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International Perspectives on the Future of Qualitative Research in Europe

Documentation of the 2010 Midterm Conference of the European Sociological Association Research Network 20 Qualitative Methods “Innovating Qualitative Research: Challenges and Opportunities. New Directions in Religion, Technology, Migration and Beyond,” held at the University of Bayreuth (Germany), 20-22 September 2010. The following documentation includes the inaugural addresses and all statements and interventions from the two plenary sessions on “The Future of Qualitative Research” that took place during the mid-term conference in September 2010 at the University of Bayreuth. Speeches and discussions were entirely videotaped, transcribed and carefully edited in order to present a thorough and readable documentation. The text was revised by all intervening speakers and is published upon unanimous approval. We are grateful to Carolin Dix for valuable support with transcribing the video data.

– Monday, September 20, 2010 –

Introduction to the conference

— *Bernt Schnettler* (vice-chairman of the Research Network): Dear Participants, on behalf of the local organizers, I welcome you very much to this midterm conference of the European Sociological Association Research Network Qualitative Methods at Bayreuth University. We are delighted that over the next two days, more than ninety scholars from twelve mainly European countries will

work on the question of the challenges and opportunities for the future of Qualitative Research in Europe. The program will include two plenary sessions with outstanding experts in Qualitative Research from all over the continent who will discuss with scientists from Latin America, Africa, and the United States. The debates will centre on the challenges of an emerging European Research Space and the role Qualitative Research can play in it. In addition, twelve thematic sessions have been organized with a total of 48 presentations which will examine the contribution

of Qualitative Methods to several substantial areas of social research, ranging from Migration, New Technologies, Contemporary Religion, Social Memory, Africa, Ethnography, Urban and Community Research, Discourse Studies, to Grounded Theory. Moreover, there will be a keynote speech given by David Silverman (London) that is followed by a laudation to Thomas Eberle (St. Gall), the former chair of our Research Network and current vice-president of the European Sociological Association.

Finally, let me express our gratitude to those persons and organizational bodies which have made possible this conference by their effort and financial support. In the first place: our organization team, whose members have been working incessantly throughout the last week in order to make your stay as comfortable as possible: Barbara Mayer, Alejandro Baer, Johannes Schaller, Marlen Rabl, Martin Asshauer, Max Breger, Georg Lindinger, and Bernd Rebstein. We are also very pleased that a number of colleagues have volunteered as session organizers and we thank them very much, because the core of this conference will consist in the work realized in the thematic sessions. The conference will be framed by two plenary sessions that open and close the meeting.

A conference like this needs proper funding and we applied a different concept than in previous years. We want to emphasize the support we receive from Bayreuth University in terms of rooms and infrastructure. This conference has received substantial financial support from the following institutions: the European Sociological Association; the Association of Friends and Supporters of Bay-

reuth University; The Bavarian Ministry of Science, Research and Arts; Bavarian Research Network on Migration and Knowledge (FORMIG), which has also set up a poster exhibition in the hall. We also appreciate contributions from the Swiss Sociological Association, three Research Networks of the German Sociological Association: The RN Sociology of Knowledge, the RN Sociology of Science and Technology Studies, and the RN Qualitative Methods. The conference also collaborates with *Qualitative Sociological Review* and with FQS – *Forum Qualitative Research*. Last, but not least, I want to express my gratitude to the session organizers, the plenary speakers and to all those presenting papers at this conference. Dear colleagues, we hope that this conference will be another important step in the advancement of Qualitative Methods in Europe. We all wish you a fruitful conference. Now, I will give the floor to the president of the ESA Network Qualitative Methods Krzysztof Konecki. Thank you very much.

— *Audience applauds*

Presidential Address

— *Krzysztof Konecki* (chairman of the Research Network): Thank you, Bernt Schnettler. I would like to welcome all participants of the midterm conference “Innovating Qualitative Research: Challenges and Opportunities – New Directions in Religion, Technology, Migration and Beyond” here at the University of Bayreuth. Also, I would like to welcome the vice-president of the European Sociology Association, Thomas Eberle, and the members of the Board of the Network Qualitative Methods with the vice-chair of our network,

Bernt Schnettler, from Bayreuth University. I also welcome members of the German Sociology Association, who contributed to this midterm conference. We are pleased, as a Research Network of ESA, to be here in such a wonderful place like Bayreuth with its great cultural heritage and scientific achievements. This is a good place for being innovative in a sense of connecting tradition and future of Qualitative Methods and Qualitative Research.

What is meant by the title of this conference? Let me give you my interpretation of its topic: *Innovating* – not innovation – means that we are in the process of constructing methods, procedures and new areas of research. *Innovating* also could be understood as an activity that produces innovations. And we hopefully will have many final products, artefacts of this action. *Innovating* could also be understood as a process that still produces – in research practice – new and fresh perspectives or procedures that are often created *ad hoc*. *Innovating*, then, can be treated as a feature of scientific research *per se*. The qualitative tradition in social sciences shows evidently that methods are not to be regarded as a stable toolkit of the qualitative researcher. The corpus of methodological knowledge develops and is modified according to theoretical development and sometimes according to the progress of events in the researched field.

Such an understanding of *innovating* means that methods are *interactions* with the substantive field and the empirical and theoretical findings within. The consequence of the interaction is that methods influence another way of seeing the so-

cial world by the researcher and the empirical findings, which could influence how the method is used in a further investigation process or even have influence upon a choice of the “proper methods” to make further research progress. We can set this tentative hypothesis at the beginning of our conference: If *innovating* is a feature of Qualitative Research, then the substantive fields are *permanently open* for new discoveries in research or even open for theoretical findings, explaining what is going into a researched field. Modification of methods and the use of new methods in the current research allow us to find something new and achieve the serendipity context that means we could find something that we were not looking for. *Innovating* in the research field is that indispensable feature of the scientific progress and it opens new dimensions of social worlds and slices of empirical data. The depth of social reality and minuteness of our descriptive skills are difficult to measure and to determine a priori. They are dependent upon our “microscope” – methods and theories – that we still develop. That means *innovating*. That’s a short explanation of the topic.

Now, I would like to invite all of you to discussions inspired by the title of the conference. I am very happy to see so many participants from so many countries. The European Qualitative Research is open for other continents, too. Welcome here in Bayreuth. I wish you good discussions, interesting lectures and a pleasant staying. Please consider the midterm conference of ESA as opened (Norwegian Bell rings).

— Audience applauds



Image 1. From left to right: Konecki, Silverman, Eberle, Knoblauch, Cisneros, Macamo, Valles.

Documentation of the Plenary Sessions

Plenary Session 1: The Future of Qualitative Research in Europe I

Chairman: Krzysztof Konecki; discussants: David Silverman, Thomas Eberle, César Cisneros, Elísio Macamo, Hubert Knoblauch, Miguel Valles; interventions from the audience: Reiner Keller, Maggie Kusenbach, Anne Ryen, Alejandro Baer, Antonia Schmid, Artur Bogner.

— *Konecki*: OK. Then we start our plenary session on the future of Qualitative Research in Europe. I am glad we have a plenary with so many experts in the field of Qualitative Research and I would like to briefly present each of them. Let me, in the first place, introduce to you David Silverman. He is a professor emeritus at the Sociology Department of Goldsmith College, London. He is an editor of many method books on Qualitative Research

– so many that I’m not going to read all the titles. Our second participant in this plenary is Thomas Eberle, professor of Sociology at the University of St. Gall, Switzerland. From 1998 to 2005, he was a president of the Swiss Sociology Association. Since 2007, he is a member of the Executive Committee and the vice-president of the European Sociology Association. He is a former chair of our Network and he was also a chair of the ESA Research Network Sociology of Culture. César Cisneros is a professor in the Department of Sociology of the Autonomous Metropolitan University, Iztapalapa in Mexico City. He teaches Qualitative Methods and social sciences epistemology. He is the editor for the Spanish version of the *Forum of Qualitative Social Research*, FQS, and there coordinates the Ibero-American branch. Cisneros has published extensively on Qualitative Data Analysis and the use of special software. Professor Elísio Macamo, born in Mozambique, is a professor of African Studies at the University of Basle. He was

a founding member of the Bayreuth International Graduate School of African Studies. He is currently the editor of the *African Sociology Review* and a member of the executive board of the German-African-Studies-Association. Hubert Knoblauch is a professor of general sociology at the Technical University of Berlin. Since 2004, he is an elected member of the Referee Board for Empirical Social Research of the German Science Foundation DFG, he is a former chair of the Research Network Qualitative Research and currently an Executive Board member of the ESA Research Network Sociology of Culture. He is also a committee member of the European Science Foundation Scientific Program EUROQUAL – Qualitative Research in the Social Sciences in Europe. Miguel Valles is a professor of sociology in the Department Methods of Social Research and Theory of Communication at the Complutense University of Madrid. He is a leading expert in methods in Spain and has widely published on Qualitative Research Methodology. He works in the fields of combining qualitative and quantitative methods, history of social research methods, society, life and methods, qualitative interviews, Grounded Theory and computer-assisted qualitative analysis. He also has conducted research in sociology of population, old age and migration. He is also a committee member of the EUROQUAL-Network.

Having introduced our speakers and discussants, I proceed to read the questions that shall guide our discussion. Subsequently, I will ask each plenary speaker for his short

statements of about five minutes each. After that, we will have time for discussion among the plenary, and finally we will open the floor for a general debate with all of you. You don't have to watch all these wonderful people and listen to them all the time. Please join in the discussion.

We would like to discuss the following questions:

1. How can Qualitative Methods respond to the challenges of an emerging European research realm? (How can we improve cooperation among the several existing parallel associations, initiatives, funding bodies, et cetera in the field of Qualitative Research?)
2. Is there a uniquely European Qualitative Methodology? (How can we improve the relations of European Qualitative Research with Qualitative Research in other world regions?)
3. How can we strengthen the connections between Qualitative Methodology and substantive inquiry?

These are the questions derived from the title of our conference and we will be interested in the statements of our plenary speakers dealing with these topics from their perspective as qualitative researchers. You have already heard my statements – please start giving yours in the indicated sequence: David Silverman, please.

— *Silverman*: (PPT is started) I can't resist using a couple of slides for illustrating my argument. Thank you, Krzysztof, thank you, Bernt, for the efficient organization of this conference. I wanted to make a few comments on the future of Qualitative Research and dip into its relation with substantive inquiry. In five minutes, this will hardly be a global diagnosis. It rather reflects my experience of the past few years in many workshops in Qualitative Research for PhD-students in different countries including France, Finland, Sri Lanka, Tanzania and Australia. My issue is how we could improve the quality of such PhD-research. I want to talk about how these students can make their work analytically intelligent and thereby curiously more relevant to society. That is a two step trick I want to discuss. It is a kind of dance and it is a difficult kind of dance to execute. Step one is to move away from social problems in defining the research topics. Instead, we should define the research topics analytically. Step two is – having done such theoretically guided research – to move back, to address social problems in a more profound and relevant way. The problem as I see it is threefold. The first is that too many PhD-students begin with what I see as common sense research questions. Just to take one example of a student interested in education. He asked: "Are classroom lessons effective?" And you can see the way in which that was using a common sense topic as a way of defining the research problem. The second problem is that as many of you know, often, quantitative research can answer these com-

mon sense research questions. They can have a lot of samples. They can have reliable measures, and so on. The third problem is that if you want to implement the findings from such common sense defined research problems, the participants often know it better. If we are simply feeding back to the participants their own perception, it's difficult to surprise them or to improve things. And what is missing out in these problematic ways of proceeding is the participants' own unacknowledged local skills and practices, which they cannot tell you. There is a two-step trick. Step one of this two-step trick is to redefine the problem – as I see it – by theorizing the topic. I always begin from the constructivist perspective as my particular kind of way of doing things. There are other approaches, like Grounded Theory, and so on, which I think also provide ways of theorizing topics. I am not so sure about other, more American traditions like post-modernism, for example. I think the problem there is one so theoretically defines the topic one can never go back to the social problem. How can we redefine the problem? How do I find practical relevance? As an example, I offer you, in only thirty seconds, my own last research project on HIV-test counseling; where, instead of asking counselors or their clients what they saw was going on in the counseling-session and how effective it were – I studied the actual counseling-session. There, I found phenomena that all participants were unaware of. I found phenomena like counselors giving – what was supposed to be counseling – giving just pieces of advice to their clients. Why are

they doing this? I found the communication structure there, which I called *advice as information*. It turns out to be a very effective way, if you are giving advice to somebody, to manage the fact that you gain no acknowledgments from him. Imagine in a face-to-face situation with a friend who comes with a great problem with their life and you say: “Well, I think you really must change your life” and you get no response. How do you manage that situation? Well, these professionals found a way of managing that situation. In a ten minute counseling-session, they managed not getting any kind of response to this complicated and very personal advice they are giving. So, I found the communication structure; the participants were unaware of and yet it was present in their practice. And, this had practical implications. Finding practical relevance precisely by doing that two-step-dance, by initially moving away from distance concerns, away from journalistically defined social problems, theoretically defining our research topics. Let’s say, I’m going to look at the “seen, but unnoticed” practices of the participants. Thereby – I believe – having much more potential of practical relevance. That is the conclusion of my comments. I am interested to hear from my distinguished colleagues whether they face the same or other issues in other societies.

