

FQS—From the Shop floor

Katja Mruck & Günter Mey

Key words:

qualitative research, book reviews, social sciences, Internet, qualitative-research.net, gateway, research communication, information, online-publishing, FQS

Abstract: Two years of *FQS*—this means two years of intense publishing and networking efforts in the field of qualitative research, using various Internet services. In this article, we will take stock of some of the foundations and cornerstones of this work, which resulted in the current project, allowing us to re-organize *FQS* to become an international and interdisciplinary online gateway for qualitative research and social sciences' Internet use—funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft.

Additionally, we will provide readers with a first overview of this new, fifth "Special Issue: *FQS* Reviews." We also provide information about some innovations accomplished within this Issue and some expectations for the future are described as well.

Table of Contents

- [1. Two Years of *FQS*](#)
- [2. From an Online Journal to an Online Gateway](#)
- [3. "Total time on error: 3 weeks, 2 days, 6 hours, 37 minutes, 15 seconds"](#)
- [4. *FQS*: The Actual State, the Next Steps](#)
- [5. *FQS* Reviews—About this Issue](#)

[Acknowledgment](#)

[References](#)

[Authors](#)

[Citation](#)

1. Two Years of *FQS*

It has been a long, sometimes difficult, sometimes joyful, and most times instructive road—accompanied by a lot of work—from our first thinking about the creation of an online journal for qualitative research to this fifth issue, just made available to our readers. [1]

From the very beginning, we have had consensus about some central conceptual cornerstones of such a journal. First of these had been

- a. *Interdisciplinarity*: qualitative research, a handling of "data" rather close to everyday talk, everyday experiences and everyday life, is genuinely an inter- and multi-disciplinary project, even if closer contacts between researchers from different disciplines often are limited, for example, to sharing some basic literature, to co-operation between two persons or to sporadic meetings of research groups such as those within scientific associations. So one main concern had been to use the opening issues of *FQS* to introduce some traditional stances, current research methodologies, empirical emphases and disciplinary perspectives, and in this way to offer some pre-conditions for

- researchers from different disciplines to contact each other about *directly*—e.g. by comments on the published texts through using our discussion board. [2]
- b. *Internationality*: Although, unfortunately, qualitative research in most countries and disciplines still seems to be limited to a rather marginal role in respect to the mostly quantitatively oriented mainstream, qualitative research, nevertheless, often is sharing some tacit fixations with this mainstream. If you take, for example, a look at international acceptance and reputation, at the presence or absence of researchers in important discourses etc., the core of qualitative research seems to be also dominated by the white male, English-language and, more concretely, the North American¹ domain. Obviously, there is at least one more gender, many more colors, languages and many (national) "Gestalten." Another important idea has been to use FQS to introduce the own perspective to others, vice versa to learn from and about the "Other/Strange," and eventually also to initiate closer contact, familiarity, and exchange within this heterogeneity. [3]
- c. *The Internet as a resource for social scientists*: This meant—besides our wish to use the Internet for systematically promoting the interdisciplinary/international distribution and networking of qualitative research—first of all, mainly theoretical considerations about the possibility that the fast publishing and the flexible use of space could lead to important changes in comparison to the contents, design, and ways of distributing/accessing traditional print media. (For a more detailed description of FQS' beginnings see MRUCK 2000a.) [4]

Trying to evaluate the state of our work from today's perspective, our idea to support the interdisciplinary character of qualitative research turned out quite well: there have been five FQS-Issues; this means about 170 contributions from authors belonging to more than twenty different disciplines, although there are obviously some main focuses within psychology, sociology, educational sciences and anthropology/ethnology.² One issue, introducing [German Qualitative Psychology](#) to an international audience, was published in June 2000; in the Autumn of 2001, an issue about [Cultural Sciences](#) will follow, and in Spring of 2002, an issue about [Criminology](#) is planned. [5]

Also, some first steps to establish FQS as an *international project* have been successful: More than 110 Texts are available online in the German language and an equal amount in the English language. This represents an enormous project, not only quantitatively—to which authors from about 25 countries contributed (again, with focuses especially in Germany, followed by Great Britain, the United States, Canada, Austria and Switzerland)—, but also from many authors who come from countries which up to that point had been more or less

1 This is especially obvious if one takes a look at "The Handbook of Qualitative Research" edited by Norman K. DENZIN and Yvonna S. LINCOLN, published in its second edition in 2000, and because of many good reasons an authoritative source for qualitative researchers: More than 75% of all authors, contributing to this edition, came from North American universities.

