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**The Documentary Method*****Exemplified by the Interpretation of Group Discussions*<sup>1</sup>**

The development of qualitative methods has mainly been influenced by sociology during the last 20 years. This is the reason why sociological traditions are dominant in the textbooks of qualitative research. We can distinguish four traditions, by which qualitative methods have been influenced.

**Main Roots and Methodologies of Qualitative Research**

First there is the Chicago School which dominated American sociology up to the beginning of the Second World War. Prominent names here are George Herbert Mead and William I Thomas and after the Second World War Herbert Blumer, Erving Goffman and Anselm Strauss. One branch of the Chicago school has become prominent as symbolic interactionism. Above all the *grounded theory* as a current methodology of qualitative research has its roots in this tradition.

A second root of qualitative methods is the *social phenomenology* of Alfred Schütz. The *ethnomethodology*, which had a strong influence on the development of qualitative methods, is partly influenced by this tradition. Starting at the beginning of the 1960<sup>th</sup> ethnomethodology is connected with the names of Harold Garfinkel and Aaron Cicourel.

Ethnomethodology however has also been influenced by the Chicago school, but still more by the sociology of knowledge of Karl Mannheim, which – like Chicago School - goes back to the 1920<sup>th</sup>. Mannheims sociology of knowledge can be seen as the third essential root of qualitative method besides Chicago school and phenomenology.

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As a further root of qualitative methods in Germany we have to mention the Frankfurt school in the tradition of Adorno and Habermas. In this tradition a qualitative practice of research in its own right has not been developed before the 1970<sup>th</sup> by Ulrich Oevermann under the name „objective hermeneutics“.

The objective hermeneutics already belongs to the *actual methodologies* of qualitative research like the *narrative analysis* or the *narrative interview* which has been developed by Fritz Schütze and has its main field of research in biographical analysis. Fritz Schütze has above all been influenced by the Chicago school and by ethnomethodology.

As another actual methodology, the *conversational analysis* developed by Harvey Sacks, is strongly connected with ethnomethodology. It is directed to the sociolinguistic analysis of the formal structures of everyday conversation or everyday talk.

The so called *hermeneutic sociology of knowledge*, which is connected with the name of Hans-Georg Soeffner, directly refers to the Social Phenomenology of Alfred Schütz.

The *grounded theory* (above all connected with the name of Anselm Strauss) is – as I already mentioned – directly rooted in the Chicago school.

Last there is our own methodology, the *documentary method*, which directly refers to the sociology of knowledge of Karl Mannheim. But it has also been influenced in some respects by ethnomethodology and by Chicago School.

The documentary method has been applied in various areas and with different instruments of research (see: Bohnsack/Nentwig-Gesemann/Nohl 2001). For example in the interpretation of interviews, in the interpretation of different sorts of conversation or talk, for instance the conversation in the family. It has been applied in the interpretation of videographics and of reports in the context of participant observation. At the moment I am very engaged in the interpretation of pictures, especially photographs, on base of the documentary method. But the broadest experience we have with the documentary method is in the field of group discussions.

## **The Aporie of Subjectivism and Objectivism and the Contribution of the Documentary Method to its Overcome**

Concerning the actual state of art in the area of qualitative methods in general there are especially two problems, which have to be faced in the methodology and in the practice of qualitative research:

Qualitative research is forced to acknowledge the state of discussion in the epistemology of social sciences and therefore it has to overcome objectivism which claims a privileged access to reality. This tendency towards an objectivistic stance has its origin partly in criticizing the subjectivism in quantitative research. So it has been pointed out (for instance by Adorno 1969), that even highly aggregated data which lay claim to representativity, often only permit an access to the *subjective* perspective of those under research. But the difference between the subjective meaning and the objective structure was often gained at the expense of taking the perspective of the observer as more or less absolute. The social and scientific standpoint of the observer thus was not reflected consequently.

