



OFFENER KREIS

GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR
THOUGHTFUL PARTICIPATION

Further Ways to Use the Set

More ways to use the set, downloads, ordering options, and space for feedback can be found on the project page:

<https://jmeischner.com/lab/offener-kreis/en>



Note:

This set is not a course or a facilitation method, but a tool for thoughtful decisions about participation in projects.

Getting Started

How we designed it to work...

The orientations reflect recurring tensions in participatory research. They show the perspective from which a question is asked and which dimension of the project it helps explore more deeply.

The Orientations



Use and Impact

Time and Commitment


Power and Responsibility


Knowledge and Validity

Language and Publicness

The phases structure the typical course of a research project into clear stages. Each card is linked to one phase and invites closer reflection at that point in the process.


The Phases

Framing 

Design 

Collecting 

Interpreting 

Sharing 

Phase: Collecting

Orientation: Language and Publicness

Starting with a Phase

Three cards are enough

Use the cards especially when an important decision is coming up in this phase.

Framing:

1-6

Design:

7-12

Collecting:

13-18

Interpreting:

19-24

Sharing:

25-30

Choose 3 cards from the phase you are currently entering.

Starting with an Orientation

Three cards are enough

Choose 1 orientation. Take 3 cards.

Power and Responsibility

2 · 14 · 19

Knowledge and Validity:

6 · 10 · 16

Time and Commitment:

3 · 24 · 28

Use and Impact:

5 · 17 · 21

Language and Publicness:

8 · 20 · 30

*Contrast card (optional):
Take 1 card from a **different**
orientation.*

Per Card: Three Short Notes

What you take from it (without needing to "finish" it)

- *What is this really about for us?*
- *What can or do we honestly not want to carry?*
- *What does this mean for our decision?*

Now · revisit later · consciously not

To close (1 minute):

- *We will do: ...*
- *We will consciously leave out: ...*
- *What will help us notice early if this starts to tip? ...*

Reflective Conversation

1:1 or in a team

Duration: 15-30 min · Materials: 3 cards (+ optional 1 contrast card)

- 1. Choose 3 cards
(see insert card 3).*
- 2. Per card (~4 minutes):
one person reads aloud, a short silence, then only what feels necessary.*
- 3. One follow-up question per card:
"How would we notice if we are misleading ourselves here?"*
- 4. Closing (2 minutes):
mark one conscious decision.*

*Allowed outcome:
"No participation in this phase"
is also a valid result.*

*When does
engagement stop
feeling like co-
research and begin to
feel like compensation
for missing resources?*

1

▶ Phase: Framing



Orientation: Power and Responsibility

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1

Phase: Framing



Orientation: Power and Responsibility

What is our most honest reason for including participation in this project?

2

▶ Phase: Framing



Orientation: Power and Responsibility



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2

Phase: Framing



Orientation: Power and Responsibility

*Which expectations
do we raise without
being certain we can
sustain them over
time?*

3

▶ Phase: Framing



Orientation: Time and Commitment



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3

Phase: Framing



Orientation: Time and Commitment


Which signals do we unintentionally send that might suggest predetermined outcomes?

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▶ Phase: Framing



Orientation: Power and Responsibility



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Phase: Framing



Orientation: Power and Responsibility


Whose benefit takes precedence when the goals of science, funding bodies, and communities collide?

5

▶ Phase: Framing



Orientation: Use and Impact



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Phase: Framing

Orientation: Use and Impact



How do we handle knowledge that does not fit our predefined framework but matters deeply to people on the ground?

6

▶ **Phase: Framing**



Orientation: Knowledge and Validity



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6

Phase: Framing



Orientation: Knowledge and Validity

How much clarity is needed at the outset for shared shaping and co-creation to become possible?

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Phase: Design



Orientation: Power and Responsibility



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Phase: Design



Orientation: Power and Responsibility

What changes at the core of a scientific question when we deliberately formulate it in simpler terms?