— *Konecki*: Thank you, David Silverman. Thomas Eberle, please.

— *Thomas Eberle*: I would like to frame the question quite differently. The future of Qualitative Research in Europe depends on how success-

ful we are in institutionalizing it – in teaching, as well as in research. Qualitative Research has obviously been quite successful in the recent past. Many qualitative research projects have been funded and many textbooks and studies have been published, special journals have been created, and professorships for Qualitative Research were created. In ESA, as well as in other international associations, there have been founded sections for Qualitative Methods and with FQS (*Forum Qualitative Research*), we have a wonderful Forum for Qualitative Social Research, which spreads publications around the world. In other words: the institutionalization has progressed significantly. And, we have good reasons to look into the future optimistically. But, still, we have to go on and put much energy in those projects to increase the initiatives.

Aside from this huge progress, however, I also see great challenges ahead. I see a crucial battle taking place at the universities. Which profile is asked for the job-openings? Which kind of professors will be appointed? Those professors will play the music in the future in teaching, as well as in research. Many professors that are now prominent in Qualitative Research will be retired in the next ten years. Here, the important question is: Will they be replaced by Qualitative Researchers again? In Switzerland for instance, I observe a decline of those theories, which have legitimized Qualitative Research. The interpretative theories are dropping from the university curricula and the theoretical landscape is more and more reduced to systems-theory and ratio-

nal choice as the two dominating paradigms. This development threatens the very bases of Qualitative Research. Tears come to my eyes when I see that one of our prominent Qualitative researchers, who built up a research team for the last 20 years, will be replaced by a rational-choice theorist. All our achievements are in danger if we lose the battle of proper appointments. It is difficult to keep track of the developments in the different European countries in this respect. This is one of the reasons we meet here with the ESA Research Network Qualitative Methods where such an exchange can take place. So, I’m really wondering what is going on in other countries in this respect. In any case, I don’t think that there is a uniquely European Qualitative Methodology. As Europe is obviously not a unity. We have different research traditions in different countries and we are not very well aware of what is happening in different places. English has become the *lingua franca* because of the tendency that we are all orienting in general more toward the Anglo-Saxon world than to other European countries. This brings me to the next point. There is more and more pressure on young academics that they publish in English, in A-journals, and that they spend some time abroad, preferably in the U.S. We all know that this implies the danger of mainstreaming. Our American colleagues in Qualitative Research tell us that they are still marginal in the American sociology where Positivism is still home. Where are the triple-A journals for Qualitative Research? Triple-A journals are usually American. The requirement

to publish in triple-A journals, thus, helps to promote non-Qualitative Research. The institutionalization of such requirements, which is currently spreading – I think all over Europe – could more and more become an obstacle for the further institutionalization of Qualitative Research. So let me come to the last point: the respectability and reputation of Qualitative Research also depends on how prolific the research results are perceived. Sociology describes itself as a reflexive discipline. But, it leaves the floor, to solve practical problems in great deal, to the economists and the political scientists, for example, to rational-choice theory. If funding agencies go on to require societal relevance of research projects, our community should accept the challenge and produce some profound studies that contribute to solving societal problems. If we cooperate on an international level doing this, we probably have better chances to further institutionalize Qualitative Research in the future. I may add, I don’t mean that we should do applied sociology. That is not what I mean by societal relevance. I mean it in a fairly broad sense. It doesn’t mean that we have to take over common sense definitions of problems. But, I see if we don’t tackle the problems which society thinks are important to tackle, we could lose the battle or appointments.

— *Konecki*: Thank you very much. César Cisneros, please.

— *César Cisneros*: Thanks a lot, Bernt Schnettler, for this invitation and the possibility to share some of my thoughts with you in the

conference. The topic is very challenging, but also a great opportunity to create bridges and get more understanding between us. I'm going to answer the conference questions from my Latin American perspective as a Mexican Qualitative Researcher. Here are my statements. First, we need to incorporate into our agenda discussions on how the epistemological perspectives are constructed and how further conditions can improve the quality of our work. In my opinion, an empirical sociology of epistemologies would constitute a step forward in our understanding of the social conditioning of scientific knowledge. The dialogue between methods, approaches and methodology has provided relevant reflections in diverse disciplines and the influence of any qualitative tradition has been evaluated or re-evaluated in different fields and conflicts. Methods, approaches and methodology have been enhanced thanks to such dialogues, but, also, as a consequence of the opportunity to know and to discuss what researchers are doing in different regions of the world. Knowledge based on different traditions, concepts and theories let us be aware of both: our unity and diversity. Qualitative Research is then very rich and charmed because of the various legacies and treasures gathered in each country. That is bringing me to my second point: The worldwide story of Qualitative Research is formed by diverse narratives, authors and approaches. Recognize national differences and experiences and discuss such diversity and analyzing its unity lead us to explore the conceptual roots of our current

practices as qualitative researchers to act in a future globalized academia. All of us know that the dominance of English language in the globalized world of Qualitative Research has resulted in a number of reactions from non-English speaking researchers. The dilemma for many of us is the need to take a critical stance against such dominance. At the same time we recognize the need for disseminating our words to an international audience. And finally, my third point: Speaking as a Latin American sociologist, I would like to say there is a special *flavor* to Ibero-American Qualitative Research that has been intensified by the unique links between politics and sciences and practice and science. Also in Mexico, as in other Latin American countries, the quantitative sociology dominates the institutional panoramas, converting, in marginal the interpretive paradigms constituted by comprehensive traditions as phenomenology, hermeneutics, symbolic interactionism, constructionism, ethnomethodology and others. We know there is no one *real* Qualitative Research paradigm. There are many paths to follow when doing Qualitative Research. The path one chooses often shapes the research. There are many stories to tell about Qualitative Research in Ibero-America, but there is no time to talk about. Here it is important just to highlight a critical point. From my experience, Qualitative Research conducted in the Spanish and Portuguese speaking worlds vividly display the roles that culture and context play in our conceptualization and practice as interpretive human beings. This is a critical

point. We know that Qualitative Research is particularly well suited to articulate the complexities of culture and context. For such reason, and recognizing that Latin American research remains on the periphery of the international academic community, my interest is to create more collaboration between Latin American and European associations, keeping our identity as researchers involved in the movements for freedom and social justice in our countries.

— *Konecki*: OK. Thank you. Following the sequence of my introduction, the next is Elísio Macamo, please.

— *Elísio Macamo*: Good morning to everyone. Thank you very much for the invitation to come here and the opportunity to say a few things about this topic. Of course, I am particularly afraid because I had been invited as an African to tell about the future of Qualitative Research in Europe. I will dwell slightly on the past because I think, in terms of the development, Qualitative Sociology in African sociology is still lagging behind. I think that some of the problems coming out of that are also of some interest for a discussion about the future of Qualitative Research in Europe. Basically, there are two points I would like to bring up here. The first one is concerning the status of sociology in general in Africa. The second one is concerning the research praxis in Africa, also in the context of what is known as African Studies. As far as sociology in Africa is concerned, I think most of the sociological research in Africa is done in

a quantitative way. Instead, Qualitative Research in African sociology still lags behind. This has to do with the later development of sociology, which is basically a discipline that started in the sixties with the independence of many African countries, and rode on the waves of modernization theories and also on the wave of industrial sociology. For those reasons, there was a lot of emphasis on survey methodologies, and so on. The other factor was that the larger area that one could associate with Qualitative Methodologies was largely left to social anthropology. So, there has been an understanding within the African context that Qualitative Methodology is everything that is not quantitative. And this has had serious implications for the development of that particular way of doing research. Now, to my second point concerning the research praxis: There has been quite a strong emphasis on proofability in research. What I mean by proofability, which has been quite frequent within the context of social research in Africa and also to some extent in African studies, is to simply accept as valid what is intuitively correct. A lot of work that is produced in African research and in research on Africa has that stigma. Therefore, by reading such works, it is very difficult to agree on the nature of the data and it is also quite difficult to engage in a discussion concerning the particular methodologies that had been followed. Now, where do I see the opportunities for Africa, but also for Europe in the very nature of Qualitative Research? My understanding is that Qualitative Research places a lot of em-

phasis on what you might call “second order observations.” Particularly, the way in which you can seek to retrieve your object through what your informants say. In that way you can define your object in a very particular way, which does not force you – as in the framework of plausibility – to make things concerning the validity and the objectivity of what you are saying. What that does is that it allows you to get into a discussion with your peers concerning the criteria which you use to create that which you are treating as your object is actually, you know, what grounds you have, what warrant you have to make such means and then get into a discussion about that. I find that particularly interesting. I think German phenomenological approaches, particularly in the area of the sociology of knowledge, have made quite important contributions. They stimulated a lot of methodological discussions that go beyond a simple knowledge of the context – which, of course, plays a major role within the context of plausibility. That allows for interesting exchanges and perhaps opens up opportunities not only for African scholars to come to Europe and do research in Europe. Also, it opens up opportunities for African scholars to engage European scholars doing research in Africa on a methodological level without always insisting on the issue of context and insisting on the importance of knowledge of culture. It would enable them to speak intelligible about realities that are strange for them. So, where I see the future of Qualitative Research in Europe is in making it possible for scholars from

all over the world to find a common language to discuss how they make their object visible. Thank you.

— *Konecki*: Thank you very much. Hubert Knoblauch is next.

— *Hubert Knoblauch*: Thank you very much for the invitation and for the chance to talk about these problems we have been facing already for quite some time. I’m actually sharing Thomas Eberle’s view quite a lot and I would like to answer the question on the background of experience not only of the ESA and of the Qualitative Methods Research Network, which I share for more than ten years now, but also on the background of a consortium, which is called EUROQUAL, which is slightly different to the ESA. It is initiated by the European Science Foundation on Qualitative Methods, but as opposed to our group, it is an interdisciplinary group. And, it failed incredibly. So this is some of the background. The other background, I should probably mention to people who are not from Germany, is that one might dare to say that Qualitative Methods are reasonably institutionalized in Switzerland, even more in Germany. So there are quite a number of professorships specialized on Qualitative Methods in sociology, but also in other fields. Qualitative Research is part of the regular curriculum for social science students. In sociology, in education science and some other disciplines. Well, on this background let me try to answer the first question about the European research realm. I think there is the tendency to create something like

a European Area, of course triggered by the European Research Council. They demand from us to have something like qualitative representation of Qualitative Methods. But, there are also some obstacles. One of these obstacles we encounter lies, of course, in the Qualitative Methods themselves. It is the internal diversity of methods. There is a huge diversity of methods, ever increasing. Every one of us is working on innovations so this diversity is still increasing. That makes it really difficult to get an overview in such a huge number of methods.

