

## 6 Empirical Design and Methodology

Given the lack of systematic research on the specific group of ‘mobile creative knowledge workers,’ a qualitative approach seeking exploration was chosen for this study. Applying such a methodology necessitates considering the character of the gathered data. I chose to take a very close and detailed look into a small number of cases in order to understand the complexity of the relation between mobility and belonging in creative knowledge workers’ lives. Furthermore, I am interested in finding out about the potential importance of individual mobility in creative industries – thus another aspect which makes it even more complex. I will start this chapter with an introduction to the phenomenological perspective in empirical research. In the context of this perspective, the notion of the ‘lifeworld’ – which I have so far used without explanation – is introduced. It should help us to understand the overall frame for studying individual cases (section 6.1). I will then discuss the method of data collection. Here, you will find information on my sampling strategy, on the character of the interviews I have done, on the mental mapping method that I used, and also a reflection on the interview situations and atmospheres (section 6.2). I will dedicate a third part of this chapter to the mode of analysis, describing in what I root my technique: namely, grounded theory, objective hermeneutics, and qualitative heuristics (section 6.3).

### 6.1 The Phenomenological Perspective: Studying the Lifeworld of Others

Phenomenology is a philosophical approach to science that became widely noticed through the work of Edmund Husserl in the 19th century. Basically, it is the study of conscious action. A phenomenological perspective applied to human beings and social interaction understands the human being as existing in a state of ‘consciousness’, in which all action takes place with ‘intention’ and has ‘significance’. Intention is based on one’s reflection about the difference between how things should be and how they actually are. The human being embeds a large share of action within conscious reflection, and thus relates intentions to this action. Intentionality, however, is dependent on mutual understanding. Two interacting people have to have a shared understanding of this intention. Consequently, reference frames are an important issue in the study of social interaction, if seen through a phenomenological lens. Basically one could sum up the phenomenological position as follows: it’s all about interpretation. People interpret what others signal them through their action, and the sociologist’s role is to interpret the interpretation of others. This brings us to the notion of the ‘lifeworld’, which could be thought of as a person’s individual reference frame based on previous experiences and personal knowledge stock (I will come back to this in section 6.1.1).

The phenomenological perspective in sociological research is based on early work by Edmund Husserl and Alfred Schütz, and it was rediscovered by Luckmann (cf. Hitzler & Eberle, 2008; Grathoff, 1995; Eberle, 2000). Husserl (1969 [1936]) observed a crisis of European science, which he found to be based on the fact that scientists did not take into consideration the real and existing lifeworld of most people. Scientists were often imprisoned in their theories and abstractions that were distanced from social realities. Husserl wanted to illustrate the pre-existence of ‘lifeworlds’, independent of their potential scientific observations. For Husserl, the lifeworld is the original sphere. It is the pre-existing foundation of everyday practice and reflection. It existed before scientific observation. Lifeworlds are always individual. Each person lives in his or her own lifeworld in which, through scientific study, evidence could be found for more formal social structures (cf. Hitzler & Eberle, 2008: 109/110).

Alfred Schütz (in co-authorship with Luckmann; see Schütz & Luckmann, 2003) later adopted these early reflections of Husserl. Schütz observed that social sciences, in opposition to natural sciences, are dealing with recapitulating social ‘sense making’ and ‘significance’. According to Schütz, we can only find larger societal structures of sense making by looking at the lifeworld of the individual. Sociological research is thus the reflection about the similarities between lifeworlds and their sense making arguments. In this epistemological perspective the ‘lifeworld’ is both a reference frame for social sciences as well as their empirical object of study. On the basis of his or her own lifeworld, the sociologist should try to understand the lifeworlds of others in a given thematic field. The aim is to identify universal structures of subjective constitution (Hitzler & Eberle, 2008: 111).

Schütz looked for a secure way through which sociology could ‘understand’ (*Verstehende Soziologie*). He refers to Weber’s understanding of sociology as a science that seeks to understand subjective sense-making related to individual action and practice. How people attribute sense to their individual action should be analyzed. As Hitzler & Eberle resume (2008: 112<sup>60</sup>): ‘*Explaining social phenomena based on individual action necessarily calls for the study of the subjective sense which this action has for the acting individual.*’ In Schütz’ explanations, sense-making works through conscious reflection (*Bewusstseinsakte*). A person experiences different situations in life, and they give these experiences a certain sense related to other experiences. In a person’s mind, a superimposed system of more abstract senses develops through a process of grouping single experiences. Thus, a single experience receives a certain sense through reflection on former experiences.

The interpretation of the sense of individual experiences might change with time and with the accumulation of new experiences, as well as with a change in one’s

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<sup>60</sup> Translated by the author from the German text: ‘*Soziale Phänomene aus den Handlungen der beteiligten Individuen zu erklären, muss daher heißen, auf den subjektiven Sinn zu rekurrieren, den diese Handlungen für die Handelnden selbst haben.*’

personal sense system. Schütz's main interest is to understand how people understand each other even though they cannot look into the other's mind. He thinks that mutual understanding evolves from signification. Sense is transported through signs that have to be interpreted by the recipient on the basis of their personal experience and knowledge, and in the frame of a situative relevance system (*situatives Relevanzsystem*). Thus, the recipient can only partially understand what the sender of a sign means, as the sender's experience and situative relevance system is different from that of the recipient. The closer and the more contemporary both sender and recipient are in space and time, the better they can understand each other, as relevance systems and experiences might be more similar.

As a consequence, social sciences have to acknowledge that sense in the social world is pre-structured. It is a structure of 'primary order'. In contrast, the scientific abstraction and theoretisation is a structure of 'secondary order', which is based on this primary order. Schütz defines two methodological aspects that become relevant. First, subjective interpretation is the central tool in developing sociological models, which are based on observed action and the exploration of sense in this action. Second, the sociologists' concepts and models have to be adequate. This means they have to reflect the sense systems and the understandings of the studied individuals and their lifeworlds. These sociological models and concepts should use common language and sense so that the studied individuals understand them. Hence, sociologists should avoid constructing theories and concepts that do not exist in the real world (cf. Schütz & Luckmann, 2003).

Reflecting on Schütz's work, Hitzler & Eberle (2008: 114) conclude that experience is the central issue in the phenomenological perspective. Phenomenological analysis of the 'lifeworld', for example, means looking for shared and more general sense making and interpretation in the society. These general sense structures in the end could be characterised as 'objective'. Furthermore, how these objective senses are internalised by the individual and how individuals change these objective senses has to be studied, too. For the scientific practice, this implies a necessity to systematically reconstruct multiple experiences. Consequently, there is no objective facticity (*objektive Faktizität*), but only subjective constitutions of consciousness and sense making. Hitzler & Eberle indicate that between individual lifeworlds – including their relevance systems and stocks of experiences – there are several 'inter-subjective' overlaps that facilitate orientation in everyday life. Shared interpretations are necessary tools for living together. This means that social practice is first of all a communicative action, which includes a large share of interpretative work. Interacting subjects have to define the degree of overlapping between their individual lifeworlds. Hitzler & Eberle (2008) also point to the fact that the lifeworld is divided into so-called 'small lifeworlds', which Marx termed 'specific worlds' (*Sonderwelten*). These fragments of the lifeworld enable one to relate single experiences to a shared, intersubjective stock of knowledge (e.g. the professional world, the family world). Only a particular relevance system is applicable in each 'small lifeworld', and thus complexity is reduced.

Hitzler and Eberle illustrate this with the growing differentiation of human knowledge stocks into small expert knowledge systems, shared and understood only by selected members, and not understood by non-members. In particular, in societies characterised by individualization and differentiation, the logic of studying individual lifeworlds becomes a necessity. Kurt (2002) remarks that social phenomenology deals with the consciousness about the consciousness of others. Kurt refers to Husserl's understanding of consciousness as the experience of the position of the 'Me' (*Ich*) in relation to another relevant 'object'. For Husserl, the *Ich* and the other object form opposite poles in the mind. Through controlled reflection and reconstruction – which is the sociologist's job – the constitution of society and its internal relations is made possible. Social phenomenology could be brought to the point in the following phrase (Kurt, 2002: 253<sup>61</sup>): *'The core of this argumentation is the idea that the human being is a relation, who relates in understanding ways to itself and to others through setting and interpreting symbols.'*

This goes along with a growing relevance of hermeneutics and explorative methodological designs. Hitzler & Eberle (2008: 118<sup>62</sup>) comment: *'[Opposed to the phenomenological insight that different types of knowledge might be relevant], the testing of hypotheses in the frame of deductive-nomological approaches to explanation – somehow implicitly – requires that people act equally under equal conditions. This is often the case in societies with mainly traditional orientation, but in modern societies this only happens in the sphere of routinised action. The more modern societies are characterized by detraditionalisation, by the increasing options [for acting] and by individualisation (Gross 1994, 1999), and the more often individual actors re-interpret their own situation, the more their knowledge and action becomes contingent, the more also the predictive power of 'if-then' assertions fades, and the more urgent explorative and interpretative research designs become (cf. also Hitzler 1997, 1999b).'*

Equally, Kurt (2002) mentions that objective positions in science have only limited applicability. They have their value in studying objects that are independent of sub-

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61 Translated by the author from the German text: *'Den Kern der Argumentation bildet der Gedanke, dass der Mensch ein Verhältnis ist, das sich Zeichen setzend und Zeichen verstehend zu sich und zu anderen verhält.'*

62 Translated by the author from the German text: *'[Gegenüber der phänomenologische Erkenntnis, dass unterschiedliche Wissensarten relevant sein können] setzt das Testen von Hypothesen im Rahmen des deduktiv-nomologischen Erklärungsmodells – sozusagen implizit – voraus, dass Menschen unter gleichen Bedingungen gleich handeln. In Gesellschaften mit vorwiegend traditionaler Orientierung ist dies zwar oft der Fall, in modernen Gesellschaften jedoch lediglich im Bereich von Routinehandlungen. Je mehr moderne Gesellschaften durch Enttraditionalisierung, Optionensteigerung und Individualisierung geprägt sind (Gross 1994, 1999) und je öfter die Akteure ihre Situationen um- oder neu interpretieren, desto kontingenter wird ihr Wissen und Handeln, desto mehr verkümmert die Prognosefähigkeit der Wenn-dann-Aussagen und umso dringlicher werden explorativ-interpretative Forschungsdesigns (vgl. dazu auch Hitzler 1997, 1999b).'*

jectivity. They could be applied to measurable ‘quasi-natural’ laws (*Gesetzmäßigkeiten*), and often they are embedded in inductive approaches. Yet, phenomenology is a completely different perspective. It is not about a description of the obvious and visible facts; rather, it deals with the question of how these facts become obvious. The central focus in social sciences is on ‘phenomena’ such as experience, perception, sense making and consciousness. It is first of all a reflexive process into which the scientist also has to involve his personal experiences and lifeworld. Kurt says (2002: 10<sup>63</sup>): *‘The starting point of social phenomenology is not social realities but symbolic materials which are interpreted in respect to the social sense that can be expressed through them. The aim of understanding in social phenomenology is the development and application of ideal types, which can explain interpersonal relationships.’*

Given the fact that creative knowledge workers use symbolic content as a central resource for their work, I think it becomes useful to take a phenomenological perspective for the analysis of my interviews. Remembering the words of Kurt (2002) that human beings are relational and they send and receive signs and symbols, the creative knowledge worker *per se* could be understood as an obvious object to study. Creative knowledge workers continuously send signs and produce symbols; they also interpret signs sent to them by others in reflection about their own role in society and their own perception in the peer group.

Furthermore, phenomenology might also be helpful in studying the perception and consciousness of space. Already in the 1970s, the humanist geographer Anne Buttner (1976: 280) referred to the value of a phenomenological understanding of individual space perception: *‘Traditional phenomenologists have recognized that man, the cognizing being, is anchored in a physical and social world, and that this ‘world’ situation influences the meanings and intentionality of his consciousness.’* I believe that social phenomenology is a useful reference in this research project in order to provide a framework for understanding the positioning of the self in the world – of the creative knowledge worker in their transnational and multilocal lifeworld.

### 6.1.1 *Lebenswelt*: The Lifeworld Concept

A central term of social phenomenology is ‘lifeworld’. The concept of lifeworld was mainly developed by Alfred Schütz, who was inspired by Husserl’s idea of the *‘Welt der natürlichen Einstellung’* (world of natural attitude) as well as Scheler’s *‘natürliche*

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<sup>63</sup> Translated by the author from the German text: *‘Ausgangspunkt der Sozialphänomenologie sind dabei keine sozialen Realien, sondern zeichenhafte Materialien, die im Hinblick auf den sozialen Sinn, der in ihnen zum Ausdruck gekommen sein könnte, interpretiert werden. Das Ziel der verstehenden Sozialphänomenologie ist die Bildung und Anwendung von Idealtypen, die zwischenmenschliche Beziehungsformen erklären können.’*

*Weltanschauung*’ (natural worldview) (cf. Esser, 1991: 12). Esser (1991) identified three main characteristics of Schütz’s lifeworld/*Lebenswelt*. First, people do not question the knowledge that is relevant for living in the lifeworld. Second, this lifeworld knowledge has a certain character itself. Third, there are systems of relevance that make certain knowledge a part of a lifeworld or not.

Concerning the first point, Schütz (1944) formulated the idea that each adult person automatically possesses a certain knowledge stock. This knowledge stock consists of knowledge that was gathered through former experience in a given context, and which was transformed into a type of manual for future behaviour in the same context and in similar experiences. A functional element, here, is the assumption of constancy (*Konstanz*). In the lifeworld, the constancy of the lifeworld structures, the constancy of the relevance of one’s own knowledge for a life in exactly this lifeworld, and the constancy of our own capacities to influence our lifeworld are all unquestioned by a person. Only in situations of strong ruptures in life, e.g. as described in the figure of the ‘stranger’ being unfamiliar with a new place, we pose ourselves questions (cf. Schütz, 1944). If the usual practices and knowledge for problem solving no longer work in a different context (a new situation, an unknown place), then we think about the knowledge that we apply in action routines.

What’s the specificity of lifeworld knowledge? Esser (1991) explains that lifeworld knowledge is structured in a system of plans and zones with different ranges (*Reichweiten*). Furthermore, this knowledge is ordered through a process of typification. We construct typical situations or problems and ways to act successfully and satisfyingly, which also means solving problems in an appropriate way. Then, these types are continuously tested by everyday life experience. If we are confronted with a new problem for which we cannot apply our lifeworld knowledge, we develop new lifeworld knowledge to be used when a similar problem shows up again in the future. Here it is sufficient to only develop basic knowledge that suffices to solve the current problem, but not to solve the problem in the absolute best way. This pragmatism is essential in the lifeworld, as there is less time and space for analysis of and reflection on details. If we thought about everything in detail, problem solutions would become too complex and we would not be able to react to problematic situations anymore. In many situations, we act in a way in which it is less than 100 per cent probable that we are doing the right thing. This is simply because we cannot afford to search for complete information for solving a problem in the best way.

This nature of lifeworld knowledge includes the fact that people are normally ‘experts’ – meaning they have an understanding of ‘why’ things work the way they work – in only a limited number of thematic fields. In the majority of fields people are laymen (*Laien*); they only know ‘how’ things work, yet no longer ‘why’. The more distant a thematic field is from a person’s lifeworld, the less they know ‘how’ things work. In the end, when a field is thematically very distant, only rudimentary knowledge of ‘what’ things work remains. On the fringes of lifeworld knowledge, we then find only ‘beliefs’, ‘blind trust’, mere ‘acceptance’ and sometimes even complete ‘ignorance’ (Esser, 1991: 15).

Lifeworld knowledge is also integrated in a double sense. First, individual knowledge fragments are integrated within the person's individual knowledge stock, allowing for appropriate acting in one's own lifeworld. This integration is important for a person to be able to apply everyday life theories (*Alltagstheorien*), which are causal assumptions between means (*Mittel*) and ends (*Zweck*). On an individual level, a person disposes of a set of thematic knowledge fragments, which are all related to each other through a super-ordinated unity, and which as a whole make sense for the person and give sense to their life and actions.

Second, a person's thematic knowledge is integrated into intersubjective knowledge systems (Esser imagines them as institutions) that allow people to forecast other people's behaviour. Lifeworld knowledge thus has a fundamentally intersubjective character. This intersubjectivity of knowledge is defined by what Schütz calls the 'reciprocity of perspectives': people can take others' standpoints. Additionally, it is also defined by the pre-existence of some parts of the knowledge. Typifications and sense relations are normatively pre-dating the individual person in a society. They will be internalised by the person during the socialisation process. Finally, intersubjectivity is also defined by the institutionalisation of knowledge. Two not directly interacting people can share institutionalised knowledge that still makes their acting appropriate. Esser (1991) formulates the example of a person sending a letter through the institution of the postal service and the postman who delivers the letter. Both people have not communicated directly, but the letter reaches the destination.

Finally, 'relevance' is important in the organisation of knowledge. Depending on individual motives and interests, not all people share the same knowledge, as only certain thematic fields are relevant for the one, but not for the other. According to Schütz, there are two types of relevance: motivational relevance (*Motivationsrelevanz*) and thematic relevance (*thematische Relevanz*). The first refers to the fact that people select relevant aspects within a given situation based on personal interests and super-ordinated motives that are important for their own life. Esser mentions that in particular language and communication are important for defining this motivational relevance (1991: 18f.<sup>64</sup>): *'In this we can see the paramount importance of communication and language for the (discharged) execution of everyday life's actions; not in the transfer of immediate contentual 'information', but in its continuous and ascertaining reference to the momentous structure of relevance each time, as well as the respective and sufficiently routinised action which promises success.'*

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64 Translated by the author from the German text: *'Hierin liegt die überragende Bedeutung von Kommunikation und Sprache zur (entlasteten) Abwicklung des Alltagshandelns: Nicht in der Vermittlung unmittelbarer inhaltlicher 'Informationen', sondern in ihrem fortwährenden vergewissernden Verweis auf die jeweils bedeutsame Relevanzstruktur und das damit verbundene und hinreichend erfolversprechenden Routinehandeln.'*

Thematic relevance occurs when the routinised acting, which itself is based on motivational relevance, no longer works in situations that are so new that one's own lifeworld knowledge is not sufficient to master the situation. In such a situation, one's own knowledge becomes questioned and more relevant knowledge is added or put into new relations with other existing knowledge. With the words of Esser (1991: 19<sup>65</sup>): *'Before [related to motivational relevance] the definition of a given situation was part of the solution to a problem, now [related to thematic relevance] it [the definition of a given situation] is itself the problem.'* Thematically relevant knowledge is built up in these circumstances until a new and sufficient routine for the definition of the formerly new and unknown situation is developed.