By criticizing this objectivism those qualitative researchers, who are standing in the tradition of Social Phenomenology turned back to the subjective meaning („subjektiv gemeinter Sinn“) in the sense of Max Weber and took it as the basic element of the methodology and the theory of action in the social sciences – following by this Alfred Schütz in his way of continuing and specifying Webers position. This however has left us with an unmastered problem. By following the subjective meaning we can learn a lot about the perspective, that means: the theories and the intentions of those under research. But there is no way to differentiate methodologically between the perspective of those under research and the perspective of the *observer*. This means also that there is no real methodological difference between common-sense- and scientific interpretation.

The problem which I have outlined here is obviously not restricted to the area of qualitative methods. Much more this seems to be a central problem in nearly all methodologies and theories of action in the social sciences. But the discussion of these epistemological problems has been carried out with a special intensity in the area of qualitative research. Both antagonistic positions – the subjectivistic as well as the objectivistic - have in common that they both believe in or are bound up with the aporie of objectivism and subjectivism.

To overcome the dilemma between that way of empirical research which only duplicates the subjective meaning, at best systematizing it, but remaining within the borders of that what is taken for granted in the Common Sense on *one hand*,

and the objectivistic claim for a privileged access to reality on the *other hand*, it was Karl Mannheim who made an essential contribution already in the 1920<sup>th</sup>.

Mannheims sociology of knowledge offers a perspective for observation and interpretation in which – although there is a clear difference between the observers perspective and the subjective meaning of the actors – the *knowledge* of the actors (of those under research) is still the basis of analysis. Essential to this specific stance of observation is the distinction between two different sorts or levels of knowledge: the *reflexive or theoretical* knowledge on one hand and the *practical or incorporated* knowledge on the other hand. It is the latter knowledge by which action is orientated. This practical knowledge is an implicit knowledge. By Mannheim it has also been called „a-theoretical knowledge“. In English it is Michael Polanyi (1985) who has coined the term „tacit knowledge“.

This implicit or tacit knowledge forms a sort of structure, by which action is orientated mostly independently from the subjective meaning and it has insofar a certain objectivity against it. This structure of implicit knowledge however is at the same time a *mental* product. Mannheim therefore has called it an „objective mental structure formation“ („objektiv-geistiger Strukturzusammenhang“) (1982, S. 94). This sort of structure thus – to emphasize this again - belongs to the knowledge of the actors themselves. It is a knowledge, which is at the disposal of the actors and not a knowledge which only the observer has a privileged access to, as this is typical for the objectivistic approaches. The social scientific interpreters thus do not presume or presuppose that they know more than the actors in the field, but that those actors they themselves do not really know what exactly they know all about.

Thus the task of the scientific observer is the explication of this implicit or tacit knowledge. This epistemological starting position thus is fundamentally different from the objectivistic approaches. (It is not the task of the scientific observer to apply to the cases under research a knowledge about rules which is only known to him. Much more it is his or her task to bring to an explication that knowledge about rules which is known by those under research without being explicated by them).

The documentary method thus is apt to overcome the aporie between subjectivism and objectivism: Although the empirical base of research is in the knowledge of those under research and in their relevances, the observer is not committed to their subjective intentions and common sense-theories. Much more she or he is able to find an access to the structure of action and orientation, which exceeds the perspective of those under research.

## **The Change of the Analytic Stance from Asking ‘What’ to Asking ‘How’: from the Immanent to the Documentary Meaning**

Thus the documentary interpretation presupposes a change in the analytic stance different from the Common Sense. It is the change from the question *what* social reality *is* in the perspective of the actors to the question *how* this reality is produced or accomplished in practice by these actors. By practice I mean the practice of action as well as of talk, of presentation and of argumentation. Asking for the *how* is asking for the *modus operandi*, for the *habitus* which is basic to the practice in the sense of Pierre Bourdieu. The change from asking *what* to asking *how* also is constitutive for the constructivistic stance of analysis. In the sense of the system theory of Niklas Luhmann (1990) this is the transition between the *observations of first order* to the *observations of second order*. Thus Karl Mannheim has outlined the first explanation of the stance of the observer in the social sciences which still meets the requirements of epistemology today.