In addition to this internal diversity, there is a special diversity across national and cultural areas. Thomas Eberle, you can tell this within a country, for example, but this applies also across nations, of course. It is one of the topics you have had since the existence of this network. It was such a huge diversity between national and cultural areas, between methods. There are different traditions in Spain, in Italy and so on and of course in Britain. Additionally to these two varieties, there are also disciplinary differences and varieties between the qualitative traditions in education studies, in sociology, in anthropology, and so on, which are again diverse. And in addition to them we have, fourthly, the trans-disciplinary development. Like, for example, Science and Technology Studies or Religious Studies, and so on. They develop their own, somehow qualitative traditions of research in the broader area of Qualitative Methods. All four of these levels of diversity, I think, are intervening the tendency towards a European Qualitative Meth-

ods Research Area. This is also the answer to what European Qualitative Methods means: the specificity of European Qualitative Methods is its diversity.

But, I think there are also bridges. We have knowledge about diversity and that’s the major feature of the European Qualitative Methods. The tendencies and results of that, I would say, is that we all have adopted it, for example, with our reference to Grounded Theory, the tendency to a general methodology. That of course is an attempt of international standardization. The tendency towards a general methodology, however, is bound to harm the relation to theory. One likes to forget that from the beginning there weren’t “Qualitative Methods” – Qualitative Methods is to my mind an unlucky historical coincidence. There have been interpretative methods and non-interpretative methods, standardized methods and non-standardized methods and by some practical reasons it turned out to be useful to call it Qualitative Methods. But, at least one tendency of this background is, of course, their relation to the theoretical basis, which founded them and were its legitimations. Thomas (Eberle), I share your view on that. I think the legitimations of Qualitative Methods are getting lost. One of the results of that is to my mind a series of “core-side-innovations” in Qualitative Methods. Core-side-innovations mean that methods are just translated in different theoretical speech forms and languages, which is quite useful. But, this is not really an innovation. It just sounds like. I don’t want to criticize it, but

that is what is happening. It is not really innovative because the relation to what makes the Qualitative Methods has been lost. I don't know really if I should foster that. But, at least one of the demands would be, first – we tried it EUROQUAL, but it didn't succeed – to go for something like a formal organization, an Association of European Qualitative Method, whatever, something like that. This means that an intensified network, especially cross disciplines, is utterly important. My second demand would be to insert a huge variety of people in practical research, but also in the other substantive research areas like Science and Technology Studies, Sociology of Medicine, Health Studies, and Linguistics, and so on. There is a huge variety of people not only in the practical field, but also in substantive research areas, working with Qualitative Methods. And somehow, they are there developing their own canons of study, independent of sociology. Linguistics, in the study of communication, is a good example here. So, I would say if one does formally organize, one has to look for the connection to the substantive areas. And this leads to the most important demand that there should be an interaction between these various forms, which means there must be reflection. Opposed to the quantitative people, one difference should be: we should be reflective about what we are doing. I think that is what makes us different. We should reflect what we are doing and somehow be aware of reflective methodology you (Thomas Eberle) mentioned. We should be able to answer the question how we han-

dle the differences in our field ourselves. Unfortunately, that is what we are not doing. There is no overview; we do the same that is demanded of us. Instead, we write introductions, collective books, and so on. OK, that's it. I think these are the three demands: interaction, the form organization and the link to the substantive areas. Thank you.

— *Konecki*: Thank you, Hubert Knoblauch. Now, I would like to give the floor to Miguel Valles.

— *Miguel Valles*: Thank you very much. I would like to give some short answers to the five questions about the future of Qualitative Research. But, first thank the organizers, especially Bernt Schnettler and his team, for the invitation. Congratulations for organizing this initiative. Let me say something, in five minutes, about the main heading or thematic umbrella on the future of Qualitative Research. It is usual to read and hear, not only in the academic circles, that the future is in the present. I like to add that the future (in every field of human activity) is in the present, but also in the past. It is a mix of old and new generations' efforts, wishes, dreams, and so on. I understand the words of Thomas Eberle when I think of those wishes and dreams as a mix of tradition and innovation. Now, I'll try to make a first statement regarding each question, drawing from the present and past that I have lived in the last years. First question: How can Qualitative Methods respond to the challenges of an emerging European research realm? And, in brackets: How can we improve cooperation among the

several existing parallel associations, and so on? Here, there is a double question. I give a first answer drawing from the EUROQUAL initiative that Hubert Knoblauch has referred to. That initiative was promoted by the European Science Foundation with the cooperation of more than a dozen European countries with the aim of responding to the European challenge of disseminating the research experience of older and younger generations. I could refer to the various European workshops organized within the EUROQUAL networking program, such the one on "Archives" and "Biographical Research," but it would take a bit more time. And we have two or three people here who have organized these workshops: Hubert (Knoblauch) chaired one on "Visual Methods," and Anne Ryen did the same on the "Quality of Qualitative Research." Well, I could refer to those various European workshops, but that would take me a bit more time than only five minutes. Let me just refer to the one I was responsible for: it was on "Archives and Biographical Research." The promotion of a culture of sharing and of archival research sensitivity (if you let me use that expression), following initiatives such as "Qualidata" at Essex University is a possible answer, I think, to the question embraced in brackets, that is the second question that has been mentioned. I have only enough time just to mention projects such as the "Timescapes" project, where different universities, in this case British, took part. I could refer to the Spanish "Mourning archive project" (the "Archivo del duelo," a research on the forms of

grief rituals in public places after the terrorist attacks in Madrid, March the 11th of 2004), where there are blurred frontiers between the traditional disciplines or fields of social researchers, such as anthropologists, historians, sociologists, and so forth. By the way, Qualitative Research in some places is, in my opinion, narrowly conceived, associated to anthropology. In the mentioned project those traditional disciplines of social research are cooperating with experts in libraries, museums, and so on. I could also make reference to the EUROQUAL final conference held in London in May 2010 about "International Perspectives on Qualitative Research in the Social Sciences." It was very well organized by Paul Atkinson and his team of Cardiff University. There, nearly a hundred of abstracts were orally presented, mainly by young researchers talking about their research in progress. One way of estimating the near future of Qualitative Research can be inferred from the abstracts of those presentations. Well, we are about to have nearly 50 presentations in this conference. Most of them are abstracts from projects that many of you as researchers are doing at the very moment, so we can use them to make us an idea of the immediate future. Now, the second pair of questions is: Is there a uniquely European Qualitative Methodology; and, in brackets, how can we improve the relations of European Qualitative Research with Qualitative Research in other world regions? The first question seems to me a yes/no question, and I am tempted to give a quick no-answer. A first reasoning

is that there is a variety of different groups, schools, research styles even within a single European country. I am just thinking about the case of Spain, for example, where at the same time these research groups, schools or traditions are in contact or have received influence from many diverse groups in and outside the European frontiers. Globalization is the word to sum up this thread of reasoning... On the one side, in Spain and all other European countries there are many different groups of researchers belonging to different schools using different Qualitative Methodologies. But, on the other side, at the same time these groups, schools, et cetera are in contact with each other and work together also with other European and non-European groups. This leads me to the second part of the question: the question in brackets – How can we improve the relations of European Qualitative Research with Qualitative Research in other world regions, such as the Americas, Africa, Asia, et cetera? This is the question I prefer most. To express a first answer in this case, I'll just mention the FQS initiative. And, I think this is something real. Today, I'm glad to share the table with the colleague responsible for the Ibero-American branch of this online journal. Finally, I'm going to answer the last question: How can we strengthen the connection between methodological and substantive inquiry? It is difficult to teach methods in general and qualitative ones in particular without referring to classic works or without giving examples of current work. This is one observation that

is associated in my mind with the classic of *Street Corner Society* by William Foote Whyte. Or, to introduce biographical methodology to students of sociology, I cannot forget *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* by Thomas and Znaniecki, as I share this table with our president from Poland. And in the Spanish context, I talk immediately about *Making the America* by Marsal, who emulated in part the work of Thomas and Znaniecki. But, in general, I prefer the connection between methodological inquiry, substantive inquiry and the historical and biographical context of the researcher. That's why I find it so pedagogical or simply useful (in terms of learning); those appendices where the author becomes more visible, narrating the history of research and the history of himself or herself becoming a researcher. So recording methodological appendices, or the making of every piece of research or the backstage process of research, from the demand of the study to its presentation, is one way to tackle the third question. I don't want to end my first statement without mentioning GTM (Grounded Theory Methodology) lessons. Its insistence on generating theory (substantive inquiry) as a task inserted or embedded within this methodology. And, last, but not least, the subtitle of this ESA midterm conference is a good example of the referred connection. The main title is "Innovating Qualitative Research" and we have already heard the address by the chair of the table. But, the subtitle is "New directions in religion, technology migration and beyond." Well, this has been my statement.

— *Konecki*: Thank you very much. I also have some kind of a statement. My approach, therefore, is very pragmatic and practical. I come from sociology of organization and management and I would like to say something about some institutional issues of our activity. How can Qualitative Methods respond to the emerging European Research Realm? Here, I have a similar opinion, close to Thomas Eberle's. In my opinion, referring to the institutional work for the developing of our academic course, it is very important to broaden our influence as Qualitative Methodologists, Qualitative Methods and the constructivist approach. This work can also improve the quality of our research. What is important, in many countries, like in Germany or in America, Qualitative Methodology is well established yet. Still, there are some doubts in the academic world about Qualitative Research and in many countries there still is this distinction between qualitative and quantitative approaches. Also in Poland, where I come from, we have that strange situation. Before the Second World War, we had a strong biographical research that was well developed, and there had been a lot of departments of Qualitative Sociology. Znaniecki was crucial here. Then, under the communist regime, quantitative research was done a lot, adapted to some political institutes. Qualitative Methods instead, coming from this "bad guy" Znaniecki, who migrated to the U.S. and was accused of being a capitalist, suffered. Now, today, Qualitative Methods in Poland rather exist. To strengthen them again,

we must work in institutions and we need the cooperation with other ESA networks and also with ISA networks. What we also did in the past was cooperating with other networks. Cooperation between journals is another important issue. What we already have are these wonderful journals specialized in Qualitative Methods, if you think of FQS (*Forum Qualitative Sociology*) and QSR (*Qualitative Sociological Review*). To answer the question if there is a unique European methodology or not, I want to point out that uniqueness could easily be associated with self isolation. If we want to be unique, then we should forget desperately to cooperate. Just then uniqueness can be achieved, only this way. Any other way is very difficult to find because of globalizing journals. Every journal is different, I think. Except non-nationally based ones. We should start the cooperation in many substantive fields and with publication in European-cited journals or cooperate between European associations and national based associations in other parts of the world. This is the simple idea of how to improve the institutional development of Qualitative Methodology.

