

# Can research methods from different disciplines work together?

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A new article exploring how to make research methods from different disciplines work together has been published in Cultural Trends. The article's recommendations are based on the experience of organizing an enormous multidisciplinary project, Dementia and Imagination. With an emphasis on multidisciplinary research growing in the academy and social policy alike, this new article offers valuable insight to researchers and teams involved in collaborations between different specialisms.

Dementia and Imagination is a national project led by the Dementia Services Development Centre at Bangor University. It explored how art might 'improve the quality of life and community connectedness of people living with dementia'. It additionally sought to examine how art could challenge and change the public perception of dementia. The venture brought together the arts and humanities with the social sciences, which posed a challenge in terms of reconciling very different approaches to [research methods](#).

The project involved six UK universities and a wide range of civil society organizations. As different participating bodies had completely different philosophies about how to conduct the research owing to their 'different epistemologies', individual researchers had to become adaptable in their methods. Professor Andrew Newman of Newcastle University wrote, 'Researchers are required to be flexible to undertake research that answers the aims that have been set and that satisfy the needs of various stakeholders'. Many team members involved in such an environment found this experimental approach rewarding. Early early-

career researchers commented on how beneficial the experience of using both qualitative and quantitative methods was as a learning exercise. Ultimately, the project opted to not let a single approach dominate, favouring 'epistemological pluralism'. Such an approach, the authors believe, is essential when working on solutions to complex contemporary societal challenges such as how dementia-friendly communities may be created.

This article makes a significant contribution to knowledge about how the methodology of large-scale multidisciplinary projects may be constructed. Anyone building research groups across different universities and between universities and community partners will strongly benefit from reading this unique account.

**More information:** Andrew Newman et al. Carrying out research across the arts and humanities and social sciences: developing the methodology for, *Cultural Trends* (2016). [DOI: 10.1080/09548963.2016.1241338](https://doi.org/10.1080/09548963.2016.1241338)

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