2 These disciplinary focuses we are sharing with the before mentioned handbook from DENZIN and LINCOLN, though with a partly different weighting: About 70% of the authors who participated in the handbook belong to the disciplines just mentioned.

blank areas on our personal maps of qualitative research. In the meantime, about 1,200 persons subscribed to the newsletter that we are using once a month to inform readers about *FQS*. These subscribers come from Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brasilia, Canada, Chile, China, Columbia, Costa Rica, Denmark, the Dominican Republic, Egypt, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Greenland, Great Britain, Guatemala, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Iran, Island, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Lebanon, Lithuania, Malaysia, Mauritius, Mexico, Nepal, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Puerto Rico, Russia, Slovenia, South African Republic, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Turkey, Uruguay, the USA, Venezuela and Zambia. Additionally, some readers have joined us from nations with a very poor Internet presence or whose geographical details are less known and who are using the big international mail services to contact us. We mention our subscribers' national identities in such a detailed way not only because we are proud that so many people from so many countries are using and appreciating our work—for sure we are proud about this, and we continue to enjoy all the feedback that reaches us at *FQS*. This feedback has, from the very beginning, encouraged us to carry on, even through some very difficult phases of our work! Another more important reason to list the countries is our respect for and surprise at the Internet medium itself and its enormous potential for inter-relating (particularly for the field of qualitative researchers). This represents a potential we have just started to recognize and begin to tap in just some of its features so far. [6]

In addition, we have noticed, for some months now, an increasing number of persons contacting us or subscribing to the *FQS* newsletter who do not belong to the more narrow field of academic research, but are working in other fields, for example, in social or community institutions or within commercial (research) institutes. Somewhat more sobering is the *active* participation of female users: Though about 45% of the subscribers of our newsletter are female, and although the number of female authors participating in two issues—namely *FQS* 1(1) and *FQS* 1(3)—has been 42% and 46% respectively, in *FQS* 1(2) only 32% participated and in *FQS* 2(1) only 23%; in the current issue also only 25% of contributors of articles were women. Similarly, our Editorial Board is over-represented with more than 75% being male colleagues.³ Though we are familiar with such gender imbalances elsewhere from our everyday life in society as well as in our work as scientists, clearly, this is not how we like things to be. To support additional ways of participation for groups yet underrepresented and to correct these inequities by a careful and encouraging policy will be one of our main tasks for the near future. [7]

3 Some comparisons: While about 70% male compared to about 30% female authors contributed to the handbook of DENZIN and LINCOLN, this relation is even more worse if German handbooks are compared: Only about 1/5 female authors participated in "Biographische Methoden in den Humanwissenschaften" (edited by Gerd JÜTTEMANN & Hans THOMAE 1999), the same proves true for "Qualitative Forschung. Ein Handbuch", edited by Uwe FLICK, Ernst von KARDORFF and Ines STEINKE (2000). An obviously positive exception compared to this gender imbalance is the "Handbuch erziehungswissenschaftliche Biographieforschung" (edited by Heinz-Hermann KRÜGER and Winfried MAROTZKI 1999) cause the share of female authors is nearly 40%.

All in all, the above summary shows in a very impressive way the important role the Internet can play as a networking and supportive medium and to an extent that we had never been able to imagine in the beginning of our work. So from our own national perspective and coming from a psychology background, we ourselves were able to get in close contact with sociologists, educational scientists, historians and many other colleagues from different disciplines. The same proves true for current or planned cooperation with institutions or with single qualitative researchers in other countries (this cooperation will in the future also affect the inner organization of *FQS*, see [Section 4](#)). It seems also worth mentioning that these contacts are not limited to textual material or to virtual communication. Even while publishing the first issue in January 2000, it was "[m]ostly surprising to ourselves ... how short online contacts can lead to online cooperation (and sometimes friendships), some of them also producing offline meetings and cooperation" (MRUCK 2000a, para.10). Besides organizing, for example, workshops with colleagues, we especially enjoyed German and British visitors in the early days and remember mussels and sparkling wine in Cologne, interpretive work in a fish restaurant near the Hamburg harbor, times of contemplation and long walks through Magdeburg, problem-centered talks in a Thai ambiance or in a Berlin kitchen, or, more recently, serious and amusing stuff between disciplines and nationalities in a Turkish restaurant during a Kassel conference, or accompanying an American friend and colleague through some Chinese and other passions, or British-German alliances while enjoying wonderful North American food in a somehow dreary Berlin neighborhood. Developing *FQS* successively not only means supporting distribution, acceptance, and networking in the field of qualitative research, but also the exchange, cooperation, and sometimes also the friendship between concrete persons/researchers. [8]

FQS as an online medium additionally invokes our awareness of our own having been socialized by print-media and their rituals, and of one's own resistance to change. So we are trying time and again to detach *FQS* from traditional frameworks, without giving up things that have proved their worth, but rather adjusting such proven concepts and procedures in a new way to the special qualities of the Internet (see, for example, our considerations about Peer-Review; PENICHE & BERGOLD 2000). Certainly, our experimentation has just begun to get started and some actual consequences may be found by the reader even in this issue. For example, we have started to separate the design of Adobe and HTML files: while we are trying to use the hyperlink structure for the HTML files more than we did in former issues (see especially the contribution from [Michael ROTH](#)), we also have prepared the Adobe files more closely reflecting more traditional media format and reading habits than we did before. This represents a way of "flexibilization," one that we surely will continue in the future. [9]

Another important point necessary to mention while balancing two years *FQS* is our decision for a broad international and interdisciplinary accessibility—all full texts are available free. As already mentioned in our [concept](#): "from the very beginning we thought [paid subscription] ... to be an anachronism ... in view of the most precious potential of the Internet: cooperating worldwide and informing each other about qualitative research in different (sub-) cultures". As it has been

necessary, nevertheless, to secure the financial base of our work permanently, we, (the persons involved in *FQS* and its development from its beginning in 1999—including especially Franz BREUER, Clemens POVEL and Jarg BERGOLD), decided in the Spring of 2000 to collaborate with the [Zentrum für Qualitative Bildungs-, Beratungs- und Sozialforschung](#) ("Center for Qualitative Educational, Counseling and Social Research"). First of all, this collaboration helped to provide an office and computers through the University of Magdeburg and support from its computer center. Additionally, an application was made for funding for *FQS* and additional planned resources for qualitative researchers through cooperation between the Free University of Berlin and the University of Magdeburg. [10]