How can we strengthen the connection between Qualitative Methodology and substantive fieldwork? I think, the basic question here is, if Qualitative Methods fit to each and every substantive field? If this is the case, then the problem doesn't exist and we should do anything to promote Qualitative Methodology. Public opinion, for example, according to Herbert Blumer, should not be researched by polls, but by qualitative analysis of collec-

tive action. If Qualitative Methodology is not universal to any substantive field, we should work out how any substantive field generates specific methods that should be used to answer specific questions. And, I think we have such a situation, for example, with conversation analysis. It answers specific questions. And, I think we all agree to have, rather, that situation. But, with our methods we can already answer many of those specific questions. Here, the midterm conference can strengthen the links between Qualitative Methods and many substantive fields. For me, this would be a reason for planning the next conference more open to other fields and not strictly methodological. We should gain other researchers in substantive areas that use Qualitative Methods and we should cooperate with them in organizing joint research or conferences and publications. Thank you and, please, start the discussion.

— *Eberle*: We have obviously two different strands in the discussion. One is: How to improve Qualitative Methods and how to improve Qualitative Research; and the other is: How to organize it institutionally. These are two different things. And both have to be done. I see a certain contradiction in that the diversity in Qualitative Research also resulted in many different groupings, which are kinds of religious sects. These groups think only their own research should be counted as the real way of doing Qualitative Research and the way of all the others is not acceptable. I think, this may be done in a scientific

discourse and can be quite prolific in a scientific discourse. But, the problem is: How do you organize with these people? Can you join forces? And I think this has been a great problem for Qualitative Research and it took a long way, a long time, until we really joined forces and said we have a common goal. A common goal is that not only quantitative data is data. There are other kinds of data and other ways of collecting data and of doing data analysis. And, that took a long time. I may briefly introduce a Manifest we have done in Switzerland. It also took many years to reach this. This was trans-disciplinary with all other social sciences together, in collaboration with many professors of sociology, political science, social psychology, anthropology and other social sciences. And we finally reached it. This is in three languages, which is always important for Switzerland. That really was a great success. But, it also required a lot of effort. People usually don't have time or they are not ready to invest a lot of time in such things. Although, they say one should do it and that it would be important. Here, the problem is: you have to have a liberal stance. We may be ethnomethodologists, but we have to accept qualitative interviews. Otherwise, we can't join forces. And here, if we think about the creation of a European or even international association of Qualitative Research, the question is: Do we find the right people who can do a scientific debate based upon their convictions, but on the other hand be politically liberal and join forces with the others? That is a great challenge.

— *Konecki*: OK, thank you, Thomas. Hubert Knoblauch, please.

— *Knoblauch*: (to Thomas Eberle) Of course, we have special groups like discourse analysis, conversation analysis, and so on. But, then we shouldn't forget what you (to Cisneros) also mentioned. We have national varieties too, particularly here in Germany, which criss-cross whatever are the special tribes in Qualitative Methods. And of course, all of these, one should be aware of if we talk about innovations, all of these are bases for innovations, be it the conversation analysis-people, be it the discourse-people the German, the French or the English discourse-people – and so on. They are all, by the very fact that there are special breeds, there are basis for innovation. In this sense diversity is, of course, just the very feature of Qualitative Methods. The problem is, first of all, people are not joining forces, most of them, but then, there is no overview in this sense and there is no common denominator, so far, as I can see. And, don't think that the very notion of Qualitative Methods is a denominator. We can use it politically, and we have joined forces in Qualitative Methods, but this is not a denominator. A denominator is something else. It is some shared theoretical orientation, to my mind, in order to get all these various forms, which are innovative in themselves, together.

— *Konecki*: OK, please, David.

— *Silverman*: OK, I would love to make a statement, but I wonder if someone from the floor

wants to because we are monopolizing the discussion and it would be nice to hear intervention from the audience. I would prefer to hear questions, if that's OK for you?

— *Konecki*: Maybe not already, OK? Then Cisneros, please.

— *Cisneros*: Thank you very much for this opportunity to speak about the challenge of creating and developing an association. From my point of view, we really need an international association and keep our disciplinary differences, keep our national differences. Here, we have different groups, even if some of them irritate us in behaving like a religious movement with the right way of doing ethnographical analysis. This behavior is a challenge, especially for us as we are not just qualitative researchers, but also citizens. We need an international association of Qualitative Inquiry. We need an international association of Qualitative Research roughly organized by nations, organized by language sections, organized by methods or in another way. We really need to be aware not just of the challenges, but also of the obstacles and what we are really aspiring to do.

— *Konecki*: Then I would like to respond to César Cisneros. As him, I think international organizations of Qualitative Methodology are important and I believe we could easily do it. They could be nationally based. We already have the national sections of Qualitative Methods or some sections based mainly on this kind of methodology. We can contact them and integrate them on an international

level. It is a good idea and also very practical. I'm convinced we need such an institutional thinking. We need it, I think, I agree with you. OK, David Silverman is next.

— *Silverman*: I remember very well when I was part of the committee of the British Sociology Association and there was the discussion about whether journalists should be invited to attend our annual conference. And the consensus was no because they might distort what we came up with. This was actually bizarre. Although, we try to get our views across, we were so closed in our views. Well, things may have changed since I'm retired, I don't know. British sociology and journalism do have contact now, I guess. I believe the important way to face up to the wider world is, as Thomas Eberle and others have mentioned, the importance of thinking of the social relevance of our work at all times. As much as we have to be theoretically informed also to think of how that way of being theoretically informed can lead to addressing issues around in the wider society. And, certainly how we can demonstrate the plausibility of what we are doing and the unique insights we can offer to quantitative people. I remember, several years ago, I was asked to speak to the London University Department of Demography. And, I was very intimidated by what they may say to me talking about Qualitative Research. But, it turned out that the kind of research I was describing to them they hadn't so far come across at all. They just assumed that Qualitative Research was a kind of journalism they are not inter-

ested in. When they heard about the kind of research I and other people did, they got quite excited about it and decided to talk about collaboration. So, thinking about the outside world is really something we probably need to do more.

— *Knoblauch*: I need to contradict. I don't think this is the problem nowadays. We are already socially relevant. Everywhere – if it is in business and marketing research, social work or whatever – there is Qualitative Research and everyone is working with some computers and coding systems. And, it's fairly standardized. So, the problem is this kind of Qualitative Research has lost everything and nothing to do with what we wanted to do. In fact, it has become quantitative research. That's why I don't think social relevance is the problem. I see that a lot of Qualitative Methods have lost ground. I don't want to say there is no good work at all, but this work is always standardized. And everyone does it in an easy way, which is not good for us and not intentional, I think. This is the major problem. If it gains to found an international association, of course, we can support it. But, if we only do that, we are spoiling the whole business, the whole reason why we are doing that. That's what they are doing and why we haven't done it yet. This is not our intention and it is not the intention of other special branches, like conversation analysis or discourse analysis. This is the reason they never joined in. They just do their own thing. They do not want to be spoiled. I don't think it's the relevance. My question and my perception are totally different. From my point

of view Qualitative Research already is in the business, in politics, and so on. Paid research is done by companies and done for politics. We sell enough. Here, the label of Qualitative Research often is that of an easy available method for everyone. I think what we are doing is selling out and that's a serious problem. That is not the idea of academia.

— *Konecki*: Thank you, Hubert Knoblauch, for your emphatic contribution. Next one is Jan Coetzee.

— *Coetzee*: I have another impression from South Africa where I come from. Here, quantitative research is very much the dominating paradigm. Quantitative researchers do real work when it comes to relevance. Instead, there are various question marks over the qualitative material or qualitative data insofar that it cannot directly do changes in policies, decision-making, in other words: where the power issue is at stake. Power is the ability to make changes and to bring about a different foundation. I sometimes think that qualitative sociology's main problem is that it does not manage to project itself as an area where – irrespective of the epistemic reflexivity that's going on – and it can still make changes. That it can be effective with policy, maybe. I think, sometimes we probably are our own worst enemies by continuing with the debates on hermeneutics and on the philosophy of science, the words of things, even into linguistics. We have people out there, the policy makers; they want material that can make the difference.

— *Knoblauch*: I think we actually observe, of course, also the differences in the standards of Qualitative Methods in different ways. I am not sure if this is a real advantage if you are the one whose statistics are quoted by politicians. I just give you an example of the Technical University of Berlin. Here, also engineers have training in Qualitative Methods. You can imagine that kind of training, but they get training and later they go out and train themselves in these methods, but have no idea of sociology at all. That also is the case in business and in market research, in politics research and social works. I think there are still areas where Qualitative Research could be more relevant, but I don't see a general lack of relevance. I think what's happening in these areas is the use of easy and cheap ethnography. These are the things done, but these aren't the things we want to have. That's what I'm saying. It's not everywhere, but it's there and it's not what we wanted.

— *Konecki*: OK, there is a request to speak from the audience. Can you introduce yourself please?

— *Keller*: My name is Reiner Keller. I am working on discourse analysis in social sciences. I have just two points. One, first is the question of translation politics. Together with some colleagues, I edited two books on discourse analysis ten years ago in Germany. Now, there are third and fourth editions in Germany and they are now standard works, from the sales. We sent it to Sage at the time to publish it also in English, but they consid-

ered it *too continental*. I think this was because there are contributions from Germany, from Switzerland, from Italy, from the Netherlands and from France. And so, for them it was of no interest to publish it worldwide because lots of the references were to European traditions, to works in German or in Italian. So, I think this is one major problem that we don't have funds for translations of works, because we don't want to merge everything into some Anglo-American thing. So, we have to have the original books and we have to produce the translations. For me, this is one very important point to organize. To get funding for the translations. There is a second point I want to mention. I am a member of the French Association of Qualitative Research, too. There are almost the same problems which are discussed here. And, I just attended the conference in Grenoble on Interpretive Policy Analysis. There were three to four hundred people around and it was a great thing. I mean, it was so successful because they didn't call it Qualitative Methods in Policy Analysis, but Interpretive Policy Analysis, so they took together what you mentioned. There were empirical studies and there was reflection on how to do, on methodological aspects, and so on. They made clear by this kind of labeling that the Qualitative Methodology is not something which is discussing itself, but it is applicated, it is used to answer real life questions in different fields. I think this is kind of a strategy to think about and to take together. Why not doing something like an interpretive sociology conference in Germany?

Where it would be clear that this is not just a methodological reflection for itself, but all this refers to questions of research and practical questions.

— *Konecki*: Thank you. Maggie Kusenbach is next.

— *Kusenbach*: I am Maggie Kusenbach and I teach in the United States. Originally, I come from Germany. I would like to respond to your comments about the U.S. sociology. I understand your frustration, but I want to say that sociology in the U.S. is quite different in terms of its theoretical debates. They are not interested in Systems Theory, they are not interested in rational choice. Instead, they are still debating conflict theories, structural functionalism, post-modernism. They are looking for works that address these debates in terms of their topics. The dominating interest is really still in social problems issues: race, class, gender. These are the types of topics the Americans will be interested in. The third limitation, of course, is the language. You know, if it is not in English, Americans are not going to read it. So, there is a sort of block, and some limitations to the things you have to do to engage Americans in the debate. At the same time, I see a lot of ways of how Americans are pushing outwards and generating new interests. There is a lot going on that maybe has to do with changes in politics. There is a lot of interest in globalization, global impacts of the U.S. on the world, and also a lot of interest in immigration. Americans want to know where these other people come

from. They want to understand issues in other places of the world. There is a new interest in going out and doing comparative work on the qualitative level. I think, there is a new interest in reaching out to other regions of the world. Americans are less concerned in legitimizing Qualitative Research. It is established, it is institutionalized. I am in a department where there are two quantitative researchers. We don't have this legitimation-debate. There is not so much energy spent on saying why Qualitative Research is a valid endeavor. That's past. We reach out to quantitative people. How can we work together? How can we do mixed methods research? How can we do interdisciplinary research? But, I think the most exciting thing is that there is interest in globalization, in immigration, the markets, disasters – I mean, Americans have a new interest in understanding what is going on and this might be a good opportunity for collaboration, working together on making Qualitative Methods better and more valuable.

— *Konecki*: OK.

