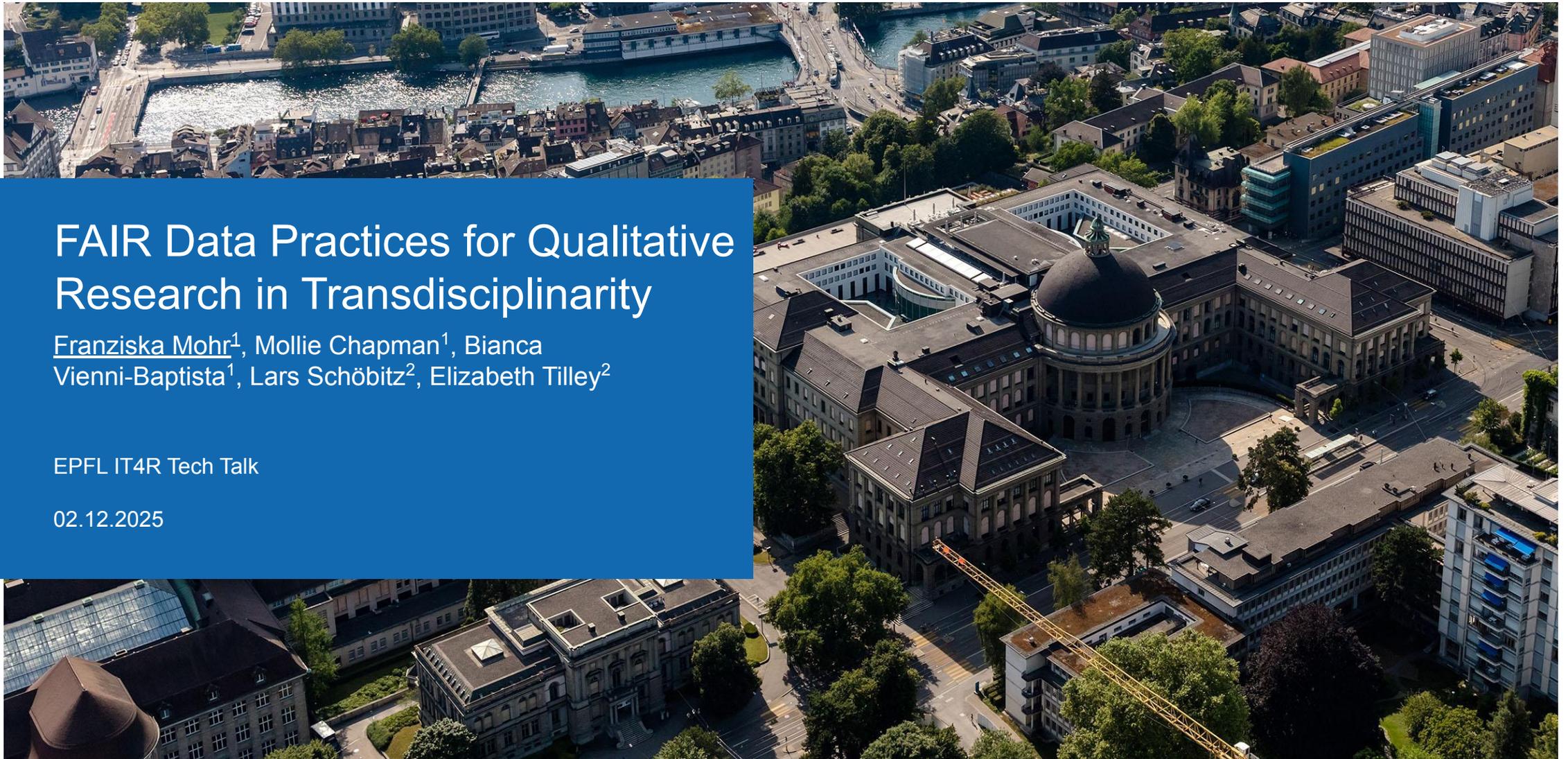


FAIR Data Practices for Qualitative Research in Transdisciplinarity

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EPFL IT4R Tech Talk

02.12.2025



FAIRqual project



Franziska



Mollie



Bianca



Lars



Liz

TdLab

Global Health
Engineering

Funded by the Open Research Data Program

FAIR data principles

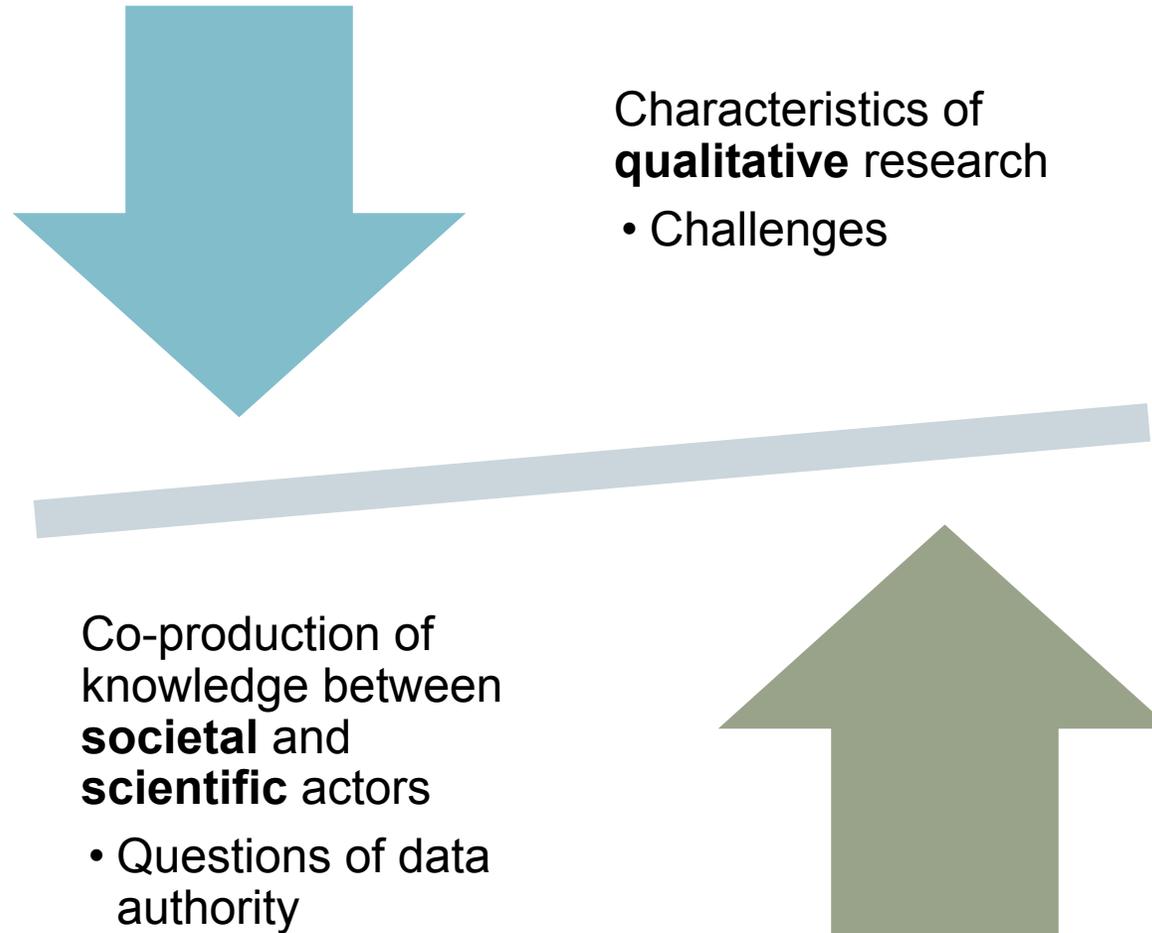
Aim:

Guide to capture essential characteristics of data objects to make data reusable for humans and machines

- **F**indable
 - I.e. (Meta)data have a persistent identifier
- **A**ccessible
 - I.e. (Meta)data are retrievable (open or authentication / authorization procedure where necessary)
- **I**nteroperable
 - (Meta)data use a formal, broadly applicable language for knowledge representation to integrate them with other data
- **R**eusable
 - I.e. (Meta)data are well-described with accurate and relevant attributes

Wilkinson et al. 2016; www.go-fair.org

Sharing qualitative data in Transdisciplinary (Td) research



Qualitative data in Td Research

- **Interviews**, focus groups, oral (hi)stories, informal talks
- **Workshops** outputs (flip charts, post-it notes, manual summaries)
- Audiovisual (photos or videos)
- Participant observation and fieldnotes
- Mapping
- Artistic outputs
- ...



S. B. Rhomberg Photography

FAIRqual Workshop at IT24, November 2024

FAIRqual project

