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The Individual and the Societal

Since the mid-1980s new key-words like everyday life, gender, culture, experience and others have aquired the status of conceptual terms within the humanities. Moreover, many of these terms have come to provide labels for new disciplines or 'joint ventures' such as the history and sociology of everyday life, gender studies, or cultural sciences (*Kulturwissenschaften*). These labels have predominantly been employed by scholars, who began their careers in the 1970s and 1980s. Previous generations, and particularly the exponents of the so-called *Historische Sozialwissenschaft* (historical social science) in Germany and Austria, by contrast, had still concentrated on categories like class, society and economy, and above all, on structures and processes, categories which dominated and innovated research during the 1960s and 1970s.[1] The fundamental change between these generations of scholars has been in the perception of what is actually of concern to society. This is a point I would like to elaborate in a little more detail by looking at the concept of 'structure'.

It was the French historian Fernand Braudel who most profoundly influenced the concept of an '*histoire des structures*' from the end of the 1940s onwards.[2] Braudel's ideas became popular in the German-speaking academia in the 1960s. Otto Brunner, for example, opportunely seized on the concept of an '*histoire des structures*' as a replacement for the ideologically tainted ideas of an 'internal population hierarchy' (*innere Volksordnung*) or 'the inner construction of human bonds' (*innerer Bau menschlicher Verbände*), which had been the features of nationalsocialist *Volksgeschichte*.[3] The Heidelberg historian Werner Conze,

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[1] Reinhard Sieder, Was heißt Sozialgeschichte? Brüche und Kontinuitäten in der Aneignung des Sozialen, in: Österreichische Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaften (OeZG) 1 (1990), vol. 1, pp. 25-48; Reinhard Sieder, Sozialgeschichte auf dem Weg zu einer historischen Kulturwissenschaft? In: Geschichte und Gesellschaft 20 (1994), pp. 445-468; English: Social History. On the Way to Becoming a Historical Cultural Science? In: Filozovski Vestnik 2/1997 ("Power and Resistance"), Ljubljana 1997, pp. 257-284.

[2] Fernand Braudel, La Méditerranée et le Monde Méditeranéen à L 'époque de Philippe II, Paris 1949.

[3] Otto Brunner, Land und Herrschaft, 2nd edition, Brünn et al 1942, p. 185.

likewise welcomed the opportunity with open arms. He too picked up the concept of *structure* as a replacement for the antiquated notions associated with the concept of a social, legal and economic 'constitution' (*Verfassung*).[4] Conze even went so far as to think that the label 'structural history' (*Strukturgeschichte*) should replace that of social history althogether. He received practically no support for that, but together with Brunner and others he was nevertheless able to pave the way for the triumphal progress of the concept of structure in the historical social sciences, at least within the German speaking world. From Conze's and Brunner's time right through to the publication of Hans-Ulrich Wehler's *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte*[5] a society's structures were always described foremost as *economic and social structures*, including politics and demography and – reduced to systems and institutions of wisdom and faith – culture. The first and second generation of the historical social science (*Historische Sozialwissenschaft*) always viewed these sorts of *structures* as the basic stage upon which all kinds of events appeared.[6] Within this structural (not structuralistic!) paradigm, 'structures' were viewed as being completely *external* to individuals, who are therefore structurally (over)determined. And from this point of view, the study of personal accounts or documents only made sense in so far as they were able to help reconstruct the objectiv structural reality of the society in question. Individuals only possessed a fairly sketchy view on the world, they thought in ideological terms and behaved in a structurally determined manner, all the time never realising that history was being made behind their backs.

From this perspective, those younger historians, ethnologists, sociologists and literature specialists who are concerned with the study of everyday life, gender studies, microstoria, historical anthropology, new cultural history and cultural studies, who all try to decipher the meanings that individuals and groups associate with their actions, are seen as *revisionists*. They are accused of being untheoretical, of lacking conceptual rigour and losing themselves in thick descriptions of colourful historical episodes, without adding anything significantly new to social scientific knowledge. In the final analysis, therefore, this debate aimed at *theoretical* questions, which of course have methodological consequences: How should we think about societal structures, how about societal processes, and what is the place of acting

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[4] Werner Conze, Strukturgeschichte des technisch-industriellen Zeitalters als Aufgabe für Forschung und Unterricht, Köln et al 1957.
[5] Hans-Ulrich Wehler, Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte, 2nd edition, 4 vol., München 1989.
[6] See Jürgen Kocka, Sozialgeschichte: Begriff – Entwicklung – Probleme, 2nd edition, Göttingen 1986.

by individuals within those structures and processes? And if – as younger scholars argue, 'experience', 'meaning' as well as the 'imaginary' and the 'symbolic' should get far more attention, will this open the way towards an interdisciplinary project of 'sciences of culture' (*Kulturwissenschaften*)?

The new paradigm of praxeology and what it changed

From the mid-1980s onwards, the view became increasingly popular that the idea of structure – that is to say in terms of economic, social or political structures – could be a mode of *describing* the distribution of phenomenons, but in itself *explains* nothing.This was because (as the young Karl Marx had already noticed) social, economic or political conditions emerge from the activities of the lively social subjects; social reality is produced through the active appropriation (*Aneignung*) of those conditions by individuals and groups. In the 1970s and 1980s this was pointed out in sociology and ethnology, where Pierre Bourdieu, Anthony Giddens[7] and others developed new key concepts such as *habitus* or *field* or *practice*, in order to comprehend activities of individuals and groups within a structured space of relationships. Giddens provided the missing link between individuals and structures, which the German historical scientists had failed: *structuring* or *structurizing*, which means the ongoing (re-)production of structures by the individual's acting.

The 'revisionist' generation, to which I belong, took over these theoretical tools and started, somewhat belatedly, to read some of the major works of interpretative sociology (*verstehende Soziologie*) in the succession of Max Weber which had never been taken at notice by the German founders of historical social science. Studies on the social world (*soziale Welt*) and the life-world (*Lebenswelt*) by Alfred Schütz,[8] or on the *Social Construction of Reality* by Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann[9] had especially large impact on our thinking, because

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[7] Pierre Bourdieu, Entwurf einer Theorie der Praxis auf der ethnologischen Grundlage der kabylischen Gesellschaft, Frankfurt am Main 1976; Anthony Giddens, Die Konstitution der Gesellschaft. Grundzüge einer Theorie der Strukturierung. Mit einer Einführung von Hans Joas, Frankfurt am Main / New York 1988.