— *Baer*: My name is Alejandro Baer and I would like to refer to the question our colleague, César Cisneros, raised. In this conference, we are three people from the Spanish speaking world: César Cisneros from Mexico and Miguel Vallés and myself from Spain. I think, it is important to talk about the problem of how to avoid main-streaming and at the same time, as César said, be part of that debate without being absorbed into that. In our countries, we want to be part of and join that debate. And,

we have a lot of things to share. This is a question that I formulate to my colleagues from the continent and from America and Britain. How can academia, including journals and publishers, be a bit more open and open the doors to these other traditions? For example, in Spain we have an extraordinary body of scholarly work by the Madrid School of Qualitative Research. There are no translations into English from the works of Jesús Ibáñez, for example. In Latin America some people might have made their way to translations. But, these are individual cases. The fact is that whole traditions are totally obscured. So, this is a question I ask to the whole audience: How do you include these marginalized traditions to the international debate?

— *Silverman*: Well, I am obviously responsive to that. I think by that you might, to use a term from CA, to think about recipient design. Think about how you can take on board problems from the Anglo-Saxon traditions or the German and French traditions to think about topics they are looking for and show the relevance of the work you are doing in your tradition. Try to answer those kinds of questions. You could rather say: look, what we are doing is important and therefore you should listen to us. To demonstrate the ways in which it is relevant to the concerns in our societies. Now, you might think that is a hard task because we in the Anglo-Saxon traditions don't have to do that. There was a nice chapter by Pertti Alasutaari, a Finnish sociologist, in a book on Qualitative Research Practice three years ago where he is talking about hegemo-

ny of the Anglo-Saxon traditions. You know – how much easier it is from people working within that and people on the periphery. I, as an insider, still think it is possible to make/show the relevance of your work to the kinds of concerns raised in other kinds of traditions. It is something you have to do all the time anyway, I mean, if we are speaking to people in other disciplines. I give courses on Qualitative Research to business students and I never studied business. I have to do a sort of recipient design, what I am doing to show its relevance of the kinds of issues they concern. That's what I'm wondering, if that kind of work can be done more.

— *Konecki*: OK. Then, Anne Ryen is next.

— *Ryen*: I just want to address a less heroic aspect of globalization in Qualitative Research. We definitely want to have high Qualitative Research. When we look upon what's taking place then we see: the world is turning into a market place. If we don't have the same possibility of getting published with the bigger companies that see the world as a market place, it is very hard to get through. And this is one way, I would say is ... That would come in very practical issues. The fastest way of examining our theories, our force is by getting our ideas published and next getting sold out to the bigger markets. I come from northern Norway, but I worked in different parts of the world... This is another issue that we, as an organization, would have to address. If we don't do that, we can talk about all these fabulous ideas, but they will not materialize.

— *Schmid*: My name is Antonia Schmid and I work and teach and do research at the University of Wuppertal. I just went to the Sixth International Conferences on Qualitative Inquiry in Urbana-Champaign (Illinois, U.S.) and I had some experiences there that parallel what you said, (to Knoblauch), but also contradict what you said (to Baer). Well, a huge part of that international conference was held in Spanish, so I guess there is some sort of development ... and also people there were actually, they didn't spend as much time with legitimizing the methods and you were right saying that. But, they were actually as frustrated as people in Europe with where the money goes. So, what we do, even if it's relevant – the question is not if it's relevant for the world, but if it's relevant for those who fund research. So, I would like to kind of enforce what you said (to Ryen). The question is how do we get to where the money is? So, that is, I guess, all without getting spoiled.

— *Konecki*: More questions? Maybe I can comment on something that Hubert Knoblauch and many of you have said about the popularity of Qualitative Methods in business, for example. My experience is that we had the big Congress of Polish Sociological Association and I organized a session there on "Innovations in Qualitative Methods." There was a big interest especially from the marketing companies working in business, public relations, and so on. We only had a very small room with space for maybe ten people. But, so many people were interested and in the end we got 85 people sitting everywhere in this tiny

room. Most participants were business people sitting there together with scholars discussing Qualitative Methodology. What could we offer to these people? We gave them typology, theoretical backgrounds on the methods like diversity, and so on. Probably they weren't too satisfied listening to us, but the biggest interest and a lot of questions were given to the practical aspects. Clearly, they were only interested in practice. For dealing with these people, we can probably use some explanations, accounts of our doings. But, I am not sure if we can get this border from the company towards the people from other disciplines and especially the business world. Probably, we should do what we do. I don't know if we really need to give them the theoretical backgrounds.

— *Knoblauch*: My task is contradicting. We all are doing Qualitative Methods, but does this mean we are not good in counting? Some of the best ethnographies used numbers. You know this is not really the point. So, we have to think about what the hell is Qualitative Methodology at a certain point. I'm convinced that the answer to these questions is theory, a certain kind of theory. We shouldn't forget that it comes from the interpretive paradigm. Qualitative Research is not for people lazy in counting. Although, we are all working within Qualitative Research and it is not really the most fitting notion. We should be aware of that. This is our task as scientists. I will just close responding to your approach. I know from the DFG (German Science Funding Agency) and I know also from the Swiss Foundation that qualitative research approaches are not

disadvantaged. The numbers of qualitative research projects are surprisingly high. So, not getting funded is not our most serious problem at the moment. Developing our skills is the most important thing and we should be aware of that.

— *Eberle*: Just one sentence. I don't disagree that we have now this advantage; and, I talked about the future. And, I said there are certain institutional contradictions which might end up that it will again be a disadvantage. For me, that is the challenge. So, I was talking about this challenge. Not about the present state.

— *Konecki*: Please.

— *Artur Bogner*: I would like to add a critical footnote to this very weak picture that has been debated yet. I see, when we are talking, the disintegration into various tribes of Qualitative Research we will forget that the largest – and most powerful of these tribes is outside the discipline. That is the discipline of history. And there are other disciplines like anthropology that also belong to these tribes. So, this is not only a danger, a paradigm or a problem to sociology in a narrow sense.

— *Konecki*: Thank you. More comments or questions? No. Just perfect in time. Thank you very much! [– audience applauds –] If not, then I would like to thank you for taking part in our discussions and listening to us. We will continue discussing these questions in the last plenary.

Documentation of the Closing Plenary: The Future of Qualitative Research in Europe II

– Tuesday, September 21, 2010 –

Chairman: Bernt Schnettler; discussants: Giampietro Gobo, Anne Ryen, Krzysztof Konecki, Ruth Wodak, Jörg Strübing, Jan Coetzee; interventions from the audience: Thomas Eberle, David Silverman, Maria Buscatto, Maggie Kusenbach, Reiner Keller, Tomas Martilla, Miguel Valles.

— *Snettler*: Welcome to our very last point in this conference. We are approaching the end and I suppose we are all tired. And, you can see on the schedule that this is the very last point and we will have dinner just outside the room at 7 pm, but before we can have dinner together, I would like to take up again the initial question from the first plenary discussion we had yesterday on the future of Qualitative Research in Europe. We will again discuss this topic with a couple of colleagues, friends and experts from different areas of Qualitative Research. We will have a total of eight colleagues presenting their point of view. And, most of them are sitting here physically. Two of them are not. We will have a video statement at the end. But, before we will listen and watch them, I would like to open the floor for discussion. Remembering that we were discussing yesterday several points in this debate and there are especially two points I would like to remind you of. At first, the relations of our Research Network to other disciplines, institutions or funding bodies in Europe, for instance EUROQUAL, the European Science

Foundation, and so on – and beyond with other world regions. In the preceding plenary, we have already heard voices from Latin America and Africa. We had some input from other world regions. And, we will think about our relations with other associations. With Anne Ryen and Jan Coetzee, we are also lucky having with us two voices of colleagues working in Africa and we also have other voices from America and Africa in the audience. Secondly, we are not able to resume what you were doing in all the thematic sessions. I haven't been able to listen to all of them. But, I think it has been worth the effort going into different thematic areas. We will not have the chance to sum it up for the debate. But, we can think about our relations with the substantial areas of research with Qualitative Methods. So, that will be two points I would like to suggest for this discussion. It is open for you (to the audience) and we will try to have it not like the speaker delivering their perspective, but like an opener for a wider discussion with the audience. We will start again with a short statement and then have a break. You (to the audience) will have the chance to ask questions and start the discussion and at the end we will have the video. Now, I would like to ask Giampietro Gobo to start with his presentation. We all know him very well, so I don't have to present him. He is one of the founders of this Network and he also has a certain view on what is going on in Italy. I would like to ask you to share your view with us.

— *Gobo*: I think that the future of Qualitative Research has some positive aspects and some negative ones. The positive, I think is a phe-

nomenon I saw in many countries. There are new generations of PhD-students that prefer Qualitative Methods. Many dissertations are based on Qualitative Methods, much more than on quantitative methods. And also, thinking in terms of generations, not so far in the future, some of those PhD-students will be professors and Qualitative Research, I think, will compose the majority; also, because the quantitative professors will be retired at a time [– *laughter from the audience* –]. So, I think it is sociological or institutional or socio-demographic evidence that Qualitative Research will be dominant in the future. But, it is not the merit of Qualitative Research alone. Here, I totally agree with what César Cisneros mentioned yesterday. It is also by reasons of some social conditions. Yesterday, David Silverman talked about the interview society. I think, there is interplay between society and methods. Society created a space for some methods and not for other methods. So, I ask: Who did the job for the Qualitative Methods? I think it was economy. If you think about Total Quality Management, which is an important invention that overcame, in the 1980s, the Fordist line of management. Quantitative research is closer to Fordism. And, Qualitative is closer to that view. And so, I think that the society and the economy make space for the emergence of Qualitative Research because these methods fit better to business and management than quantitative methods. This is the positive part. The negative part, I think, is the issue of the quality of Qualitative Research. As we know, that quantitative research is quite poor and we criticize these kinds of results. But, also the stan-

dard of Qualitative Research is quite low. And, I think at least for four reasons. One reason is that many times Qualitative Research produces very common-sense results. It is often criticized as very descriptive. Somebody said: "We are kind of journalists." The second reason I found is that there are no practical missions for Qualitative Research. There is no interest to be practical, just for doing research, but no interest to advice, to suggest or to change things. The third reason – this is my experience – I do not conceive any interest in improving Qualitative Research Methods. This is not the case of quantitative researcher. If I go to a quantitative research meeting, you can find many thematic sessions of how to improve the question, how to improve the response alternatives, how to do much better data analysis. In qualitative research sessions, you often find just a presentation of research-results, but no contributions to the improvement of our methods. And, I think that also there are few concerns about being systematic in our research, in following a precise research design. In my opinion, these are weaknesses of Qualitative Research. And for this reason I foresee that in the future it will disappear as Qualitative Research. First, it will be dominant, but then, maybe in the 50's or 60's, when Thomas will be still alive [– *laughter from the audience* –], probably quantitative research will take over again.

— *Snettler*: Thank you very much. I would like to suggest now Anne Ryen to continue her view on this. Anne is from the very upside of Europe, from the Nordic Countries she came here all the way from Norway. She is actually on our Board

and she is also the former president of this Research Network. So, please, Anne.

