

Intergenerational Conversations About LGBTQ+ Needs at the End-of-Life – Reflections From Sweden

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Background

Sexual and gender minority populations (LGBTQ+) may have specific experiences and concerns regarding aging, dying, death, and loss. For example, in Sweden, older LGBTQ+ people have lived in times when their identities were criminalized and pathologized, and experiences from the HIV/AIDS pandemic may influence their concerns about end-of-life care. Furthermore, there are few intergenerational LGBTQ+ spaces to exchange experiences and build community. Therefore DöBra Rainbow Cafés were developed.

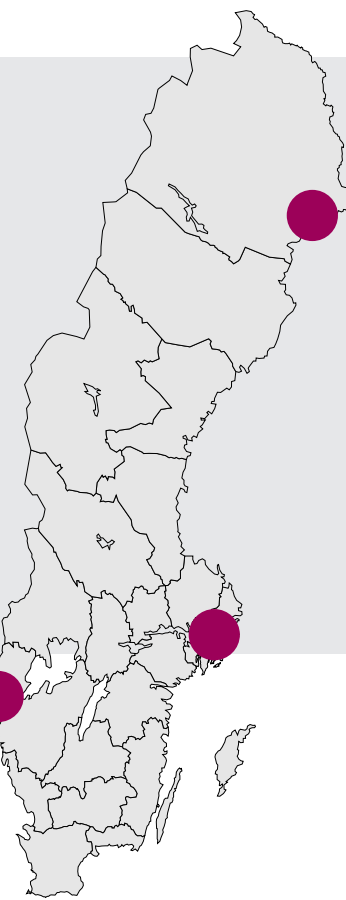
DöBra Rainbow Cafés

DöBra rainbow cafés are meeting places by and for LGBTQ+ people who want to talk about dying, death, loss and life. DöBra is a pun meaning literally dying well, and figuratively awesome. During cafés, participants discuss end-of-life related topics through open-ended questions and arts-based activities.

Research aim

To investigate the development process of the DöBra Rainbow Cafés and experiences of participating in them.

7 DöBra Rainbow Cafés thus far:



Places: Stockholm, Gothenburg, and Luleå
Period: Nov. 2022 - May 2024
Community partnerships: LGBTQ+ organisations, meeting groups, artists, and educators
Data generated: Reflective documentation after each café and 31 follow-up interviews with participants and partners (25-88 y/o)

Preliminary findings



Images from DöBra Rainbow Cafés.

The iterative café development illustrated the disparate needs of this diverse group. Some people are more comfortable in a separatist space for a certain sub-group, others may have specific experiences related to dying, death, and loss.

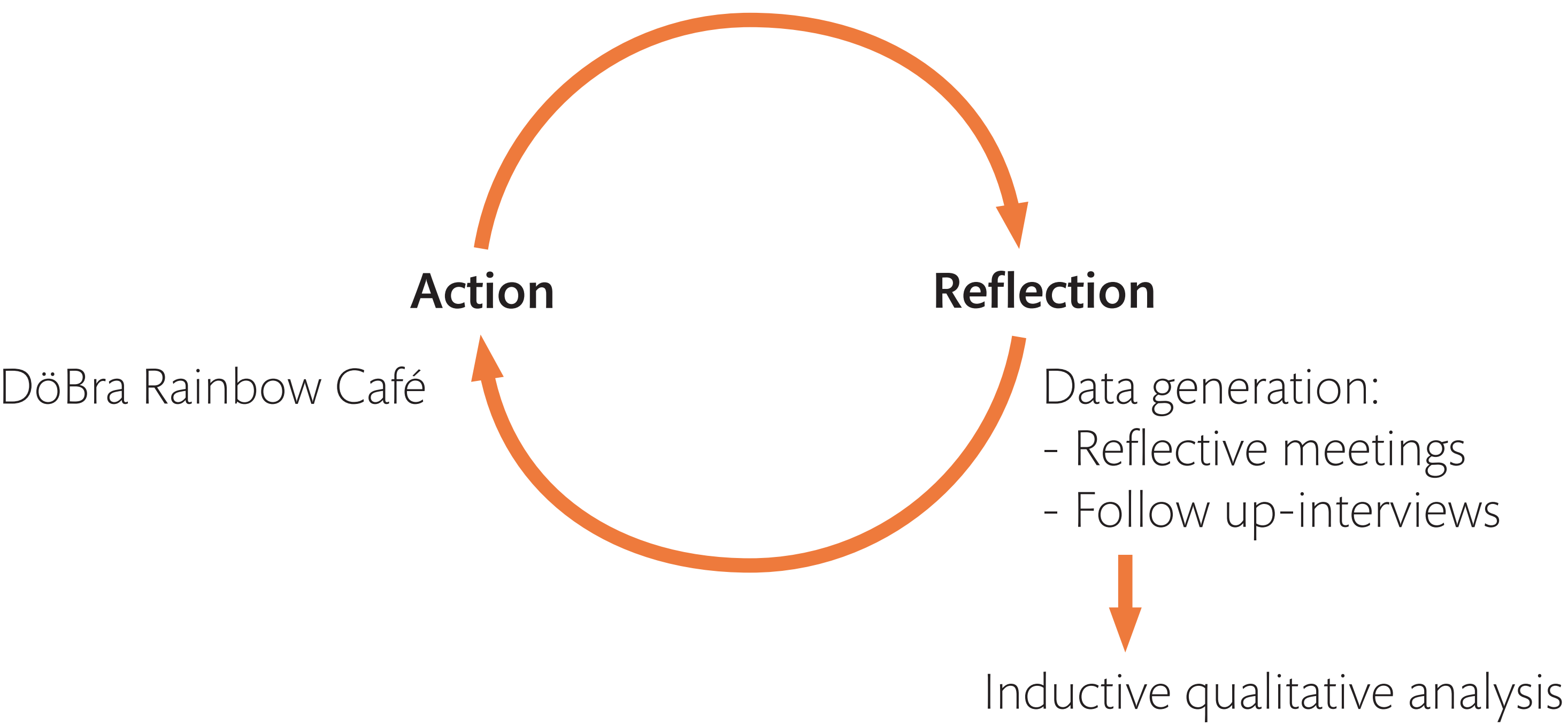
Therefore cafés engaged different groups:

- 2 cafés for LGBTQ+ people of all ages
- 1 café for older LGBTQ+ people
- 1 café for older lesbians
- 2 cafés for transgender people
- 1 café attended by LGBTQ+ newcomers (often asylum seekers)



High Heel Memorial, by Zafira Vrba Woodski, to commemorate trans people who have died. Image from a DöBra Rainbow Café.

Method: Qualitative action research



Participants described the cafés as a space to discuss end-of-life issues without a need to consider dominant heteronormative societal discourses.

Lesbian woman in her 70's:
"It means a lot... It was important because maybe there is a difference in how you can "die well" when you are LGBTQ, and also because it feels safer in a way to be in this context. I am [in my 70's] so I shouldn't even care, but it's anyway the whole time... in my whole life, since I came out [in my 30's], that I the whole time think about "what can I say, what can't I say" based on that I live with someone with the same gender. I am much better at it now, but I am not really at ease still... so then you choose to not say certain things maybe. But in this context it is easier."

Conclusion

Findings indicate a need for safer spaces where LGBTQ+ people can discuss end-of-life related concerns and find social support. Findings may help support organizations to create such spaces and sensitize end-of-life care staff to LGBTQ+ perspectives.

Scan the QR-code for more information.

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