The constructivistic stance of analysis - especially there where it has become relevant for empirical research – has been influenced by ethnomethodology. Here – for the first time - social reality has been considered in a radical way from the point of view of its „practical accomplishment“, as Garfinkel has called it. The documentary method is one of the crucial terms of ethnomethodology, taken over from Mannheim (1952) by Harold Garfinkel (1961 and 1967). (The understanding of the documentary method in ethnomethodology however is connected with some limitations in theoretical perspective, which cannot be considered here; see: Bohnsack 1997).

The documentary method offers – on the level of an observation of the second order – an access to the pre-reflexive or tacit knowledge, which is implicated in the practice of action. Asking for the *documentary meaning* can – as I already mentioned – be understood as asking for the *How*: how practice is produced or accomplished. That means asking for the *modus operandi* of practical action. This question has to be distinguished from asking for the *What*, which is on the level of the observer of *first order*. In the terms of Mannheim the meaning of first order is the *immanent* meaning.

In the case of verbal expressions the immanent meaning also can be called the literal or referential meaning. Concerning group discussions the immanent meaning comprises that stock of knowledge which can be made explicit by the participants themselves. This has to be distinguished from a knowledge of experiences, which is so much taken for granted by the participants that it must not or also *can* not be made explicit by themselves. The participants understand

each other, because they hold a common knowledge, without any need to explicate this knowledge.

If we look at group discussions or at everyday talk in general only on the level of the literal or explicit meaning, the discussions often seem to be without real connection between the topics and without general structure. It seems to the observer as if always new meanings would emerge. I would like to illustrate this problem by an example which stems from a research project about young migrant people of turkish origin (see: Bohnsack et al. 2002 and Bohnsack/Nohl 1998). The discourse was initiated by the interviewers asking, if the young people actually live with their parents. First the male young people in turn give narrations. They depicted by this that because of their respect against the father it would be impossible to smoke in his presence. Then they delineate how they behave in their peer-group. At last one of them depicts the situation of a visit in a restaurant with his german girlfriend. There was a dispute with her about who is allowed to pay the bill.

Although the topics change permanently, the young people *understand* (in German: „verstehen“) each other obviously without being able to *interpret* (in German: interpretieren), that means: without being able to explicate the message which is connected with their depictions – to explicate the framework or structure of orientations, which is underlying the depictions. This framework of orientations, as we have called it, can only be unfolded by depictions and narrations, that means: it can only be depicted metaphorically. It is the researcher, who in behalf of the participants explicates their frame of orientation, who brings it to terms. The task of the researchers as documentary interpreters thus is the theoretical explication of the mutual implicit or intuitive understanding of the participants.

Only when the researchers succeed in this explication they will be able to identify that pattern of meaning resp. that problem which underlies the whole discourse and which is worked out through different topics. Than it becomes possible to look behind the surface of continuously emerging new opinions of the participants and to identify those general patterns or frames of orientations which are represented by the discourse.

In our example that pattern of meaning or orientation, which is documented throughout the whole discourse, we have called the pattern of the „separation of spheres“. It is a separation between the *inner sphere*, the sphere of life inside the family, the networks of relatives and ethnic community, and the sphere outside of it in the public: the *outer sphere*. This distinction is constitutive for the whole everyday practice of the young people. So we can see that the traditional habitus

of respect to the father and the family requires to keep central elements of the *outer* sphere (that means: the activities of the young people in the peer group and in school and at the working place) out of the *inner* sphere (so for example even the activity of smoking cigarettes). So we have a separation or severance of spheres, which makes it hardly possible to have an open negotiation between children and parents about problems which are relevant for the identity of the young people. Both spheres with their different moralities (the ‚german‘ and the ‚turkish‘) stand apart from each other.

This separation of spheres concerns different areas of the everyday life, which become topics of the discourse - among others also the relationship with the german girlfriend. In case of a conflict between these different moralities there is no (meta-) communicative negotiation with the girlfriend, but a strategic circumvention. Also in other passages of the same group discussion (so for example when the young people report about their experiences with ethnic discrimination), we find that frame or pattern of orientation, which we have called the separation of spheres. On a certain level of abstraction we can recover a homologous pattern throughout the whole discourse once we have succeeded to identify it in one of the passages or topics. Those passages which are much more than others qualified to identify the general pattern of orientation in the sense of the habitus of a group or a person we call *focusing passages* or *focusing metaphors*. These passages are characterized by detailed or dense depictions (that is what we call *metaphorical density*) and by a high commitment (that is what we call *interactive density*). The passages make it possible to get a quick and valid access to the central patterns of orientation.