[8] Alfred Schütz and Thomas Luckmann, Strukturen der Lebenswelt, vol. 1, Frankfurt am Main 1974; Alfred Schütz, Der sinnhafte Aufbau der sozialen Welt. Eine Einleitung in die verstehende Soziologie, Frankfurt am Main 1974.

[9] Peter L. Berger u Thomas Luckmann, The Social Construction of Reality, New York 1966, German: Die gesellschaftliche Konstruktion der Wirklichkeit. Eine Theorie der Wissenssoziologie. Mit einer Einleitung zur deutschen Ausgabe von Helmuth Plessner, Frankfurt am Main 1969.

there it was argued that social realities were constructed purely in terms of the perceptions of the actors themselves. By this, the basic idea of the first generation of historical social science as well as of the 'quantifying' paradigm, dominating academic sociology in the 1960s,1970s and 1980s, were very much put into question, because in fact they had argued society could and should be analyzed and measured in terms of (measurable) 'structures' and 'processes', without empirically investigating the actual practices and meanings of individuals and groups.

The 'revisionists' now understood the dialectical relationship between structures and processes on the one hand, and the individuals actions, meanings and experiences on the other, in about the following way: From their very first steps into life human beeings are always confronted with already structured and symbolized outcomes of social acting. They grow up with and become socialized within a certain language, in patterns and styles to behave as a male or a female, as an employee or a freelance and so on. Yet at the same time, it is individuals who appropriate these structured relationship-models, absorb and internalize them, and perpetuate and modify them through their actions. In short: Individuals *structurize* all kinds of their social relations and conditions by *doing* gender, by *doing* parenthood, by *doing* paid work, and so on. Obviously, some actors are more powerful than others, and some acting is 'blind' or has unforeseen and unintended consequences. Although individuals are acting according to their very own interpretations, common patterns of acting appear. Larger groups of individuals can be orientated by the same ideas or ideology and sometimes may even act for a common goal; only this should be called a 'collective subject' (*Kollektivsubjekt*), which social historians and sociologists took for granted, focusing on what they grasped as 'social structures'.

Within this post-structural (not post-structuralistic!) paradigm, structures are no longer seen to exist mainly *outside* of the individuals. The different power relationships which relate individuals to one other also are structured. What is more, structures get *inside* individuals, in shape of rules and principles which guide their decisions, differentiations, communications and actions, summarised as *praxis*, and in the form of their mental and body structures and dispositions, summarised as *habitus*. In short: individuals are *structured* as far as their *praxis* and their *habitus* are concerned, and they in turn *structurize* their relationships, social systems and institutions through their praxis and their habitus. Individuals are neither intirely free to implement their will, nor completely restricted by the allready structured circumstances. Apart from a few exceptional cases, they generally find a certain space for acting and interpreting

within which they must come to decisions and to perform actions. The size of this relative autonomy changes and has grown during the last centuries, as Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, Georg Simmel, Talcott Parsons, Jürgen Habermas, Ulrich Beck and other scholars tried to explain by diverse theories of 'modernization' and 'individualization'.[10]

This reformulation of what the individual and what society is and what cultural, social, economic or political structures should mean in respect to both of them was far from being an empty rhetorical exercise. It actually changed the perceptions of the historical world. Hitherto unrecognised places and people with their attitudes and forms of acting took on meaning and importance in order to describe and explain social reality and its historical change. Mentality, physicality, ideology, even fantasy, magic and myth now seem to be just as relevant as what had been grasped before as the 'external' structures of states, feudal domains, municipal administrations or party constitutions. To take one example: Even such a strong and disciplining external structure like a military unit could only be fully described and explained by analyzing their internalization through officers and soldiers, whose actions externally reveal what has been absorbed, thus structurizing communication within the military as a social system. – If the internal is equally important as the external, because the one would not exist without the other, then it follows that personal interpretations, desires, feelings, myths and imaginations are not merely some kind of incidental mist, obscuring the scholar's view, but rather, they must be interpreted as constitutive parts of socio-cultural reality.

This theoretical view produced the impulse to draw up corresponding research projects, together with appropriate methical tools and technics. Foremost, the theoretical reformulation of the individual's status in society necessitated the search for *texts* and *narratives* of all kinds, that give us indications about social acting and the experiences of people. This is but one way of describing the socalled linguistic turn that has taken place in the humanities in the last decades. In no sense this is a return to the writing of history,

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[10] Emil Durkheim, Regeln der soziologischen Methode, ed. by Réne König, Darmstadt 1961; Max Weber, Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft. Grundriss der verstehenden Soziologie (Studienausgabe) 5th edition, Tübingen 1972; Georg Simmel, Grundfragen der Soziologie. Individuum und Gesellschaft, 4th edition, Berlin and New York 1984; Talcott Parsons, Gesellschaften. Evolutionäre und komparative Perspektiven, Frankfurt am Main 1975; Jürgen Habermas, Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns, Frankfurt am Main, 2 vol., Frankfurt am Main 1981; Ulrich Beck, Risikogesellschaft. Auf dem Weg in eine andere Moderne, Frankfurt am Main 1986; similarities and differences in the modernization and individualization theories of these authors are discussed by Markus Schroer, Das Individuum der Gesellschaft, Synchrone und diachrone Theorieperspektiven, Frankfurt am Main 2000.

sociology or ethnology as a purely poetical act (poetic storry-telling), as some critics from the first generation of social science history have assumed.[11] Just the contrary happened. The changes represent an improvement in, and the refinement of, investigative and analytical methods, which are thus able to grasp the meanings inherent in what we call structurized practices and practiced structures.

How to get narratives where no texts yet exist

Anybody who, like myself, is primarily interested in 20th century history is often confronted with the lack of adequate written material or records dealing with relevant aspects of the lifes of 'ordinary people'. But unlike historians of other centuries, we have the opportunity of asking them about their past actions, experiences and feelings. I now want to go into more detail about one of the main research techniques used for this purpose, namely the *narrative interview*.

