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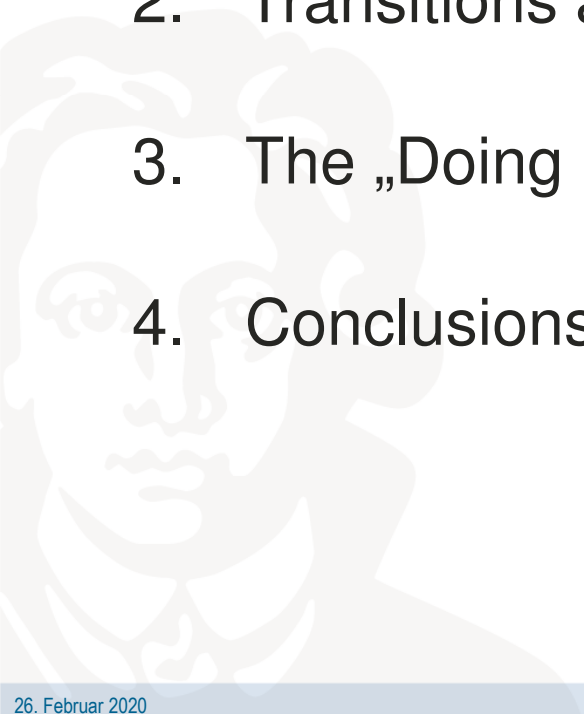
# Transitions and the ‘Extraordinary’ –

## Bodies, Spaces and Things in Doing Retiring

*Doing Transitions in the Life Course: Discourses, Practices, Institutions, Subjects, Feb. 2020*

# Outline

1. Doing Transitions in the Life Course
2. Transitions and (Extra)Ordinariness
3. The „Doing Retiring“ Project
4. Conclusions



# Doing Transitions in the Life Course

- **Transitio** = going across or over → movement between two status points
- **Transitions in the life course**: movement between social statuses or life stages (Walther & Stauber, 2013)
- **Doing transitions in the life course**: How are these movements being done?

multi-agential

multi-sited



processual

non-linear

TRANSFORMATIVE

# Transitions and (Extra)Ordinariness

- Extraordinariness signifies transitions / lack of extraordinariness signifies states
- Ordinariness signifies states / lack of ordinariness signifies transitions



- Must be apparent - often m



ings



# The Doing Retiring Project

- **Question: How is retiring being done?**
  - Which social practices constitute this process?
  - When, where, how, by whom and what are these practices carried out?
  - How are they connected and organized?

The aim is to identify, describe and analyse **practices and processes**, not people

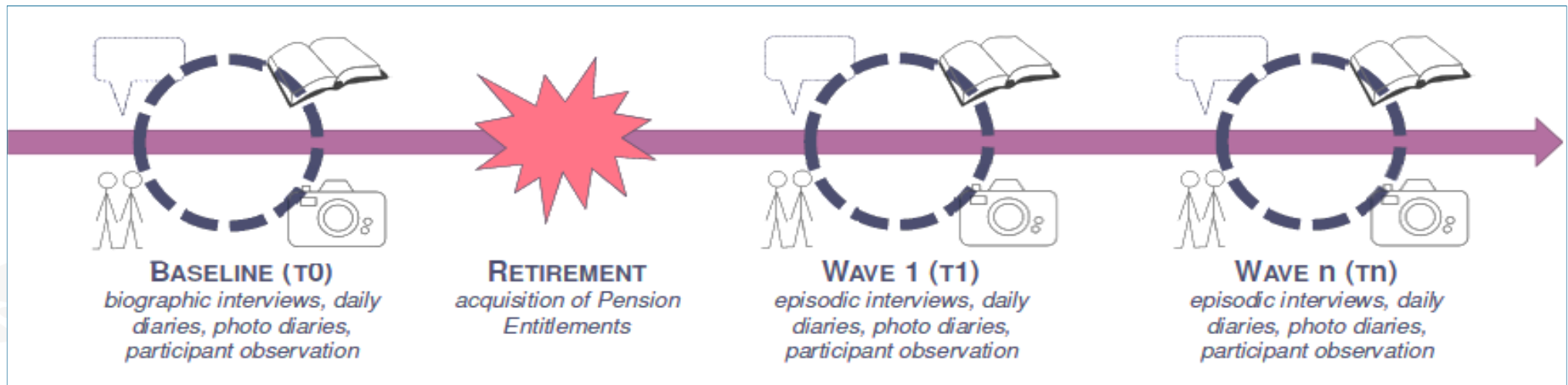


# The Doing Retiring Project

- **Question: How is retiring being done?**
  - Which social practices constitute this process?
  - When, where, how, by whom and what are these practices carried out?
- **How are they connected and organized?**
  - **Connection and organization through (Extra)Ordinariness**