For Esser, the lifeworld is mainly structured by clearly identifiable relevance structures, by routines and typifications of situations, as well as by institutions of ritualised behaviour. They have the function of making everyday behaviour less difficult and more efficient. They are necessary because of the limited time and resources to continuously question everything and to deal with the surrounding world's complexity.

#### *Everyday life and the lifeworld*

Schütz & Luckmann (2003) also thematise the difference between the 'theoretical lifeworld' and the 'everyday lifeworld', which they both understand as 'modes of being'. As a starting point, they formulate their definition of an 'everyday lifeworld' (2003: 29<sup>66</sup>): *'The specific segment of reality which the awake and ordinary adults, in a mindset of sanity and reason, simply take for granted should be understood as everyday lifeworld. We consider everything as 'simply given' which we experience as unquestioned, all situations which are unproblematic to us for the time being.'* The everyday lifeworld is the frame for the experience of life as such. There is no necessity for distanced and theoretical reflection as there would be for answering questions in the scientific mode of thinking. Schütz & Luckmann say (2003: 42<sup>67</sup>): *'While this general opaqueness of the*

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65 Translated by the author from the German text: *'Zuvor war die Definition der Situation ein Teil der Lösung des Problems, jetzt ist sie selbst das Problem.'*

66 Translated by the author from the German text: *'Unter alltäglicher Lebenswelt soll jener Wirklichkeitsbereich verstanden werden, den der wache und normale Erwachsene in der Einstellung des gesunden Menschenverstandes als schlicht gegeben vorfindet. Mit „schlicht gegeben“ bezeichnen wir alles, was wir als fraglos erleben, jeden Sachverhalt, der uns bis auf weiteres unproblematisch ist.'*

67 Translated by the author from the German text: *'Während diese allgemeine Undurchsichtigkeit des lebensweltlichen Erfahrungsvorrats vom Standpunkt theoretischen Wissens als ein Mangel erscheint, muß daran erinnert werden, daß ich in der natürlichen Einstellung vom pragmatischen Motiv beherrscht werde. Der Erfahrungsvorrat dient mir zur Lösung praktischer Probleme. Im theoretischen Denken kann ich den Zweifel zum methodologischen Prinzip machen. In der Welt des Alltags liegt mir dagegen daran, mich routinemäßig in meinem Handeln orientieren zu können. Die in meinem Wissensvorrat sedimentierten Auslegungen haben den Status von Gebrauchsanweisungen: Wenn die Dinge so und so liegen, dann werde ich so und so handeln.'*



*everyday life stock of experiences appears as a deficiency from the viewpoint of theoretical knowledge, one has to recall that in the natural mindset I am dominated by the pragmatic motive. The stock of experiences serves the solution of practical problems. In the theoretical reflection I can use doubt as a methodological principle. In contrast, in the world of everyday life, I am interested in being able to orientate in routinised ways by my behaviour. The interpretations that are sedimented in my knowledge stock have the status of a manual: if things are so-and-so, then I will act so-and-so.'*

The lifeworld as such is intersubjective, because it includes other people. There are intersubjective overlaps between individual lifeworlds, e.g. shared modes of interpretation, or mutual understanding. In particular in the everyday life mode, several things of the lifeworld are taken for granted and are not questioned (Schütz & Luckmann, 2003: 30):

1. The physical existence of other people;
2. The consciousness of other people, which is similar to one's own consciousness;
3. The environment and its elements are the same for oneself and the surrounding others, and they have the same meanings (*Bedeutungen*);
4. The possibility to interact with others;
5. The possibility to communicate with others;
6. The pre-existence of a structured cultural and social world, in addition to the natural world, which all work as a shared reference frame for myself and others;
7. One's own situations are only to a limited extent caused and produced by oneself.

In this sense, the lifeworld influences our behaviour through its enframing function, but we also structure and influence our lifeworld through the way we act in everyday life. Living in the mode of the everyday lifeworld means that we think and reflect in pragmatic ways. We base our interpretations of individual situations on an internalised knowledge stock which is our reference frame and which is based on our former experiences, as well as the experiences of others provided to us through communication. '*Every lifeworld interpretation is an interpretation in the frame of something formerly interpreted, within a general and rather familiar reality*' (Schütz & Luckmann, 2003: 33/34<sup>68</sup>), and people trust in the continuity of their knowledge stocks' validity (*Gültigkeit*). This implies the basic assumption that the world is constant and does not change, so that knowledge remains functional. In the everyday lifeworld, a person continuously relates new experiences and situations to previously experienced situations. Thereby, situations can principally be understood as problems that have to be solved. Former situations forced a person to develop proper solutions. In everyday life, we are continuously confronted with new situations, and we first try

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<sup>68</sup> Translated by the author from the German text: '*Jedes lebensweltliche Auslegen ist ein Auslegen innerhalb eines Rahmens von bereits Ausgelegtem, innerhalb einer grundsätzlich und dem Typus nach vertrauten Wirklichkeit*'

to solve their problems with former solutions recorded in our knowledge stock. We group solutions in typologies, and we use them to pragmatically and rapidly solve new problems, without having to reflect on it. Sometimes we do not even experience this consciously. That is the essential character of the everyday lifeworld. Things are self-evident (*selbstverständlich*).

Yet, what happens if our problem solutions do not suffice in solving new problems? Then individual knowledge stocks are reflected consciously in the background of the current situation/problem, and they become adapted. This process can include a modification of existing typologies until similar experiences can be lived without questioning and reflection again. On the other hand, we can also face the problem that our typologies are in themselves incomplete to master our life. Then not only a single type of solutions has to be adapted, but new types have to be created. This normally occurs if we are confronted with completely new situations in unknown environments. *'Familiarity is only familiarity in relation to typical things, while the atypical aspects of the individual horizon remain undefined, because a typification concerning them proved superfluous – within the respective past interpretational situation'* (Schütz & Luckmann, 2003: 40<sup>69</sup>). This means there is certain rationality in the way people create their knowledge. Problem solutions are only temporary and for the time being (*bis auf weiteres*, as Schütz & Luckmann say). This means they are not valid forever. Third, there is also the basic problem that the knowledge stock, in form of a catalogue of problem solution strategies, is not integrated logically into a meta-order. In everyday situations, a person can experience that one reference frame (*Bezugsschema*) is not sufficient for mastering the current situation, and they start to use other reference frames in order to solve a given problem. This includes that reference frames are reflected in their relation to each other, and a process of ordering the knowledge stock takes place.

Schütz & Luckmann (2003: 69f.) later characterise the style of experience (*Erlebnisstil*) that is connected to the everyday lifeworld. For them, the everyday lifeworld is this part of the reality in which mutual understanding is possible. It is the sphere of the lifeworld in which the self's own action (*Handeln*) causes changes. These changes then are perceived by the self, and they reveal the mutual influence between the self and the others. One's own way of acting is directly evaluated by others, and a feedback is intersubjectively produced and experienced. This particular style of experience consists of:

1. Attention to life: in a cognitive mode of being completely awake and attentive to what happens around the self;

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<sup>69</sup> Translated by the author from the German text: *'Vertrautheit ist lediglich Vertrautheit mit Bezug auf Typisches, während die atypischen Horizontaspekte unbestimmt bleiben, weil sich mit Bezug auf sie eine Typisierung als überflüssig erwies – in der jeweiligen vergangenen Auslegungssituation.'*

2. *Epoché der natürlichen Einstellung*: there is no doubt about the existence of the outer world and its objects and there is limited reflection about a possible other character of the world;
3. The dominant form of acting is corporeal and intentional (*sinnvoll*);
4. Others are experienced as consciously thinking fellow human beings (*Mitmenschen*) who share an intersubjective world in which communication and interaction is possible;
5. Self-experience is bi-fold: the socially determined 'self' exists in form of social roles; and the free 'I' acts.

Schütz & Luckmann (2003) further explicate that the time frame, which is relevant in everyday life, is defined by the junction of world-time and 'inner time' as a shared structure of time within an inter-subjective world.

Also Grathoff (1995) deals with the specificity of everyday life (*Alltag*). In particular, he tries to explain the relation of everyday life to the wider lifeworld. Grathoff remarks that many studies use both terms as mutual substitutes. Yet, he sees the necessity for distinctive definitions. Grathoff defines 'everyday life' as follows (1995: 93<sup>70</sup>): '*For a first approximation 'everyday life' should be described as the concrete and vivid encompassing plenitude of the empirical experience of actors, who – mutually orientating towards each other, relating to absent others, and heading forward to the future – look for orientation in, and define situations according to the historic and biographic inventory of an always pre-existing society.*' Everyday life thus refers to a continuous sequence of stories, situations and action that happen in a pre-structured social world. Other than everyday life, the lifeworld is first of all a phenomenological concept, which builds the frame for everyday life. Lifeworld refers to the sensual-conscious corporeality (*sinnhaft-bewusste Leiblichkeit*), while 'everyday life' consists of the actual living enframed by this lifeworld.

In everyday life, there are certain social facts (*Sachverhalte*) that could be studied directly, but in the phenomenological lifeworld concept they are linked to other terms. Grathoff (1995) explains that social relations are translated into intersubjectivity; social consciousness becomes intentionality; social sense could only be observed through reduction; and communication could be reflected in the typology of the lifeworld. Grathoff (1995: 106–112) makes it even more explicit. Social relations in everyday life are often equated to relationships between persons. By contrast, intersubjectivity in the lifeworld concept refers to the relation between pre-existing

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<sup>70</sup> Translated by the author from the German text: '*In erster Näherung soll mit 'Alltag' die konkrete und lebendige, umfängliche Fülle der Erlebniserfahrung von Handelnden bezeichnet werden, die, aneinander sich orientierend, auf abwesend Andere sich beziehend und auf Zukünftiges zugehend, im historischen und biographischen Bestand einer stets vorgegebenen Gesellschaft ihre Orientierung suchen und ihre Situation definieren.*'

'objectivities' of an interaction as well as one's subjective experience and conscious communication about it. Grathoff also thinks that phenomenology and the lifeworld concept only allow for a study of action (*Handlung*), but not of acting (*Handeln*). This is due to the fact that Schütz's phenomenological position conceptualises everyday life's consciousness (*Bewusstsein*) as intentionality (*Intentionalität*) in the lifeworld. Intentionality is characterised by the conscious co-presence of the 'intending' and the 'intended'. This means there is more to interaction than mere conscious acting. Third, Grathoff argues about the difference between social sense in the lifeworld and in the everyday life. According to Schütz, there are different and finite sense areas. Lifeworld forms the overall frame for all these finite sense areas. The lifeworld is somehow a holistic horizon. Yet, everyday life constitutes its own finite sense area (*Sinnbereich*) and its own cognitive style within the lifeworld. Other sense areas would be the game, the scientific reflection, the fantasy, and the dream. These all have their own cognitive styles. Grathoff remarks (1995: 109<sup>71</sup>) '*While the lifeworld represents the encompassing horizon of sense for all finite sense areas (Schütz has never distanced from this conception by Husserl), the distinguished sense area of everyday life is limited.*'

Finally, Grathoff also explains how scientific and everyday life typologies (*Typiken*) go together. As for the second, he remarks (1995: 110f.<sup>72</sup>): '*We are born into a world (as Schütz says), which is pre-structured by typologies mediated through conversational language. Already in the earliest stages of language acquisition we perceive dogs as typical dogs, mothers and friends as typical ones. It is not the specific and unique opposite, but it is the type rooted in former experience which guide the way we act in our everyday life.*' In the everyday life sphere, typologies are thus transported and learned through language, and they also evolve. In scientific reflection, ideal types based on a Weberian conception are the counterpart of typologies. For everyday life it is now important to understand communication as a mode to transcend one's own subjective everyday life and let others participate in the experience of their own everyday life. Communication in everyday life is thus a mode to immediately experience what the other person has experienced. In doing so, communication helps to generate shared types within a typology. At each moment, the personal environment represents interference between one's own and other people's everyday life.

Here, two different styles of transporting a message through communication become relevant. First, the everyday life sphere only knows 'types of experiences',

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71 Translated by the author from the German text: '*Während die Lebenswelt der umfassende Sinnhorizont aller finiten Sinnbereiche ist (Schütz hat sich nie von dieser Husserlschen Konzeption distanziert), ist der ausgezeichnete Sinnbereich des Alltags begrenzt.*'

72 Translated by the author from the German text: '*Wir werden in eine Welt hineingeboren (so Schütz), die von der umgangssprachlich vermittelten Typik stets vorgeprägt ist. Schon in den frühesten Phasen unseres Spracherwerbs nehmen wir etwa Hunde als typische Hunde, Mütter und Freunde als typisch solche wahr. Nicht das konkret-einzigartige Gegenüber, sondern der in Vorerfahrungen gründende Typ bestimmt meist unser Alltagshandeln.*'

and each experience told within a communication receives sense from another person through linking it to a pre-existing type. Second, in the lifeworld phenomenology, the question is what holistic system stands behind the typologies of everyday life?

I think this introductory review of social phenomenology's central terms 'lifeworld' and 'everyday life' helps to frame my exploratory research on a micro-sociological level. In particular, the descriptions of how knowledge stocks are organised, how they are used in pragmatic ways in everyday life, and how they are reflected more deeply in non-everyday life modes of being might prove helpful for approaching some of the questions that I outlined in chapter 5. For example, I would assume that it could help to understand how multilocal creative knowledge workers orientate and appropriate new places in their multilocal lifeworlds. The questions that deal with the role of the transnational momentum in their lives might also better be reflected through the lens of the phenomenological perspective.

### 6.1.2 *Appräsentation*: The Cognitive Foundation of the Lifeworld

Another central term in social phenomenology is the technique of *Appräsentation*/appresentation. Schütz & Luckmann (2003: 634–641) speak of appresentation as a mode of crossing the borders of time and space. Concerning space and time experience in the everyday lifeworld they say (2003: 71<sup>73</sup>), '*The wide awake human being is, in their natural mindset, mainly interested in that specific sector of their everyday lifeworld, which is located in their range and is spatially and temporally ordered around the centre of themselves as a person. The place, where I am, my present 'here', is the starting point for my orientation in space; it is the zero point of my coordinate system, within which the orientational dimensions, the distances and perspectives of the objects in my surrounding field are defined. In relation to my body, I group the elements of my environment in categories such as 'to the right', 'to the left', 'above', 'below', 'in front of', 'close', 'far' etc.*'

This aspect of space-time, which is immediately (*unmittelbar*) experienced, is called the present range (*aktuelle Reichweite*). This part of the world depends largely on my physiological perceptions, and it is mainly structured in close and distant elements. The experience of this world is very much related to the present moment. It

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73 Translated by the author from the German text: '*Der hellwache Mensch ist in der natürlichen Einstellung vor allem an jenem Sektor seiner alltäglichen Lebenswelt interessiert, der in seiner Reichweite liegt und der sich räumlich und zeitlich um ihn als Mittelpunkt anordnet. Der Ort, an dem ich mich finde, mein aktuelles ‚Hier‘, ist der Ausgangspunkt für meine Orientierung im Raum, er ist der Nullpunkt des Koordinatensystems, innerhalb dessen die Orientierungsdimensionen, die Distanzen und Perspektiven der Gegenstände in dem mich umgebenden Feld bestimmt werden. Relativ zu meinem Leib gruppiere ich die Elemente meiner Umgebung unter die Kategorien rechts, links, oben, unten, vorn, hinten, nah, fern usw.*'

is also subject to change, once the person moves physically in space. When a person moves, the formerly distant becomes closer, while the formerly close becomes distant. The present range continuously changes.

Yet, while being in one present range, a person thinks of other past ranges, and as such the past ones transcend the current one. If there is the possibility that the person can go back to the former one, and things and elements in it could be expected to be ordered as before, then it is a 'recoverable range' (*Wiederherstellbare Reichweite*). Schütz & Luckmann formulate (2003: 72f.<sup>74</sup>), 'Thus, I assume – *ceteris paribus* – the one sector, which was formerly in my present range, as constant, or as constantly changing. Furthermore I know that I only have to move like this and that, I have to do this and that, in order to bring this sector back into my present range.' This means that there is a broad variety of spatial sectors that were formerly experienced by the individual, and that in sum define the total world in the 'personal recoverable range'. Obviously, this total world, or personal recoverable range, continuously transcends my present range.

If we translate this past orientation into a future orientation, we could speak of an 'attainable range' (*Erlangbare Reichweite*) (Schütz & Luckmann, 2003). This spatial range is defined by all possible and probable 'ranges' in the future that I can imagine as realistic on the basis of former experiences. All these future ranges depend on subjective probabilities (*Wahrscheinlichkeitsstufen*) and on technical and physical 'possibilities'. The first ones are based on individual future plans and the existing hierarchies between different plans, while the latter are defined by the technologies that a society offers for spatial mobility (e.g. trains, air connections). Conscious reflection about these probabilities and possibilities are based on past experiences and the resulting estimation for future options. The security that a person has in guessing 'attainable ranges' is dependent on how far away these options are in social, temporal and spatial terms. The less distant they are, the more probable their attainability.

