

Ethnography meets Gerontechnology – Methodological reflections and outlooks

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Purpose There is a growing interest in ethnographic methods in computer sciences like software ergonomics or human computer interaction. Especially participant observation or field studies seem to promise insights in the everyday life of potential end users. (Rabinow, Marcus, Faubion & Rees 2008). In this perspective, ethnographic methods are considered as epistemological instruments to better meet the users' needs and guarantee a better acceptance of technology. But ethnographic research is a tricky methodological approach. It is time-consuming, complex, non-directional, contextual and messy. (Marcus, 1995). The ethnographer plays an important role as a subject of knowledge. (Clifford & Marcus, 2008). Consequently, the application of ethnographic methods in technology development has to be adjusted to the requirements of the technical field and its methodological approaches of knowledge production. This leads to a modified mode of ethnography with its own advantages and disadvantages.

Method Based on my ethnographic participation in several research projects developing gerontechnology, I reflect about potentials as well as pitfalls of the involvement of ethnographers in technology development, and discuss their contribution to knowledge production in the development process. Furthermore, I introduce newer approaches of digital ethnography and ask for their productive potential for gerontechnology. (Pink et al., 2016). **Results and Discussion** Although ethnographic methods seem to be a suitable hands-on approach for technology development, several modifications have to be adjusted to meet both the ethnographers needs as well as the technicians' expectations. (Endter, 2016). Transdisciplinary openness, time and reflexivity play a crucial role to path the way to mutual understanding and collaboration. The presentation discusses how ethnographic research must be designed in order to achieve this.

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