Unlike, say historical demography, which only takes very few pre-selected characteristics of people into account, we are looking for complex figures ('actors') whose activities and experiences should become accessible to empirical research. But it is precisley here we have to be most careful, because to re-construct activities and experiences is not that simple as it may sound. It is not possible to go into detail here, but obviously 'experience' and 'activities' or 'practises' are connected in various subtle ways. 'Experiences' always contain reflexive aspects of the actor/ narrator and are clearly the outcome of his interpretations. So if we listen or read narratives concerning individual experience, we get the actor's / narrator's own interpretations and those views and interpretations he wants to communicate. Of course the interpretations of the actor / narrator are not purely by chance. They have a definite relationship to his social practises, and they are interconnected with his social and cultural environment (*Umwelt*). As one of the theories we have adopted with the delay of some decades, namly the theory of Symbolic Interactionism[12] teaches us, every individual in each situation is confronted with a more or less wide range of possible meanings. The individual looks for its own interpretation in order to choose between different possibilities to act. The

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[11] Cf. Jürgen Kocka, Zurück zur Erzählung? Plädoyer für historische Argumentation, in: Geschichte und Gesellschaf 10 (1984), pp. 395-408; Hans-Ulrich Wehler, Die Herausforderung der Kulturgeschichte, München 1998.

[12] Herbert Blumer, Symbolic Interactionism. Perspective and Method, Englewood Cliffs 1969; see also Herbert Blumer, Der methodische Standort des Symbolischen Interaktionismus, in: Arbeitsgruppe Bielefelder Soziologen (Hg.), pp. 80-146.

different meanings are mostly reached through communicating with significant others involved in one's own social system (family, youth group, enterprise, party, church etc.). Moreover, these possible meanings and interpretations are offered to the individual by various *media* (like coffee-break-gossip, newspapers, movies or talk-shows on the TV). As I will argue later, we have to look for the traces of all that media and communications within the individual's narrative, or to put it in more linguistic terms: for various texts inside the text.

The first difficulty with doing narrative interviews lies in finding the appropriate initial question, or better to say: the proper invitation to start narrating. Needless to say, this invitation must be comprehensible in linguistic and cultural terms, but it also must *define the space* in which the narratives should take place. This is a crucial point and not always so easy to get right; if it is too large, the narrator is potentially intimidated and may react by asking counter-questions, which then compel the researcher to restrict the narrative scope in a second try. If the narrator has already started with his highly complex work of recalling, explaining, rephrasing former accounts, keeping our attention alife by postponing the climax and so on, as researchers our first and main duty is to be curious, patient and tenacious *listeners*. This is in order to make the narrator be as free as possible to bring forward his narrations by associating one memory-puzzle with the other, guided only by his feelings, affections, sentiments, ideas and values, last but not least, by the 'subconscious' in the sociological sense and by the 'unconscious' in the particular sense of psychoanalytical theory.

From a social scientific perspective, narration is a particular type of social action. It involves making a series of choices between narrative options, and these choices correlate in a certain way to a series of decisions the narrator has made as an actor in the past. Usually he will not be able to overlook all of his options being an actor, and even as a narrator looking back and being more 'experienced' he is not. Nevertheless he will use the rare occasion which the narrative interview (similar as some forms of psychotherapy) offers him to get arguments and rejected possibilities back into his mind. Therefore, again, as researchers we are obliged to behave as curious, patient and tenacious listeners. 'Storying' or narrating implies composition, which includes different types of constructing acts like storying, reporting, the description of relevant situations or persons, re-constructing arguments which were used in a former decision-making, frequently involving significant others as well as dominant discourses, global and special evaluations, and some else. But all this does not mean that the narrative simply *reflects* a past event or one's taking part in it, no more than is the case with

any other kind of text used in the humanities. Like any text, the narrative is a construction and a series of interpretations. But we can assume that it is possible to find out the constructive principles, which refere to those principles or patterns which guided the decisions made by the actor in the past. In other words, we can postulate a certain (but not full) *congruence* between practices and experiences of the actor on one hand, and his narration on the other. Nevertheless, there is an *hiatus* between the actor's experience in the past and his narration in the present. But this is true for all historical and sociological research and every type of 'sources' and 'data'. As Johann Gustav Droysen has put it in his famous *Historik* back in the mid-19th century, the past is completely, irrevocably gone, and what we produce in the present by what means or technics so ever, is always just an *imagination* of it.[13]

Given that we want the narrator to recount experiences in a detailed and freely associative manner; therefore we must limit our own active part in this special conversation and try to maintain an *open* methodological stance. In the classic narrative interview, originally developed and described by Fritz Schütze,[14] we do not pose any further question during what I might call the 'grand narrative survey' of one's life story or of a certain period of life, or of a special field of activities, set on the agenda by our initial invitation. In this way, the narrator remains free to *compose*, *condensate and select* and bring 'his' stories und descriptions to an *end*. That is to say, that the narrator is – just as being an actor during his life-time –a definite and relatively autonomous actor and not at all some kind of the researcher's puppet.

When the opening narrative is finished what the narrator usually communicates verbaly or non-verbaly, we begin to ask immanent follow-up questions. Selecting from a list of keywords or phrases jotted down while listening to the grand life survey, we invite the narrator to tell further aspects of topics which he has already brought up. Nine times out of ten, these immanent questions will be something along the lines of, "You mentioned XYZ. Could you say a little bit more about it?" Less often we miss the evaluation of an event which was told in a story or in a more scarce report. Then we ask: "You told me the story (you reported …) of XYZ. But I have not yet understood what this event did *mean* to you (or: what it means to you today, looking back). Could you tell me about it?"

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[13] Johann Gustav Droysen, Historik. Vorlesungen über Enzyklopädie und Methodologie der Geschichte, ed. by. Rudolf Hübner, 2nd edition, München / Berlin 1943, p. 7.
[14] Fritz Schütze, Die Technik des narrativen Interviews, dargestellt an einem Projekt zur Erforschung von kommunalen Machtstrukturen, Universität Bielefeld, Fakultät für Soziologie, Arbeitsberichte und Forschungsmaterialien Nr. 1, 2nd edition 1978.