Finally, there is also a social aspect in relation to physical space. In the everyday lifeworld modus of thinking it could be imagined that a person could change physical position with an opponent in order to enter into the opponent's present range. Yet, the perception of this 'present range' is dependent on one's individual physiological capacity, too (ears, eyes, etc.). As such, it might differ between people. One person cannot experience the identical present range of another person, even if they exchange their position in physical space. On the other hand, as two persons' 'present ranges' can overlap in large part, one can speak of a 'shared environment'. Here, biography comes into play. While for one person the present range could be based on former experiences of the same (in the sense of a 'recovered range'), this range could

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74 Translated by the author from the German text: 'Ich setze also – *ceteris paribus* – den Sektor, der vormals in meiner aktuellen Reichweite war, als konstant, oder konstant veränderlich, an. Ferner weiss ich, daß ich nur diese und jene Bewegungen ausführen, diese und jene Schritte tun muß, um diesen Sektor wieder in meine aktuelle Reichweite zu bringen.'

be a new experience for someone else (in the sense of a recently ‘attained range’). In terms of future options, some ranges could be imagined as probably attainable by one person, but not by others. Furthermore, not only a dual intersubjectivity in the given moment could be the case. Such space-time experiences are also shared with third persons and the society as a whole in the form of a system of spatial structuration. It defines the distribution of intimacy or anonymity, of the foreign (*das Fremde*) and the familiar (*das Vertraute*), social distance and proximity. This differentiation influences to a strong degree how we experience our lifeworld in spatial terms.

*Appresentation, time, and the phenomenological understanding of perception*

Generally, people tend to speak of perception in the form of realising something or someone. Mainly this refers to the corporeal nature of the human being. We see with our eyes, we smell with the nose, we touch with our hands, we hear with our ears. Yet, a mere physiological perception is limited to the immediate spatio-temporal setting, as Schütz & Luckmann indicate (2003: 591<sup>75</sup>): ‘*Everyone continuously stretches their own spatial and temporal limits of experience, but they exceed these limits – seldom appalled – as a matter of course.*’ Therefore, in phenomenology ‘perception’ is orientated to what happens in the minds of people while they perceive. For phenomenologists, perceiving something or someone means a state of reflection, in which the immediate happening is put into relation with former experiences. Thus, the one immediate aspect that is perceived in a given moment is more than what we perceive physiologically, because former knowledge is added to the immediate physiological perception and thus augments it. Husserl (1969 [1936]) discovered that human beings tend to see things that they physically cannot see. The same accounts for all other physiological senses; there has to be more to perception than a mere physiological character. So, there is always a parallelity of physiological perception and mental reflection. Husserl calls this mechanism appresentation (*Appräsentation*) (cf. Kurt, 2002: 51–55). Present things merge with the ‘non-present’ things in the perception of a person. Kurt illustrates this with a person looking at a building. This person will see the front façade as they are physiologically unable to look through the walls. Nonetheless, the backside or the inner structure of this building is also integrated in the perception as an ‘imagination’ that is based on former experience. Husserl conceptualises appresentation as a process of ‘passive synthesis’, in which the consciousness – independently of the Me (*Ich*) and spontaneously – connects the immediate perception of a given moment with former syntheses of past experiences. Kurt explains this with another example: we recognise melodies by hearing only individual tones, or we imagine rain by seeing grey clouds. This is always appresentation.

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75 Translated by the author from the German text: ‘*Jedermann stößt immer wieder an die räumlichen und zeitlichen Schranken seiner Erfahrung, überschreitet sie aber in Erinnerung und Handlungsentwurf mit der größten – nur selten erschütterten – Selbstverständlichkeit.*’

For appresentation, it is also important that former knowledge stocks exist, and are already abstracted in the form of typologies. When a person sees the façade of a house, they will be able to perform appresentation if they have already seen exactly this house's interior and back side, or if they have already seen similar façades on other houses, which they have mentally grouped into a type of houses. Therefore, appresentation always needs additional information that stems from memorised experiences and can add to one's actual physiological perception.

Appresentation is not only relevant for the study of perception; time is also an important aspect. As appresentation is a process of connecting the past with present situations and experiences, they always have a temporal relation. Time is a fundament of the constitution of everything, says Husserl (cf. Kurt, 2002: 55). Relating two experiences to each other, time also separates and distinguishes different experiences in an uninterrupted temporal sequel. Here, two things happen parallel: we always finish one experience, and a new experience starts. And at the same moment, we always relate each of these new experiences to a former one. Thus, we continuously relate experiences. According to Husserl, the past, the present, and the future are thereby always related to each other. Husserl uses specific terms for these temporal dimensions. The past is called 'retention', the present is called 'impression', and the future is called 'protention'. Current 'impressions' are always framed by retentional and protentional aspects. We always order a situation according to what happened right before and to what we expect to happen right after (cf. Kurt, 2002: 57). As an illustration, Husserl used a music concert in which the audience is always aware of the tone currently playing, putting it into a sequence with the former and the following tone. A complete melody could only be understood as a melody, as a coherent unit through this temporal functionality of appresentation.

Husserl also distinguishes between a present consciousness and the memory. Experiences, which are followed by new experiences, are sliding into the 'retentional field' of the consciousness. They are then still relatively close to present experience, and they are placed in the 'present consciousness' (*Gegenwartsbewusstsein*). The more experiences follow afterwards, the more this first experience slides away from the present one. From a certain moment it leaves the 'present consciousness', and is no longer part of the present imagination. It then becomes part of a person's memory and can only be made conscious through active remembering (*Erinnern*). While retention is part of our immediate experience and perception, the memory is not. Memorising, or remembering, is the act of re-experiencing a past experience if it was already detached from the present moment. Similarly, future experiences are divided into protention and expectation. Protention, just like retention, is part of the immediate experience and perception. Expectations, which are actively made conscious, are farther away in the future (e.g. plans, hypotheses).

While these temporal modes of perception rather refer to the passively perceiving *Ich*, there are also active perceptions. An important notion here is 'apperception' (*Apperzeption*) which refers to the fact that a person never only perceives the one



experience that is perceived physiologically at the given moment. The person will also put this perception into a 'perceptual field', as the example of the spider on the wall illustrates. A person might see something dark on a white wall. The direct perception is that of a dark point on the wall, and only through appresentation the person will be able to interpret and to distinguish if it is a blotch or a spider. Then, through apperception the wall and the room itself are also consciously perceived. Husserl says (Husserl, 1973: 493; cited in Kurt, 2002: 63<sup>76</sup>): '*As such the world is timeless conscious, continuously apperceived. While I am only focused on this and that as a part of the immediate environment, I am still aware of what else is there in the background or behind the immediate.*'

Equally, Schütz & Luckmann (2003) discuss a person's means to cross the borders of time and space. They think of such means as helping to make everything co-present (*mitvergegenwärtigen*), which could not be perceived and experienced directly and at the moment. Such means can consist of:

- *Anzeichen* (indications), which refer to something other than themselves, to something hidden or absent. They consist of information about things which are out of the temporal and spatial range of a person, and they help to access the consciousness of others;
- *Merkzeichen* (bookmarks), which form bridges to the future. They consist of the active and structured making of memories for later moments and situations;
- *Zeichen* (signs), which are a mixture of *Anzeichen* and *Merkzeichen*. They represent the main means of intersubjective communication (e.g. language), and they are important to cross borders to other people;
- *Symbole* (symbols), which are a means to transfer the sense of something, of an object, between the sense structure of everyday life and other sense structures.

All these means are based on former appresentation, and they are the basis for future appresentation. Schütz & Luckmann (2003) mention that appresentation is actually the key for the existence of a lifeworld. If people were not able 'to appresent', they would only experience situations that could not be related to each other. Yet, it is exactly these relations that define the lifeworld. Appresentation, they say, is an active process of the consciousness in which links and concepts of former information are put in relation to present experiences. A person can only understand the significance of a present situation through appresentation.

Transferring the idea of appresentation to places, we can study how creative knowledge workers deal with their multilocality. The parallelity of different places must somehow leave traces in the consciousness and sense-making of these multi-

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<sup>76</sup> Translated by the author from the German text: '*So ist aber Welt immerfort bewusst, immerzu apperzipiert; während ich davon nur auf dies und jenes einzelne gerichtet bin, habe ich doch das Mitdaseiende im Hintergrund wahrgenommen.*'

locals. I suggest that especially for the duality of absence and presence the idea of representation could provide a useful perspective.

### 6.1.3 Methodological Implications of Phenomenology

In terms of empirical methodology, the phenomenological perspective calls for a concentration on sense making and sense structures in peoples' lives and in society. Grathoff (1995: 120) argues that a Cartesian understanding of objectivity and measurability of the social facts, as well as an apodictic understanding of evidence, is no longer appropriate. Science has to be thought of as part of the lifeworld and somehow related to the everyday life sphere. Scientific fieldwork is not free of values – as suggested by nihilistic positions. The phenomenologist reflects him- or herself in the light of his or her field. This reflection also allows for a closer relation between science and everyday life, which is necessary for a scientific understanding of the empirical world. Here, Kurt defines phenomenological fieldwork as follows (2002: 149<sup>77</sup>): *'This preoccupation aims at a scientific understanding of everyday life ways of understanding the social reality. The leitmotif of such an understanding is the reconstruction of this construction, which orders and structures the interrelatedness of human beings. [...] Both ways of understanding intend to interpret the social sense of the self-evident aspects of the lifeworld.'*

Yet, while the everyday life construction of sense comes along with personal interest, preferences and opinion, the scientific reconstruction should be free of these. This position somehow opposes Grathoff's (1995) neglect of the possibility of value-free science. Furthermore, everyday construction happens in the frame of the necessity to (re)act, while scientific reconstruction is free of such pressure. Third, typologies in everyday life are practical and necessary to master one's own life (*Lebensmittel*), whereas in scientific reconstruction typologies serve knowledge acquisition (*Erkenntnisgewinn*) and have a formal character that helps the formation of theories. In everyday life things are easily and subconsciously understood; in science, questions are raised and consciously answered to exactly understand these everyday life ways of understanding (cf. Grathoff, 1995; Kurt, 2002).

As far as I have studied this literature, the philosophy of social phenomenology calls for heuristic approaches that seek 'sense-making' practices through the analytical technique of reconstruction – it is about understanding phenomena in the every-

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<sup>77</sup> Translated by the author from the German text: *'Diese Beschäftigung zielt auf ein wissenschaftliches Verständnis des alltagsweltlichen Verständnisses von sozialer Wirklichkeit. Das Leitmotiv dieses Verstehens ist die Rekonstruktion der Konstruktion, die das Aufeinander-bezogen-Sein von Menschen ordnen und strukturieren. [...] Beiden Verstehensweisen geht es darum, lebensweltlich Gegebenes auf sozialen Sinn hin auszulegen.'*

day life mode of others (the empirical sample) from the perspective of the theoretical mode of the researcher. Given that there are overlaps between the researcher's and the studied person's lifeworld and the different modes of being, some theoretical reflection is necessary in order to generate heuristic models during the study of these overlaps between everyday and scientific modes of being.

## 6.2 Collecting the Data: Interviewing Technique

In this section I will explain how I gathered my empirical data, which consists of 25 in-depth qualitative interviews and which includes mental maps from each studied case.

### 6.2.1 Mixed Character Qualitative Interviews: Biographical Narration and Problem-Oriented Sequences

For this research project, I decided to use a qualitative approach, as sufficient data on transnationally multilocal creative knowledge workers does not exist so far. The idea of the project is to explore the thematic fields as outlined in chapter 5. Thus, a qualitative design is more appropriate than a quantitative study. There are many pointers in the methodological literature that argue in this direction, too (e.g. Hitzler & Honer, 1997: 10f.; Wessel, 1996: 132ff.). Qualitative interviewing is the preferable methodological choice for the exploration of new thematic fields, for the generation of empirically grounded theory, and for the development of a catalogue of scientific terms that originate not from science but from the empirical field itself. In this sense, Scherke (2011: 84<sup>78</sup>) remarks, '[...] *it could be observed that in more recent migration studies there has been an increasing concentration on qualitative methods. These methods seem more appropriate for examining those processes of 'in-betweenness', of cultural transgression and of the dissolution of borders, which come along with processes of transnationalisation. Narrative biographical interviews, participant observation and ethnographic studies allow for a detailed reconstruction of actors' practices in everyday life [...] [and they are] more suitable to break traditional patterns of thinking.*'

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**78** Translated by the author from the German text: '[...] *ist in jüngeren Studien zum Thema Migration eine zunehmende Konzentration auf qualitative Methoden feststellbar. Diese scheinen besser geeignet als quantitative Methoden, um jene Phänomene des „Dazwischen“, der kulturellen Übergänge und Entgrenzungen zu erfassen, die mit Prozessen der Transnationalisierung einhergehen. Lebensgeschichtliche Interviews, teilnehmende Beobachtung und ethnografische Studien erlauben die detaillierte Nachzeichnung der Alltagspraxis von Akteuren [...] [und sind] besser geeignet, überkommene Denkschemata zu durchbrechen.*'

In the theoretical literature on methods in qualitative interviewing, a variety of prototypical interview situations and formats are described. Among these, we can find the biographical narration, on the one hand, and the problem-oriented interview, on the other hand (cf. Hopf, 1995). The biographical narration is a form of interviewing in which the interviewer provides very little information on the research topic. The interviewee is confronted with a certain moment in their life from which they should start a narration about their own biographic history (cf. Bichi, 2002). All narration is recorded, no matter what topic the interviewee talked about. This type of interviewing aims at registering the individual life topics of an interviewee. A central question is: what events/situations/contexts were important in their life? The interviewer only interferes with rather little guidance of the narration, e.g. through asking for more details about a certain issue that comes up during the interview. The interview technique remains a very open one, depending a lot on the biographical aspects and narrations that an interviewee is willing and able to provide.

In the subsequent analysis, the researcher tries to reconstruct how things have evolved in the interviewee's life in relation to the research topic. The advantage of this approach is its openness to all kinds of information. These interviews can generate very detailed and rich narrations that allow for a reconstruction of very complex patterns. It is also useful in studies that deal with individual reasoning of people, or in studies that focus on lifeworlds. The disadvantage is that it can also generate too much information that is not relevant for the study. The problem is also that interviewees, when speaking about their life, start to become very detailed and often drift away from the researcher's interest. Work then becomes difficult when the researcher has to identify and eliminate the unnecessary information during the analysis.

The problem-oriented interview is an approach with a stronger guidance through the interviewer (Hopf, 1995). The research topic is divided into problems, or sub-topics that might be relevant to the study. Then an interview guideline is developed which should help the interviewer to stay focused and to structure and guide the narration of the interviewee. Other than in standardised quantitative interviews, the qualitative interview does not necessarily call for precisely formulated questions. Rather, the interviewer uses a guideline with key words to remember all problems to be covered during the interview. Yet, it is still dependent on the interview situation, when, how and how detailed the single problems are talked about. The advantage of problem-oriented interviewing is that it allows for an economic way of gathering information for a pre-defined topic. It limits the 'informational noise' that comes along with more open interviewing techniques. It is also very suitable in situations where comparison between different cases of interview partners should be structured in advance. The disadvantage of such problem-oriented interviewing is that the interviewer basically preselects the incoming information by making certain problems an issue during the interview, while not mentioning others. Interviewers must listen very attentively to what people say in order to not

interrupt narration too early and limiting information. Then they also should not ask for certain problems again, if the interviewee already spoke about them in the frame of another problem earlier.

I understand such descriptions in the literature as prototypical interview situations, and I did not pressure myself to stick rigidly to methodological theory during my fieldwork. I think it is more relevant to react to the interview partners' ability to narrate. Some interview partners are more able to provide rich biographical narrations than others, who need more guidance throughout the interview. I therefore decided to apply a mix of both of the aforementioned prototypical interviewing techniques. This means I started the interviews with a narrative stimulus as done in biographical narrations. My stimulus consisted in asking my interview partners for 'their places'. While the precise wording was dependent on the situation, the question was more or less: could you please describe which you would consider your places? The question partially astonished my interview partners and they were not able to deal with it right away. This irritation was good for me, as I immediately had their attention and I could start a first discussion about the notion of 'my place'. This discussion revealed the first information on what makes peoples' places 'their places'.

If people were not able to answer this rather abstract question, I then made it more precise so that they might orientate by their own biographical history; they might start with where they were born, where they grew up, where they live today, and why. Then my interview partners regularly started a longer narration, while at the same time sketching these places as a mental map on a sheet of paper, as I had asked them to do.

When the narrations about their places had finished, I started to orientate the interviews towards my fields of interest (cf. chapter 5). From there on, interviews became a bit more problem-oriented, but I remained attentive as not to interfere in narrations provided by my interview partners. I also paid attention to guiding the interview and moderating the change to a different field of interest. In qualitative studies, I found that using very large questionnaire guidelines, printed in bold letters on A4 pages, distracted the attention of the interviewees. Interviewees are curious about the questions and often try to have a look at such guidelines, if they are on the table during the interview. Understandably, they want to know what they will be asked, or how long the interview will take. Yet, I perceived this as a disturbance to the interview situation. Therefore, I decided to note key words on a very small sheet of paper, and I left this sheet of paper covered throughout my interviews. I only took it out when the interview really halted, or I had forgotten what else to ask. However, as far as I could, I tried to not look at it during the interviews. This helped my interviews to retain a conversational character, in which the mental map of the interview partner was the major item on the table that guided their attention and therefore the narration.