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Phase: Design



Orientation: Language and Publicness



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Phase: Design



Orientation: Language and Publicness

*At what point do we
privilege
methodological
elegance over
experienced impact?*

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Phase: Design

Orientation: Use and Impact





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Phase: Design

Orientation: Use and Impact



*How do we balance
accessibility and
methodological
requirements in our
design choices?*

10

Phase: Design



Orientation: Knowledge and Validity



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Phase: Design



Orientation: Knowledge and Validity

*How might
participants recognise
when their
contribution no longer
feels like shared
shaping?*

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Phase: Design



Orientation: Power and Responsibility

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Phase: Design



Orientation: Power and Responsibility

← *Which perspectives do we lose when only what is perfectly reproducible is valued?*

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▶ **Phase: Design**



Orientation: Knowledge and Validity



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Phase: Design



Orientation: Knowledge and Validity

*Where do we need
clear rules, and where
do we need flexibility
so that people can
take part?*

13

▶ Phase: Collecting



Orientation: Knowledge and Validity



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13

Phase: Collecting



Orientation: Knowledge and Validity

Who is able to afford participation in this context and who is not?

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▶ Phase: Collecting



Orientation: Power and Responsibility

How do we deal with differing expectations regarding the future use of data?

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▶ Phase: Collecting



Orientation: Power and Responsibility

How do we account for observations that fall outside our data-collection framework?

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▶ Phase: Collecting



Orientation: Knowledge and Validity



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Phase: Collecting



Orientation: Knowledge and Validity


*How do participants
experience the
distance between
data collection and
public impact?*

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▶ Phase: Collecting



Orientation: Use and Impact



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Phase: Collecting

Orientation: Use and Impact



*How do we engage
with lived experience
without smoothing it
over in the name of
neutrality?*

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▶ Phase: Collecting

Orientation: Language and Publicness



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Phase: Collecting



Orientation: Language and Publicness

*How can participants
be involved in
processes of
interpretation without
making analysis
arbitrary?*

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▶ Phase: Interpreting



Orientation: Power and Responsibility

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Phase: Interpreting

Orientation: Power and Responsibility

*How do we speak
about results that fall
short of expectations?*

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▶ Phase: Interpreting



Orientation: Language and Publicness



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Phase: Interpreting

Orientation: Language and Publicness

Does analysis primarily serve the pursuit of truth for researchers, or the capacity for action within communities?

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▶ Phase: Interpreting

Orientation: Use and Impact





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Phase: Interpreting

Orientation: Use and Impact

*How seriously do we
take interpretations
that arise from
everyday experience?*

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▶ Phase: Interpreting

Orientation: Knowledge and Validity



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Phase: Interpreting



Orientation: Knowledge and Validity

*How do we maintain
analytical distance
without devaluing
emotional
perspectives?*

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▶ Phase: Interpreting



Orientation: Time and Commitment



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Phase: Interpreting

Orientation: Time and Commitment

What does thorough analysis mean when people are waiting for answers that affect their lives?

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▶ Phase: Interpreting



Orientation: Time and Commitment



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Phase: Interpreting

Orientation: Time and Commitment

*How do we keep
results factual without
losing their societal
relevance?*

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▶ **Phase: Sharing**



Orientation: Language and Publicness



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Phase: Sharing



Orientation: Language and Publicness

*How can recognition
go beyond formal
acknowledgement?*

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▶ Phase: Sharing



Orientation: Power and Responsibility



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Phase: Sharing



Orientation: Power and Responsibility

*How can results be
both citable and
meaningful for the
community?*

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▶ **Phase: Sharing**



Orientation: Language and Publicness



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Phase: Sharing



Orientation: Language and Publicness

*How do participants
experience the end of
the project?*

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▶ Phase: Sharing



Orientation: Time and Commitment



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Phase: Sharing 

Orientation: Time and Commitment

*When is a result
sufficient for practice,
even if it does not yet
meet scientific
standards?*

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▶ **Phase: Sharing**



Orientation: Knowledge and Validity



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Phase: Sharing



Orientation: Knowledge and Validity

*Which nuances must
not be lost, even when
we aim to
communicate clearly?*

30

▶ **Phase: Sharing**



Orientation: Language and Publicness



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Phase: Sharing

Orientation: Language and Publicness