2. From an Online Journal to an Online Gateway

The first draft of the application for a pilot project "Ausbau der wissenschaftlichen Online-Zeitschrift *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research (FQS)* zum Informations-, Kommunikations- und Vernetzungsportal *qualitative-research.net* [Extending the scientific journal *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research (FQS)* into the information, communication and networking gateway *qualitative-research.net*]" was submitted to the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (Gruppe Wissenschaftliches Bibliothekswesen im Förderschwerpunkt "Informations-Infrastrukturen für netzbasierte Forschungs Kooperation und digitale Publikation") on April 15, 2000.⁴ In June we were informed that this first draft had not been accepted, and we were invited to send a revised version: In revising our application, we were asked to take special care to secure the acceptance of the project within the German "Fachcommunity" (i.e. special sections within German scientific associations), to restrict our concept to the original gateway functions (future projects e.g. on qualitative online research or online teaching might eventually be included at a later point in time) and to put forward suggestions concerning its long term institutionalization. Besides revising the proposal, we thus set off a large number of dialogues, for example with representatives of qualitative sections and groups within various German scientific associations to initiate future cooperation. The libraries and computer centers both of the Free University of Berlin and of the University of Magdeburg agreed to provide permanent support and cooperation. Because of the great number of the negotiations necessary, the new proposal was submitted to the DFG at the beginning of November 2000. The core of the project now was

"to develop an online-gateway for qualitative research and Internet use. Starting with offers already existing—especially with the online journal *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research (FQS)*—information and communication resources for qualitative researchers will be systematically collected, developed, evaluated and implemented permanently. Under a national perspective, *qualitative-research.net* should become the central online access for qualitative research, continuously collaborating with different scientific associations (e.g. in the

4 DFG (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft) "is the central public funding organization for academic research in Germany. DFG is thus comparable to a Research Council (in British and western European terminology) or a (national) Research Foundation (in American and far eastern terminology)". For more information see <http://www.dfg.de/english/index.html>.

educational sciences, psychology, sociology). As the gateway will be accessible in two languages at a minimum, this also should help German language researchers to access international resources and to participate in international discourses, and vice versa to support the knowledge about and acknowledgement of German qualitative research in other countries". [11]

In the middle of December, new negotiations became necessary as in the meantime one DFG reviewer had put forward possible objections. Somewhat to our surprise, the reviewer was worried that the proposal to dedicate *FQS* and the planned online gateway to qualitative research as a whole was made as a matter of form only, while in fact we were planning to limit our work to biographical research. Fortunately, it was easily shown that this was not the case, considering the pluralistic and encompassing profile *FQS* had already established for itself. Additionally we were asked to adjust the planned project to the already existing map/infrastructure of institutions for social scientists. [12]

Based upon this request, we also initiated additional contacts reaching beyond the field of qualitative research proper. First dialogues e.g. with the Informationszentrum Sozialwissenschaften resulted in our shared interest to stay in touch in order to prevent any unnecessary redundancies, additionally we will check if the systems of classifications and the hierarchies already in use suit—at least in part—our and our users needs. This should be one way to work against a possible diffusion of information/knowledge. [13]

Having made our statement concerning our dedication to qualitative research in general and provided information about our starting dialogues with other German social sciences information gateways not belonging directly to the field of qualitative research, the evaluation of our application was continued in December 2000. At the beginning of June 2001, it reached a happy conclusion, or, considering the work already done: it will allow a hopefully positive continuing of our work—the DFG will fund *qualitative-research.net*. [14]

It might be immediately evident that such a long process, in which *FQS* depended on volunteer and unpaid work of different persons, also claimed some victims. Waiting many months for the DFG decision, being unsure what this decision would be, diminishing resources on the side of those running and financing this project on the basis of their private means—all this also resulted in some tensions among the *FQS* staff (for some—probably unavoidable—differences between traditional institutions, their representatives and their way of acting and decision making on the one hand and the necessities of working in and with the Internet on the other hand, see e.g. MRUCK 2000b). This already difficult situation reached its peak in April 2001: for more than three weeks *FQS* was not accessible at its regular Internet address. [15]

3. "Total time on error: 3 weeks, 2 days, 6 hours, 37 minutes, 15 seconds"

This is the message we received from the web site monitoring service [Internet Seer](#) concerning the English starting page of *FQS* on Friday, the 27th of April just before 6 p.m.; shortly afterwards this was followed by the news concerning the German starting page: that after "3 weeks, 2 days, 12 hours, 52 minutes, 52 seconds" on error, *FQS* was finally accessible again regularly at *qualitative-research.net*. [16]

The whole of April was filled with innumerable bureaucratic transactions in order to get access again to *qualitative-research.net* for us and for our readers:

- Since the 1st of April any ftp-access to *qualitative-research.net* failed, thus we had no chance to change or update information for the domain or for *FQS*. Any attempt to reach the provider by mail, phone or fax and to ask for an access free of faults again likewise failed.
- On April 2nd there was also no http-access for several hours. Two days later, we sent a certified letter to the provider and requested that access to the domain again be secured immediately. Well, no response, instead, the URL was again not accessible from April 4–6. The certified letter was returned to us on April 15 as undeliverable.
- As of the 6th of April, the main site of the domain—<http://www.qualitative-research.net>—was accessible again, containing advertisements from the provider and the short information that this new site was under construction and would be available soon—a text that would obviously seem very strange to our readers who were familiar with us—in some cases since 1999. If one attempted to reach any other site belonging to *FQS*, only an access error message appeared—which resulted in numerous requests by mail or phone which we received during the following weeks: readers were confused, some link collections deleted our address because it was not available any longer, authors asked because they had been contacted that the URL they mentioned e.g. in a printed text for their contribution, published in *FQS*, did not work, etc.
- On April 9 we sent a certified letter of cancellation to the provider, additionally asking him to acknowledge the planned provider change.⁵ This certified letter was also returned to us as not deliverable about two weeks later. [17]

5 Offers in the Internet are identified by domain names. There are national registrars (e.g. *Denic* for .de-domains), international (.net-, .com-, .org- or .edu-) domains are registered by *Internic*. By this registration it is directed what server will be accessed, if—in our case—someone in the world visits *qualitative-research.net*. Domain name registration and web hosting are paid services, and if the name servers for a domain name should be changed, this must be registered. One step in this procedure is that the registrar asks the so called "Administrative Contact" (most times the domain owner) and the so called "Technical Contact" (the provider) for their "Acknowledge"-Statement—difficult in the case of a provider as silent as our one had been during April 2001.

As of the 6th of April we provided a provisional mirror site in cooperation with the Free University of Berlin to secure access to the *FQS* full texts. But even on April 25 those who tried to reach *qualitative-research.net* got the following message:

Dieses Kunden-Angebot befindet sich zur Zeit noch im Aufbau.
Hier finden Sie nähere Informationen zu den [Provider-Name]-Tarifen
Laut dem [Provider-Name] Counter sind Sie Besucher Nr. ... ⁶ [18]

If one attempted to reach other sites (single contributions or e.g. the starting page of the English *FQS* version at <http://www.qualitative-research.net/fqs/fqs-eng.htm>), the message continued to be:

Not Found
The requested URL /fqs-eng.htm was not found on this server. [19]

It took till the 26th of April to change the old name server registrations and point them to a new server making sure that everyone interested in accessing *FQS* did in fact reach *FQS*, and that we ourselves finally had access again to *qualitative-research.net* and the information available there. Our new provider is a very reliable one; in addition we prepared mirrors at the Free University of Berlin and at the University of Magdeburg, which are immediately accessible in the case of unexpected errors; further steps are in preparation with the DFG-project that we are starting at present. The former state of *FQS* could be fully reconstructed, only some postings at our discussion board were lost as they had been accessible only regionally at the old providers' server, and we do not have any access to these data as of April 1st. [20]

4. *FQS*: The Actual State, the Next Steps

Over the past two years, *FQS* has evolved at a rate that is characteristic also for other (scientific) uses of the Internet. *FQS*—in the beginning planned as an online journal—now acts and is requested on a worldwide scale as a networking medium for qualitative research. This actual purpose will be supported and extended by establishing *qualitative-research.net* as an information gateway for qualitative research and Internet use in the social sciences. As *FQS*, it will be realized internationally and in an interdisciplinary form—some basic information will soon be available both in English and German language. Within *qualitative-research.net*, we plan to provide:

- a. *Information*: There exists an important need for reliable information, covering all aspects of the work qualitative researchers are engaged in. Gaining knowledge about regional online or offline offers existing in different countries and disciplines should not depend on getting access to the one or other purely by accident. In order to close this gap, *qualitative-research.net* will systemically collect, evaluate and offer information relevant to the field of

6 Not too easy to understand for the users not familiar with German: The message announced, that the customers site was under construction, gave a link to the provider's advertisement, and provided a counter.

- qualitative research and Internet use which the users may access, supplement, and evaluate in their turn, if they wish to do so.
- b. *Communication*: In addition, *qualitative-research.net* together with international partners will gradually establish various communication resources for qualitative researchers (mailing lists, chats, discussion boards etc. will be available, adapted to the needs both of individual researchers and of research groups). Researchers not familiar with using the Internet and its services will be assisted dependent on their respective purposes and expertise.
 - c. *Online-Publishing*: Moreover, all offers that are at present provided under the heading of *FQS* (single issues, single contributions, debates, reviews etc.), will become an integral part of *qualitative-research.net*. In addition to the English and German versions as they already exist, a Spanish *FQS*-version will be developed together with colleagues from Latin America; this Spanish version will likewise become part of the planned online gateway.