### 6.2.2 Mental Mapping: Illustrations of Mental Cartography

The idea of mental mapping derives from research done in the 1960s on the perception of space. Early work was done by Kevin Lynch (1960), who studied how people perceived and orientated in urban environments. His main interest was to base urban planning on the individual perception of the built environment, and thus to increase the quality of life. Lynch (1960: 47ff.) explained that spatial or environmental perception focused on a distinct set of five attributes:

- Paths, which represent the most important attribute. Paths can also be termed ways; they have a linear character and link other spatial attributes with a point character.
- Edges, which also have a linear character, but their specificity is that of dividing two areas from each other. They signify breaks and interruptions in a territory, and at the same moment the edge itself works as a joint between the divided areas. The more different the character of the divided areas, the stronger is the importance of the edge.
- Districts, which have an areal character. They have an internally homogeneous character. A person can enter and exit them, and can identify them as a distinct district compared to other districts upon entering it. This often includes that the district contains characteristic physical elements, e.g. buildings or city squares.
- Nodes, which have a point character in mental maps. They are attributed with encounters and intersections, e.g. city squares or big crossroads. Given this character, they force people to make directional decisions, which basically leads to the fact that people are more conscious and attentive at these locations. It is a spatial localisation of consciousness. As a result, mental map descriptions of nodes can become very precise and detailed. Nodes are also often entrance points to districts.
- Landmarks, which have a point character, but on a smaller scale than nodes. Landmarks interrupt the homogenous continuity of the spatial environment, e.g. large buildings, progressive architecture, historical monuments, etc. Through this character, they help people pin down their mental maps.

Lynch also found that while drawing their mental maps on paper, people were following certain logics of progression. The people he interviewed mainly started by drawing a central starting point, a location, which was used during their everyday life movements. Then they drew the main directions into their maps, namely paths and nodes. Afterwards, they added the edges as a basis for then putting the important districts. And finally, they made maps more detailed by adding more precise information such as landmarks (cf. Lynch, 1960: 113ff.).

In reference to Lynch's work, Downs & Stea wrote the ground-breaking book *Maps in Minds: Reflections on Cognitive Mapping*, which was published in 1977 (I will refer to the German translation, which was published in 1982). In this book they explain that there is a difference between cognitive mapping as a process, an activity, and

the mental map as a result, a tool for everyday life. Concerning cognitive mapping, they formulate (Downs & Stea, 1982: 23) that it is a capacity to collect, order, save, memorise and process information on the spatial environment. Moreover, they think of this capacity as being dependent on age (or maturity) as well as the utility of mental maps and the stock of knowledge a person has. The output, the mental map itself, then serves as a tool to support spatial decisions, such as where we need to go, and how we can get there. Basically, mental mapping is about organising and processing one's own spatial knowledge (*Raumwissen*) in order to orientate and take individually perfect location decisions. Cognitive mapping is a flexible and ever-changing process. Downs & Stea (1982: 44f.) explain that through cognitive mapping, a person develops a set of varying perspectives that help the person master different situations. It is a process of continuous learning by which a person is able to understand the complexity of relations between a place, its people, possible activities and efficient pathways through this complex. Rather than merely knowing something about a place, it allows for knowing a place like the back of one's hand.

Downs & Stea (1982: 24) then define a mental map as a structured representation of the spatial environment, which is based on a snapshot in a given moment and which is subject to change. Furthermore, it is always a very individual imagination of the surrounding world. Other people might have different mental maps, even though they are looking at the world from the same position in space. If we reflect what Downs & Stea offer with these definitions of cognitive mapping and mental maps, we can see the conceptual proximity to the elements of social phenomenology. In the field of mental map research, the everyday lifeworld is also a key mode of experiencing the world, and again, life is split into individual situations – here spatial situations – which are reflected in a cognitive process that includes all former situations. Finally, the experiences are processed into typologies and structured knowledge, and these form a preliminary mental map.

In addition to this, there is a strong link between personal identity and mental maps. Downs & Stea (1982: 49) point to the fact that personal identity is strongly influenced by our knowledge of spatial environments. They term this phenomenon the 'sense of place' (*Ortssinn*). Only having a detailed mental map of a place, we can evaluate it in the light of our own values and convictions and we can decide to include it into or exclude it from our personal identity. If we do not know something about a certain territory (a city, a neighbourhood, a region), we are less probable to identify with it.

Downs & Stea (1982) also outline why mental maps are so important in everyday life. Everyone is continuously confronted with a general spatial problem. This spatial problem consists of the following elements of information: the 'where' of things and people, the 'what' at a certain location, and the 'when' of things happening/being located in space. In order to answer these questions and solve our personal spatial problem, we need to know. According to Downs & Stea, knowledge is characterised as experiential knowledge (*Erfahrungswissen*), as learning by doing. They reject the

structuralist hypothesis of a predefined capacity to acquire knowledge, imagined as a stencil that allows for knowledge infiltration or not. They also reject the pedagogical conceptualisation of knowledge as something that is uploaded into the brain (*Auswendiglernen*). To them, cognition, as composed of knowledge and the comprehension of this knowledge, is a result of the reflection about spatial experience. During interaction with others and with the spatial environment, a person learns and then incorporates this learning technique into their knowledge stock. The latest knowledge is thereby included into a set of typologies. These generalised typologies help to master subsequent situations and to evaluate them as specific experiences in relation to the past. Downs & Stea reflect this on the example of a 'street'. When coming to a new street, a person already knows something about it, as they developed the type 'street' during their lifetime, which then might be differentiated into several subtypes. Thus, this person must not learn anew what a street actually is, but they can immediately look for other more relevant information: where can I do what in exactly this street? How is this street different from the other streets?

Furthermore, Downs & Stea (1982) elaborate on the 'where' question and the related cognitive knowledge stocks. The 'where' has to be distinguished into two elements: 'identity' and 'location'. Downs & Stea think that identity is not so important here because when it e.g. stems from names, it might not be unique (e.g. cities with the same name in different federal states), whereas location is always unique. 'Location' is more important; it indicates where something is, and how I can reach it from where I am now. It is composed of a situation and a direction. A location could be described as a situation within a coordinate system. Additionally, it could also be described with the information how to reach it from a certain other location (direction). Both forms of circumscribing location are central contents of mental maps. Related to location, 'distance' is important, too (Downs & Stea, 1982: 73). It is basically the perception of distance, and as such it is relative, and a cognitive element. The interesting questions for mental map research are: What factors influence our estimation of distance? Which distance measurement units are used in thinking about cognitive distance?

Finally 'direction' and 'directions' are distinguished by Downs & Stea (1982: 79ff.). The difference is that 'direction' is something like North, East, West, or South, whereas 'directions' is the description of where to find a location. The first one indicates a location within a coordinate system, and the second one refers to a path to a location, e.g. from my own current location. Using both 'direction' and 'directions', people actually develop the capacity to orientate in space. Orientation is thought of as the capacity to cognitively relate individual locations to each other, so that they are functional in one's own lifeworld.

It is important to mention that mental maps have a dynamic shape. They change with time. A perceiving person gets more used to the surrounding environment by passing it more often. This includes that more details are perceived and added to the mental map. In addition, the built environment itself is subject to change, through e.g. urban planning (cf. Scholz, 2011). A mental map is thus a dynamic representa-



tion of spatial knowledge, which is based on cognition and perception. Automatised and intuitively, spatial information enters through physiological perception into our mind, and it is processed there into knowledge through cognition (cf. Downs & Stea, 1982).

Ploch (1995: 24<sup>79</sup>) also defines mental maps as the interviewees' *'own perspective on the world, their drawn worldview'*. Mental maps are often striking; they contain typologies and also textual explanations. She also points out that one should not forget that mental maps only represent a 'snap-shot' of the given moment. The interviewee draws what appears relevant to him when interviewed. In another moment this might be something completely different. As such, Ploch argues, mental maps do not allow concluding on an 'overall picture' (*Gesamtbild*).

I came across this idea of mental maps in an earlier research project, but it did not fit in there. So I kept this idea to use mental mapping as a method later on, and I found it matched perfectly with the topic of this project on multilocal creative knowledge workers. Applying mental map research in this project includes that the scale of maps would change as compared to Lynch's work. Lynch (1960) applied mental mapping to urban environments, and thus to the local scale. In the literature, also other examples can be found that used mental mapping as a technique for capturing people's perception and cognition of space. Scholz (2011) studied the individual imaginations that people had about the Euroregion of Saar-Lor-Lux, shifting the application to a regional scale. This largest cross-border labour market in the European Union was her empirical field for conducting interviews with several thousands of Saar-Lor-Lux inhabitants, including high-school students, who were asked to describe their region. What Scholz then did in the analysis was to overlay the different maps. Then she looked at differences and similarities in the maps. Scholz found that indeed people were using the spatial attributes as described by Lynch. They included the national borders (edges); they drew the countries or parts of the Euroregion on all sides of the borders (districts); they put major highways and train connections (paths); and some even sketched landmarks into their maps. In addition to mental map research on a local level, Scholz found that people referred to very different geographical scales when speaking about 'their region'. Checking for words related to space, Scholz discovered that local, regional, national and specifically the Euroregion's names were continuously mixed in individual maps. Then she also found that people used detailed descriptions including clichés based on the collective identity of inhabitants. Inhabitants from French parts of the Euroregion attributed specific characteristics to the German parts of the Euroregion, using available stereotypes about Germans, for example. Thus, mental maps do not only consist of the descriptions of spatial attributes, but they also contain descriptions of the people living there. This confusion of place and people was also observed in other fields of research such as studies

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79 Translated by the author from the German text: *'ihre Sicht der Welt, ihr gezeichnetes Weltbild.'*

on place-based identity (cf. Weichhart, 1990; Weichhart et al., 2006; Mühler & Opp, 2006). Therefore, mental maps carry more information than mere topological content.

Methodologically, mental maps are interesting as they lead to a distinct atmosphere between interviewer and interviewee (Ploch, 1995). While in qualitative interviews the interviewer, consciously or subconsciously, interferes and guides the dialogue, they become a marginal figure during the moment when an interviewee is drawing their mental map. The opponent for the interviewee is not the interviewer, but the sheet of paper and the pencil. The interviewer has less possibility to influence what shows up on the paper. The interviewer can only influence the mental map's content through the wording of their initial invitation to draw.

What did these results tell me for my research project? Looking at the difference between Lynch's and Scholz' scales, I thought it would be more interesting to scale it up. Scholz could only have found the scale issue in upscaling from the local scale. But I wanted to do mental mapping without even defining scale, which I would assume of as an approach even more open to scale issues. Lynch and Scholz had a clear spatial focus in their research, a specific city or a region. I do not have such a clearly formulated spatial area that I want to study. I wanted to keep my research rather open, so I did not tell my interview partners to which spatial scale they should refer in drawing their maps. What I was interested in was the individual 'action space' (cf. Hägerstrand, 1970) as a pattern of different places. Therefore, I asked people for 'their places', and to draw me a map of these places.

There is another interesting issue in mental map methods: how much of cartographic assistance is provided by the researcher to the interview partner? There are several approaches to this. Some studies used pre-structured maps in which orientational elements are provided, e.g. highways, train lines, administrative boundaries, and capitals for the regional scale level and above, or city squares, streets and neighbourhood boundaries for studies on the local level. This allows the interviewees, in particular those who are afraid of drawing incorrectly, to have a minimum of orientation for their own elements that they would put in, but it also pre-structures the way in which an interviewee draws. In addition, it predefines the scale of the map, which makes scale variations between cases of a study nearly impossible. This approach is quite good for studies in which there is a certain focus on a given spatial area. It allows the recording of information about the variety of size relations between individual perceptions, e.g. studying how large and where people locate a city square within a district or street grid.

Another approach consists of providing nothing – just a blank sheet of paper. This approach has the advantage that it allows for flexible data collection. The interviewee is not forced into a scale and into a pre-defined section of the environment. They can decide freely what scale and section to put into the map. This makes analysis more difficult, but the collected material can be richer in individual case-specific information. Scholz also used this approach, not providing any orientational elements to her interview partners. Yet, Scholz made a clear spatial reference in forms

of verbally mentioning that the study is about the Euroregion Saar-Lor-Lux. I also decided for this option, and I did so for another reason. In Downs & Stea's book on mental mapping, they pointed out that mental maps do not only consist of geometric information (Downs & Stea, 1982), mental maps also consist of verbal information translated into little narrations as well as of images, which can be translated into little drawings. We also find hints of this in Scholz's (2011) study, because she mentions in her analysis that people used stereotypes and judgements of other people to describe their representation of the Euroregion. I also became convinced that gathering such data necessarily called for a blank sheet. If you put streets and borders onto a map as orientation, it is already predefined that this mental map should have the character of a geometric cartography in a given territory. Yet, by leaving a sheet of paper blank, mental maps can take different forms, e.g. consisting of more symbolic elements. In her study on mental maps of Frankfurt-based university students, Ploch (1995) observed that her respondents associated Frankfurt with 'traffic, cars and noise'. However, they only drew this in symbolic or textual ways, while not drawing streets and cars. Ploch interpreted this observation as an indicator for the fact that the students reproduce 'collective images' instead of 'personal experience'. She must have been a bit disappointed as she formerly criticised human geography for studying exactly such collective images instead of personal living spaces. She says (1995: 38<sup>80</sup>): *'In spite of all the traffic chaos mentioned, the 'Frankfurt' of the mental maps neither knows streets nor cars. The question arises if the typical Frankfurt is less the 'personal one' than the 'one of the others'.'*

I would rather say that this is an interpretational misunderstanding by Ploch. It might be that Frankfurt-based students did indeed draw 'their' Frankfurt, but they did it in a way (namely symbolic) that was not expected by Ploch (namely cartographic). Coming back to the approach of Downs & Stea (1982), we can see that mental maps are often thought of as a topographic map. Little other content and few other forms are imagined by mental map researchers. I am not sure if this is sufficient. Some people's mental maps are probably not maps as we as researchers expect them to be.

Furthermore, mental maps are not only functional in terms of providing generic information, but they can also be helpful in structuring interviews. Ploch (1995) studied 34 mental maps of university students. Students had to draw the maps concerning the 'Frankfurt Region' right in the beginning of the connected interviews. Later in these interviews they had to name characteristics which circumscribe the Frankfurt Region. Ploch found that those who had actually drawn the city and not the region also circumscribed the city and not the region in their interview narration. She

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**80** Translated by the author from the German text: *'Trotz Verkehrschaos kennt das Frankfurt der Mental Maps weder Straßen noch Autos. Und es stellt sich die Frage, ob das typische Frankfurt nicht das „eigene“, sondern das der „anderen“ ist.'*

concludes (Ploch, 1995: 36<sup>81</sup>): *‘This could be interpreted as an indicator that drawing ‘personal’ maps in the beginning of an interview defines the spatial horizon of all future statements during that interview.’*

Having said this, I integrated mental mapping not only for the maps itself. The general purpose of my interviews was to learn how multilocal people relate to their different places. So, I thought if my interview partners would start speaking about their complex spatial pattern, it would be helpful to have a scheme for the narration, which they would draw themselves, and to which we could both come back during the interviews. Furthermore, during her own empirical field work, Ploch was surprised about the way respondents liked drawing maps (1995: 28<sup>82</sup>): *‘We observed that many interviewees had fun drawing and inventing symbols, and that they seemed surprised about their own creativity. I would estimate this playful and creative reflection on their personal living space as another quality of the method.’* This indicates that there is also an entertaining connotation of mental map drawing.

#### *Analysis of mental maps*

Ploch observed in the 1990s that mental maps are increasingly being used as a research method in ethnology and anthropology, but the achieved results are often moderate compared to the results from other methods. Ploch thinks that this is due to the limited analysis techniques which exist so far. She lists several limitations that she observed in other ‘mental map projects’ (1995: 23f.):

1. Mental maps often only serve as illustrations;
2. In comparative settings, they are only used as an exemplary material that circumscribes a phenomenon as a whole;
3. There is no discussion about analysis techniques (at least in cultural anthropology).

Ploch observes (1995: 24<sup>83</sup>) that scientists might also be confounded by the type of information that mental maps generate: *‘The aesthetic moment of the drawing itself is impressive, and perhaps scientific researchers are particularly affected, as their ‘world’ is dominated by spoken and written language.’* Ploch appeals to the scientist’s courage

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**81** Translated by the author from the German text: *‘Das könnte als Hinweis gewertet werden, daß die “eigene” Zeichnung am Anfang einer Befragung, den räumlichen Horizont für den weiteren Verlauf des Interviews vorgibt.’*

**82** Translated by the author from the German text: *‘Wir beobachteten, daß viele Befragte Spaß am Zeichnen, am Ausdenken von Symbolen entwickelten und zum Teil selbst überrascht schienen von ihrer Kreativität. Diese spielerische und kreative Auseinandersetzung mit dem eignen Lebensraum möchte ich als weitere Qualität der Methode werten.’*

**83** Translated by the author from the German text: *‘Das ästhetische Moment der Zeichnungen besticht; und davor sind vielleicht gerade Wissenschaftler, deren “Welt” von gesprochenem Wort und Schrift dominiert ist, nicht gefeit.’*

to dismantle the mental map and analyse its individual components. These components might then be compared across cases, always keeping in mind their insertion in the overall picture of the mental map.

For a systematic analysis of mental maps, there is one big barrier: the respondent's individual drawing skills. These skills are often thought of as being dependent on educational attainment, and as such somehow related to socio-economic positions. Furthermore, Downs & Stea (1982: 23) already pointed to the fact that these drawing skills are influenced by age, utility and knowledge about topics. We already heard that one can understand 'mental maps' as an activity, and less so as an object that we dispose of. It is an active process of abstracting the empirical world, in which the degree of complexity depends on the actual experience of a given area in the everyday life. Here, Ploch (1995) observes that some scholars argue that more educated people have a higher skill to abstract and draw a map. Other scholars argue that the better educated peoples' skill to abstract the real world into textual formats makes it more difficult for them to express in non-textual ways, e.g. through drawing. This finding somehow complements the scientists' hesitation to work with mental maps, as described above.