— *Ryen*: Thank you very much. Like most other people, I think I am right in the centre [– *laughter from the audience* –]. Let me comment on two topics. The first is talking from Norway to the global and the second is talking about Qualitative Research and also about the structure in which it is embedded. Let me first say something about the state of Qualitative Research in my country. In Norway, Qualitative Research is firmly based within and across disciplines and professions, and we tend to think of it as stages: better and better and more and more accepted. But, lately this assumption of linearity has been challenged. When you look at the quality, there are for sure trends towards a simplified version of Qualitative Research. And, in the last half a year, there have been two critical incidences as to legitimacy. The first was a TV program, called “Brainwash,” where especially Qualitative Research by sociologists and, in particular, postmodern feminists, really were harassed in a number of ways. I think, they were easy targets, also because they didn’t defend themselves very well and made extremely poor performances. The second critical incident, was a debate in a well respected weekly newspaper or rather a criticism of the impact of Qualitative Research on science starting with Woolgar and Latour’s *Laboratory Life: the Social Construction of Scientific Facts* from 1979. And, the losers from the “Brainwash” on television cluttered up the situation further by releasing a couple of books too fast. This made a legitimate space for conservative philosophers and for attacks from the

medical profession; though, for most of the researcher’s life will go on as before, back to daily life. But, we recently also had a couple of interesting policy documents or two White Papers. Report no. 20 from 2004-2005 called *Willingness to research (Vilje til forskning)* and report no. 30 from 2008-2009 called *Climate for research (Klima for forskning)*. In the second, there was a quest for more research on health issues, a classic sociological field. However, the report stressed professional practice and a researched based policy and opens up for further research by the professions. This opens for more Qualitative Research, but it also opens for more of the kind of Qualitative Research that we worry about when it comes to quality. However, when you look at the ranking of research and universities, this is mostly based on quantitative measurements like counting citations, number of publications and journal status. This ranking may make us assume that Qualitative Research does well, but Max Weber with his “iron cage” taught us to be skeptical to bureaucrats. It is important, then, that the second White Paper, *Climate for research*, stresses that universities need to build a context that allows not only for research, but also for doing research without constant interruptions, hence, bureaucratic work, et cetera. New Public Management in Norwegian universities makes research time into residual time because of an ever increase in number of bureaucrats demanding more meetings to attend, more forms to be filled, et cetera.

Let me now jump briefly to the international level. If you look at research from the global perspective, it is definitely embedded in a western

superstructure. We all work at universities that function very well. They support us, we have good PhD grants, good offices, things are fairly well organized and therefore we are in a privileged position. So I think, when we discuss Qualitative Research we also need to discuss what I call minds, markets and money. I do a lot of my research in the African context. I know we use terms like “Westernism” and “Europeanism” both as external and internal criticism, but I would very much like to put in another concept – “Americanism” to better describe the contemporary impact due to the new U.S. interest in so-called indigenous research. But, as an organization, ESA needs an organizational strategy. I’m a bit skeptical about trying to make one global organization because that might mean monopolizing the space. But, I’m very strongly in favor of collaborating across methods, places and spaces. For an organization like ours that is all European, it is essential to include more European countries. Europe is more than what we now manage to engage. What we have in ESA is fantastic, but we should always want more. We need to have more international partners or minds, but in particular new members from European countries not yet in ESA. One reason for the new interest in the so-called South is publishers’ noses for markets, and our field, QR, is a good example of “New...whatever” that sells well, but history has taught us that methodological colonialism lurks around the next corner. So, we do not need more export, but more critical thinking on how better to explore in contexts different from the classic western ones – in ESA preferably inside Europe.

— *Schnettler*: Thank you very much. The floor is open for questions, comments, discussions. Thomas Eberle, please.

— *Eberle*: It is just a question for Anne Ryen. I mean, you have a lot of experience with African researchers. How would you practically develop closer relations from our network?

— *Ryen*: I think the main question is, if ESA is the right organization for international sociology or for European sociology. In ISA RC33 Logic and Methodology four of us, Blasius, van Dijkum, Balbi and myself have made an agreement with Sage on a methodology series with non-British and non-American authors. So, one way for ESA is to strengthen ties with ISA. But, because I have been working in African countries for about twenty years, I do have an incredibly good network with African colleagues and universities for the simple reason that we collaborate.

— *Schnettler*: Further questions? Krzysztof Konecki.

— *Konecki*: I would like to support your idea of including more countries from Europe. We are a European Sociological Association. But, if we have a look at the origin of sociologists and methodologists that cooperate with our network, then Europe is divided. From eastern Europe, we almost have nobody here. We should start to think, how to get these people. For example, we have good colleagues in Estonia. But, so far, they haven’t joined our European institutions or organizations. We have to make an effort that

these other organizations from Poland or Russia take us seriously. Europe is divided into East and West not North and South.

— *Schnettler*: Ruth Wodak.

— *Wodak*: I would actually like to link to Giampietro's statement. Here, I see a big problem with future PhD-students. And, I'm not as positive as you are. I work in a British context and our important criteria apart from the RAE ranks are completion rates. Now, PhD-students get less and less time to do their dissertations. There is even talk about going away from three years to two years. Or, doing a Masters and a PhD in three years. Now, if you do that or if you try to do that and you do fieldwork in Qualitative Research and analysis in some hopefully good way, you will not succeed. It is totally impossible. Even if you do the fieldwork in the neighboring village and you don't have to travel somewhere. I see this as a big problem already now with my PhD-students. It leads to data-taking, which doesn't require so much fieldwork. You download newspapers, and so forth because that is very easily accessible. But, it goes away from the most interesting kind of data we like, which is everyday life in organizations and so forth. I think that this will lead to mainstreaming of topics, a mainstreaming of data and a lowering of standards in fieldwork.

— *Schnettler*: Thank you. There is a question from David Silverman.

— *Silverman*: (directed to Ruth Wodak) Did I get you correct, you are not really a sociologist? You are mainly working in linguistics. I'm just

wondering if other ways of extending the scope of what we do as a network should be to think about making ourselves a more welcoming environment to other people than sociologists. This is a real question, I don't know the answer. Should we have sociology in our title? These people are not only working in linguistics there are also people in the education business, some psychologists, people who are doing Qualitative Research using the kinds of approaches we do. Maybe we should make more of an effort to involve them in our work?

— *Schnettler*: OK. There is our next question from Miguel Valles.

— *Valles*: I just wanted to make my own remark to the oral presentation by Giampietro Gobo. Well, in relation to the references to journalism as a bad reference. I feel more open to that. I think we could learn the good things from journalists or journalism. I just remember the appendix in the work by C. Wright Mills *On Intellectual Craftsmanship*, please re-read that. It would be a good exercise to re-read those pages. Of course, he warned his colleagues that if they wrote like journalists, if they made themselves understandable to the wider public they could be taken as journalists and then loose (credibility in the academic world). So, my question is don't we, as the audience, don't you, as speakers on the table, think we could learn from them? One: make more understandable our results. Remember, that sociology opened up a field in a state of art where philosophers or philosophy was more dominant. And the other thing is: Don't you think that we can learn from jour-

nalists the way they archive, for instance visual material, or the way they archive what they produce in the mass media?

— *Schnettler*: So we take this as a suggestion and a different voice on our stance towards journalism. Now, please, Marie Buscatto.

— *Buscatto*: I want to address Giampietro Gobo again. You said that Qualitative Methodologists were not working much on the quality of their methods, so since you have been around quite a lot, could you maybe explain why you think we don't do it that often, that systematically and, maybe, how could we improve? These are three questions because I am wondering why. I totally agree with you – but why?

— *Gobo*: (To Valles) Very brief about journalism: you are right. But, on the other hand, you know that journalists usually write on topics they don't really know and often articles are superficial. Here, it is also the question of the adequate use of theory. They are just picking up theory from others. (To Buscatto) Now, about your issue of improvement: as a network, we try to set up a couple of groups, if you remember: focus groups, ethnography, discourse analysis and so one in order to produce improvement. But, often here are no real improvements. Usually, we are looking for new techniques and then we find out that in reality they are not that new. But, the techniques themselves are not improving in the way quantitative techniques are improving. I mean, the questionnaire, the data analysis in the last twenty, forty years they improved a lot. We are not improving.

— *Buscatto*: But why? How do you explain that?

— *Gobo*: That is because we prefer to not be systematic, that is something like "Western kind." We are not improving; we are just focusing on the topic. You have some exception, for example, conversation analysis. They improve their methodology a lot. Today, CA is quite different from the way it was done in the 1980s. They improve in the way they code the body movement. But again, this is just an exception. Usually, I don't see much improvement in ethnography, focus groups, and interviews. Maybe there are some new ways to analyze data, but there is no real improvement.

— *Schnettler*: OK. We are already in a hot debate, but I want to mention the improvement of something that in Germany had been called the discussion of the quality of Qualitative Research. We may discuss on that, if you like, but then we come back to the other issues. So now, I want to hand over to Jörg Strübing.

— *Strübing*: Yes, I'm just struggling on this issue, but in quantitative research: Is there really an improvement of methodologies? I would answer, no. But, what they do a lot is to improve their techniques. The use of new scales, new computer programs for new regression analysis models, and so on, and so on. They do a lot of that. But, there is no improvement of the general methodological model, which is pretty much fixed. So, there is not so much going on. It looks like more than it is, I would say. So, I would not be so much pessimistic in that point. On the other hand: What are we doing? Are we really

not improving our methods? I'm not so sure. At least in the field where I am looking at, you find quite a number of publications on new ways of looking at a certain method not technically. But, open it up in new perspectives, getting new sensibilities for the new ways of looking at data or at the field for instance. Of course, not all of this might be a great improvement. But, there is a lot of movement in our disciplines.

— *Schnettler*: OK. Thank you. We will get back to this discussion just in a couple of minutes. But, let me just give a chance to Jan Coetzee now. He has been on our Board for quite a long time. Jan is a professor of sociology at Rhodes University in Grahamstown, South Africa. We are especially happy that he is here and not only because Bayreuth University has close relations to Africa and he is the one who had undertaken the longest journey. So, please, share your view with us.

— *Coetzee*: Thank you, Bernt Schnettler. I hope to be able to pick up on two of the issues that had already been raised. But, let me first start by just changing our topic a little bit. Not really changing, but giving it just a slight move in a different direction. That is: we are talking about the future of Qualitative Methods within Europe and I would like to add to that. We have to talk about *new Qualitative Methods within a new Europe*. Not only new Qualitative Methods, but also a new Europe. We all know that a new Europe requires a new approach. We all have seen with the enlargement of the European Union that many of the former classifications have lost their meaning. There is a need

to look differently at the focus of our intention that is mainly Europe. I think amongst others, we can really say that the traditional distinction between first world and second world and third world has, for instance, changed dramatically. And, what we have today is not so much a focus on European society or societies, but a focus on different societies within a broader context and all of them in transition. And, I think that really is a very important challenge for Qualitative Methodology because these challenges of societies in transition are very specific. And, it ranges from the more micro-approach or the micro-level, where one is talking about the human condition, where the focus is on the well being and on the capabilities of people. Then, it moves to a slightly more middle level, or meso-dimension, where the focus is on power and organizations. And, it then, also will move to the domain of governance, of civil society and eventually even to the most macro-domains. And, that is the value domain where we will have to rethink and renegotiate issues around human rights, around democracy, around sustainability, and so on. So, what that brings into the discussion is that we will have to change, according to my view, the focus. Maybe, we will have to move away from just thinking about Qualitative Methodology or Qualitative Methods. One of the papers in yesterday's session dealt with Pierre Bourdieu's relational sociology. I don't know who was the presenter and I am sorry that I missed that one. But, I find in Bourdieu's work exceptionally valuable aspects of how to improve the quality of Qualitative Methodology. And one of those, one of the issues that will

probably be the most important when trying to improve the quality of Qualitative Methods will be to stop thinking about qualitative and quantitative as if they are two different categories. I think, we're practicing a discipline, the discipline of sociology, that has to move beyond the old categories. We should, rather, think relationally about these issues not longer or the micro- and macro-, or on the objective or subjective levels. These things are related. They are, as Bourdieu would say, they are genetically related. And, I think that one of my own concerns, if I look at papers presented (and I might even be contradicting David Silverman) is that there is often too little theoretical reflection when we do Qualitative Research. David Silverman said he wants to see more evidence, more data and less theory. Maybe I'm misquoting you, David, or taking your statement out of context, but I'm much more in favor of more theory and more theoretical grounding because that is the way in which we are going to improve the quality of Qualitative Methods.