Fig. 1: A short summary of the planned offerings of *qualitative-research.net* [21]

To make sure that all information relevant and of interest to qualitative researchers will ultimately be available and usable at *qualitative-research.net*, we are collaborating with many German and international partners. To realize *qualitative-research.net* as the *central German online base for qualitative researchers* we continue to cooperate with those colleagues who are already part of the *FQS'* Editorial Board as well as with individual researchers from various German universities who supported our application to the DFG. In addition, we have also established cooperation with representatives of qualitative groups or sections within German scientific associations, who will systematically be involved

in the design and development of *qualitative-research.net*. To date these include (among others):

- Winfried MAROTZKI, member of the Board of the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Erziehungswissenschaft (DGfE)*, and Peter ALHEIT on behalf of the Board of *DGfE's Kommission Biographieforschung*;
- members of the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Soziologie*: Wolf-Dietrich BUKOW on behalf of the *Sektion Biographieforschung*, Hubert KNOBLAUCH, Ronald HITZLER, Anne HONER, Jo REICHERTZ and Werner SCHNEIDER, who constitute the Board of the *Sektion Wissenssoziologie*;
- Nicola DÖRING, who is responsible for the Internet presence of the *Fachgruppe Methoden* and who is a founding member of the *Arbeitsgruppe Online-Kommunikation* in the *Fachgruppe Medienpsychologie* of the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Psychologie*;
- Jürgen SEEL on behalf of the Board of the *Neue Gesellschaft für Psychologie (NGfP)* and Jarg BERGOLD as Speaker of the *NGfP's Gruppe Methoden*, and
- Wolfgang TRESS, Chairman of the *Allgemeine Ärztliche Gesellschaft für Psychotherapie e.V.* [22]

In order to include the before mentioned groups, regular communication with these contact persons is essential. This in turn will be an important step towards making *qualitative-research.net* a useful and vivid place of exchange within the German qualitative research community. However, our efforts will not be limited to these persons and groups: other disciplines and scientific associations also comprise subsections with a primarily qualitative orientation; they, too, will be invited to join *qualitative-research.net*. [23]

The international standing of our project depends first on the cooperation—in some cases very close—with the members of the *FQS-Editorial Board*. Saul FUKS (Argentina) and Euclides SÁNCHEZ (Venezuela), our Regional Editors from Latin America, have begun to establish a Spanish language *FQS* version together with Jarg BERGOLD. A contract for cooperation between the *International Institute for Qualitative Methodology* (Canada) and the holders of *qualitative-research.net* is in the making. A close cooperation with the *British Qualitative Data Archival Resource Center* has been established, which, for example, led to the shared editorship of the [3rd FQS -Issue](#) (together with Susann KLUGE and Diane OPITZ) and to our participation in the initiation of the *International Network of Qualitative Data Archives (INQuaDA)*. In addition, there are many contacts and first dialogues about possible collaborations e.g. with the editors of different German and international print and offline journals. [24]

Our main orientation while realizing *qualitative-research.net* will be—as it has been during our two-year work on *FQS*—to prevent it from becoming tied to specific ideological schools of thought and to strongly support a liberal and plural concept of qualitative research. We would love to make *qualitative-research.net* accessible as an information and communication platform—as a starting, nodal

point—for everyone, whether they work somewhere in the world as qualitative researchers or whether they are merely interested in one way or another of using qualitative methods. We will also continue our preference for being curious and open to new experiences, needs and so forth, and we want to continue to accept experiments, mistakes, or changes in order to make the virtual and non-virtual place *qualitative-research.net* as helpful and vivid as possible for everyone involved. We already expressed this wish concerning our work on and with FQS at a much earlier point in time in the following programmatic words:

"The quality and perspective of FQS as a provisionary—as a learning process open for mistakes and development which, insofar as possible, tries to be aware of and creatively active in the mere transfer of offline habits into the Internet—depends to a large amount on the participation of all persons associated with FQS. Together we would like to successively unfold and use all available online-resources for qualitative research. The term 'prosuming'—that means being a producer and a consumer of FQS at the same time—tries to capture the mutuality we are aiming at. Supporting and encouraging this is one of our main concerns." (MRUCK 2000a, para.21) [25]

Realizing such an orientation is not always an easy matter, and there may be rather unpleasant costs involved. This became obvious during the long period that elapsed between submitting our proposal and receiving approval in June 2001. Not all of us were able or wanted to engage in such an intensive project for so long; in some cases financial resources ended, in others, the continuous insecurity finally necessitated new career decisions. Thus, we lost some of those who had accompanied our way from the beginning. Especially worth mentioning are Gwen PENICHE, who was responsible for copy-editing the English version of FQS 1(1) and FQS 2(2). From the third FQS Issue onwards, Tina PATEL—again on a voluntary basis—took on the copy-editing for the following issues. Clemens POVEL contributed to FQS as webmaster, as a colleague, and as a friend, and without his efforts FQS would definitely not be what it is today. Holger LEIDIG will join as a technical assistant, and Birgit MATHISKE will support us in dealing with the growing amount of bureaucratic work which became necessary while running the pilot project—both had been observing our work benevolently, having been colleagues and friends for a long period of time, and we really appreciate it that they will join the team. [26]

We are aware of the fact that DFG funding will help us in important ways to extend and to further establish *qualitative-research.net*. But we are also aware of the fact that additional work and creativity will be necessary to realize FQS and *qualitativ-research.net* in close collaboration with many colleagues as a place for exchange, information, shared learning and teaching, and new forms of scholarly experiences. Some re-organization will be necessary for securing these goals within a broad international and interdisciplinary orientation. We want *qualitative-research.net* to exist not only as a concept, not only in the minds of people, not only by publishing contributions from different countries and disciplines and not only on the side of our recipients. To achieve this, we will successively invite new partners to join more closely the center of our work and of this busy, work-intensive *and* joyful project. In doing this, we are looking forward to a lot of work,

to interesting debates on qualitative research, to warm and human ways of interacting and to thrilling and contemplative meetings not only in virtual rooms! [27]