According to Downs & Stea (1982), the first level of abstraction consists in a person's perception of the environment. Ploch (1995) says this is rather a passive process of 'making one-self comfortable in a spatial surrounding'. She argues that there is also a more active process of 'adapting' to this surrounding. This adaptation calls for an active involvement (*Auseinandersetzung*) with the spatial environment. A mental map is only developed as a second level of abstraction after that active process of adaptation had started. Ploch explains (1995: 25f.<sup>84</sup>): *'I understand these signs [as drawn in mental maps] as an interviewee's effort of symbolisation. Through drawing, they appropriate their own environment – in abstract ways – and give significance to it. They order the personal world for the interviewer. With this consideration, I will also emphasize that this activity [of drawing] could be understood as an active process which already takes place during the first level of abstraction. By giving significance to their space, people (re-)design and change it; they actively appropriate it. And this is documented in the drawings.'* As such, we can understand mental mapping as, first, the process of abstracted appropriation of space and, second, the mental maps as a drawn output mirroring exactly this process. For systematic analysis of these mental maps, researchers should now ask themselves (Ploch, 1995: 26):

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**84** Translated by the author from the German text: *'Ich verstehe dieses Zeichnen als Symbolisierungsleistung des Befragten. Mit dem Zeichnen eignet er sich seine Umwelt – abstrakt – an und verleiht ihr auf einem Blatt Papier Bedeutung, er ordnet dem Forscher seine Welt. Zudem möchte ich damit zum Ausdruck bringen, daß diese Aktion auf einen aktiven Prozeß schließen läßt, der sich bereits auf dem ersten Abstraktionsniveau vollzieht. Indem Menschen ihrem Raum Bedeutung verleihen, ihn (mit-)gestalten oder verändern, eignen sie sich ihn auch aktiv an. Dies wird ebenso in den Zeichnungen dokumentiert.'*

1. How relevant was my own scientific expectation for the interviewee while drawing their mental map?
2. How relevant, in terms of 'to-be-drawn', are the self-evident things for the interviewee?
3. How far can I derive conclusions on the interviewee's values, attitudes, and behaviour?

Ploch (1995) then discusses the different perspectives on mental maps in human geography and in cultural anthropology. Human geographers mainly applied mental map research for capturing collective 'images' of places and territories. Ploch refers to Kevin Lynch's (1960) study *The Image of the City*. Ploch criticises that this approach largely generates mental maps that are reproductions of 'learnt images', and that often do not stem from individual experience and knowledge, but from the wider public images in the mass media. By contrast, cultural anthropologists do not understand human beings as shaped and informed by outside 'images', but as active creators of such images (and culture in more general ways). As such, the research question is different. It asks for people's techniques of image creation and appropriation of space. It understands the mental map as an image of the individual's own lifeworld and its relevance systems. Which places and territories are used by the interviewees to satisfy their needs (for security, identity, self-actualization etc.)?

For the systematic analysis of their own empirical project, Ploch and her colleagues started with a typology according to the dimension of spatial relations (*Raumbezüge*). They differentiated between wider maps (*Landkarten*; representing the wider spatial environment and larger action space), local maps (*Ortskarten*; one's own place of residence as focus), and symbolic maps (*symbolräumliche Karten*; rather abstract and artistic, containing many symbols). Ploch (1995: 29) found that those who had recently moved to the research territory were more likely to draw local maps than those who were natives and who drew wider maps instead.

Further, she found that the respondents' mental maps do not represent the totality of the lifeworld. Rather, they are focused on the familiar territory of the everyday life, while the lifeworld seems to be a wider sphere encompassing a larger territory. Ploch (1995: 29) called this observation the 'zoom effect'. Additionally, this familiar territory is not completely familiar, but rather the 'everyday life ways' through this territory are the familiar parts.

Concerning orientation in space (*räumliche Orientierung*), she referred to Greverus' (1994) '*kulturökologisches Raumorientierungsmodell*', which understands the living space as space of satisfaction (*Satisfaktionsraum*). Only if a space satisfies a person's needs, will the person identify with it and include it into their spatial orientation and mental maps. Here four dimensions are relevant: an instrumental one, a political-strategic one, a socio-cultural one, and a symbolic one. Basically, Ploch found that the socio-cultural dimension is the most relevant as mirrored in the mental maps. The instrumental dimension followed with a dominance of consumption ele-

ments (e.g. shopping places were more important than production elements such as the workplace and other places from the professional sphere). The symbolic dimension came third (e.g. using natural landscape elements, which Ploch interpreted as a sign of distinction against urban space). The political-strategic dimension was rather irrelevant in Ploch's study.

Generally, Ploch (1995: 31<sup>85</sup>) argued that mental maps can be analysed as follows: *'There is a first layer of the individual character of these images 'of the world in our minds'. Over this layer, there is a second layer of the 'specific', which, looked at as a whole, represents the 'general', and from which we can also derive the 'particular' with the help of the Raumorientierungsmodell [as presented by Greverus].'*

Ploch said that there are two different content dimensions that can be found in mental maps. First, respondents draw 'their places', which Ploch understood as an individual level of significance. Through a comparison of these place-related contents between cases, the researcher could discover similar significance patterns. Yet, as she said, these similarities are not necessarily based on jointly formulated and shared sense. The second content dimension consists of 'ideas of places', which rather represent an interviewee's guess about a collective image. Contents of this latter dimension are seldom drawn, and they have to be uncovered through more specific questioning (Ploch, 1995: 39f.).

Furthermore, Ploch interpreted that the few 'ideas of city' that her interview partners drew were opposed to the many descriptions of 'their cities'. According to Ploch, this is an indicator for the decreasing individual estimation that places might be shaped by the individuals themselves. Ploch wrote (1995: 40<sup>86</sup>): *'This competence of actively appropriating the environment – and changing and reinterpreting spaces – becomes stunted equivalently to the extension of politically and bureaucratically formulated general authority of professional planning.'* I think this last point is interesting in light of the creative industries' literature. There, creative knowledge workers are suspected to be very active agents in the field of space appropriation and redefinition. Therefore, one could suggest that their maps should contain more 'ideas of places' than content on 'their places'.

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**85** Translated by the author from the German text: *'Über den individuellen Charakter dieser Bilder "von der Welt in unseren Köpfen" zieht sich eine Folie des Spezifischen, das zusammengenommen das Allgemeine abbildet, aus dem wir mit Hilfe des Raumorientierungsmodells – auch – das Besondere ermitteln können.'*

**86** Translated by the author from the German text: *'Diese Kompetenz der aktiven Umweltaeignung – zu der auch Veränderungen und Umdeutungen von Räumen zählen – verkümmert im gleichen Maße wie die politisch und bürokratisch formulierte Allzuständigkeit von Planung steigt.'*

### 6.2.3 The Sampling Strategy

My sampling strategy was guided by my own definition of the target group (cf. chapter 2). The first criterion was: I looked for people who worked in creative industries according to my all-encompassing definition of this economic sector. Second, I chose people as interview partners who lived multilocally. And third, their multilocality should take place across national borders, thus having a transnational character. In the description of qualitative heuristics (cf. section 6.3 below) contrasting cases are mentioned as a tool to increase variation between individual cases. I tried to vary my sample according to the following variables: family situation, age, professional field, place patterns (East-West; North-South; EU vs. intercontinental), and nationality.

Obviously, such a catalogue of criteria is complex and describes an idealised method of sampling. The problem is that there are no data available from registries or other sources about multilocal people, because it is simply not possible to register multilocality (cf. section 4.2). Transnationality is also not registered sufficiently. So, I had to rely on other ways of approaching interesting interview partners. I started with two interview partners who I already knew and who fit into my sample. Then I decided to use the snowball sampling strategy. I asked my interview partners if they could suggest further interesting interview partners. Such a strategy obviously risks the danger of producing a very biased sample, so I tried to not rely too heavily on snowball sampling in the social networks of my two initial interview partners. Instead, I also approached my own social networks and asked my colleagues and friends for interesting interview partners. In exploratory research the bias can be relativised by respecting variation between cases. As such, I tried to speak to people with differing backgrounds. Finally, this qualitative design does not aim at completely unbiased representativeness.

Currid (2007), who studied creative knowledge workers and their social interaction in the case of New York, used a similar mix of sampling methods, because otherwise it is difficult to find interview partners. Currid (2007: 457) describes her experience with qualitative interview sampling in the field of creative industries as follows: *'I found interview subjects through a variety of methods, including cold-calling, snowball sampling, and intentionally selecting particular subjects. I found, as is true throughout the cultural economy, that credibility and social networks influence access [to interview partners]. Therefore, while I obtained some interviews simply by looking up phone numbers or email addresses and contacting my subjects without introduction, in many cases I obtained contact information for possible interviewees from other cultural producers. While this approach is not unbiased, people to whom I was referred by others were more likely to grant interviews than those I contacted without a reference.'*



*Composition of the sample*

Through a mix of different channels, I could construct a sample that varies in several ways according to the above mentioned variables (see Tab.6.1).

**Table 6.1:** Overview of the interview sample (names anonymised)

No.	Name	Gender	Age	Nation-ality	Current Partnership	Children	Profession
01	Aurélien	Male	30s	French	Yes (German)	None	Artist & Director of Cultural Association
02	Birgit	Female	50s	German	Yes (German)	None	University Professor (Architecture) & Head of Planning Office
03	Christian	Male	30s	French	No (Ex was German)	None	Artist, Model, Translator & Construction Worker
04	Dirk	Male	30s	German	Yes (Bulgarian)	None	Slavicist, Journalist & Consultant in Adult Education
05	Emil	Male	40s	German	Yes (Italian)	None	Political Scientist & Cultural Activist
06	Federico	Male	30s	Italian	No	None	Cultural Scientist & Activist
07	Gunnar	Male	20s	German	Yes (Spanish)	None	Cultural Scientist & Stem Cell Courier
08	Henriqua	Female	30s	Spanish	Yes (Dutch)	1	Scientist in Field of Regional Development
09	Isabel	Female	40s	Spanish	No (Ex was German)	None	Interpreter for High Rank Politicians
10	Juliana	Female	30s	Lithuanian	Yes (German)	2	Ethnologist
11	Kate	Female	60s	US American	Yes (no info on current partner, but Ex was German)	None	Linguist & Artistic Director for Movie Productions
12	Liam	Male	60s	English	Yes (Scottish)	3	Scientist in the Field of Regional Development
13	Marta	Female	30s	Lithuanian	Yes (Slovenian)	None	Freelance Researcher
14	Nikolina	Female	20s	US American - - Bulgarian		None	Geographer (Student Assistant)
15	Oskar	Male	50s	Swiss	Yes (Austrian)	1	Head of Firm organizing Cultural Events / Moderation

**continued Table 6.1:** Overview of the interview sample (names anonymised)

No.	Name	Gender	Age	Nation-ality	Current Partnership	Children	Profession
16	Pia	Female	30s	German	-	None	University Teacher in Architecture & Head of Architecture Firm
17	Qamar	Male	40s	Chechen-German	No (Ex were Dagestanian and Russian-German)	2	Artist & Landlord
18	Ronja	Female	30s	Danish	Yes (German)	1	Journalist & Urbanist
19	Stephan	Male	30s	German	Yes (Danish)	1	Architect & Teacher at University
20	Tjark	Male	30s	Danish	Yes (Austrian)	None	Architect, Interior Designer & Teacher at University
21	Ugo	Male	30s	Chilean	Yes (Chilean)	1	Scientist in Field of Urbanism
22	Valentin	Male	30s	German	Yes (German)	None	Actor, Juggler, Film Maker & Freelance Pedagogue
23	Willi	Male	30s	German	Yes (Argentinian-Belgian)	2	Scientist in Architecture & Urban Planning
24	Xaverio	Male	20s	Italian	No (Ex was German)	None	Freelance Photographer & Sociologist
25	Yari	Male	30s	Mexican	-	None	Hip Hop Artist

As shown in Table 6.1, the sample has an age gradient, ranging from a young student towards interview partners in their 60s approaching retirement. I interviewed parents and people without children; I interviewed singles and people in stable partnerships; I interviewed people who own apartments or houses, other people who rented, and even one who indicated having no dwelling of their own. I interviewed people ranging from the poles of traditional scientific occupations to freelance artists. Most of my interview partners have various jobs and indeed are situated between different professions. I interviewed people who considered themselves multilocals before the interviews, and others who did not. I interviewed people from different nationalities who had diverging place patterns. I interviewed people who have lived in bi-national partnerships, as well as others who had not experienced bi-national partnerships. The big challenge is now to analyse this variety of cases with a focus on finding similarity (as demanded in the approach of qualitative heuristics).

### 6.2.4 The Interview Situation: Conversational Atmosphere

In general, I decided to keep the interview situation as natural as possible. Vonderach (1997) has pointed to the importance of natural atmospheres during interviews in order to generate rich narrations. Given the fact that it was problematic to fix interview dates with my busy and mobile interview partners, I still did not want to get stressed by the often small time frames that we had. In addition, I had never met most interview partners before. Thus, the interview itself was also the situation of getting to know each other. A more relaxed interview situation, I hoped, would facilitate the trust that my interview partners would have in me, and this again, I thought, would improve their narrations. The situation that I wanted to create should be close to a private conversation, and not an artificial interview, in which one asks and the other answers. Such a procedure also allows for a better quality of interview data and it is one part of quality management in qualitative research designs (cf. Mayer, 2008).

There were two main aspects that helped me to generate such a conversational atmosphere. First, insofar as I was able, I tried to combine my interviews with something to drink or to eat, and I treated my interview partners in order to compensate for their time. As my interview partners were very busy, I thought it might be easier to convince them to an interview if the time was to be used for multiple purposes: namely, for doing the interview and for eating. Serving something to eat and to drink also gave the interview the character of meeting an acquaintance for lunch, coffee break or dinner, instead of going to a scientific interview.

Second, I tried to avoid any hierarchical situation in the interviews. Even though I had not met all of my interview partners beforehand, I still tried to address them using the German '*Du*', the French and Spanish '*Tu*', instead of the formal '*Sie*', '*Usted*' or '*Vous*'. Obviously this problem does not arise in English language interviews. Being informal, however, needs a bit of sensitivity. Some people might feel offended. In two cases, I was not sure and preferred to stay 'formal' in order to not destroy the situation by being 'impolite'. Hierarchical distance in interviews might also result from the fact that the interviewees think that they know less and drift into a pattern of shy behaviour when sitting in front of a scientist. The scientific interviewer is then psychologically in a higher position. As a consequence, interviewees might respond as they think the interviewer expects them to. This is often the case in biographical interviews, in which the interviewer enters into the core of privacy, and in which interviewees try to legitimise their own life. Yet, the phenomenon might also occur the other way around. Particularly in expert interviews (e.g. with politicians, managers etc.), the interviewees take the stronger position as they are the one who knows that they know more about a certain issue and that the interviewer has come exactly for that. Thus, information here might also not be the whole story, as experts are often trained in external communications and public relations.

The point is that both hierarchical problems cause an artificial character of the interview. On the one hand, the interviewer gives the interviewee the feeling of being

studied as a private person, and the interviewee might fall into a defensive position. On the other hand, the interviewee knows for sure that they are in the offensive position and can try to make use of it. I think the key to avoiding hierarchical situations is to build up trust. The interviewee must be able to trust in the fact that the information that they provide during the interview is not disadvantageous to them afterwards. Only through trust, an interviewer can avoid having either the problem of individual legitimisation or prepared PR talk.

One way to build up trust is to signal the interview partner that both interviewee and interviewer belong to a same social group, or that they share some experience or knowledge. Here, also Charmaz (2008) remarks that an interviewer's actual involvement not only helps the interview situation, but also the analysis at a later stage. If a researcher is involved in the empirical field, Charmaz argues, they can better reconstruct the social reality for deriving theoretical outputs. Obviously, this involvement in the empirical field is not always given, and an interviewer should be honest and never pretend about such things. In my case it is a fact that I also lived through periods in which I was multilocal, and I let my interview partners know that. This quickly helped generate a conversational atmosphere in which my interview partners did not try to legitimise their life, as they had the feeling of speaking to some 'fellow multilocal' and started to reveal information that otherwise perhaps would not have been reported. My interview with Willi serves as an example for how this might work. In the interview the conversation took a new dynamic when I started to speak of my own personal situation, and Willi started asking me about my life. Later on he also revealed new information again, even though I had already finished the interview. So, I think it was a helpful decision to avoid any hierarchy and to create a conversational atmosphere in which interviewer and interviewee are more or less equal partners.

I also had direct feedback on the interviews given to me by my interview partners, or even to other people who had helped me arrange the interviews. My interview partners expressed that they found the interview situation very relaxing and they started to pause in their busy everyday life. The interviews, and in particular drawing the mental maps – which some had never done before – made them reflect on their own situations. Based on these reflections they could think in a new way about their lives and how their lives should be in the near future. I can confirm what Ploch (1995) mentioned: the interviews in combination with mental map drawing were perceived by the interview partners as fun, inspiring and a moment of reflection outside of the immediate everyday life. Actually, my interview partners seemed to like it as a brief time-out.

### 6.2.5 Language Issues

I also have to point out that my interviews were conducted in different languages. I met people from different national backgrounds, and not all of them could speak

English or German properly. So, I offered to do interviews in the language they preferred, provided that I knew a bit of that language, too. Obviously, such a proceeding leads to a lot of language issues. These linguistic difficulties might lead to problems in maintaining a sensitive use of concepts and wording during the interview. Scherke (2011: 88<sup>87</sup>) also comments on that: *‘Another problem for qualitative social research in relation to migration phenomena consists of the language in which an interview is conducted. The life practice of migrants is often characterised by multilingualism. Depending on the context, migrants spontaneously switch between languages or they develop hybrids. Yet, sufficiently qualified interviewers who are able to deal with this phenomenon are often lacking. [...] Qualitative interviewing calls for an intensive attention towards the opponent, in other words interviews that are conducted in a foreign language cause either inhibition for the interviewee or problems for the interviewer, because both cannot be sufficiently spontaneous in their responses to the other.’* Scherke describes this problem, but she does not offer a solution to it. She only points out that essentialist and traditional concepts (e.g. ethnicity, nationality) are necessary in some contexts of sociological research on migration in order to understand the resulting problems in multicultural empirical fields. On the one hand, these concepts and ascriptions (*Zuschreibungen*) make sense for analysing e.g. discrimination, which is often based on exactly these traditional concepts. On the other hand, the concepts are part of the lifeworld of migrants, and as such have real consequences in their lives.