By this example central components of the documentary method, especially the documentary interpretation of group discussions, have been mentioned:

- The documentary meaning can be distinguished from the immanent or literal meaning
- The documentary meaning reveals itself, if the *process* of discourse is taken into account.
- On one hand such a process analysis requires a detailed reconstruction of the reference of the utterances to each other. We call this „*organization of discourse*“.
- On the other hand such a process analysis means to take into account the „*dramaturgy of the discourse*“, to identify its culminating points, its „*focusing metaphors*“

### **Focusing Metaphors and Conjunctive Spaces of Experiences**

Culminating points in the dramaturgy of the discourse, as they are represented by focusing metaphors, refer to the centres of common experiences of the members of the group, to the centres of a common *experiential space*. Following Karl Mannheim we call this a *conjunctive space of experiences* (in German: *konjunktiver Erfahrungsraum*). Those, who have biographical experiences in common, who have things in common in their history of socialization and thus have a common or conjunctive experiential space, understand each other immediately insofar as these biographical commonalities become relevant in interaction and discourse. These commonalities can be found in different dimensions. They may concern the dimension of generation, the dimension of gender, of milieu or class, the dimension of the life course or – as in our example – the dimension of migration, because the young people have a common history of migration. Accordingly we distinguish between experiential spaces which are *generational-*, *educational-*, *genderspecific*, *migrational-specific* and *specific for a phase in the life course* (for instance adolescence). To take this into account, empirical analysis must always be *multidimensional*. Which of these experiential space becomes dominant, depends on the composition of the participants of the discussion. It is dependent on the socialization history which is shared by the participants. The reconstruction of the dramaturgy of the discourse and thus the identification of focusing metaphors enables us to identify that experiential space and thus that background of socialization which is dominant in the group. (In our example it is the experiential space and background of migration). The group then gradually adjusts itself to those topics, which are in the centre of the common experience, if the researchers are successful to initiate a discourse which gradually gains a self-dynamic, which becomes independent from their interventions. That means that the researcher – at least in the first phase of a group discussion – should interfere with the discussion only insofar as this contributes to get the discourse going, to enable, to initiate or to keep the self-dynamics of the discourse. The self-dynamics are important also for another reason: It is only in the interplay of the mutual reactions of the participants that the *collective meaning* (in difference from the individual meaning) of the utterances is constituted and by this also is available to the interpretations of the researcher. Only in the mutual references to each other the collective pattern of meaning, the tacit knowledge as a collective knowledge is able to document itself.

Besides initiating the self-dynamics of the discussion it is a central principle of leading a group discussion to initiate or generate descriptions or narrations of the everyday practice. The implicit knowledge of those under research can mostly be found in concrete and detailed depictions of practical action. By this the structure of orientations underlying the practical action, the „modus operandi“ or the „habitus“ in the terms of Pierre Bourdieu, can be identified.

For this I would like to give still another example. This time it stems from an earlier research about young people from a small town in Northern Bavaria. Here we have a passage taken from a discourse of young female workers.

In the discourse of the young women it were – in contrast to the discourse of the young men -

the gender relations which became the central topic, a topic that had all features of a focusing metaphor and thus stood in the focus of the discourse. The following passage, which I will explain to you, is about the gender specific division of labour – more concretely it is about the participation of the father in the housework.