— *Schnettler*: Thank you very much, Jan. So, now, I want to hand over the microphone to Jörg Strübing, a good old friend of mine. We have published together on methodology, but that is not the reason why you are here today [– *laughter from the audience* –]. He is a professor of sociology in Tübingen, where he is teaching methods. Moreover, he is president of the German Sociological Association's Research Network Qualitative Methods. And, in that function, I would like to ask you to give us some of your views on the future of Qualitative Research in Europe and your relation, the rela-

tion of your Research Network with our ESA Research Network.

— *Strübing*: Thank you very much for this very nice introduction. Well, a lot has already been said and there is so much more I would like to mention that it would not fit in this session. Let me just pick up some issues, maybe out of context. One is that we are the ESA here. So, that is a sociological association and we are talking about Qualitative Methods. And, Jan Coetzee just mentioned we should overcome the distinction between quantitative and Qualitative Research and things like that. But, we should also have a look over the borders of our discipline, I would say. And, if we look at the situation of Qualitative Methods in Germany, in Europe, wherever, we should also look at our neighboring disciplines like pedagogical research, like educational research or psychology research for that matter. Sometimes we are complaining about the situation of Qualitative Methods, of having too few chairs at the universities, not enough funding, problems with reviews and things like that. But, in other disciplines, for instance, psychology in Germany, the situation is even worse. Here, Qualitative Methods do only exist in a niche. I do some work in summer schools for political scientists. And, if you look at them, you will find a very small amount of Qualitative Methods there and a broad set of sophisticated instruments of quantitative research. You'll find a lot of normative theory due to the specifics of that discipline and, as a consequence, very few Qualitative Research. So, there is a lot of work to do in terms of founding a broader base for our methods and our meth-

odological interest. I think cooperation should also go in that direction. I have not so much to say (to Schnettler) about the link between the German section and the European section, because we are close friends as you all know now and we often have beer together, as often as possible, so the link is just perfect [*– laughter from the audience –*]. Another thing is if we talk about improvement and how to go on, one discussion that comes up again and again is the discussion about quality criteria. And, this is a very tricky discussion. We have to have it, again and again. Solutions are still far away, I would say. Just to mention a few points here: quality criteria still are an issue that comes from conventions used in quantitative methods. And, they have a more closed approach in which it is easier to define a set of criteria that works more or less – they are not perfect, but it works more or less for most of what they do. We are not the Qualitative Methods. We wouldn't believe that. We are people who do a certain type of Qualitative Research, each of us: discourse analysis, grounded theory, hermeneutics, and what so ever. So, this does not allow for one set of quality criteria. And, there is a lot of work to do. On the other hand, we have to, kind of, negotiate among us and among the others about who gets the grants, who gets the funding, whose article is reviewed positively and published, and so on. Therefore, quality criteria are a kind of a media of exchange, you know? That's an important and maybe underestimated issue because we all feel that we can very well estimate the quality of our and our peer's work in our special method. But, that's not the only problem. It has kind of

an exchange character, that's important here. So, maybe I stop here and you include the others.

— *Schnettler*: Yes. Thank you very much. We will have some more beers together, but we also thank the German Section of Qualitative Methods for its contribution to make this conference possible. So, that could be a model of cooperation. The floor is open again. Questions, comments? David Silverman!

— *Silverman*: Both of you, Jan Coetzee and Jörg Strübing, mentioned the issue of theory. I don't fundamentally disagree with you. I think we always need both theory and evidence, clearly, and it is more the question of balance between the two. In some cases, you know, work is clearly under-theorized and purely descriptive and, therefore, needs more theoretical thought. But, there is a great deal of variation between these different societies and different disciplines, as we know. I am maybe making too large judgments here, but from what I read of, for instance, of some German Qualitative Research and some French Qualitative Research – well, Marie (Buscetto) is a significant exception – it seems to be heavily over-theorized. And, a great deal of U.S. works too, especially in the post-modern direction. And, the sad consequence is that you see PhD-students endlessly reinventing the wheel with their PhD Thesis. So, they spend chapter after chapter of theoretical justification, for what they do, without hardly leaving any space for what they are actually doing, on the contribution that they could make. So, it is never a sharp case. Sometimes we swing too much toward theorization and sometimes we swing too much

towards under-theorization. It is always a question of balance.

— *Schnettler*: Who wants to answer that?

— *Coetzee*: I think what we have to be careful about is to make a distinction between fact and theory. And, maybe my comment was more aimed at the fact that there is a need for factual information that can provide a basis for our own Qualitative Research. What I mean by that is, and that brings me back to my relational example, my French example of Bourdieu (but I could also have used as an example Margaret Archer's ideas about "analytical dualism"), whatever the theoretical example may be, I think we have a need for substantial, factual, theoretical material that can provide a basis for our own qualitative assessment. And, that's where I was moving towards when I said that these two issues – the level of structural elements and the one of constructivist elements – that these two should be brought closely together and that they should not be seen as separate. They require a double reading by us as sociologists and we need to incorporate both of those dimensions. Maybe that for the moment.

— *Schnettler*: Maggie Kusenbach.

— *Kusenbach*: I want to go back to something Jörg Strübing said and that I find interesting. I very much agree. You said that we all know it when we see good work. You know, we seem to have this implicit knowledge of what is good Qualitative Research. So, why couldn't we try to formulate the criteria by which we come to

these conclusions? What is your further thinking of how we could explicate that knowledge that we all somehow seem to have?

— *Strübing*: Yes, but I made the point a little bit differently. I said that we have a pretty good feeling about the quality of our work and of our peers work in our special method. That means, if I read Grounded Theory studies, I can easily find out whether it is well done or not. I wouldn't be so sure in objective hermeneutics or in discourse analysis or whatever. And, I feel that finding criteria for these methods would be different in some points and if we go to the very, very broad picture then it is something like adequateness or something like that. But, that's kind of how to work with it. But, that's not a good way of doing quality criteria. We had this conference not so long ago in our German section just on behalf of this subject. And, there were presenters who strove to come to terms with this criteria thing by proposing one big criterion. But, what would we do with it? And, how to, kind of, prove it? That's the problem. And, we need to differentiate that from the different methods. So, our gut feeling is, it might be a good starting-point, but it wouldn't work as a bridge to other methods.

— *Schnettler*: So, further questions? Comments? Reiner Keller.

— *Keller*: Just to add some observations in teaching Qualitative Methods. I talked with Miguel (Valles) during lunch. I think there is one problem: the kind of standardization of Qualitative Research via all kinds of small textbooks. I contribute myself to this problem [*– laughter from the*

audience –]. I tried to do it in a way that allows own thinking. During university studies, students are very – they like this because they like the great standardization because, then, they have the security to do work, which seems to be scientific, sociological because they are following step-by-step. And, we talked about that they expect us to give all the literature on the topic at the beginning of the university year. And, if you ask them to read two more pages, they will ask you if it is really necessary because they have to cope with all different kinds of struggles. So, I think that kind of standardization is a problem. On the opposite side, I think, there is a kind of insecurity, which is produced by the large amount of qualitative literature. Let me give you one example. Very often, I use the book written by Uwe Flick. Inside you can find twenty different interview-types. One is called *standardized* the next *quite standardized, more or less standardized*, and so on – [– *scattered laughter from the audience* –] and the students say: “I really don’t know what to do. I escape, I’m not able to decide which one corresponds.” These are the two structural problems. On the one hand, I think it is good that we are producing a large amount of output. On the other hand, there is a production of standardization. So, I really fear that the students get lost between these both. I think there is much work to do to get them engaged in doing and thinking and using, but not being subjected to it, and to have their own development.

— *Strübing*: I just gave a seminar on interviews and of course we started off with the Flick textbook where a number of interviews are listed

in a table. And then, I asked my students to let the air out of this table and to look what are really different types of interviews in that table. And, it came out that there are three or four different types and that’s easy to manage. And, all the rest is fashionable naming. And, we should be very careful with fashionable naming in our discussion, in our teaching. We have a number of severe differences in our different Qualitative Methods. They go back to epistemological assumptions and theoretical grounding and we have a lot of theoretical grounding of methods by the way. Nevertheless, sometimes there is a need to give new names to old things. In my area there is a new label called “constructivist grounded theory.” Grounded theory has always been constructivist, if you say so. And, there is no need to make new “additional methods.” We should be aware of this because that’s really confusing for students.

— *Schnettler*: So, there is quite a lot of what can be called side-effects of the success of Qualitative Methods. Anne Ryen, you wanted to comment on this, please.

— *Ryen*: I want to tell you stories from the North [– *laughter from the audience* –].

— *Schnettler*: So, you know, we have to have lunch at seven [– *laughter from the audience* –].

— *Ryen*: That’s OK, I am acquainted with Swahili time...I’m a member of a Norwegian committee were we are looking into the bachelor courses in methodology for students in economics where they want to standardize the

whole national level. And, I don’t know what to say. A most prominent professor of economics on this committee insists that the only method bachelor students of economics need to know is the interview. So, we are having a fight there. Another observation that is problematic to Qualitative Methodology is a new best-seller market for methodology books with half on qualitative methodology and half on quantitative. Fifty-fifty. Quick and dirty, mostly written by quantitative researchers who are rather unfamiliar with what has taken place in Qualitative Research in the last decades. I recognise this “resistance” to Qualitative Research, both in economics and political science. The paradox is that the majority of their students (at least in my country) use Qualitative Research. I have had excellent students who have done qualitative projects for private businesses and it does help to promote Qualitative Research when the businesses come back and say: “Do you have more students like that?” So, I think we also need a handle on the market.

— *Schnettler*: Is there any other question or comments at this point? That’s not the case. So, I am very happy that Ruth Wodak is with us. She has not only been for long years on the Executive Board of Research Network. She is a distinguished professor in discourse studies at Lancaster University and she is originally from Vienna, so you are already living kind of a “European life.” She is also the president of the European Linguistic Society. Maybe you can open the discussion for the relation with other disciplines?