Our experiences in several research projects have shown that there are everyday routines which do not lend themselves to narration, because they are not seen to be unusual at all or to have changed significantly. For some research topics, however, these areas are of greatest interest: such as the rhythms and routines of housework, or daily work in the factory, or living together in a long lasting relationship, etc. If this is the case, I recommend to insert a distinctive third phase into the interview, which I call *reconstructing highly routinized practises*. Here, we ask to reconstruct as precisely as possible a particular weekday, or the last day of work at the factory, or whatever routines seem to be most relevant in respect to the general topic of our research. In a sense, therefore, we try and go hand-in-hand with the interviewee through such highly routinized fields of behaviour, in the hope that it will bring up details and aspects which were not mentioned in the initial narrative survey, or eventually contradict a story narrated before, or offer a still missing link.

In certain interviewing projects we arrange special meetings with the interviewees, in order to look at the historical material they might possess, such as private photo albums, video tapes or written life documents. We discuss and examine them and it happens that we again ask for stories about a certain person seen on a picture or mentioned in the life document. Looking at pictures, videos and written documents often stimulates or revives narration, but it makes most sense to undertake this kind of exercise on a separate occasion to the main narrative interview. When we accept to introduce pictures or documents during the initial biographical survey, because the interviewee wishes definitely to do so, this might disrupt the compositional coherence of the master narrative. In general, I close a narrative interview with the invitation for the narrators to present their own summary of the conversations in terms of what feelings came up or what ideas or stances may have been changed during the process.

As soon as possible after the interview I listen to the tape or watch the video record, which enables me (or the research group) to get an impression of the specificity of the case; after that I decide (or the group of scholars decides) what the next case should be. Normally we try to find a next case, which differs significantly from the former, because this helps us to get aware of the special aspects each single case allows us to discuss. If the interview is part of a larger research project, with an organised budget and fellow researchers, the tape-record will be immediately transcribed and the group of researchers will start analyzing the text (see below) in order to formulate first hypotheses which might orientate the search for the next

case. This proceeding we call a *theoretical sampling*.[15] It means, roughly speaking, that the gradual refinement of our explanatory ideas – our provisional hypotheses – determines the on-going search for further cases (sampling). Ideally, each successive case will confirm more precisely and legitimate earlier preconceptions and hypotheses. The theoretical outcome can than be described as *grounded theory*.[16] The procedure thus dissolves the conventional sequence of social scientific research, namely that of hypothesis formulation, followed by data collection and finished by data analysis and formulating a synthesis. The process is instead *recursive* in nature. The single steps are interchangeable and continually re-orientate themselves around one another.

This recursive process of qualitative research comes to an end when we get the impression that our hypotheses will probably not be substantially altered by the findings from additional case-studies. In other words, we should achieve a kind of saturation of empirical knowledge connected with a particular theoretical output. In practise, of course, other considerations may intervene, such as a limited budget or an urgent deadline. The main criterion in this kind of research is not statistical representativeness, because this would require a different sampling method, a different style of interviewing as well as a different type of text analysis. It is the discovery of theoretically relevant links that is – in my view – far more important than frequencies or distribution of relations and phenomenons which themselves are believed to be allready clear. Theoretical returns may occur in the course of a handful of case-studies, or there may be no interesting results whatsoever from 50 or more cases. Either way, the precise total is itself virtually irrelevant. As I pointed out at the beginning, the kind of theoretical results that we are interested in is defined by social theory: We like to know how individuals are structurized by the circumstances, communications and relationships in which they lived, and how they themselves have structurized those conditions by means of their actions and interpretations.

Text analysis and representation

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[15] Anselm L. Strauss, Grundlagen qualitativer Sozialforschung. Datenanalyse und Theoriebildung in der empirischen soziologischen Forschung. Mit einem Vorwort von Bruno Hildenbrand, München 1994.
[16] Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss, The discovery of grounded theory. Strategies for qualitative research, Chicago 1967; Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss, Die Entdeckung gegenstandsbezogener Theorie. Eine Grundstrategie qualitativer Sozialforschung, in: Christel Hopf and Elmar Weingarten (eds.), Qualitative Sozialforschung, Stuttgart 1965, pp. 91-111.

To start with the basics: transcribing narrative interviews from tapes and videos follows a very simple rule: write down exactly what you hear! Of course there is no doubt that even the most precise transcription still loses vital information, such as the speaker's intonation, their tone and style of gestures, imitations and so on. Yet the written version of the oral narrative is indispensable, because it enables us to examine the text *in extenso*, free from the flowing speed of the spoken word. However, it is often wise to compromise and go back to the original tapes or videos, if we come to analyze those parts of the text, where the nuances of speech or physical gestures seem to be particularly meaningful.

There are currently a number of different methods of text analysis in use. In simplistic terms, these can be divided into two main groups: Firstly, various variants of *content analysis*, methods, which in one way or the other selectively examine texts according to research categories and, therefore, reduce the text. Secondly, forms of *sequential text analysis*, which look at a text as a whole, and in terms of how it came to be produced.[17] The first type (text reductionist methods) cuts up – either literally or metaphorically – a text and picks out certain parts of it; other parts of the text are simply discarded, either because they are considered to be irrelevant to the research in question, or because they do not fit into any of the pre-arranged categories. This procedure of content analysis is well known in sociology and can be either qualitative or quantitative in form, or even a combination of both.[18] The main disadvantage of this kind of analysis is fairly obvious: It is unable to discover anything other than what it's theoretical categories have already defined in advance. The procedure is thus far more likely to *confirm* parts of a specific theory than come up with any new hypotheses, even if content analysis has become more sophisticated sinced the 1990s, thanks to the work of Philipp Mayring and others.

I will present in more detail an example of sequential text analysis, which I put together in an eclectic way using procedures from Fritz Schütze and Gabriele Rosenthal,[19] the socalled

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[17] See the methodological survey by Siegfried Lamnek, Qualitative Sozialforschung, vol. 1: Methodologie, München and Weimar 1988; .

[18] Philipp Mayring, Qualitative Inhaltsanalyse. Grundlagen und Techniken, 5th edition, Weinheim 1995.

[19] Schütze, Die Technik des narrativen Interviews, as footnote 14; Gabriele Rosenthal, Erlebte und erzählte Lebensgeschichte. Gestalt und Struktur biographischer Selbstbeschreibungen, Frankfurt am Main 1995.

