



Local Knowledge/Local Theory

Local knowledge includes local stakeholders' existing insights about the target group and the world they live in. Those who possess insider knowledge about the lived experience of members of the target group are considered the experts in this regard. They are generally themselves members of the target group, but they may also be other persons who are in close contact with the target group and who are therefore more likely to understand their situation (e.g. outreach workers, shopkeepers in the local district, trainers at a sports club, publicans/barkeepers etc.). Within the framework of Participatory Quality Development, hypotheses about the target group's health status are formed on the basis of this local knowledge. A local theory can in turn be developed on this foundation, and would then contain the following:

- A description of the characteristics of the local problem,
- An explanation of the local causes of the problem,
- Conclusions for the development of adequate responses.

In contrast to a "universal" scientific theory, a local theory does not claim to explain large-scale social dynamics or processes. Accordingly, local theories are less abstract, but also less comprehensive. The aim of a local theory is to provide a plausible explanation for a health problem that can be understood in local terms. To accomplish this, the concrete, tangible manifestations of the problem and its underlying behaviours and conditions are described within their particular context (setting). Specific interventions to resolve or mitigate the problem can then be derived from the description.

Local knowledge and local theories are often implicit (unspoken) and rarely exist in a structured, written form. Implicit insights and explanations are made explicit through the application of participatory methods of data collection and analysis. These insights and explanations include everything that is known about the health status of the target group as well as assumptions about what will improve it or make it worse. The Developing Local Objectives and Strategies (ZiWi) method is particularly suited to constructing local theories based on local knowledge, which can then serve as the basis for an evaluation.

Continue with:

- [Collaboration](#)
- [The ZiWi Method](#)
- Examples of the practical application of the ZiWi Method: [DROBS Magdeburg](#), [The Homeless Colony \(Obdachlosensiedlung\) Mainz](#), [\(Präventionsteam Kinderschutz\) Child Abuse Prevention Team Berlin](#) and [Guardian Angels \(Schutzengel\) Flensburg](#)
- [Methods](#)

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