The aim is to identify, describe and analyse **practices and processes**, not people

# The Doing Retiring Project



## Qualitative panel study

- Following 30 older adults from before until (up to) three years after retirement
- Methods: episodic interviews, photo & activity diaries, observations



## Quantitative data

- Transitions and Old Age Potential Survey
- German Time Use Survey

# Empirical Case: Retirement Travel

- All research participants made travelling relevant in the interview situation, and many started travelling immediately after their last day of work

*„We immediately went on vacation [...] literally without a gap day. I stopped working the one day and the next day we went down to Spain for four weeks. [...] So for me, this was very important [...] to gain a distance, you know. That felt good.“*

(Tom, 2<sup>nd</sup> interview)





# Empirical Case: Retirement Travel

- But transition travel is not just ‚vacation‘ – it differs from everyday travel in several aspects, i.a. duration and destinations (far away or particularly remote), as well as often entailing extreme physical and/or mental challenges

*„[...] not to this all-inclusive thing where I usually go to, but to truly search for this loneliness [...] to realize, is this okay now, am I at peace with myself. I found this incredibly important, and I enjoyed it so much that I asked myself: Why did I have to grow to become 60 years of age to treat myself with something like that?“*

(Tess, 1<sup>st</sup> interview)

*„Get up 5:30, meditation 6 – 7, Gong 7 - 8, 8 – 9 conscious breakfast, 9 – 9:45 singing and circle dance [...] 9 pm end of shift, and then, next day, get up at 5:30 again.“*

(Jan, 1<sup>st</sup> interview)

# Empirical Case: Retirement Travel

- For some participants, travelling became the ,new normal‘ of retirement life, and even helped to structure yearly life
- However, once (Extra)Ordinariness endured beyond what was perceived as transition process, it slowly started to be framed as *deviant*

*„I mean, I think it's great, but I wouldn't be able to do it (laughs), but it doesn't matter. Oh well, I, oh no. [...] We are too much, how do you call it, too down-to-earth, too rooted for that.“*

(Harald, 2<sup>nd</sup> interview)

*„This extensive travelling, it's a flight from dissatisfaction.“*

(Roland, 1<sup>st</sup> interview)

# Conclusions

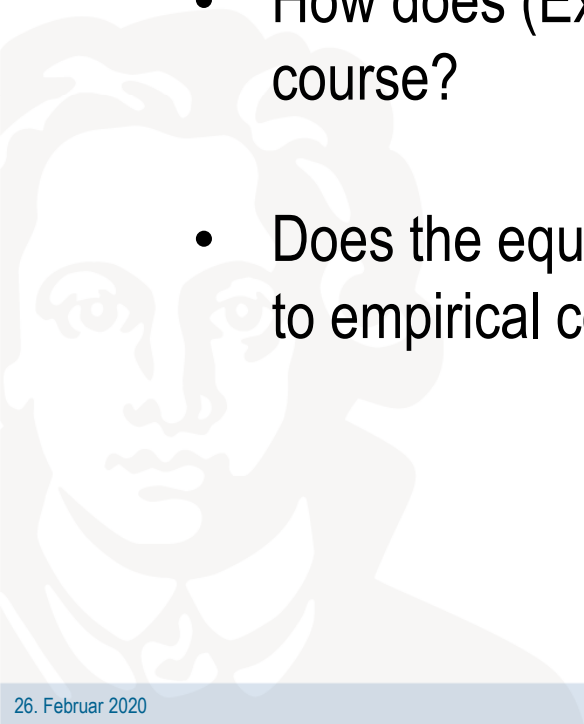
(Extra)Ordinariness...

- **signifies** life course transitions
  - is a **marker** of transitional practices and their **boundaries**
  - but: not *only* a marker!
- is a **mode of doing** life course transitions
  - is an **element** of transitional practices
  - is a **constitutor** of life course transitions
  - is **transformative** itself



# Questions

- Which shapes and forms does (Extra)Ordinariness take beyond materialities? (e.g. sounds, smells, online non-physical space,...)
- How does (Extra)Ordinariness differ between different transitions across the life course?
- Does the equation status = ordinariness, transition = extraordinariness hold true to empirical comparisons?



## Qualitative Sample

Age range	53 - 69 years (*1949-1965)
Male / Female	13 / 16
Urban / Sub-Urban / Rural	13 / 12 / 4
No children	9
No partner	8
Former occupations	researchers, teachers, head of development, bank clerks, IT personnel, self-employed, administrative, social workers, shift foremen, mechanical engineers, journalists
Pathways to retirement	Partial retirement (7) Early retirement (5) Disability pension (4) From unemployment (4) From fulltime to retirement (2) Worked past retirement age (2)