5. FQS Reviews—About this Issue

A decision had been necessary to publish an "Special Issue: FQS Reviews" instead of the originally planned "Interpretation—One text, different meanings". This was the case due to the problems and changes mentioned before, because of the special challenge such an issue on interpretation means⁷, and because of the actual state of FQS Review. [28]

FQS Review started as a section of our online journal in June 2000, and since that time it is a permanent part of FQS. Review notes and review essays are published frequently in a separate format, even though they formally belong to the following issue. FQS 2(2) now indicates another way: In addition to the external reasons mentioned above, we would like to draw the attention of our readers closer to this section. In this way, we emphasize them as *contributions of their own right*, not only as marginal and of lesser scientific benefit, as they are often recognized in other contexts and journals (see more detailed the Editorial Note published in the third FQS-Issue; MEY 2000). [29]

Taking into account the 29 review notes and review essays, building the main corpus of FQS 2(2), we hopefully did some first steps towards such an—in our opinion: necessary—acknowledgment of book reviewing: Thus, besides the purely quantitative fact, that in one issue we are publishing more review notes and review essays than in all former issues altogether (N=18), we also stress a qualitative turn.⁸ Compared to the analyses and plans provided in FQS 1(3), now hopefully the profile of this section became clear. We will make this point more precise by discussing in a short way some of the newly published texts in the following. [30]

As one successful example for the perspectives we formulated for book reviewing in FQS we like to mention the review essay from [Michael DICK](#), who not limited himself to a short summary of a book and its main contents, but used the book

7 We only shortly like to mention that the planned Issue "Interpretation—One text, different meanings" became a challenge, we did not imagine in the beginning and we did not feel prepared to cope with in an adequate way at this early time because of different reasons: So first of all, we had to find a consensus about the term "interpretation," acceptable for all involved—a really difficult and hard to realize task in regard to this term, so central for qualitative research and so overload with meanings itself. That we are not only editing a German, but also an English language journal, soon led to additional difficulties: What text should we use/what text should be offered so that authors from different countries and disciplines could provide their exemplification/meanings? A German one? An English one? What (methodological) consequences would result from a translation e.g. from German into English? How to handle the cultural embeddedness of texts? And should we really limit ourselves to *textual* data?

8 According to MEY (2000, para.3), "reviews and review essays should fulfill three functions," namely: 1) the description of contents, so readers get a first impression of (and insight into) the topics presented in the media unit; 2) the review should contain a critical appreciation of the contents presented, i.e. it should be made clear to the reader to what extent the pursued objectives were fulfilled. To be able to unfold this critical appreciation, the review should 3) allow contextualizing, which requires a discussion—more or less—of the state of the art within the respective field the media unit belongs to.

reviewed ("Biographische Methoden in den Humanwissenschaften [Biographical methods in the Humanities]," edited by Gerd JÜTTEMANN and Hans THOMAE) for an evaluation of the actual state of the research field under consideration. Insofar DICK's review essay offers more than a comprehensive discussion of a book or of single contributions being part of a book; he uses the book for critical reflection, mentioning possible benefits and deficiencies, and in this way he opens the field for further discussion. [31]

Another important point is that reviewing always implies a personal statement from the respective reviewer—one beside other possible points of view, and the more explicitly, the better. In order to help this aspect of reviewing (researching, writing etc.) to become more visible, we decided to publish also reviews from different authors on one book/media unit. So already in FQS 1(3) two reviews on Clive SEALE's "The Quality of Qualitative Research" had been published ([Louise CORTI](#) 2000 and [Udo KELLE](#) 2000), and in the future we will continue this effort by asking two and sometimes more reviewers to comment on one unit. [32]

Even if two reviewers—as for example [Angelika SCHWARZ](#) and [Oliver GEDEN](#) on "Die Stunde der Cultural Studies [The Time of Cultural Studies]" (LINDNER 2000)—are drawing rather similar conclusions, readers nevertheless become familiar with different focuses, criteria and concepts of evaluation, used by the single author. This e.g. proves true for two texts on Ralf BOHNSACK's "Rekonstruktive Sozialforschung [Social Research that re-constructs]," discussed within a review essay by [Carlos KÖLBL](#); a review note was written by [Michael KREUZER](#). Obviously, there is a common denominator in the way both authors read BOHNSACK, but while KÖLBL felt disturbed by redundancies, KREUZER welcomed the same redundancies as helpful especially for novices in this field of research. As already mentioned for DICK, also KÖLBL's review essay not only provides a summary of the book's contents, but offers interesting statements towards the actual state of biographical research and in this way enriches further discussion. [33]

The difference between KÖLBL's text on one hand and KREUZER's on the other surely depends on the difference between the two kinds of reviews: review essays allow a more concrete and detailed reflection on the respective research field, on shortcomings and future perspectives (if the reviewers do choose the opportunity to work in this way). But meantime also review notes mostly are no longer limited to a short summary of a book or to shortly paraphrasing the table of contents: also many review notes help readers to get some first ideas of the respective field. Also, for some review notes the difference compared to review essays is quantitatively diminishing, so there are cases in which the old division we once introduced starting the section FQS Review seems not to work any longer: the future will show, if we are able to develop additional distinguishing and transparent criteria, helping our readers to anticipate what kind of text they could expect if a review note or if a review essay is announced. Towards the design we decided that starting with this fifth issue we condense both types of reviews: Both review notes *and* review essays are now available as HTML *and* as Adobe files. [34]