- Explore how to apply FAIR principles for qualitative data in Td research...
 - ... from a conceptual angle
 - ... from a technical angle
- Based on what?
 - Workshop at ITD2024 – “feeling the pulse”
 - Expert interviews with Td researchers and open science experts
 - Existing literature and current discussions

<https://fairqual.org>



Project website

Challenges of sharing qualitative data

1. Epistemological traditions
2. Ethical commitments
3. Practical issues
4. Origin of Open Science practices

Challenges of sharing qualitative data: Epistemological traditions

1. “you had to be there”
 1. Importance of embodied research (being in the place, feeling what happened)
 2. Integration of emotion, experience, context
2. Need to immerse yourself in the data to analyze it properly

Challenges of sharing qualitative data: Ethical commitments

1. Standard research ethics require confidentiality (informed consent)
 1. To protect participants – "do no harm"
 2. To create an atmosphere of trust
2. Sharing fears
 1. Misuse of shared data
 2. Politization of data
 3. Loss of context

Challenges of sharing qualitative data: Practical issues

1. Anonymization - e.g. interviews
 1. Many hundreds of pages of transcripts that require often detailed reading to fully anonymize
 2. Removing names is not enough...
 3. Audio recordings are highly personal (esp. with AI...)
2. Heterogenous data - e.g. workshops
 1. What to share and how to document?