A major problem, which even linguists might not solve, is the translation of individual terms and the related semantic content or concepts between languages. For example, I faced this problem with the German terms *zu Hause* and *Heimat*, which I could not translate into English (cf. section 3.1). While some scientists might argue that wording in questions is a very sensitive issue in multilingual studies, I would argue that this problem was only of a secondary nature in my project. I formerly had worked in European quantitative studies, in which questionnaires were set up in different languages – and yes, wording is a big issue there. However, I think that qualitative interview studies have an advantage here, as we are in a situation of face-to-face conversation. If the interviewee does not understand the question, he can ask for a clarification. If the interviewer thinks that the interviewee has not understood the

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<sup>87</sup> Translated by the author from the German text: *‘Ein anderes Problem für die qualitative Sozialforschung im Zusammenhang mit Migrationsphänomenen stellt die Frage nach der Sprache dar, in der ein Interview geführt wird. Die Lebenspraxis von Migrantinnen und Migranten weist häufig eine ausgeprägte Mehrsprachigkeit auf. Je nach Kontext kommt es zum spontanen Wechsel zwischen Sprachen bzw. werden auch Mischformen entwickelt. Vielfach fehlt es jedoch an entsprechenden qualifizierten Interviewern, die in der Lage sind, diesem Phänomen Rechnung zu tragen. [...] Qualitative Interviews erfordern jedoch ein intensives Eingehen auf das Gegenüber, d.h. in einer fremden Sprache geführte Interviews erzeugen entweder bei dem bzw. der Interviewten Hemmschwellen oder beim Interviewenden Probleme dahingehend, dass nicht spontan genug auf die Äußerungen des Gegenübers eingegangen werden kann.’*

question, he can ask a question differently. Thus, I dealt in a pragmatic way with the multilingual setting: I simply tried without hesitation.

Coming back to the example of the *zu Hause/Heimat* problem, in other languages I tried to take another route by circumscribing the topic with other words, which I knew from the foreign language, paying much attention to what my interview partners would answer. In some cases I also tried to discuss the language issue directly with my interview partner, if I knew they spoke German, too. For example, you could look at the interview with Kate. As a dubbing expert, I thought she was the right person to discuss the translation of *Heimat/zur Hause* into English language. The interview was done in German. Yet, as she is an English native speaker and a linguist, I tried to figure out the translation aspects with her. Similarly, you can look at the interview with Christian. Here, I used German words in a French interview. Christian was not even astonished about it and answered without irritation. This in fact supports Scherke's observation of spontaneous switching between languages amongst migrants and their unconventional use of language.

I would conclude that in multilingual settings, such as my study here, language can become an issue. Misunderstandings and the impossibility of translating certain concepts word for word into other languages have to be taken into account during the analysis. Nonetheless, I think that in a qualitative study language issues can be controlled much better during the interview than in quantitative settings.

Finally, given the specificity of my study group, which consisted of transnational migrants, the language issue is relative also from another point of view. My interview partners all crossed national borders and they are multilocal in a transnational context. This means they have to deal with language issues within their everyday life, and they have developed a certain expertise and relaxed position towards it. They are used to conceptual clarifications between languages from their everyday life. So, it was no problem during the interviews to reformulate questions as well as answers in order to provide an understanding on both sides.

### 6.3 Methods for the Analysis of the Interview Data

This section is dedicated to the introduction of some main ideas about the analysis of qualitative data that originates from interviews. I will first describe the emergence of the grounded theory approach that was a very progressive and controversial idea when it first appeared in the scientific realm. It was rejected by a lot of scientists, but it offers a philosophy of understanding qualitative research as something that is nurtured by the empirical data. It is very helpful to understand how the generation and first treatment of data could work. Then, I will briefly speak about the idea of hermeneutics. Hermeneutics provide an approach for the detailed and reconstructive analysis of qualitative data. There are many scientists who use hermeneutics for analysis. I will focus here on the specific approach of Vonderach (1997), which he calls

*Geschichtenhermeneutik*, in which a special attention is paid to the single stories that make up a person's life. Finally, I will also introduce the approach of qualitative heuristics, which Kleining & Witt (2000) developed.

### 6.3.1 The Logics of Grounded Theory<sup>88</sup>

The grounded theory approach for the analysis of empirical data was first introduced by Glaser & Strauss (1967) and their book *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. This book was written with the intention of overcoming the cleavage between scientific theory and empirical reality. In an interview for the German *Journal für Psychologie*, Strauss stated that they wanted to introduce a new research practice which derives empirically grounded theory from the data and does not – as was/is common – use the data in order to verify or falsify pre-conceived theories (cf. Legewie & Schervier-Legewie, 1995). In reference to Glaser & Strauss, Kelle (2005) describes that the 1960s' world of Humanities was dominated by a few 'theoretical capitalists' and a large mass of 'proletariat testers' (PhD students and young researchers). The latter were commissioned by the former to empirically test their 'grand theories'. Kelle comments (2005: paragraph 2): '*One of the main purposes of Glaser's and Strauss' 'Discovery book' was to challenge the hypothetico-deductive approach which demands the development of precise and clear cut theories or hypotheses before the data collection takes place*'. The grounded theory paradigm is not a scientific theory; rather it is a methodological frame for the analysis of data. The grounded theory perspective describes a specific relationship between empirical data and scientific theory, in which empirical data lets formal, substantive theory 'emerge'.

This concept was criticised from the beginning as it contradicts other approaches to data analysis that prefer the use of preconceived theory for generating and analysing data. Since its initial presentation in 1967, the concept was constantly reworked by Glaser and Strauss. Finally, the two authors even broke up and developed grounded theory approaches in two different directions. Whereas Strauss & Corbin (1990a; 1990b) paid attention to the 'anti-grounded-theory' criticism and continued to enhance the practical dimensions of grounded theory, Glaser (1978; 1992; 1998) became more closed towards critique and focused on a more empirical discussion that stuck to the original version of the grounded theory concept (Legewie, 2005). However, the conceptions of grounded theory of both Strauss and Glaser have been misinterpreted and misused for different types of qualitative data analysis.

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<sup>88</sup> Main parts of this section were published earlier in a working paper that I have written in the frame of the PhD research at the University of Milan-Bicocca. The paper can be found on the university's website: <http://www.sociologiadip.unimib.it/dipartimento/ricerca/scheda.php?idUser=246> (accessed 14 April 2014).

*Grounded theory according to Glaser*

In order to clarify what grounded theory is and what it is not, Glaser (2004) addressed qualitative social researchers with the article *Remodeling Grounded Theory*. He writes (2004: paragraph 6): *'I hope to relieve GT [grounded theory] of the excessive scientism brought on it by those worried about accuracy and what is 'real' data when creating a scientific product. I hope to give explanatory strength to those PhD dissertation level students to stand their GT grounds when struggling in the face of the misapplied QDA [qualitative data analysis] critique by their seniors and supervisors.'*

After citing common misinterpretations of grounded theory, he introduces a set of guidelines for how to apply the grounded theory method. According to him, grounded theory development begins stringently without any theoretical pre-considerations. While other methods of qualitative data analysis start with literature review and the construction of a theoretical framework in order to design an empirical data collection process, Glaser is convinced that *'all is data'* (2004: paragraph 12). The researcher looking through the grounded theory lens has to be open-minded for every kind of data sources (interviews, field notes, statistical tables, scientific literature, observations, secondary data, etc.) and to what this data tells them. The perspective on the story that the data tells has to be open and should not be limited by preconceived theoretical considerations. Scientific literature in this sense is one among many data sources whereas it is not the precondition to start research. The aim of this method is the development of *'a set of carefully grounded concepts organized around a core category and integrated into hypotheses'* (Glaser, 2004: paragraph 41). Which steps are necessary to achieve this goal? How does the researcher get there?

*Theoretical sensitivity*

In order to achieve this goal, the researcher has to enter into a cyclic process of constant reflection about the relation between the empirical data and the emerging theory (circumscribed as *'systematic circularity'* as in Flick, 2006b: 37; *'iterative process'* as in Charmaz, 2008: 156; *'zig-zag process'* as in Creswell, 2007: 64; *'tacking back and forth'* as in Clarke, 2007: 424). Therefore, theoretical sensitivity is a fundamental necessity in the Glaserian conception of grounded theory. This means that the researcher has to trust their own preconscious processing of the data without yet knowing where it will lead them. Researchers have to be open to confusion in the beginning of the research. Furthermore, they must be able to use first upcoming theoretical insights and hypotheses in order to design the subsequent empirical stages. Even the research problem is unknown before and will be discovered in the process of reflection about the data. Glaser's suggestion is to start with analysis right away, using the first data source available. The initial step is to find any general concern showing up in the first data. This *'running the data open'* is assisted by questions such as: what is actually happening in the data? What is this data a study of? What is the main concern being faced by the participants? (cf. Glaser, 2004: paragraph 48).



*Open coding & theoretical sampling*

At this moment of research, open coding of upcoming main concerns/interests has to be applied. Thereby, grounded theory coding differs from other qualitative data analysis methods as it asks for ‘action’ and not for ‘topics’, aiming at explanation rather than description (Charmaz, 2008). The first codes indicate a direction that should be pursued. It leads to the development of first categories for analysis and first hypotheses. With the help of these hypotheses, the theoretical sampling of further data sources can be realised. The process of theoretical sampling does not aim at a representative sample: ‘Cases are chosen as it becomes clear that they can contribute to theory generation’ (Harding, 2006: 132). With these cycles of data collection, the subsequent data analysis, the development of categories and hypotheses, and the theoretical sampling of the further research become more focused. The narrower the point of interest becomes, the more of the coding process switches from an open character to a selective type of coding the data (Glaser, 2004). In this subsequent stage of ‘focused coding’ some initially open codes are selected which have a high ‘analytic momentum’ (Charmaz, 2008) or ‘theoretical capability’ (Clarke, 2007). They are put into categories for further theoretical development. Theoretical sampling, here, supports the teasing out of hidden properties of the first categories, which derived from open coding. Additional data sources are chosen in order to clarify uncertainty in the properties of developed categories. Finally, a core variable (which should be central and should account for a large share of variation in the data) will emerge and be used as the anchor point for the construction of a grounded theory.

*Constant comparative method & analytic induction*

According to Glaser (2004), two basic features make this process a systematic research methodology. First, the constant comparison between the collected, empirical data and the developing hypotheses/theoretical framework assists to remain ‘systematic’ during theory generation. In an ongoing reflection these two spheres are mirrored against each other. The hypotheses/categories have to be relevant (as indicated by the data), they must fit every used data, they must work with each other in the final grounded theory and they have to be modifiable (in case other data reveals contradictions).

Here, Glaser suggests a three-step comparison. When starting with the research, one only works with incidents in the data (indicators), which should be compared to each other. When uniformity is found among incidents, first concepts should be evolved by the researcher. In the second step of comparison, these concepts are compared (tested) by further incidents. When concepts have been proven to fit, they will finally be compared to other evolved concepts. The main interest in comparison, thus, is to find contrasting evidence in the empirical data, and to modify hypotheses in a manner that they fit a broad social reality resulting from the empirical data. This process of ‘contrasting’ the hypotheses with further data and concepts is called ‘analytic induction’. The analytic induction’s ‘decisive instrument is to analyze the excep-

tion or the case that is deviant to the hypothesis' (Flick, 2006a: 5). As long as the hypothesis can be destabilised by contrasting evidence, it has to be modified<sup>89</sup>.

Flick (2006b) also points out that the constant comparative method helps to identify 'ideal types'. These types should be derived using the instrument of 'minimal comparison' (of cases within one type) and the 'maximal comparison' (of cases in different types). In the end each empirical case should fit one of the constructed ideal types.

Once a certain uniformity between concepts, categories, types, and hypotheses is achieved, a more abstract and formal theory could be constructed which integrates all the single parts. This moment is called 'theoretical saturation'. It means that further data collection and data analysis do not generate new – in the sense of contrasting – insights. Work with the empirical material is then finished, and only the sorting of the ideas follows. Charmaz (2008) alludes that the term 'theoretical saturation' should not be misunderstood as the moment when themes come up repeatedly in new data; theoretical saturation is reached when the properties of categories are clear, and hypotheses have sufficient explanatory quality. In addition, she points out that many grounded theory studies claim theoretical saturation without documenting it.

#### *Memo writing*

This leads to the second systematic necessity of grounded theory methodology: the documentation of the theory generation process. Therefore, Glaser & Strauss (1967) introduced the procedure of 'memoing'. Glaser later defines (2004: paragraph 61): *'Memos are theoretical notes about the data and the conceptual connections between categories. The writing of theoretical memos is the core stage in the process of generating theory'*.

These memos document the researcher's hypotheses about the connections between categories and their properties. In addition, they show the attempts of how to integrate them into a generated, consistent theory. Memos are the framework for exploring, checking, and developing ideas as well as documenting the research process and progress (Charmaz, 2008). The memos are most useful when they are titled, referenced to their source data, compared to other memos, and their generation process is documented as well as their consequences for the study's progress.

In a final process – when theoretical saturation is reached and uniformity among categories exists – the sorting of all the researcher's memos generates the conceptual outline for the articulation of the theory grounded in the empirical data. This process of organising the memos also has to follow a certain system. The researcher could

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<sup>89</sup> The concept of analytic induction has been criticised by some authors. Yet, Flick (2006a: 5) affirms its usefulness for grounded theory: *'Analytic induction has been criticized as it does not [...] provide a means for establishing causal laws and universals. There are question marks against the generalization of case studies and external validity in general. Nevertheless, analytic induction has its own importance as a procedure for assessing and developing analyses by the use of negative cases.'*

start with any memo and then should refer it to the core variable/category. Subsequently all other memos are sorted around this focus and put in relation to each other so that every memo fits into the resulting theoretical frame. Grounded theory methodology, here, assumes that the social reality and each piece of it are completely integrated. The grounded theory researcher thus has to uncover the integration of each of his or her memos into one grounded theory. The resulting theory should explain ‘*as much variation as possible*’ with ‘*the greatest scope possible*’ using ‘*the fewest possible concepts*’ (Glaser, 2004: paragraph 74).

During this process of reflection and documentation, Glaser (2004) states that the researcher will finalise their study by writing up a substantive, conceptual theory with general implications. This systematic process of theory generation prevents them from simply itemising a list of descriptive findings. The resulting grounded theory has to fulfil the following criteria of scientific quality:

- Conceptual representativeness (which means explaining function in other contexts/for other phenomena as well);
- Comprehensibility (for both researcher and interviewees/empirical sources of the social reality).

The resulting profound and inductive insights of the grounded theory method represent a ‘rhetoric’ of the social psychological world (Glaser, 2004).

#### *Critiques on the grounded theory approach of the Glaserian school*

After years of being used, misused, interpreted, and misinterpreted, the grounded theory approach of Glaser and Strauss has been exposed to a large strand of critical literature. Among them, Thomas & James (2006) give a comprehensive overview about major concerns. The first critique refers to the use of the term ‘theory’. The argument is based on the quality criteria that a scientific theory is scientific when it is predictive. The problem about the grounded theory approach is that it accepts the dynamic and changing character of the social reality. Thus, the grounded theory – already from its self-understanding – is only limited to a certain case, and it only is relevant for limited time. It could not be universal. And if it is not universal, it could not be a theory, but only a particular narrative or description. A second doubt about grounded theory methodology arises from the claim that it is purely inductive. The researcher’s propensity to be totally dispassionate about the field of study is a characteristic neglected by critiques of grounded theory. According to these critiques, a researcher always possesses of some *ex ante* knowledge and should not deny this, but should make use of it. Third, the image of the ‘emerging theory’ that is to be discovered is criticised because a theory cannot pre-exist ‘hidden’ in the data. Rather, it is an active process of invent-ing/thinking a theory, which equals the process of interpretation as in other analysing methods.

The second critique about the distance to *ex ante* knowledge as formulated by Glaser & Strauss (1967) is also addressed by Kelle (2005). This problem consists of

the contradiction between, on the one hand, the claim to start research without theoretical preconceptions (letting theory ‘emerge’) and, on the other hand, the necessity to integrate pre-existing theoretical knowledge into the first steps of grounded theory building by analytic category development (theoretical sensitivity). In Glaser & Strauss’ primary book, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (1967), the two authors could not solve this problem. Later, both of them followed different approaches of how to overcome this paradox. Kelle writes (2005: paragraph 5): ‘*Since the 1960s it is one of the most crucial and widely accepted insights of epistemology and cognitive psychology that [...] the construction of any theory, whether empirically grounded or not, cannot start ab ovo, but has to draw on already existing stocks of knowledge.*’

Yet, the Glaserian school still sticks to a rather ‘fundamentalist’ understanding of how to do grounded theory construction. According to Kelle (2005), Glaser – in his 1992 monograph *Emergence vs. Forcing: Basics of Grounded Theory Analysis* – accused Strauss of ‘forcing’ data by applying too rigid ‘coding paradigms’. Glaser (2004) strictly resists to the use of pre-existing knowledge in grounded theory construction. He tries to overcome the initial paradox (see above: emergence of theory vs. theoretical sensitivity) by clarifying the idea of ‘theoretical coding’. Whereas ‘substantive coding’ is the process of applying open codes to the empirical data – the substance – in order to find emerging categories, ‘theoretical coding’ represents the researcher’s set of tools to conceptualise the relations between the ‘substantive codes’ in the final product: the integrated grounded theory. Glaser defines a set of ‘coding families’ that describe the ordering of the social world. These coding families contain ‘*terms from highly diverse theoretical backgrounds, debates and schools of philosophy or the social sciences*’ and could be used to create causal models from the substantive codes (Kelle, 2005: paragraph 13). In these more than 15 coding families, rather formal epistemological terms like ‘causes’, ‘contexts’, ‘consequences’, ‘conditions’ are mixed together with sociological concepts like ‘norms’, ‘values’, or ‘beliefs’. Thus, Kelle criticises (2005: paragraph 14): ‘*In order to develop theoretical models about empirical phenomena formal or logical concepts (like ‘causality’)* have to be combined with *substantial sociological concepts (like ‘social roles’, ‘identity’, ‘culture’)*. A major problem with Glaser’s list of coding families is that it completely lacks such a differentiation between formal and substantial notions.’ Equally, Charmaz critically states (2008: 159): ‘*What Glaser includes in a given coding family sometimes seems arbitrary and haphazard. The coding families are not necessarily mutually exclusive, and their boundaries are often indistinct.*’

Therefore, on the one hand Glaser’s approach to conceptualise the role of pre-existing theoretical knowledge in grounded theory procedures does not seem sufficiently clear; for inexperienced researchers this coding scheme is especially of less help. On the other hand, Glaser does not seem willing to integrate pre-existing knowledge into his blueprint of grounded theory methodology. He follows a rigid understanding of induction.