As far as the design and as the relation between design and content is concerned, we like to draw your attention again to the review essay, [Michael ROTH](#) wrote for this issue: Within his review, ROTH dealt with three different books, each of one reviewed and available as a single file, but being at the same time part of the main text as supplements. This main text focuses on the question how the review essays, dependent on the concrete author, were created and how his understanding of the books developed. Using creative forms of writing, ROTH unfolds his understanding, his decisions, his kinds of regard *in front of* the reader, some times using dialogues e.g. between him and his alter ego or between him and other authors. The way he is doing this leads to the question of how to establish authority in scientific texts, important e.g. in ethnological debates. In our opinion, this is also rather important to be discussed in a more detailed way and systematically within the field of qualitative research, also with regard to possible consequences for new ways of writing qualitative inquiries (for examples, e.g. of using dialogues and other forms of writing experimentally, see also MRUCK 1999 or SHANK 2001; some insights into the "Kehrseite psychologischer Forschungsberichte [Drawbacks of psychological reports]" we tried to give elsewhere; MRUCK & MEY 1996). A forthcoming FQS issue "Writing Qualitative Inquiries," edited together with Michael ROTH, will provide methodological considerations as well as examples of writing qualitative inquiries differently, opening up possible new formats for scientific reports. [35]

Although we had only the chance to mention some of the reviews published in FQS 2(2) more explicitly, we nevertheless like to thank all those, who contributed to the issue: we are grateful to the authors who helped to sharpen the profile of the section FQS Review more than it had been possible in the past. And especially worth mentioning is the cooperative and constructive way many authors used our feedback to revise first drafts, e.g., by providing additional subheadings to clarify the structure of a contribution or by revising in the way we stressed before as important for reviews in FQS (though we dislike to "dictate" any strict framework: reviews as other contributions should grow up between the media unit under review, the concrete reviewer and his or her understanding of the text, and the addressees of his or her writing. [36]

Thus, we hope to present an interesting issue, which—as far as FQS Review is concerned—is departed into three main sections: The greatest number of reviews are belonging to the topic "Qualitative Research Methods and Methodology;" besides the texts already mentioned from ROTH, KÖLBL, KREUZER, and DICK review notes and review essays are available from [John GLASS](#), [Carlos KÖLBL & Jürgen STRAUB](#), [Günter MEY](#), [Jan PRIBILSKY](#), [Achim SEYFFARTH](#), [Nicole WESTMARLAND](#) and [Andreas WITZEL](#). [37]

To the topic "Online-Research / New Media" [Dagmar HOFFMANN](#), [Andrea STÖCKL](#), [Dietmar JANETZKO](#), [Martin WELKER](#) and [Michael WYSTERSKI](#) contributed. As editors of an *online* journal, we especially would welcome more reviews towards these topics in the future, helping to understand the challenges, problems and possibilities the Internet and new media are providing for qualitative research and teaching as well. [38]

Finally, the contributions from [Volker BARTH](#), [Oliver GEDEN](#), [Torsten JUNGE](#), [Angela SCHWARZ](#), [Angela KAUPP](#), [Günter MEY](#), [Annett VOLMER](#), [Gustav FRANK](#), [Victoria HEGNER](#), [Heiko DROSTE](#) and [Mike WRIGLEY](#) are concerned with questions, belonging to the field of "Body / Culture / Identity"; Tilmann WALTER even reviewed two books—[Claudia BENTHIEN](#) (1998): "Im Leibe wohnen. Literarische Imagologie und historische Anthropologie der Haut [Living in one's own body: Literal images and historical anthropology of the skin]," and [SCHMAUSER & NOLL](#) (1998): "Körperbewegungen und ihre Bedeutungen [Body movements and their meanings]." [39]

Although *FQS 2(2)* contains a relatively small number of English language reviews (a greater number will be available in the middle of this year; see [Reviews in preparation](#)), we hope that the scope of the issue is sufficiently interesting to invite the one or other (old or new) reader also to take a look at review notes and review essays, published in former issues (for further English language review essays see e.g. [Christopher J. COLVIN](#), [Kip JONES](#), [Alfredo GAITÁN](#), [Jaan VALSINER](#) or [Nina LEONHARD](#), each one of them providing interesting points of view towards the field they are concerned with). [40]

As former issues, also *FQS 2(2)* comprises some selected single contributions: [Lisa BURKE & Monica MILLER](#) wrote an instructive text, probably interesting for novices, but not only for them, on "Phone Interviewing as a Means of Data Collection." [Georg PEEZ](#) used an initiative to develop an art-server and analyzed e-mails to work out some central aspects of profession-related communication via the Internet. Within a very detailed contribution (the genesis of this contribution surely would be worth a more intensive analysis itself), Fritz SCHÜTZE gives an outline for the interpretation of autobiographical accounts of war experiences, using the example of the "Robert Rasmus" account in Studs TERKEL's book "The Good War. An Oral History of World War II". (The English text version will be available in the middle of June.) [41]