Here we have a part of a longer depiction, given by one of the girls, a depiction of how the father is pottering about in the kitchen (Haus: Geschlechtsrolle, 5.07-42 u. 6.20-27). (In the original version the transcript is in the bavarian or more precisely: in the franconian dialect, which of course can't be translated here):

### **Discussion group: House; Excerpt: Gender role**

When my mother is cooking something he says: what have you been cooking again, what does it taste like let me have a look. Then she says: go away, I am doing the cooking, o.k.. Or when he sometimes throws his fit he goes away and buys meat and stuff and then she says: what have you bought again? Hmm, I'll cook something in advance and we'll freeze it then. Then he goes there (in the kitchen) and is cooking from nine in the morning till ten in the evening if it's possible. And then we always have to, we are not allowed ((laughing)) to stand around in his way, but we are also supposed to tidy up. He takes everything out, he needs all cooking pots, for everything he cooks he needs a separate pot (.) he always ((laughing)) says (now) we have four hotplates he always says: there are not enough hotplates (for me), we need more hotplates, he cooks like a maniac, I'm serious, and he always says. Now I haven't got ((laughing)) a pot left, (.) clean the pots, then we are standing there cleaning the pots. Then he says , now you are standing in my way again and then (.)

But when the when the (my) mother is sweeping the kitchen or so (.) then he runs through the kitchen so that you can see every (single) step. My mother says: Couldn't you have waited until (.) until this is dry, it only takes five minutes? No I've had to go in there right now

And (.) ( ) (.) ( ) (.) he is allowed to do everything. But we are always (playing) the twits, when he is doing the cooking, that really annoys me.

The young women communicate about a problem which is obviously central for them by contributing in turn descriptions and narrations of their everyday life in

the family. For us, who were leading the discussion, it was - at least at the beginning - not at all clear, what was going on here. (In the terms of ethnomethodology the utterances are highly „indexical“; see: Garfinkel 1961).

### **Habitus and Frameworks of Orientations as central Objects of the Documentary Method**

After a procedure of interpretation (which is exemplified in the „Exemplary Interpretation of a Text“ above) we at least could work out the following pattern of meaning: that means: the documentary pattern of meaning:

- Pretending to be helpful to the women with his cooking – or maybe also in good believe to do so – the father is allowed to penetrate into the sphere of the women, into the kitchen and to have his fling there. By this the father does not take any responsibility neither in respect of economy nor tidiness. The responsibility remains on the women’s side.
- Modes of participation of men, which are not really organized according to partnership in the sense that men take over responsibilities, are only apt to restrict the scope of action for the women. At the same time they increase the burden of work for them, because men - after having dealt more playfully with womenspecific work – can retire and leave to the women the main work, the „dirt“ or „muck“ as the girl puts it, so that women at last are the twits or the dupes or losers.
- Although it does not correspond with the desires or intentions of the girls, who would prefer living together in a mode of partnership, the more conventional organization of the roles has the advantage that it opens a sphere of autonomy to the women within these limitations. – It becomes evident that this is the *central framework of orientation or habitus* (see: Bohnsack 1998 and 1992) of the young women.

The other girls participating in the discussion then referred to each other by bringing into the discourse other depictions of social scenes, which partly had different topics: For example the relation to the boyfriend and his sexual obtrusiveness or the relation to the father, who uses physical violence trying to discipline his daughter.

Looking carefully at the depictions in this passage as well as in other passages and also in discussions with other young female workers always the same pattern, a homologous pattern of meaning is documented. Searching for this homologous pattern of meaning is the general task of the documentary method: Obviously we have a homologous problem in different groups. This is the prob-

lem of *maintaining the sphere of the women against men and their practice of intervention*.

At the same time these metaphorical depictions of the young women give us an *explanation* for this gender-specific orientation. That means that our interpretations in the framework of the sociology of knowledge are about to reconstruct or redesign those social processes or processes of interaction, of which the social reality of this gender orientation of the *division of spheres*, may be seen as a result. These gender relations may be seen as the result of a background of experiences which also may be reconstructed or redesigned.

By these interpretations of the scenic or metaphorical depictions we also get an access to those activities and consequences of action which are not identical with the theories, intentions or normative expectations of the actors. We can get some insights into the non-intentional consequences of the activities apart from normative demands and apart from the common sense-theories. So the intention or the normative demand of the father in our example is to be helpful in the kitchen. The consequences or entanglements of action however look quite different. On the other side the normative or theoretical orientations of the young women concerning partnership are also standing in discrepancy to what is documented in their depictions. In the process of family interaction they are always again entangled into a structure which let them refrain from the orientation to partnership in favour of the outlined habitus of the division of spheres. The documentary method as a process analysis thus also allows us to differentiate between theories, norms and intentions on one hand and the non-intentional or habitualized activities on the other hand.