### *Grounded theory according to Strauss & Corbin*

What is the difference of the Straussian approach? The general structure of how to do grounded theory construction is the same as Glaser's approach. The difference could be found in the way of solving the initial paradox (emergence of theory vs. theoretical sensitivity). Strauss & Corbin (1990a; 1990b) – instead of coding families – suggested a *'more straightforward and less complicated'* way of starting coding; they use a 'coding paradigm', as Kelle mentions (2005: paragraph 15). This coding paradigm consists of four items (or 'types of categories', as termed by Creswell, 2007: 64): 'conditions', 'interaction among actors', 'strategies and tactics', and 'consequences' (Strauss, 1987: 27–32). The items should guide the researcher in the process of open coding the data.

### *Axial coding*

Once a first code ascription is applied to the different incidents, the process of 'axial coding' is crucial in the Straussian grounded theory construction. Axial coding means putting each code into relevant relations with other codes, and thus checking for logical axes between the codes. If relevant, these axes between the codes help to find a substantive theoretical model, often presented in a visual model (Creswell, 2007: 65). In doing so, six criteria should be looked at in order to construct the relations between the codes: (1) phenomena, at which action and interaction are directed; (2) causal conditions, which lead to the occurrence of these phenomena; (3) attributes of the context; (4) additional intervening conditions, which influence the phenomena; (5) (inter-)action strategies used to handle the phenomena; and (6) consequences of (inter-) action (Kelle, 2005: paragraph 17).

### *Causal-conditional matrix*

The resultant axial model represents the image of (inter-)action strategies found in the data. Creswell (2007) points out that Strauss & Corbin have even taken the analytic process a step further, integrating the substantive theory into a causal-conditional matrix. This conditional matrix is a coding device consisting of concentric circles ranging from the individual via the group, the organisation to the community, the region, the nation and the global world. It should help to integrate micro-sociological interaction theories into a more universal level. Yet, Creswell (2007: 65) indicates that this step is seldom undertaken by the researchers due to a lack of time and financial resources.

To sum up, Strauss & Corbin follow a pragmatic and interactionist perspective. This perspective makes their approach very useful for micro-sociological studies focusing on interaction and action. However, for macro-sociological, systems theory-oriented studies, the coding paradigm of Strauss & Corbin could have less practical value (Kelle, 2005). Here, the less defined coding families of Glaser might be more open to a greater variety of theoretical perspectives.

Nonetheless, the Straussian approach seems to be attractive to a larger share of grounded theory users. The advantages compared to Glaser seem to be (1) a more precisely guided coding, which also makes grounded theory application feasible for young inexperienced scholars, and which lets research become focused more quickly, (2) a more explicit understanding of pre-existing knowledge, which makes its utilisation more legitimate, and (3) an action theory approach, which makes it applicable for micro-sociological exploratory research (cf. Keller, 2005).

With respect to Glaser, Keller concludes (2005: paragraph 23) that his fundamentalism might only be part of a strategy to defend sovereignty of interpretation: *'The suspicion arises that the parlance of 'emergence' fulfils the function to legitimize a specific style of research: [...] following this rhetoric a researcher who follows the 'right path' of grounded theory cannot go wrong since the concepts have been emerged from the data.'* Other authors also seem to vote for a more liberal understanding of grounded theory (Clarke, 2007; Creswell, 2007; Harding, 2006). Clarke (2007: 437) equally states: *'Careful readers will recognize my very deep appreciation for and usage of many facets of GT [grounded theory], yet I am in deep disagreement with many of Glaser's recent fundamental(ist) points, and turn instead to Strauss.'* Clarke's preference for the Straussian school originates in its greater open-mindedness towards the further development of grounded theory. Glaser strongly defends their jointly elaborated initial version. The new Straussian version is flexible, and Strauss does not reject enhancements.

#### *Enhancements of grounded theory*

After more than four decades, grounded theory has been applied and enhanced by several authors. Kelle, for example, points out that grounded theory construction could gain a clearer understanding if it would refuse 'naïve empiricism' and if it would prevent *'inductivist self-misunderstanding'* (2005: paragraph 24). Kelle therefore suggests conceptualising grounded theory reasoning as not only inductive but first of all abductive. In reference to the philosopher Peirce, Kelle explains that abduction is a third form of logical inference – next to induction and deduction<sup>90</sup>. Abduction consists of rearranging the facts so that new and unexpected experiences do not seem surprising anymore. In this innovative process, parts of existing knowledge which could each alone not explain the new empirical facts are put together in a new way in order to have a better fitting theoretical framework<sup>91</sup>. That is exactly what is done

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<sup>90</sup> Induction means to reason from studied cases about the unobserved cases of a same kind in a finite population, so general statements are derived from empirical evidence of a sample. Opposed to induction, deduction means to combine a general premise with an empirical statement about a case in order to generate a further statement about that case (Hammersley, 2006).

<sup>91</sup> Kelle (2005: paragraph 31) describes: *'In making abductive inferences, researchers depend on previous knowledge that provides them with the necessary categorical framework for the interpretation, description, and explanation of the empirical world under study. [...] The framework which guides empirical investigations should be modified, rebuilt and reshaped on the basis of empirical material.'*

in grounded theory when constant comparative method and theoretical sampling is applied (see also Charmaz, 2008: 167).

Consequently, Kelle (2005) discusses the falsifiability (understood as degree of empirical content) as a criterion for the applicability of theoretical preconceptions in grounded theory processes. According to the Popperian school of deductive hypothesis testing, hypotheses are only sound when they can be tested empirically. Thus, abstract and formal theories are considered difficult to use; they are simply too universal to be tested with a single sample. However, Kelle thinks that especially these abstract and formal theories might be very useful for the grounded theory researcher in order to structure the first analysis. In order to avoid the risk of neglecting better fitting formal theoretical concepts, he advocates the use of different – even opposing – concepts as analytical ‘lenses’. In exploratory grounded theory concepts, categories of everyday and common sense knowledge additionally might assist in structuring data. These formal and everyday concepts might help to find more empirical categories for the proper grounded theory<sup>92</sup>. Therefore, the use of preconceived knowledge – termed ‘theoretical pluralism’ by Kelle (2005: paragraph 44) – is legitimised not only by the fact that it facilitates the initial search for categories, but it also helps to develop these categories from the beginning on in very substantive ways in the sense of analytic induction. The pure ‘emergence talk’ thus becomes a more systematic process.

The corroboration of empirically grounded categories and theory is also considered necessary by Kelle. Consequently – and in opposition to Glaser’s epistemological fundamentalism – one has to accept the fallibility of a grounded theory. For Kelle (2005: paragraph 46), it is a ‘*methodological fact that empirical research can never provide a final proof for theoretical propositions but only cumulative and always provisional evidence*’. So, for further grounding of the theoretical concepts it is necessary to search for empirical and theoretical evidence and counter-evidence. Applying these three suggestions (abductive inference as logic, acceptance of preconceived knowledge, and corroboration of grounded theory), Kelle argues, grounded theory research could overcome its initial contradictions.

Creswell (2007) broaches the issue of theoretical saturation. The problem in theoretical saturation, he states, consists of knowing when theoretical saturation is actually achieved. The moment of theoretical saturation could be a long time coming or even be invisible to the researcher. He suggests using ‘discriminant sampling’ in order to speed theoretical saturation. Discriminant sampling consists of gathering data

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<sup>92</sup> Kelle (2005: paragraph 40) concludes: ‘*Previous theoretical knowledge can be used at any stage of the process of empirically grounded theory construction if the researchers draw on theoretical concepts with limited empirical content. [...] Thereby, the researcher may start qualitative analysis by using heuristic concepts and may then proceed to the construction of categories and propositions with growing empirical content.*’

from cases that are sampled according to the similarity to the initial cases studied. With these similar cases one can test if the developed theory holds true.

In addition, Creswell (2007) no longer refers to Glaser when describing current types of grounded theory studies. He distinguishes between the Straussian school and the approach of Charmaz (2006). According to him, Charmaz stands for a constructivist interpretation of grounded theory, which is less structured than the Straussian version. It is characterised by the absence of a coding paradigm.

Charmaz (2005; 2006) refuses the single focus on the interactional frame (from which the Straussian coding paradigm is derived); she advocates an interpretative approach to collecting and analysing the data that accounts for social complexity. She focuses on the values, views, ideologies, assumptions, and power hierarchies of the interviewees, instead of paying too much attention to the methodological accuracy of the research process. The ‘reconstruction of social reality’ becomes more central. The methodological complexity of the Straussian school limits the flexible use of grounded theory. The researcher should only use a very open, ‘active coding’, leading him to a grounded theory, which is always suggestive and incomplete (Charmaz, 2005). Thereby, expressing the social relations discovered through research should best be done in ‘gerund phrases’ – accounting for the processual character of the social world (Charmaz, 2008; in agreement: Clarke, 2007).

Charmaz agrees with the Glaserian standpoint that Straussian methodology is too rigid. She argues for more flexibility in the method and advocates for the ‘emergence idea’. Theoretical insights will better emerge liberally from the data than be put into the Straussian causal-conditional matrix after applying the coding paradigm. However, she distances her constructivist idea from Glaser’s idea of the distanced position of the researcher (Charmaz, 2008: 160): *‘The constructivist position views research as an emergent product of particular times, social conditions, and interactional situations. Constructivists argue that researchers’ perspectives will direct their attention but not determine their research. Unlike the view held by Glaser that researchers can and should remove themselves from the influences of their disciplines and the conditions of their research, constructivists aim to make these influences explicit.’*

Thus, Charmaz’ understanding of ‘emergence’ is different from the Glaserian one. She considers both the empirical findings as well as the research methodology to be ‘emergent’. Glaser & Strauss, by contrast, only conceptualised the empirical findings as emergent. Charmaz makes clear that it helps grounded theory methodology to integrate the subjective situation of the research, defined by the opinions, pre-considerations, and choices of the researcher. The researcher is guided by upcoming themes during the process of research, and they have to integrate this state of ‘being guided’ into the theory construction. Charmaz (2008) disagrees with both Glaser as well as Strauss & Corbin about the use of codes. For her, codes – no matter if coding families or a coding paradigm – force the data. Another suggestion from Charmaz concerns the field of study: she advises personal affection. A grounded theory study



becomes better when the researcher is personally involved in the field of study. They then might have a better capability of reflecting the empirical world and its relations with the theoretical frame.

Clarke (2007) offers another enhancement of the initial grounded theory concept from Glaser & Strauss. She starts her conceptualisation with a summary of current critiques from within and outside the grounded theory community. The most common critiques refer to the fact that Glaser & Strauss thought up the method in the 1960s in opposition to positivism, which was dominant at the time, and then they were unable to adapt it to future scientific perspectives (such as neo-positivism, constructivism/postmodernism, theoretical functionalism, symbolic interactionism/poststructuralism). According to Clarke (2007), both Glaser and Strauss tried to cope with criticism: Strauss (in collaboration with Corbin) focused on a symbolic interactionism perspective, opening up the researcher's influence on data collection; Glaser turned to a more functionalist perspective, neglecting the researcher's involvement. For Clarke, Strauss' position seems more professional and an honest attempt to '*make the post-modern turn*'<sup>93</sup>. Strauss admitted that researchers and research are always situated in specific structural conditions. Yet, Clarke criticises Strauss' causal-conditional matrix for being too abstract and not giving empirical specification or clear explication (2007: 432).

Subsequently, she introduces her 'situational matrix', which she frames with the question (Clarke, 2007: 432): '*How do these conditions appear – make themselves felt as consequential – inside the empirical situation under examination?*' She claims to offer a matrix in which conditions of the situation are conceptualised as being in the situation. She thinks that these conditional elements 'are' the situation and hence need to be specified<sup>94</sup>.

For bringing Strauss' causal-conditional matrix '*more fully around the postmodern turn*', Clarke (2007: 433) conceptualises her 'situational analysis' as a multi-site research – integrating human and non-human data sources. The focus is widened also to discursive material and cultural objects, which are considered to be constitutive and consequential for the phenomena under study. Situational analysis, consequently, offers three 'cartographic approaches' (Clarke, 2007: 434): (1) a situational map – analyzing relations between human, non-human, discursive, and other elements of the research situation, (2) social world/arenas map – interpreting the

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<sup>93</sup> Clarke explicates (2007: 431): '*Strauss moved partly, and I would say significantly, around the post-modern turn. Thus it is with Strauss that I have asked, 'How, then, can we meaningfully incorporate analysis of the precise ways in which particular contexts may matter into the processes of doing qualitative research?'*'

<sup>94</sup> Clarke suggests (2007: 432): '*I offer a situational matrix. Here, conditions of the situation are in the situation. There is no such thing as 'context'. The conditional elements of the situation need to be specified in the analysis of the situation itself, as they are constitutive of it, not merely surrounding it or framing it or contributing to it. They are it.*'

inquiry's meso-levels like collective actors, arenas of commitment and discourse, non-human elements, and (3) positional maps – analyzing the inquiry's positioning on axes of difference, concern, and controversy.

To sum up, Clarke proposes to shift the focus from a mere action regard to the analysis of the situation – its elements and their relation – a researcher studies. The analyst is thus able to empirically 'construct' the complexity of a situation (Clarke, 2007: 435f.). The analysis of the relation of all constitutive elements in the situation helps to overcome the scientific differentiations (e.g. between macro-/meso-/micro-levels) and simplifications (leading to the underestimation of important issues), to position the researcher in the research, and to address solid and fluid power structures (answering to neo-Marxist critiques against grounded theory).

To conclude, grounded theory – since its initial presentation by Glaser & Strauss (1967) – has become a popular methodological and analytic approach in qualitative field research. Yet, the grounded theory concept faced criticism –from both outside as well as inside the user community. The original idea of grounded theory was to develop a research understanding opposed to the dominant quantitative, deductive and positivist perspectives of the 1960s. With the evolution of scientific understanding, the grounded theory concept was enhanced by different users in different directions, amongst which the constructivist form is one of the most visible at the moment. Two nuances of constructivist grounded theory have been presented: an interpretative one from Charmaz (2008) and a relational one from Clarke (2007). Grounded theory, refined according to postmodern scientific knowledge, more than ever represents a useful tool for approaching the contemporary, complex social realities in exploratory as well as deepening stages of scientific research. While it is a flexible and 'emergent' method, it is nonetheless systematic – if used according to some guidelines (open-to-theoretical coding sequence, theoretical sampling, memo writing, cyclic reflection about data and categories, theoretical saturation, analytic induction and abductive inference). In addition, it allows for a deeper analytic comprehension than mere descriptive methods of qualitative data analysis.

### 6.3.2 Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics is an important methodological standpoint that helps to understand the logics of qualitative research and interviewing. To put it in simple terms, hermeneutics provides a guide to the interpretation of things that others have said, whether in interviews or in written form. The main problem of interpretation is that the interpreter has less information on the context of a written or spoken text. Thus, identifying the right intention and meaning of the producer of a text is a difficult task. While this is less a problem in the frame of everyday communication and interaction, it is a central issue for scientific research. Hitzler & Honer (1997) stress that in particular social sciences face this problem because, unlike the natural sciences, the data that is

gathered is pre-interpreted through the interview partners. Thus, the scientific analysis of interviews is a ‘second order’ interpretation.

Depending on the research design, the ‘first order’ interpretation that occurs during the interaction between researcher and interview partner can vary a lot. Methods that use observation or analysis of secondary data (e.g. of speeches by politicians, photos, videos) have fewer difficulties in separating first and second order interpretation. In methods in which the researcher interacts directly – e.g. in the more or less unnatural context of a scientific interview – the analysis must contain a separation of first and second order interpretations. Hitzler & Honer say that qualitative interviews then differ from quantitative data generation, because the former simulate a quasi-natural context. In qualitative interviews mostly language of everyday life is used and the researcher can influence how close the interview atmosphere is to the interviewee’s everyday life (cf. section 6.2.4).