— *Wodak*: Thank you, Bernt. I’m honored to be invited here on the territory of sociologists [– *audience: scattered laughter* –]. And, I must say to my neighbor (to Strübing), that discourse analysis is both a theory and a method, which already opens the field of interdisciplinarity. And, I would like to talk about, apart from interdisciplinary, two other brief points. One related to funding agencies, from the British and the Austrian perspectives. And, also something about application and relevance, because I think that’s important. But, first to the question of interdisciplinarity. Being a discourse analyst means, that you are inherently interdisciplinary because I’m not regarded as a “real linguist” and I’m obviously also not a “real sociologist” or whatever. So, we have always been working in between the fields. And, moreover, discourse has become an inflationary term. Everybody does discourse analysis of some kind. Thus, I think it’s very important to really do interdisciplinary research. And, that would mean: working together with sociologists, political scientists, historians; but also people from the management school and others. This implies, that we learn what they do, but they also learn what we do. My experience is that people say: “Oh it’s great that you know how to deal with texts. But, you know, it’s much too difficult and why should we learn all this strange terminology?” not thinking, that, of course, they also use terminology that is strange, but this time – for us, obviously not for them. So, I think to cross fields we have to be very curious and very open and have a lot of respect for other fields you are entering. Many people are very frightened. They perceive this

as a threat to the discipline. You might take something away, if you enter in this other field. My experience is, instead, extraordinary fruitful and brings a lot of innovation because my firm belief is: only interdisciplinary research is really innovative. It opens up new perspectives, which you don't get if you always stay in your own field. So, having said that, my own experiences, which fields can one cross over to relate to sociology and anthropology because they all do fieldwork, use interviews or do ethnography and so forth? They might do a different kind of ethnography, but it's, of course, also participant observation in many ways, but also, and this is my most recent British experience, management studies. I always thought that management scholars would be primarily quantitatively oriented, but there has really been a turn to the qualitative. They all come and say: "How do you do this qualitative stuff?" "What do we do with discourse?" and "Tell us how to analyse these data." So, I think this is really a new field, which has opened up enormously. I teach qualitative methods and discourse analysis for PhDs across disciplines in the faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Lancaster. And, they all want to know what to do with their data. So, I think there is an enormous potential there for us to learn and vice versa. We can link well to these fields. I think political scientists might be the most closed group. There is a big and strong American quantitative paradigm there. But, otherwise, there is a lot of interest and we should – you probably use the mailing list – open up our invitations. I send around the call of papers of this network to all the other

networks I know and people also come. So, there is a lot of potential for fruitful learning from each other. But, you have to be willing to do that. It's stressful, it takes time, it's not easy to learn something new which we are not used to. Very briefly a word about funding agencies, both my experience with European agencies and those in the United Kingdom. We're expecting huge cuts now anyway and Qualitative Research costs a lot, ethnography costs. It takes time, you need transcriptions, and the funding is stopping. People don't understand what the relevance of this Qualitative Research is. And, that relates to my third point, the relevance. In the United Kingdom, we are expected now to illustrate the so-called impact of our research. That has become the new magic word that has to be measurable for the next national evaluation, we have to show who has taken our research and applied it, where, how and with which effect. Like a causal chain – which is of course impossible. But, we have to do that. We have to be able to explain the relevance of what we're doing. And, it's always challenged. "What is a case study?" "How can you generalize it?" "What does it mean?" "Who is going to apply this?" We have pages and pages we have to write about the impact. Therefore, one huge challenge for the future of Qualitative Research will be to simplify what we do and to work together with others, to choose topics which are relevant. Otherwise, the funding will stop. On a European level, it is very difficult to get purely qualitative projects: almost no purely qualitative projects get funded. So, that is my quite negative view.

— *Schnettler*: Thank you very much. I don't think it's negative at all. It's a call to think also about the structural and the financial aspect about the future of Qualitative Research. The floor is open again. Please, give me your questions and comments.

— *Guest* (Thomas Martilla): Thank you very much. I really liked your ideas about interdisciplinary work because this is something that I think is very important especially in the field of methods. One thing that you were saying is that for interdisciplinary work it's sometimes more important to one to learn than one to teach. I think, this might be an issue. We always want to go out, and want to teach our methods and they are underdeveloped in this or that area. So, it would be more fruitful to say: "You are doing this and that and I want to learn from you." And I think, this also opens the door that others ask questions to us.

— *Wodak*: If I may answer this?

— *Schnettler*: Yes.

— *Wodak*: You understood that completely in the right way. My experience is that one has to learn from each other. And, in one interdisciplinary project, which I belonged to, the sociologists gave lectures to us as non-sociologists, as historians and discourse analysts, and we all decided to read texts from each other to establish a common base of knowledge and of terminology. I'm convinced that you have to learn how to speak to each other. It is a different language, it is a different perspective, a different *Weltan-*

schauung. And, that is why interdisciplinary research takes more time, than the conventional one which one has always done. My experiences are that it's also very much more innovative once you cross that first threshold.

— *Schnettler*: Further questions? You are tired or waiting for dinner? What we can do at this point, if there are no other questions and comments: I would like to give the change to those who are not here to send us their message. I am not sure if that will work. I received this file just last night and was told it will work. Katja Mruck and Günter Mey can't be with us because they are giving a workshop on Grounded Theory Methodology in another place in Germany and the train connections do not allow them to be here, because we changed the conference schedule. So, I am really indebted to them. They made a video recording of their contribution and I don't think that I have to introduce them. Just remember the project they are pushing forward the *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, FQS, is very intriguing because it is actually connecting worlds if you are looking at those who are reading these articles, which are online. They are being distributed in the German speaking world, not only in the Anglo-Saxon academia, but also in the Spanish speaking world. There is a kind of growing network, a virtual and a social network, which is playing a very important role in the establishment of Qualitative Research. So, I would like to give them the chance to address their topics. So, please listen to them. It's maybe a kind of a propaganda video [– *laughter from the audience* –].



Image 2. Katja Mruck and Günter Mey.

Video: Statement by Katja Mruck and Günter Mey, FQS

[The video can be accessed at: <http://www.qualitative-forschung.de/FQS/FQS/>.]

— *Mruck*: Hi, I'm Katja.

— *Mey*: And I am Günter. And, we, together with many others, are FQS (<http://www.qualitative-research.net>).

— *Mruck*: And, first of all, thanks to Bernt for inviting us.

— *Mey*: And, we hope that you are all having a wonderful time tonight.

— *Mruck*: OK, we need to be quick. Five to seven minutes is really challenging. Let's try to respond to two questions. So, the first one, my dear Günter, is: How can we improve cooperation in the field of Qualitative Research?

— *Mey*: I think most crucial is the kind of shared identity as Qualitative Researchers, and for this we would need shared places, virtually and in real life. These places should be open for all Qualitative Methods, not only what seems to be qualitative mainstream, but also exotics. And, it should help to bring together researchers from different disciplines and different countries. This would support to see what happens beyond my own perspective and would help to find new ways of thinking and researching.

— *Mruck*: This, exactly, has been our main idea for starting FQS; and, after working on FQS for more than ten years, we know how difficult it is to fulfill such claims. We were interested in making visible the rich stock of knowledge in different disciplines, but making things visible is just one step. Knowledge is used, but exchange not really takes place. For example, the possibility to comment on articles has only been used four or five times, although, we published more than 1.300 articles since 2000 and do have more than 13.000 readers currently. We were interested in making the stock of knowledge available to colleagues all over the world, but we still have the language problem: with an enormous effort we build up resources for review and copy editing on a voluntary base in German, English and Spanish – César knows what I am talking about – and we do need English to communicate over national boundaries. Every year, I do have a mail exchange with Norman Denzin, for example, on how to share resources instead of continuously building up new ones. Instead, we receive invitations to link to someone's site as a collaborating site. But, what we would need in my opinion is a truly shared building and maintaining of infrastructure instead of another next international or European institute.

— *Mey*: This, nevertheless means, that we have to continue, because we already see an increasing number of submissions from all over the world. The increasing relevance of Qualitative Research in different research fields and sub-disciplinary areas and the in-

creasing relevance of selected research styles and methods, and FQS helps to bring forward some of them. This is obvious for discourse analysis.

— *Mruck*: And, for sure, it is not sufficient to have just separated resources. This, in a way, touches the second questions: How can we improve the relations of European Qualitative Research with Qualitative Research in other world regions?

— *Mey*: One important step might be to provide access to all open access journals from one starting point. Think of FQS...

— *Mruck*: The *Qualitative Sociological Review* (<http://www.qualitativesociologyreview.org/>).

— *Mey*: The *Qualitative Report* (<http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/>) and the *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* (<http://ejournals.library.ualberta.ca/index.php/IJQM/>), to mention just some of them. And, additionally shared data bases for review and copy-editing ... And, maybe in the future one or the other might be interested in your "merge them all" – idea.

— *Mruck*: Yes, I would indeed love to bring together as many relevant actors as possible. Who knows – one day FQS and the *Qualitative Sociology Review* might merge and invite the American friends to join our efforts in the next step. And, for sure, we do not only need shared web resources like open access journals, but also real places to meet, discuss and build up shared identities across disciplinary areas, inspiring each other. We both are quali-

tative psychologists talking to qualitative sociologists currently.

— *Mey*: Indeed, that it is possible to bring together very different actors is one lesson learned from the “Berlin Meeting on Qualitative Research Methods” (Berliner Methodentreffen Qualitative Forschung, <http://www.berliner-methodentreffen.de>) we are celebrating annually since 2005. Many important representatives of Qualitative Methods in German-speaking countries and from different disciplines, working on data and their methods, together with 400 participants. Two days of Qualitative Research at its best, as we do know from the evaluation.

— *Mruck*: So, those interested in building up shared online infrastructures might also start to think about expanding such a German meeting and similar meetings already existing to a European meeting.

— *Mey*: Time is over, unfortunately, so these have been just a few ideas and maybe we will meet others interested next time in real life.

— *Mruck*: And, we do wish you all wonderful discussions and inspiring insights! Bye, bye.

— *Visual citation*: “If you have an apple and I have an apple and we exchange these apples then you and I will still have one apple. But, if you have an idea and I have an idea and we exchange these ideas, then each of us will have two ideas” (George Bernard Shaw).

— *Schnettler*: So, thank you very much. There will be more than apples afterwards [– *laugh-*

ter from the audience –]. But, as you have seen, there is one thing we have forgotten. That is the importance of technology. I will promise to put this on the net, so you can watch the video without these technical problems.

— *Silverman*: Can you also promise to remove the background music? [– *laughter from the audience* –].

— *Schnettler*: I suppose I’m not allowed to do that [– *some laughter from the audience* –]. So, I think we shouldn’t go on discussing. So, please Krzysztof Konecki, give us your last words to this conference before we have dinner together.

— *Konecki*: OK, we are approaching the end of the conference and I am very happy that it is almost finished [– *laughter from the audience* –]. I would like to thank all participants for coming here and also for joining our discussions. I think that the future prospects of Qualitative Methodology are bright, even if the quality is bad [– *laughter from the audience* –]. But, we discuss this quality. Seriously, I really think in Grounded Theory it is improving [– *laughter from the audience* –]. We have discourse analysis, as well as conversation analysis or Grounded Theory that is better than before. And, I would like to add something else about the conference: I think that we should come back to the title of the conference, to discuss the connections with the substance of research and variants. Many words were said about crossing the boundaries and connecting different disciplines. I think that such a term like “Quali-

tative Social Sciences” could be used to cover geographic Qualitative Research, pedagogical, and in economy, in management. And, I think that this is the term that could cover and give the input to a strong development of Qualitative Methods in the future for all the different disciplines. And, we can have discussions between different disciplines and look for the specificity of using the methods, in sociology, or in psychology, and maybe we can find something inspiring for each discipline. And, what emerged during this discussion, I think the problem of quality of Qualitative Research, it was not the problem of our conference, but I think it is an important issue for all of us and of how to evaluate PhD Theses. I could ask then: who does evaluate PhD Theses if we do not have criteria to evaluate? We professors – we know what is done now or not. But, probably that is not enough to get credibility from the students. My own experience is that it is sometimes difficult to explain to students why this is not a good qualitative report because we

are not always aware of our own criteria. Here, we have to work on. This was my last sentence about the discussion, topics, substantive things. Thank you, Bernt, and thanks to your team [– *audience applauds* –]. You did a marvelous job and we all enjoyed it a lot. Not only these exciting discussions, but also the evenings. Thank you very much. I would also like to thank the invited speakers, the organizers of the thematic sessions and to the plenary speakers. You did a great job, a lot of work. We are tired, but we are happy. And, I close the meeting [*president rings Norwegian bell*].

— *Schnettler*: Thank you for coming [– *audience applauds* –]. We really enjoyed it and I have to say it again: It had been a brilliant team behind the scenes. More than eight people were working on this, so thanks to them [– *audience applauds frenetically* –].

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 • Schnettler, Bernt and Bernd Rebstein. 2012. “International Perspectives on the Future of Qualitative
 • Research in Europe.” *Qualitative Sociology Review* 8(2):164-205. Retrieved Month, Year (http://www.qualitativesociologyreview.org/ENG/archive_eng.php).
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