"Objektive Hermeneutik" by Ulrich Oevermann and others,[20] the codification techniques of Anselm Strauss[21] and, last but not least, Johann Gustav Droysen's writings on historical source criticism and interpretation.[22]

The theoretical starting-point for my method of text-analysis is that which I set out in the first part of the paper. The individual is unavoidably compelled to perform as an socio-historical actor, and thereby to choose between different options and alternatives. Narration can only occur *ex post*, after the decisions between various options and the decisive action have taken place and became part of a private or non-private event. Hence, every act of narration (and every storying within the narrative interview) deals with the looking back at actions, arguments, interpretations, discourses and experiences in the narrator's past. For this it does not matter whether this past was yesterday or fifty years ago. Through this act of reflection nd recollection of previous actions, individuals feel obliged to justify, legitimize – even to distance themselves from their former decisions and actions. On the other hand, the special position of the individual as a narrator allows him to add aspects: In the meantime he or she gained further experience in communications, heard of new interpretations, theories or discourses, and so on. Two fundamental requirements are to be followed throughout our text analysis: Firstly, we must try to reconstruct the social practises intrinsic to the individual's own life course, including the accumulation of different levels and dimensions of experience. Secondly, the analysis has to convert back into an open and hypothetically still undecided life path, what in retrospect necessarily appears as a teleological outcome. These two basic requirements are to be operationalised step-by-step, in a series of up to six analytical stages.

In the first step, I ask the first sequence[23] of the text: what events are being reported here? Which places, which people and what time period is being spoken about? These initial

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[20] Ulrich Oevermann, Tilman Allert, Elisabeth Konau, Jürgen Krambeck, Die Methodologie einer ‚objektiven Hermeneutik' und ihre allgemeine forschungslogische Bedeutung in den Sozialwissenschaften, in: Hans-Georg Soeffner (ed.), Interpretative Verfahren in den Sozial- und Textwissenschaften, Stuttgart 1979, pp. 352-433.
[21] Strauss, as footnote 15.
[22] Droysen, as footnote 13, pp. 149-187.
[23] The problem as to how large the single text sequence should be, can normally be resolved in a fairly practical way: either there is a clear thematic break, which defines where the sequences start and finish, or there is a difference in the type of text beeing constructed; this might be a story at one stage in the text, followed by report or descriptions later. Or the sequence may be determined by a change in tone or style of speech, or by a change in speaker (turn-taking). In my experience, the average length of a particular sequence tends to be between 5 and 10 lines long. But this depends very much on the whole economy of the

questions are answered according to the (for historians well known) technique of *pragmatic interpretation*, a phrase taken from Droysen's teachings on interpretation, which corresponds to "level 1" of Ulrich Oevermann's objective hermeneutics. In other words, we ask: Was does the narrator want to tell us? We find this out by paraphrasing the text sequence. At this point, we are interested in the socalled *manifest meaning* supplied by the narrator.

At the second stage, I examine the 'historical' circumstances: time, place, purpose etc., which the narrator is speaking about, a process that Droysen termed the *interpretation of circumstances*. The most important and difficult questions on this stage of text analysis are: From which peculiar standpoint does the narrator speak in this sequence? This, for instance, requires some knowledge or at least some hypotheses on how many and what different standpoints of actors involved were given at this particular time and at this particular place. What did the actor, to which the narrator refers in a kind of *Ego-duplication*,[24] know, and what did he learn to know eventually later on? Which discourse impressed and orientated the actor at the time? Can we detect some textual traces of such a discourse within the narration? (In some cases this question will be asked more extensively in a special stage of text analysis, see below stage five.)

The next, the third step is to ask what *circumstantial knowledge* (i. e. *latent meaning* in Oevermann's objective hermeunics) can be added to the text sequence's manifest meaning from the standpoint of a well-informed (!) researcher. In some contrast to what Oevermann argues for his procedure I deliberately include contextual knowledge in a very extensive way. So I might, for example, ask: What do we know about the school-system in say, Vienna, in the 1920s, if the narrator's story about his experiences at a Viennese school in the 1920s has to become analyzed, and is there special writing on it or do special film documents exist? Frequently, this special knowledge can only be acquired by additional research, which might interrupt text analysis for some weeks or so, but definitely enriches our circumstantial knowledge and will make our text-analysis far more reliable. Again, this additional special knowledge is employed in so far as it helps to evaluate the social, economic, political, cultural etc. conditions in which the actor was performing, and how the field of interaction, in which he participated, was *structurized* by him and his co-actors. For these special research acts I write down *memos*.These memos make analytical sketches of how a certain information or

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research process. The richer this economy is (in terms of money, time and personell), the smaller the average sequence will be.

[24] Philippe Lejeune, Der autobiographische Pakt, Frankfurt am Main 1994, pp. 13-51; .

theory could affect the interpretation of a single sequence, make connections with different or contradicting theoretical standpoints or point to possible linkages with other parts of the narrative, and so on, in a way that will later make it easier to keep theories and text sequences in a system of references.

The fourth step is to investigate the *internal experience* in so far as it seems profitable to do so, and as long as it accords with the interpretation put forward up until that point. This is what Droysen called the *psychological interpretation*, which implies asking what internal processes are being spoken about relating either to the actor or to the narrator. As in the previous stages, it is again necessary to confront the Ego-duplication, and to distinguish between exactly who is speaking about their personal experience: the narrator, or the historical actor (which the narrator was in his past)? In answering this question, we should be able to find a point of connection – a semantic trace – of this supposed mental process in the text itself, as a means of regulating our psychological fantasies. I fully agree with Oevermanns rule of being sparing with psychological explanations (*Sparsamkeitsregel*). But here again, I will employ extensive contextual knowledge, because it should be clear, that even psychological categories do not exist outside history. For example, in one interview the narrator told his experience as a working-class child in Vienna and spoke about witnessing his parents having sexual intercourse. To help interpret this episode, I used the work of Siegfried Bernfeld, a Viennese psychoanalyst and former pupil of Sigmund Freud, as it dealt specifically with working-class families during that period in time. In this way I got informations about a psychoanalytical discourse which was around at the time when the young man (the later narrator) tried to cope with his 'prime-act'- experience.[25] Nevertheless, there are still certain precautions to be taken. No matter where it comes from or how relevant or prestigious it may appear, the use of a particular scientific theory does not allow me to draw definite conclusions about my case-study. Theories adopted from the wide and heterogeneous theoretical context of text-analysis offer just one way of reading and understanding the text sequence, which still has to compete with others.