(Concerning biographies and biographical narrations we can also differentiate, as has been shown by Fritz Schütze (1983) first, between that, what happened in the course of the life history on one hand and on the other hand that, what had been the intentions, norms or theories of those entangled into these structures of the process of life history ).

### **Understanding (Verstehen) versus Interpretation (Interpretieren)**

Going back to the depictions of the young women we can see that the documentary or metaphorical meaning cannot be brought to an explication by the young women themselves - neither the pattern of orientation concerning the division of spheres nor the process of the genesis of this pattern of orientation. The depictions of their experiences much more belong to the preflexiv or implicit knowledge. The theoretical explication is – as I mentioned before – the task of the scientific observer. We call this theoretical explication *interpretation*.

Those patterns of meaning however can also be comprehended without an explication, that means: without an interpretation. This is what Karl Mannheim

(1982) called „understanding“ (in German: „Verstehen“). The young women understand each other by referring in turn to the tacit knowledge or tacit meanings which are implied in their depictions without any necessity to interpret each other.

Different to understanding the interpretation, the theoretical explication of the process of practical action by which the pattern of orientation is constituted and reproduced, requires a specific line or stance of analysis, namely a „genetic stance“ which I characterized by asking for the How. This analytic stance is connected with „putting in brackets the character of validity“ of social facts. It is connected with a „suspension“ of the character of validity of social facts – as Mannheim (1982) called it (in German: „Einklammerung des Geltungscharakters“). That means that the claims for truth and normative rightness, as they are connected by those under research with the social facts, are put in brackets, are suspended. Thus the interpreter has no interest in the question, if the depiction (here the description how the father is pottering about in the kitchen) is right, if it corresponds to the fact or to the truth. Much more the Interpreter asks, what is documented in the experiential depictions of the young women about their attitude, their habitus, their frame of orientation.

Because that pattern of orientation or meaning which is constitutive for their everyday practice (the pattern of the division of spheres) is not explicated by themselves, it is not completely conscious to them. But as it comes to an expression in their descriptions and narrations, it is also not totally unconscious or latent. Concerning the question which sort of consciousness we have about our own habitus, Bourdieu has commented that we cannot oppose a „completely transparent consciousness“ to a „totally opaque consciousness“ (Bourdieu 1972, S. 200). According to Bourdieu it is self-evident „que l’on ne peut répondre en opposant, selon l’alternative du tout ou rien, la conscience parfaitement transparente à l’inconscient totalement opaque“. Those patterns of meaning and orientation, which are the object of interpretation in the documentary method, belong to the collective stock of knowledge of the young women in a way that actually they don’t know what they know all about. As I mentioned repeatedly, the explication of this implicit or tacit knowledge is the task of the documentary method. To the main difference between the immanent or literal meaning on one hand and the implicit or documentary meaning on the other hand I will now come back again to make a rough sketch of the working steps of the documentary method (which are exemplified in the „Exemplary Interpretation of a Text“).

## **Formulating and Reflecting Interpretation**

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The transition from the immanent to the documentary meaning is – as I explained – the transition from asking *what* to asking *how*. In accordance to this *what* has been said, depicted or discussed, what has become the topic of a discourse is to be separated from *how* the topic, that means: *in which framework*, the topic is dealt with. This framework of orientation (which we also call the habitus) is the central subject of the documentary interpretation. The comparative analysis from the outset is of central importance for this interpretation, because the framework of orientation takes shape and can be empirically examined only in comparison to other groups or other cases. We have to ask: How is the same topic dealt with in other groups or by other individuals?

