

The Bremen Workshop

Qualitative Longitudinal Research and Qualitative Resources in Europe: Mapping the Field and Exploring Strategies for Development

*Friday 24th April 2009
University of Bremen, Germany.*

Call for Participation

We are pleased to announce a one-day international workshop that will bring together researchers and archivists with an interest in the re-use of qualitative data, and in the development of qualitative longitudinal (QLL) research and data resources across Europe. The workshop is being organized as a collaborative venture between the UK Data Archive, the Timescapes Qualitative Longitudinal Study and Archive, and the Bremen Life Course Archive, with support from the Council for European Social Science Data Archives (CESSDA).

Funded places to attend the workshop (including travel, meals and two nights accommodation on 23rd and 24th of April) are available for European researchers and/or archivists who are interested in developing Qualitative and Qualitative Longitudinal resources in their respective countries. Presenters will produce a short paper (a country report) outlining existing resources and infrastructure in their countries, and will contribute to discussions on the strategic development of Qualitative Archiving and Qualitative Longitudinal Research across Europe. A limited number of self funding places will also be available. Details of the workshop and how to apply for places at the event are set out below.

Background

CESSDA has a generic remit to develop social science data infrastructure in Europe, although to date much of this work has been oriented toward Quantitative data and resources. Part of the challenge in broadening the scope of CESSDA is that the ethos of sharing Qualitative data has been slow to develop, while funding for Qualitative Longitudinal (QLL) research and the establishment of QLL datasets for re-use are at an early stage of development. Provision for the collation, organization and re-use of these data is therefore variable across much of Europe.

In the UK and elsewhere varied models for facilitating Qualitative and QLL data sharing are developing e.g. the generic services provided through the UK Data Archive (Essex), and the more specialist historical and themes resources available through the Life Course Archive (Bremen); the Mass Observation Archive (Sussex); and the 'Timescapes' Qualitative Longitudinal Archive (Leeds). However these developments are occurring in piecemeal fashion, with little provision for sharing skills or good practice or enhancing collaboration between researchers and archivists across the European community. This workshop is a first step towards developing such provision. The workshop programme is still to be finalized, but the morning session will involve tabling and discussing the country reports, while the afternoon session will explore a range of strategic questions as set out below. The main output from the workshop will be a report which maps out existing resources and infrastructure across Europe and makes recommendations for strategic developments and future collaborations.

The aims of the workshop are to:

- Map out Qualitative longitudinal and generic qualitative datasets and resources across Europe, whether held in formal archives, research centres or individual collections
- Document how existing datasets are managed, organised and used
- Explore different models for archiving and sharing data, including the models offered by generic and specialist qualitative archives
- Identify gaps in existing infrastructure
- Explore potential strategies for filling these gaps, strengthening links between researchers and archivists, and enhancing data sharing and re-use

- Develop plans for a European network of Qualitative and Quantitative Longitudinal Data Collections and Qualitative Longitudinal Researchers and Projects, co-ordinated through databases, JISC lists and catalogues of holdings
- Explore the possibilities for a European-based Timescapes Study and Archive, that will parallel Timescapes UK

The workshop will address a range of strategic questions:

- *How effective are existing models of archiving?*
- *Should existing infrastructure (for quantitative resources) be augmented to include qualitative and QLL data or should separate infrastructure be developed?*
- *What impact might the drive towards mixed methods research, e.g. in Germany and the UK, have on such decisions?*
- *Should resources be centralized or devolved? Is there a place for a loose confederation of projects and resources? What are the funding implications?*
- *Are generic archives the way forward or specialist archives that are thematically driven? Or a mixture of the two? What are the pros and cons of a mixed economy of archiving linked to specific research endeavours and different kinds of data?*
- *What is the potential for forging closer collaborations between researchers and archivists as the joint curators of research data and joint catalysts for sharing and re-use?*
- *What strategies are needed to support Qualitative longitudinal research within Europe, to complement and augment Quantitative Longitudinal resources?*
- *Given the strategic questions posed above, how might such research and resources best be organized?*
- *What is the potential to develop comparative QLL studies across Europe?*

Applications for funded places at the workshop are invited from researchers and/or archivists to co-ordinate and produce a map of research, data and resources in their respective countries, in CESSDA (Austria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and UK) and elsewhere in Europe. Joint applications from archivists and researchers are particularly welcome. Alternatively, if you would like to contribute material for a country report, please contact us. Early applications are advised as places at the workshop will be limited to 40 Participants. A small number of self funding places will also be available.

Please submit an abstract by email attachment to Linda Fox at l.j.fox@leeds.ac.uk before 4th December 2008.

The organizing team: Professor Bren Neale, Dr Libby Bishop, Dr Louise Corti, Dr Andreas Witzel, Professor Nigel Fielding, Professor Kevin Schurer and Linda Fox.

References:

Opitz and Witzel the concept and Architecture of the Bremen life course archive FQS 6 (2) Art. 37 May 2006.

Sheridan, D. (1996) *Damned Anecdotes and Dangerous confabulations: Mass Observation as life history. Mass Observation occasional paper, no. 7, University of Sussex library. UKDA.*

Websites:

Timescapes: <http://www.timescapes.leeds.ac.uk/>

Archive for Life Course Research:

http://www.lebenslaufarchiv.uni-bremen.de/index.php?id=567&no_cache=1&L=1

CESSDA: <http://www.cessda.org/>