PAPER	Audio-Visual	Contextual Data	Intangibles
Collaboration Guide Post-It Flipchart Mind maps Working Notes Rich Pictures Participant lists Reports Personal Notes / Field notes Key words List of measurements Dot-mocracy Guidelines + Factsheets	PPT Slides Photos Videos Maps Constructions from Legos Collage Zines Visim Boards	Prototypes Spreadsheets News Coverage Bills Catering Leftovers E-mail lists Logistical Documents	Networks Knowledge New Ideas A Mindset <u>Mess</u> New Concepts + Methods Working Groups X-1 Diff Interest Groups Questions Negotiations Personal Experience Stress + Fatigue Fun Hot Air Social Dynamics

Brainstorming workshop artefacts, TdLab Brown Bag Lunch March 18, 2025

Challenges of sharing qualitative data: Origin of Open Science practices

1. Current movement mostly based in quantitative tradition means not always suited to qualitative or Td data and traditions
 1. Not identifying with open science movement creates hesitance
 2. Importance of qualitative researcher in shaping the conversation

“I think that there is something that does not make sense in wanting to apply quantitative research trends to qualitative methods.”

quote from online survey in Prosser et al. (preprint): It's time to join the conversation: Visions of the Future for Qualitative Transparency and Openness in Management and Organisation Studies.

FAIRqual project

- Explore how to apply FAIR principles for qualitative data in Td research...
 - ... from a conceptual angle
 - ... from a technical angle
- Based on what?
 - Workshop at ITD2024 – “feeling the pulse”
 - Expert interviews with Td researchers and open science experts
 - Existing literature and current discussions
- Develop **guidelines** and “**demos**” based on data collected during FAIRqual
 - Workflows that could work for TdLab
 - Wider outreach through publications, community of practice

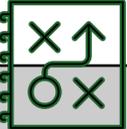
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Project website

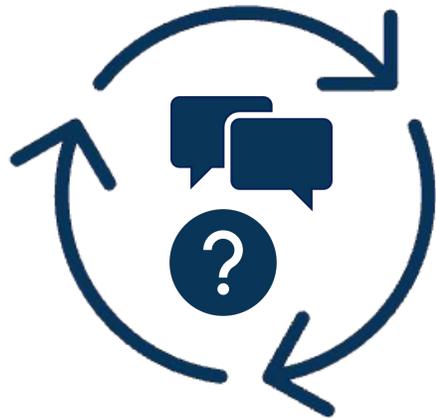
Approaches: Qualitative data requires variable levels of access

“open by default” is not an option

		Level of Access			
		Closed	Controlled	Restricted	Open
Level of processing	Raw data				
	Full data without identifiers				
	Excerpted / partial data				
	Final analysis				

Approaches: Practical steps of publishing ITD Workshop data

1. Choice of workshop material
2. Digitization; creating meta data
3. Publication on data repository



group	question_no	individual_thought_postits	type	comment	umbrella_term_postits
a	1	content analysis	lived	NA	NA
a	1	storytelling diagrams? (draw and tell)	lived	NA	NA
a	1	interview transcripts	lived	NA	NA

variable_name	variable_type	description
group	character	Workshop group identifier (a, b, c, or d)
question_no	numeric	Question number discussed (1-4)
individual_thought_postits	character	Content of individual post-it notes from participants

Approaches: Data authority / informed consent

1. Inform about intention to publish data openly
2. Opportunities to flag «non-shareables» during workshop
3. Integrate workshop participants during data publication process
4. Offer workshop participants co-authorship for dataset



FAIRqual Workshop at IT24, November 2024

Outlook



Literature

Alexander, S. M., Jones, K., Bennett, N. J., Budden, A., Cox, M., Crosas, M., Game, E. T., Geary, J., Hardy, R. D., Johnson, J. T., Karcher, S., Motzer, N., Pittman, J., Randell, H., Silva, J. A., da Silva, P. P., Strasser, C., Strawhacker, C., Stuhl, A., & Weber, N. (2019). Qualitative data sharing and synthesis for sustainability science. *Nature Sustainability*, 3 (81–88). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41893-019-0434-8>

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Prosser et al. (preprint): It's time to join the conversation: Visions of the Future for Qualitative Transparency and Openness in Management and Organisation Studies. <https://doi.org/10.31235/osf.io/ntf73>

Wilkinson, M. D., Dumontier, M., Aalbersberg, Ij. J., Appleton, G., Axton, M., Baak, A., Blomberg, N., Boiten, J.-W., da Silva Santos, L. B., Bourne, P. E., Bouwman, J., Brookes, A. J., Clark, T., Crosas, M., Dillo, I., Dumon, O., Edmunds, S., Evelo, C. T., Finkers, R., ... Mons, B. (2016). The FAIR Guiding Principles for scientific data management and stewardship. *Scientific Data*, 3(1), 160018. <https://doi.org/10.1038/sdata.2016.18>

Questions & comments