According to Hitzler & Honer (1997: 23<sup>95</sup>), the very basic idea of hermeneutic analysis is *‘to break through the superficial informational content of a text in order to find the underlying (this means somehow ‘latent’ or ‘hidden’) layers of sense and significance, while at the same time making and maintaining reasonable this process of reconstruction, both in a methodologically controlled way.’* Unlike mere content analysis (e.g. described in Mayring, 1995), hermeneutic analysis tries to discover meaningful relations between individual aspects in an open way. In content analysis, categories are set before looking at the interviews, while in hermeneutics the interviews themselves reveal important categories that are linked to each other. One can only reconstruct sense and meaning in people’s lifeworlds in this manner. Therefore, it is important to neglect one’s own pre-existing knowledge, which might be relevant for and influence the interpretation of data. Hitzler & Honer (1997: 24<sup>96</sup>) say it is important *‘that the interpreting researcher plays dumb on his own stock of knowledge, that he pretends to not be aware of or to not have this knowledge, with the aim of being able to constitute the phenomenon of inquiry in a way which is rectified from his/her routinised cultural connotations, and as such in a ‘new’ way.’* Hermeneutic approaches use doubt, reflection and the neglect of rapid understanding as main tools to uncover the inherent structures of everyday knowledge. The assumption of ‘knowing’ something is fundamentally questioned. This philosophy of understanding the knowledge crea-

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95 Translated by the author from the German text: *‘[...] methodisch kontrolliert durch den oberflächlichen Informationsgehalt des Textes hindurchzustoßen zu tieferliegenden (d.h. eben: in gewisser Weise „latenten“ bzw. „verborgenen“) Sinn- und Bedeutungsschichten und dabei diesen Rekonstruktionsvorgang intersubjektiv nachvollziehbar zu machen bzw. nachvollziehbar zu halten.’*

96 Translated by the author from the German text: *‘dass der Interpret sich gegenüber seinen eigenen Wissensbeständen „künstlich“ dumm stellt, dass er also so tut als kenne bzw. hätte er sie nicht, um so das infrage stehende Phänomen von seinen kulturellen Routinekonnotationen „gereinigt“, d.h. quasi „neu“ konstituieren zu können.’*

tion process could be compared to a 'divestment of epistemological naivety' (*Entkleidung epistemologischer Naivität*) (Hitzler & Honer, 1997: 25).

A particularly interesting approach in the field of hermeneutics is the *Geschichtenhermeneutik*, which was introduced by Vonderach (1997). This approach focuses on the reconstruction of individual biographies. The basic idea is that sense-making is oriented by single stories and situations that occur in a person's life. The reconstruction of sense-making therefore needs to go through storytelling. The sense that a person gives to their life derives from the entirety of their single stories. Vonderach thus thinks that researchers have to look for a reconstruction of the overall life story (*Lebensgeschichte*) of the interviewees. Based on Wilhelm Schapp's *Geschichtenphilosophie* (1976), Vonderach explains that these stories have a socialising function; they bring people together and they are the basis for identification. During the course of a life, stories build up on former stories. Each situation is reflected upon afterwards by an individual and it becomes a story. Former stories guide how a person acts in subsequent situations. During this process of lining up stories during a lifetime, a person develops structures to order these stories. It is the researcher's job to discover these underlying structures and to build a grounded theory from such procedure (Vonderach, 1997: 176).

Vonderach (1997: 176f.<sup>97</sup>) suggests that a natural interview atmosphere in particular is important to generate story-telling: *'Following the logics of interpretative sociology, especially if it considers the concept of stories as important, communicative research methods are particularly appropriate, which allow for an expression of the interviewees' 'meanings' and 'stories', in which a person in question experiences themselves and their social world in relation to sense and in orientation towards action. This is best achieved through methods which mainly equal everyday life and its ways of 'natural' communication. Open conversation or 'open interviews' are particularly suitable here [...]'.*

The selection of interview partners should follow the logics of theoretical sampling and contrasting cases. During the analysis, the researcher should neglect the 'homology hypothesis', which was developed by Schütz for narrative interviewing. Schütz thought that the stories which interview partners are telling can directly be understood as true. However, Vonderach would understand these stories as an *ex post* reflection about a past situation. Thus, what a person tells now is not necessarily identical with what happened at the respective moment in the past. The researcher

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<sup>97</sup> Translated by the author from the German text: *„Dem Ansatz einer interpretativen Soziologie, insbesondere wenn sie dem Geschichtenkonzept eine wichtige Bedeutung zukommen lässt, entsprechen dabei vor allem kommunikative Verfahren der Sozialforscher, welche geeignet sind, die „Bedeutungen“ und die „Geschichten“, in denen die betreffenden Menschen sich selber und ihre soziale Welt sinnbezogen und handlungsorientiert erfahren, zum Ausdruck gelangen zu lassen. Dies erreichen am besten Erhebungsmethoden, die den „natürlichen“ Kommunikationsweisen des Alltagslebens möglichst nahe sind. Offene Gespräche bzw. „offene Interviews“ sind dafür besonders gut geeignet, [...]'.*

should thus concentrate on the overall life story. The first step of analysis is then to write up a case-specific life story based on the single narrations from the interview. In a second step, the current life situation and the individual plans for the near future are evaluated, then all this information is merged into individual case reconstructions. The researcher basically writes an external life story about the life story of the interviewee.

To reconstruct this life story, Vonderach suggests a four-step model. First, a sequential analysis of the interview must be elaborated. The researcher should pay attention to the ways in which interviewees acted in specific situations in their life that are relevant for the research topic. These situations are told in individual sequences during the interview. The researcher must then think about possible alternative ways of acting in that given instant. The resulting difference between the two – the actual acting and the theoretical alternatives – can be used for first analytical formulations about underlying structure. Second, the specific interview situation must be looked at. In particular, it is relevant to reflect on how the interviewee tries to present themselves in a given interview context and atmosphere. Therefore, the researcher must interpret meaning and things in experimental ways, comparing different possible interpretations of what an interviewee said. Third, the researcher puts the puzzle together: For each case the individual sequential interpretations are put together into a total life story, which includes information about ‘relevance’, ‘preference’, ‘orientation’ and ‘acting’ of each interviewee. These life stories should be formulated in a way that they serve the specific research topic. In this first stage, empirically grounded categories should be elaborated. In a fourth step, the researcher then tries to abstract central orientations and concepts that structure how a person acts within their life-world.

Finally, the individual cases are compared to each other. This comparison can focus either on similarity or on differences, or on both. It might help the development of a typology across individual cases. Vonderach resumes (1997: 184<sup>98</sup>): *‘In the course of comparison across cases an impression arises of the similarities, commonalities and differences of life stories. This impression cements to the recognition of typical, case-crossing structural relations or gestalt patterns.’* Given these explanations of hermeneutics, the methodological proximity to grounded theory becomes obvious.

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98 Translated by the author from the German text: *‘Im Verlauf des Fallvergleichs entsteht ein Eindruck von den Ähnlichkeiten, Gemeinsamkeiten und Unterschieden der Fallgeschichten, der sich zur Erkenntnis typischer fallübergreifender Strukturzusammenhänge bzw. Gestaltmuster verdichtet.’*

### 6.3.3 Qualitative Heuristics

Qualitative heuristics is a method described by the German sociologist Gerhard Kleining at the University of Hamburg. During the 1990s, he developed this specific heuristic method that he understands as a guideline for systematic exploration and discovery in qualitative data. He describes his method as linked to ‘introspection’, a method widely used in psychology. The roots of this method can be found in early psychoanalysis, phenomenology and grounded theory (cf. Kleining & Witt, 2000). Kleining & Witt explain that qualitative exploration was repelled for a while from social sciences, when quantitative measurement became a methodological imperative following neo-Kantianism. Kleining & Witt want to re-establish systemic exploration in the social sciences.

According to Kleining & Witt, four basic rules have to be followed in order to achieve fruitful discovery from qualitative data. First, the researcher has to approach the empirical field in an open-minded and flexible way. This includes that they must react appropriately to empirical observations in the fieldwork, which means practically that they have to adapt their personal pre-conceptions to the empirical realities. Whereas this might be a natural step in research, Kleining & Witt (2000: paragraph 8) remark: *‘Alas, discoveries in many cases contradict general scientific beliefs which are hard to give up and may even cause crises within the process of research itself. The rule suggests a reconsideration of the researcher’s scientific position if the data consistently are not in agreement with information taken for granted.’*

Second, the topic of research is flexible during the research process. The actual research topic only becomes evident once the research is finished. Given the project-based nature of contemporary social science, this might seem an illusionary thing, but according to Kleining & Witt, it allows for true exploration. In case a topic becomes irrelevant or part of another topic during the research, the empirical fieldwork should not be interrupted, but the project should be retitled. New knowledge can only come to the surface in this manner. This second criterion includes a researcher’s open-mindedness to discovery by chance.

Third, the data collection process should involve techniques to maximise the ‘structural variation of perspectives’ represented in the sample. Variation should not be limited to sampling. Kleining & Witt argue that variation in methods in general as well as in formulating questions is an important way of gathering rich empirical material. One could also translate that point into quantitative approaches, in which individual variables seem to be more influential than others, and then one could diversify variables in a given empirical design while collecting data. Variation also has a temporal dimension; one can look at certain empirical facts from different temporal perspectives: past, present, or prospective.

Fourth, Kleining & Witt describe that the main focus during analysis must be the search for similarities instead of differences. They refer to notions such as ‘analogies’, ‘homologies’ and ‘accordance’, and they describe the research process as follows

(Kleining & Witt, 2000: paragraph 11): *‘The analyst starts grouping those parts of the protocols or observations which are most similar to other parts and continues to group the groups tentatively, suggesting headlines for the groups and then headlines on top of headlines thus progressing from concrete parts to a more and more abstract general whole which nonetheless keeps concrete details. Proceeding in this manner, the overall pattern, showing the structure of the topic, will gradually emerge. All data have to be considered and incorporated, and not only a selection of it as an example (“100%-rule of accordance”). The analysis is integrated into the process of data collection and mutually dependent on it.’*

The overall goal of qualitative heuristics is to construct an atmosphere of dialogue between researcher and empirical data/case that comes close to an everyday conversation. It is a succession of questions and answers in which questions are not rigidly pre-defined. This procedure, as Kleining & Witt (2000: paragraph 12) explain, will help to *‘adjust the epistemic structure of the researcher to the structure of the phenomenon and brings it in line with itself.’* Similar to grounded theory’s call for theoretical saturation, qualitative heuristics tests the validity of analysis through the 100%-rule, which means that all data fit into the analysis, and further data does not contest and change that same analysis. However, one has to bear in mind that all social data are only historic moments, and they are subject to change with time.

### 6.3.4 Synthesis of Approaches to Data Analysis

The analytical techniques of grounded theory, hermeneutics and qualitative heuristics presented here are profoundly justified in epistemological terms. However, their practical usage is poorly explained. After studying this methodological literature, I found myself confronted with more questions than answers. I had expected a manual for analysis, but now I know this does not exist. Even if one existed, there would probably be another which argued exactly the opposite. Therefore, it remains in the hands of the individual researcher to find their own method of analysis orientated towards these theoretical descriptions of the methods. In order to find one’s own way, it is helpful to recall the similarities between these three approaches.

The three approaches to the analysis of qualitative interviews discussed here reveal several basic similarities. First, all these approaches distance themselves from simple content analysis. Content analysis suggests that we can look at individual fragments within interviews and that we can hold the content of these separated fragments as true (Mayring, 1995). Furthermore, content analysis uses pre-selected and theoretically derived analytic categories and coding systems. By contrast, grounded theory, hermeneutics, and qualitative heuristics call for a more cautious and sceptical way of analysing the data. Here, the content – which lies at the surface of the spoken word – is not considered the most interesting data. Rather, the underlying and latent meaning structures should be looked at, and then the researcher should use these

underlying meaning structures to generate conclusions. Second, unlike in content analysis, coding schemes and categories are not pre-selected on the basis of theory, but they are derived during analysis from the empirical data. The researcher looks for these relevant categories in the empirical material. Here, all three approaches point to the central role of ‘emergence of analytical dimensions and categories’ through a cyclic process of switching between theory and empirical data during the process of analysis.

The end of this process is derived once theoretical saturation is achieved. This means – in the words of Kleinig & Witt’s ‘100%-rule’ – that all cases must fit into the empirically derived theory, or hypotheses, or concepts. None of the empirical cases should vary significantly from the theoretical abstraction that was elaborated during the analysis. Furthermore, additional cases should be reasonably assumed to not alter this theoretical abstraction.

A focus on variety during the sampling process is also mentioned in each of these approaches. In order to reach theoretical saturation, a great variety of individual empirical realities should be taken into account, and the technique of finding theoretical abstraction begins by contrasting individual cases and studying similarity and difference.

Finally, the relation of the separable interview fragment to the interview story is also thematised in all approaches. Whereas content analysis also uses individualised interview fragments, the approaches presented here demand reflection on the interrelatedness of single parts of an interview and the wider picture of the whole interview. The latent and actual meaning of an interview passage can only be reconstructed through embedding it into the general life story and its sense structures. Therefore, the basic reconstruction of the life story is also necessary.

I think that an orientation to these similarities helps to analyse the interviews and the mental maps in an appropriate way. Thereby, I understand the methodological theory as a description of an ideal typical proceeding that provides a reference frame. I will now explain my own method of analysis.

### 6.3.5 Treatment of Data

Recorded interviews were transcribed according to a given set of transcription rules. I decided to keep the transcription rules simple. Reinders (2005) explains that transcription can follow different rules, which have varying degrees of reporting the ‘para-verbal data’ (such as breaks, interruptions, noise). Here, different ways of formatting the text breaks could be selected. Score notation (*Partiturschreibweise*) shows where para-verbal data influenced the continuity of the interview by specific text settings. Using standard line breaks makes it easier to read the text, but one has to use symbols to report para-verbal data. In addition, there are different ways of writing down spoken language, which uses different grammar than written language. One



can also use standard grammar as is used in written language. Then there is literary circumscription (*literarische Umschrift*), a way of typing in which words are written down as understood from the audio file. This means leaving out individual letters or syllables, but also merging two words in the manner that the people spoke. This technique is interesting when people speak with strong accents or even in dialects, where vocabulary differs from standard language. Third, there is the technique of using eye-dialect, which uses phonetic elements to report how people have pronounced words. And finally, one can also write transcripts according to the International Phonetic Alphabet. Before the transcription, the researcher has to decide and make a protocol for the decision (cf. Reinders, 2005). Here, Hitzler & Honer (1997) emphasise that transcriptions must be complete, meaning the complete length of an interview, but the researcher should make pragmatic decisions about the degree of detail.

**Table 6.2:** Transcription rules

Symbol	Meaning
...///	Interruption and change in who speaks
...	Unfinished sentence or thought, without interruption by other speaker
[thinking]	Additional explanations to spoken text; also: para-verbal information (noise, gestures, information on longer interruptions)
[XY]	Spoken text that was not understandable during transcription
[XY_interpretation]	Spoken text that was not understandable during transcription, but where interpretation was tried during transcription

As I did not aim at a detailed psychological analysis of my interviews, I decided to keep transcription rules simple (cf. Tab. 6.2). I also decided to use the standard grammar of written language. I think that if no detailed linguistic study of the interviews is the goal, then all other types of writing transcripts make it far more difficult for other scholars to read the transcripts. Furthermore, I did my interviews in different languages, and phonetic transcription would have been very costly to do, without necessarily providing more relevant information. Additionally, I then used small interview protocols to provide background information on the interviewee and on the interview situation and atmosphere, which for an interested reader might be valuable information for understanding the quality of the data gathered.

### *Analysis procedure*

I have tried to orientate to the four step model provided by Kleining & Witt (2000) in order to structure my empirical data collection and analysis. Indeed, I entered the field with an open and hardly structured interest. I also tried to stick to the second criterion: I started with a set of doubts that I translated into a first draft of the general

project context. Then, the description of my research project indeed changed with time and I adapted it to the empirical realities that I faced. For example, in early stages of my project I conceived of my study group as being ‘global nomads’, moving around just as detached from places and local contexts, which then turned out to be wrong, as it did actually not show up like this in my early interviews. I then changed my own perspective, understanding my study group not as global nomads, but as people alternating between mobility and rootedness. I also applied the third basic criterion of qualitative heuristics: structural variation. Indeed I sampled in a way to increase variety within the sample: I sampled different age groups, I sampled women and men, I sampled homosexuals and heterosexuals, I sampled people with and without children, I sampled in different sub-sectors of creative industries. Then I also varied interview atmospheres, going to my places as opposed to going to my interview partner’s places, or even doing interviews in third places. I also changed the order and wording of questions. However, what I always tried to do was create an atmosphere of natural conversation and react flexibly to the mood of my interview partners. Finally, I strongly focused on similarities in my data’s variety as I analysed my interview partners’ stories. Analysis followed a three-step model:

1. Reconstructing the life story. In reference to Vonderach’s *Geschichtenhermeneutik* (1997), my analysis started by looking at the individual cases in order to understand the overall life stories of each of my respondents, as well as the interview-specific story that was told during the interview. I here added data that was publicly available on the Internet, and which helped to embed and extend the information as provided during the interview itself. These compressed life stories aim at providing information on the cases, and they should allow for a contextualisation of the individual information drawn from the interviews.
2. Mapping the geographic range of the everyday lifeworld. In the next step I looked at the interviewees’ drawn mental maps and I compared them to their narrations during the interviews. Here, I gave specific attention to information that concerned ‘space’ and ‘places’. At this stage of analysis, I wanted to find out more about the individual action space of my interviewees, thus determining the geographic extension of their everyday lifeworld. Furthermore, I used this step to compare the richness of geographic information as provided in the mental maps as compared to the narrated interviews. Finally, I merged geographic information from the interviews and from the mental maps into new case-specific maps that help to analyse, visualise and illustrate the geographic set-up of the transnational multi-locality of my interview partners.
3. Searching for similarity across cases. In a third step I then compared the individual cases to each other. Based on the idea of grounded theory, I began writing memos – yet not in such an ordered manner as demanded by Glaser & Strauss (1967) – on my observations, and for coding the interviews’ text. Then I reflected on the individualised and coded sequences in the light of the entire interview and the life stories of the interview partners (as asked for in hermeneutics; cf. Von-

derach, 1997) as well as the other cases. At this stage, I also joined the empirical analysis to the theoretical considerations, and I grouped codings into categories according to my 'fields of interest'. Here, obviously the clarity of the interrelatedness between different codings and fields of interest became clearer. In reference to Kleining & Witt's (2000) qualitative heuristics, I focused on similarity and commonality. From this step of analysis, I derived slightly abstracted categories, which were then grouped into dimensions that are finally important components of my interview partners' lifeworlds.

4. Theoretical abstraction. In a final step, I merged insights from the three former steps into a synthetic analysis. From this analysis I derived the final theoretical output, which consists of the heuristic concept of 'plug&play places'. The subsequent chapter will introduce the empirical findings from these individual steps of analysis.