Concerning the practice of research this methodological difference between the immanent and the documentary meaning resp. the difference between the observations of the *first* and the *second* order has as its consequences a clearcut separation of two steps of working: Following this two-step-interpretation it can be made clear, where and howfar that, what has already been interpreted (that means: explicated by those under research), is only *formulated* by the researchers - this is what we call *formulating interpretation* - and when, at which point, the researchers bring up own interpretations in reflection upon the implicit self-evident knowledge of those under research - this is what we call *reflecting interpretation*. The basic structure of the *formulating interpretation* is the decoding and formulation of the *topical structure* of a text. The formulating interpretation in itself is separated into different steps (which are explained in „Exemplary Interpretation of a Text“).

The task of the *reflecting interpretation* is – as I mentioned – the reconstruction of the framework of orientation, the Habitus. The basic structure of the reflecting interpretation is the reconstruction of the formal structure of a text (besides ist topical structure). In the case of group discussions it is the *organization of discourse* which first has to be reconstructed. That means that we have to characterize the way , how the participants refer to each other formally in their utterances.

### **Typification and the Multidimensionality of Analysis**

The next step of analysis, the step of typification, of constructing types, starts from the *common features* of all the cases: For example in our research about young people of turkish origin we could identify more or less in all cases, in all groups a common problem of orientation which I already characterized as the problem of the *seperation of spheres*, the seperation of the outer from the inner

sphere. When we classify this as typical for migration and thus form – as we call it – a *migrational typification*, we presuppose a comparative analysis insofar as we look for things in common between all groups of turkish origin. But we also presuppose a comparative analysis insofar as we look for differences, for a contrast with *non-migrant* groups. But going further the reconstruction of a migrational typification is only valid, if the migrational space of experience can be worked out in its relation to other spaces of experience, resp. to other typifications. We also speak of an *overlying* of different spaces of experience or different typifications. For instance when comparing young people of turkish origin of different sex, of different milieus or classes, of different generations we can observe different ways of dealing with the same migrational problem: the problem of the seperation of spheres.

On one hand this comparative analysis is required to reconstruct for example gender- and generational typifications. On the other hand the validity and the generalizability of the migrational typification is only proved, if it can be identified throughout these overlyingings or differentiations. The degree of validity and generalizability of a single typification – for instance the migrational typification – depends on how manifold, that means: how multidimensional the single case can be located within a whole typology, how manifold it can be related to other typifications like gender, generation or life cycle (see: Bohnsack 2001b). This was meant when I said that qualitative analysis always should be *multidimensional*.

## The Documentary Method Exemplified by the Interpretation of Group Discussions

- four main roots of qualitative methods: ▪ Chicago school (symbolic interactionism) ▪ social phenomenology and ethnomethodology ▪ Mannheims sociology of knowledge ▪ Frankfurt school
- important methodologies of qualitative research today: ▪ objective hermeneutics ▪ narrative analysis ▪ conversational analysis ▪ hermeneutic sociology of knowledge ▪ documentary method
- the contribution of the documentary method to overcome the aporie between subjectivism and objectivism
- the change of the analytic stance from asking *what* (observations of first order) to asking *why* (observations of second order) as the difference between the *immanent* (literal) and the *documentary* (implicit) meaning
- continuously *emerging* new patterns of immanent meaning versus *representation* of general patterns of orientations - the documentary meaning - in group discussions
- the documentary interpretation of group discussions as *process analysis*: the analysis of the *organization* of discourse and the *dramaturgy* of discourse
- the culminating points in the dramaturgy of the discourse (*focusing metaphors*) indicate the centres of common experiences, of collective or *conjunctive spaces of experience*
- the concrete group (case) takes part in different (gender-, generation- and milieu-specific) spaces of experience
- patterns of orientation and their backgrounds of experiences are documented in the metaphorical or implicit stock of knowledge of everyday descriptions and narrations
- the documentary method opens the chance to differentiate between theories, norms and intentions on one hand and the habitualized practices (*habitus*) on the other hand
- *understanding* (Verstehen) versus *interpretation* (Interpretieren), which means the explication of what has been understood

- „putting in brackets the (common sense) character of validity“ (of truth and normative rightness) in the documentary method
- *formulating* (immanent) and *reflecting* (documentary) interpretation as the elementary steps of work
- *typification* and generalization on base of a multidimensional comparative analysis

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