Also the *FQS-Debate* on the "Quality of Qualitative Research" is continued by contributions from [Andreas HUBER](#) and from [Urs KIENER & Michael SCHANNE](#); during June, the moderators of the Debate, Franz BREUER and Jo REICHERTZ, will publish a provisional resume (for the Debate and its purposes see BREUER 2000). In this context, we like to announce a special issue, edited by Udo KELLE and published in the middle of 2002: Contributions within this issue partly will be revised versions of texts, prepared for the conference "Standards und Strategien zur Sicherung von Qualität und Validität in der qualitativen Sozialforschung [Standards and strategies of quality- and validity-checking within qualitative social research]," which took place at Mannheim, Germany in December 2000 and was organized by the ZUMA and the Section "Methods" of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Soziologie. This issue will especially be important, as it helps us to open up the *FQS-Debate* also to the English speaking community. [42]

After this long prelude, we now invite you to an interesting and stimulating reading, and certainly, any comments on single contributions and/or on the whole issue are appreciated! [43]

Acknowledgment

As we had to face unexpected problems on the side of our usual copy-editor, we searched for a solution that probably gave this English version of our text a kind of patchwork impression, being a sometimes thrilling, sometimes amusing characteristic of the whole project FQS. A British-Canadian-German collaboration started to revise our (in some regards) broken English, and we warmly like to thank Margrit SCHREIER, Kip JONES, Michael ROTH, Mechthild KIEGELMANN, and Karl PROKOPP for their wonderful and immediate support!

References

- [Breuer, Franz](#) (2000). Editorial Note, FQS Debate: "Quality of Qualitative Research" [5 Paragraphs]. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum Qualitative Social Research* (Online-Journal), 1(2), Art. 31. Available at: <http://www.qualitative-research.net/fqs-texte/2-00/2-00debate-editorialnote-e.htm> [Date of access: May 31, 2001].
- [Denzin, Norman K.](#) & Lincoln, Yvonna S. (2000) (Eds.). *The Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, Ca.: Sage.
- Flick, Uwe; von Kardorff, Ernst & Steinke, Ines (2000) (Eds.). *Qualitative Forschung. Ein Handbuch*. Reinbek: Rowohlt.
- [Jüttemann, Gerd](#) & Thomae, Hans (1999) (Eds.). *Biographische Methoden in Humanwissenschaften*. Weinheim: Beltz.
- Krüger, Heinz-Hermann & [Marotzki, Winfried](#) (1999) (Eds.). *Handbuch erziehungswissenschaftliche Biographieforschung*. Opladen: Leske + Budrich.
- [Mey, Günter](#) (2000). Editorial Note, Reevaluating Book Reviews: As Scientific Contributions [20 Paragraphs]. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum Qualitative Social Research* (Online-Journal), 1(3), Art. 40. Available at: <http://www.qualitative-research.net/fqs-texte/3-00/3-00mey-e.htm> [Date of access: May 31, 2001].
- [Mruck, Katja](#) (1999). "Stets ist es die Wahrheit, die über alles gebietet, doch ihre Bedeutung wandelt sich." Zur Konzeptualisierung von Forschungsobjekt, Forschungssubjekt und Forschungsprozeß in der Geschichte der Wissenschaften. Münster: Lit.
- Mruck, Katja (2000a). FQS—Idea, Realization, Future Perspectives [25 Paragraphs]. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research* [On-line Journal], 1(1), Art. 1. Available at: <http://www.qualitative-research.net/fqs-texte/1-00/1-00hrsg1-e.htm> [Date of access: May 31, 2001].
- Mruck, Katja (2000b). Qualitative Research Networking: FQS as an Example [16 Paragraphs]. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum Qualitative Social Research* (Online-Journal), 1(3), Art. 34. Available at: <http://www.qualitative-research.net/fqs-texte/3-00/3-00mruck-e.htm> [Date of access: May 31, 2001].
- Mruck, Katja & Mey, Günter (1996b). *Überlegungen zu qualitativer Methodologie und qualitativer Forschungspraxis – die Kehrseite psychologischer Forschungsberichte*. Forschungsbericht aus dem Institut für Psychologie der TU Berlin, Nr. 1/96. Available at: <http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/~mruck/Ber-96-1.html> [Date of access: May 31, 2001].
- Peniche, Gwen & [Bergold, Jarg](#) (2000). Peer-Reviewing [20 Paragraphs]. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research* [On-line Journal], 1(1), Art. 30. Available at: <http://www.qualitative-research.net/fqs-texte/1-00/1-00penichebergold-e.htm> [Date of access: May 31, 2001].
- Shank, Gary (2001). It's Logic in Practice, My Dear Watson: An Imaginary Memoir from Beyond the Grave [96 Paragraphs]. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research* [On-line Journal], 1(1), Art. 9. Available at: <http://www.qualitative-research.net/fqs-texte/1-01/1-01shank-e.htm> [Date of access: May 31, 2001].

Authors

[Katja MRUCK](#), FQS – Main Editor

[Günter MEY](#), FQS – Book Review Editor

Citation

Mruck, Katja & Mey, Günter (2001). FQS—From the shop floor [43 paragraphs]. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 2(2), Art. 8. <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs010283>.

Revised 3/2007