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[25] Reinhard Sieder, „Vater, derf i aufstehn?" Kindheitserfahrungen in Wiener Arbeiterfamilien um 1900, in: Hubert-Christian Ehalt, Gernot Heiß, Hannes Stekl (eds.), Glücklich ist, wer vergisst...? Das andere Wien um 1900, Graz u. Wien 1986, pp. 39-89; English: Reinhard Sieder, „Vata, derf i aufstehn?": Childhood experiences in Viennese working-class families around 1900, in: Continuity and Change, vol. 1 (1986), pp. 53-88; Siegfried Bernfeld, Psychologie des Jugendalters, in: Siegfried Bernfeld, Antiautoritäre Erziehung und Psychoanalyse. Ausgewählte Schriften, vol. 3, Frankfurt am Main, Berlin, Wien 1970, pp. 5-151.; reprinted in: Siegfried Bernfeld. Sämtliche Werke, vol. 1: Theorie des Jugendalters. Schriften 1914-1938, ed. by Ulrich Herrmann, Weinheim / Basel 1991.

On the fifth step, I try and ask whether it makes sense to identify any form of ideology, morale or philosophy within the text sequence – what Droysen called "the interpretation of moral forces and ideas". This kind of question is not always appropriate for every text sequence, but rather frequently, because there is nearly no public discourse without a moral, ideological or philosophical impact. And as I have mentioned earlier, the narrator feels himself very much urged to clarify his own position vis-à-vis morales, ideologies or philosophies (*Weltanschauung*) and their implications for his own decisions. To tell his (imaginary and preliminary) life-story is the most important way to keep this clearing going. I would then inquire: Where do these ideas, these morales, this philosophy come from? Do they correspond to major ideological currents in the actors or the narrators contemporary society? Do they belong to a particular political camp? Is it possible to make explanatory connections between ideology, morale or philosophy and the way of actions or psychological patterns that I am going to analyze?

The sixth step is to imagine what the subsequent room for action is, and this again in a double sense: on the one hand, what was the actor's potential room for manoeuvre, as regards the further course of his *history*? And on the other, what is the scope of the narrative space available to the narrator? Which is the likeliest direction that the narrator will take in telling his *story*? In taking this sixth step, I open up a range of possibilities and options, both historical and narrative, a variety which sometimes seems to overwhelm us. But this corresponds to the second basic requirement that I talked about earlier, namely the need to convert the finished story back into a series of options. As I deed throughout all steps of text analysis I enter these further possibilities as hypotheses onto a separate hypotheses-sheet. Hypotheses about specific sequences of text are simply marked according to their place in the transcript which is the scrupolous protocol of the conversation, for instance: page 1, line 10-14; page 5, line 4-8, and so on. In this sixth step I refer to hypotheses about the possible subsequent course of action in the past as 'historical sequence hypotheses' (HSH), and those about the possible subsequent evolution of the narrative as 'narrative sequence hypotheses' (NSH). Narrative sequence hypotheses can usually be linked to ideas about the probale kinds of texts that will recur next in the narrative (i.e. whether the following text sequence will take the form of a story, a report, a description, or an argument).

At the end of this stage, if not earlier, I am in a position to decide if the text sequence has been sufficiently analyzed. I can then turn to the next sequence, open it (because I covered it whereas I analyzed the previous sequence) and begin the procedure once more, in the way I have described. During the whole process, it will become apparent whether former hypotheses have been falsified, or which hypotheses have been further confirmed, or why a hypothesis turned out not to be fully accurate and need some alterations.

How to present case studies

In the meantime a long lasting debate has been decided: There can be no story-telling without theory! Moreover, there are no theoretical discussions in the humanities which are not of service to the analysis of narratives. The point is rather that the story or history must be told in such a way that the narrratives (or at least elements of the narratives) are made accessible to theory. Here, I would agree with Jörn Rüsen, who argues that the specific rationale of the historical sciences is their ability to provide *explanatory narratives*, or alternatively, *narrational explanations.*[26] And I believe, this might also be true for most of the humanities, including the more recent types of analysis of movies and other media. Therefore, it is a question of presenting the one or more case-studies in a way that puts the theoretical elements in a visible context, thus enabling the reader to follow the development of a theory.

In doing so, we are able to combine *hermeneutic*, *analytical*, and *dialectic* operations. The hermeneutic part involves deciding about the meaning and sense of the text. As I have already demonstrated, this is not hermeneutics in the classic and historicistic style, which only asked for the intrinsic truth (or: the manifest meaning) of the author, but also to juxtapose *manifest* and *latent* meanings. The analytical operations concern everything that extends the knowledge of the actor / author / narrator: They imply the application and construction of different kinds of theory, which are not theories of the actor / author, the examination of comparative cases, the setting-up of a typology, and so on. In so far as these operations distrust the manifest meaning of the actor / narrator and try to de-construct how actors and narrators are constructing their meanings within an universe of discourses, there is at least some similarity to the procedure of *deconstruction,* [27] which usually is thought as being the opposite of any

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[26] Jörn Rüsen, Wie kann man Geschichte vernünftig schreiben? Über das Verhältnis von Narrativität und Theoriegebrauch in der Geschichtswissenschaft, in: Jörgen Rüsen, Zeit und Sinn. Strategien historischen Denkens, Frankfurt am Main 1990, pp. 106-134.
[27] Jacques Derrida, Die Schrift und die Differenz, 5fth edition, Frankfurt am Main 1992.

kind of hermeneutics.[28] It turns out, however, that hermeneutic procedures in the particular recent mode of the cultural sciences[29] and deconstructing procedures do not entirely exclude each other, but can be 'combined' in an open process of text analysis. Lastly, the *dialectic* aspect requires looking at the changing relationships between the changing circumstances and the actor's experiences and actions during his life time. This includes theories and discourses which may intervene in everyday life by the media and by those experts and professionals which argue in the name of these theories and discourses; frequently they have the power to introduce discourses and their crucial notions and values into the individual's horizon of meaning (*Lebenswelt*).

How can we present all this to the audience? Qualitative, case-based research has the possibility of presenting either individual case-studies, or of making a comparison between a number of different case-studies. In the latter instance, it is also possible to set up a case-typology. Presentation of single-case-studies is normally done in article form, although occasionally these appear as monographs, often under the heading of micro-history or micro-sociology. To conclude, I would like to look briefly at one of my own case-studies, in which I dealt with questions of the Hitler Youth (*Hitlerjugend*).[30] I will focuse here on the aspect how this case-study is being constructed in order to put theoretical outcome into the foreground. Moreover, it should become clear that even the most theoretical case-study is nothing else than a special type of narration: an *explanatory narrative.*

As with every narrative, the presentation of this case-study begins with a series of informations that implicitly enables the readers to place themselves within the period and

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[28] See Georg W. Bertram, Hermeneutik und Dekonstruktion. Konturen einer Auseinandersetzung der Gegenwartsphilosophie, München 2002.
[29] Hans-Georg Soeffner, Prämissen einer sozialwissenschaftlichen Hermeneutik, in: Hans-Georg Soeffner, Auslegung des Alltags – Der Alltag der Auslegung. Zur wissenssoziologischen Konzeption einer sozialwissenschaftlichen Hermeneutik, Frankfurt am Main 1989, pp. 66-97; Hans-Georg Soeffner and Ronald Hitzler, Hermeneutik als Haltung und Handlung. Über methodisch kontrolliertes Verstehen, in: Norbert Schröer (ed.), Interpretative Sozialforschung. Auf dem Wege zu einer hermeneutischen Wissenssoziologie, Opladen 1994, pp. 28-554.
[30] Reinhard Sieder, A Hitler Youth from a Respectable Family. The Narrative Composition and Deconstruction of a Life Story, in: Daniel Bertaux and Paul Thompson (eds.) Between Generations. Family Models, Myths and Memories, Oxford 1993, pp. 99-119; German: Reinhard Sieder, Ein Hitlerjunge aus gutem Haus. Narrativer Aufbau und Dekonstruktion einer Lebensgeschichte, in: Wolfram Fischer-Rosenthal and Peter Alheit (eds.), Biographien in Deutschland. Soziologische Rekonstruktionen gelebter Gesellschaftsgeschichte, Opladen 1995, pp. 330-359.

location of the Hitler Youth member's childhood.The historical circumstances surrounding the child in the 1920s are presented via a mixture of paraphrases and direct quotations from the narratives. The scene is set by describing a district of the city of Vienna, where he grew up, the family home, the father, mother and brothers and sisters, the essentially patriarchal family relationships, and the long-standing family traditions and ideology connected to their history as a bourgeois, military (officer-class) and acting family, together with their socially downwardly mobile status in the 1920s. I deliberately paint the circumstances and family relationships in a way, which already contains a theoretical perspectice: The social-cultural milieu is presented in such a way as to make the explanatory power of it's socialisation effects evident, and to make clear it's links to other social-cultural milieus in that district of the city. The psychological (psychoanalytical) interpretation of the internal experience of these relationships is also presented, as in the following description of the father's historically determined situation:

"To him the family heritage was both an obligation and a burden. He suffered from being forever cast into the shade by the fame of his celebrated great-aunt. Yet he prided himself on belonging to one of the 'oldest dynasties of actors in the German-speaking countries'. (…) When he was forced to discard his uniform in October 1918, his world collapsed. He missed the stage and the corset previously afforded him by the military attire. Moreover he was unable to develop a bourgeois discipline of any sort. (…) He was one of those stranded people who had been robbed of the Emperor's uniform."[31]

Then I constantly try to apply *contextual knowledge* (see above) in order to evaluate the actor's / narrator's situational circumstances, and this eventually enables me to formulate a first hypothesis, relating the history of the father with the socialisation process as it has affected the life course of his little son up until this point, when the actor / narrator was nearly ten years of age:

"My first hypothesis is that the structural opposition of a bourgeois family marked by social deprivation, on the one hand, and the solidarity in the street and the neighbourhood, on the other, caused Peter to develop a proto-political stance which was determined by the following ideology: Human beings are not equal since they possess different hereditary faculties. This is why human beings also bear different responsibilities. This Darwinistic understanding of

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[31] Sieder, A Hitler Youth from a Respectable Family, see footnote 26, p. 100.

societal structures was transmitted to Peter Treumann first and foremost by his father and the narrative tradition of the family history. After the disintegration of the monarchy in 1918 and the material decline of the family in the 1920s, the above concept was grossly at variance with the experience that only the solidarity of the street-gang or of the grown-ups in the neighbourhood respectively could ease the material plight." [32]

This leeds back to what I mentioned earlier about circumstantial interpretation and about psychological and ideological interpretation: Here, the presentation explains in a narrative way how elitist and social darwinist attitudes and ideas began to root themselves in the individual, and how – over a period of time – these practises became 'characteristic' of this individual. In other words, the interpretation presents the ways in which his main dispositions or his *habitus* developed and took effect. Following on from this, I recount Peter Treumann's route into the Hitler Youth organisation, together with the accompanying politicisation of the father-son-conflict, which forms then a second explicit hypothesis: "The personal became increasingly political: the conflict between father and son intensified and was carried out more and more with explicitly ideological arguments."[33] Not by chance, a number of new figures enter the story at this point and are ascribed important functions in the conflict, such as an Austro-Fascist Minister and former officer in the war (Emil Fey), who bolsters the father's political opinions; or the socialist poverty councellor (*Armenrat*) and the national socialist leaning school-teacher, who oppose the austro-fascist system supported by Peter's father. The narrator also introduces events such as the civil war of February 1934 or the failed *Putsch* by the illegal National Socialists in July of the same year, because they contribute substantially towards the son's politicisation – and promote the ideological split between father and son.[34]

The story continues with such determining experiences as contacts with girls from the League of German Girls (BDM, i. e. the National Socialist organisation for girls and young women), actual attacks by Peter Treumann and his Hitler Youth collegues on Jewish youths, and their social and physical battles with other youth groups, above all the so-called 'Schlurfs'.[35] It is a

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[32] Ibid., p. 103-104.
[33] Ibid., p. 104.
[34] See ibid., pp. 105-108.
[35] See Christian Gerbel, Alexander Mejstrik, Reinhard Sieder, Die "Schlurfs". Verweigerung und Opposition von Wiener Arbeiterjugendlichen im Dritten Reich, in: Emmerich Tálos, Ernst Hanisch, Wolfgang Neugebauer, Reinhard Sieder (eds.), NS-Herrschaft in Österreich. Ein Handbuch, Vienna 2002, pp. 523-548. The term „Schlurfs" had been widely used as a derogatory name for adolescent 'loafers' and 'tramps' in Vienna since the early 1930s.

further theory, that the 'Schlurfs' represented the very opponents of the Hitler-Youth, because they too had grown up on the streets and were not afraid of picking fights with other youth groups, such as the Hitler Youth. The 'Schlurfs' imitated US- fashion and demonstrated their anti-militarism and aversion to achievements. This group constituted the absolute negation of Hitler Youth ideals and symbolized it aesthetically, which again suggests a psychoanalytically informed hypothesis of what was going on in the actor's psychic system: "In his imagination Peter Treumann projected what he had warded off for himself on to the *Schlurfs*; apart from their consumerism and their refusal to perform in school or at work, it was above all their relations to girls and their liberal approach to sexuality which indicated their social inferiority. They imbodied, so to speak, the negation of the HJ ideal and therefore appeared to be the natural enemies."[36]

Treumann's narratives on his encounters with Jewish youths in the streets of the 2nd district of Vienna and with girls from the German Girls' League confirm and differentiate this hypothesis so far. The narrative-theoretical presentation ends with explanations as to why, after the *Anschluss* with Germany in 1938, Treumann becomes disillusioned with the increasing bureaucratisation of the Hitler Youth organisation and the loss of it's elite status, to the extent that he resigns from the organisation and volunteers for the German army, where he then begins an officer's career (like his father did in the First World War).

The last part of this theoretical narrative discusses some of the highly theoretical aspects of the case in more abstract terms. This means explaining the narrative principles which guided both the actor in living his life and which guided the narrator in the composition and performance of his life-story. It is here where the theoretical assumption, that there might be a partial congruence between the life *process* and the life *story* given by the narrator has to be examined again. We have to distinguish between the practises of life and the performance of one's life story, even if the principles and patters of life practises can only be ascertained empirically from analysing the narrative. Therefore it is necessary to go back to the narrative and explain the actors active involvement in the decision to embark on a career in the Hitler Youth (and later, the *Wehrmacht*), rather than any other. If we were to naiveley take at face value the narrative sketch given by the narrator, that would imply that his becoming a member

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Subsequently, the term was applied more specifically to youths who dressed and behaved in a certain way. After the NS takeover in Austria in March 1938, the term was adopted by the state authorities (school administration, police, public youth welfare, juridical authorities).
[36] Sieder, A Hitler Youth from a Respectable Family, as footnote 26, p. 112.

of the Hitler Youth was inevitable, a matter of compulsion. Yet this would mean the construction of a total *sub-jectum* which is deprived of every possibility to act and interpret its own accord, a puppet of history so to speak. My main argument is that Peter Treumann's specific and 'individual' modes of interpretation, his sense of orientation and particular strategies of action, identification and power accumulation, influence his confrontation with the historical circumstances and choices in front of him. The narrative principles he used *indicate* the processes of adaption involved, along with the formation of a particular view of the world and the people in it:

(…) three processes attract our attention: allegorization, typification, and homologization. Allegorization signifies the comprehension and interpretation of an abstract context by means of personification. The persons used for this purpose usually belong to the world of primary experiences (father, mother, godfather, Nazi teacher, the socialist *Armenrat*). Typification denotes the application of auto- and hetero-stereotypes to social groups: the solidarity of the street gang, the antisocial attitude of the *Schlurfs*, the passivity of the Jews, the cowardice of the socialist fighters of February 1934, and so forth. (…) Homologization means that within the family, the street-gang, the HJ group and so forth, the historical subject discovers equivalents of the general social conditions. The patterns of interpretation, the ideological elements and phantasmagorias used in this process, are taken from the discourses the subject partakes in through hearsay, written texts and images. The social roles, positions, and characteristics of both family members, neighbours and friends on the one hand and of the respective adversaries on the other hand are projected on to society or parts of society by the adolescent (and still by the adult). One's own family does not function any better than the system of the *Ständestaat;* the *Volksgemeinschaft* operates in the same way as the HJ, only on a larger scale; in the competition in the street the young Jews show the same kind of behaviour as the Jews on the ramp at Auschwitz."[37]

Other arguments in this explicitly theoretical part of the case-study relate to the social labelling of persons and groups, which can also be observed throughout the stages of personal development, and to the body sensations which help determine the development of a sense of masculine identity and distance this member of the HJ from girls and women, and from the feminine side of his own personality.

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[37] Ibid., pp. 114-115.

"The willingness to disregard the physical and psychological costs of standing up for one's values, the latent tendency to self-destruction, and the identification with dead (murdered) heroes seem to have become habitual from childhood. These traits are constantly promoted by the various agencies of socialisation (street-gang, *Pimpfengruppe*, illegal Hitler Youth, *Staatsjugend*, *Führerschule, Wehrmacht*) and are lauded as 'duty', 'loyalty', 'courage', and so forth. The subject took in the rewards for auto-aggression in order to pass them on again – for instance as leader of the HJ."[38]

The analysis concludes with a final argument on the relation between the individual and the societal: "The HJ became the site of Peter Treumann's social life in adolescence. This social space organized and structured the dispositions of the adolescent. It continued to mould what had had it's beginning in other social spaces (in the family, in the street-gang). On the other hand, Peter Treumann also took part in the forming of this social space through his actions and interpretations."[39]

This sketch illustrating the constructive principles of a qualitative case-study and it's theoretical outcome should have made it easier for the reader to understand how the procedures of conducting narrative interviews and of doing sequential text analysis can operationalize the most prominent process in question: the interaction between the individual's social acting on one hand, and the political, economic, social and cultural circumstances on the other. Or to put it more simply, to describe and explain how people make history, without being free to do so.

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[38] Ibid., p. 116.
[39] Ibid., p. 116.