

Ethnography of Scenes. Towards a Sociological Life-world Analysis of (Post-traditional) Community-building¹

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Abstract: The kind of ethnography presented in this article is a further development of life-world analytical ethnography. The continuation of this approach is labelled "ethnography of scenes" because it a) mainly deals with post-traditional communities, especially with youth (club) culture and because b) it observes relationships with a, so to speak, scenic point of view.

As is true for ethnography as a whole, this research concept is (also) an attempt to depart from a pseudo-objective "overview" that sweeps over the actors' heads. Its goal is to painstakingly reach for an intimate knowledge of life-worlds, as it were, "viewed through the eyes" of the actors. This explorative program has so far been pursued most consistently by life-world analysis in the tradition of Alfred SCHÜTZ. *Sociological* life-world analysis now goes beyond a purely phenomenological life-world approach insofar as it aims at reconstructing the subjective perspective, i.e. the life-worlds, of *other* actors. Accordingly the phenomenological description has in this case been embedded in a triangulative *ethnographic* research concept that links field-relevant data of *every kind* to practical participant data while employing a plurality of methods. Although participation for the purpose of perspective-taking is the basic procedure of this approach, it integrates this into further procedures of data collection such as observation and interviews.

Table of Contents

- [1. Introduction](#)
- [2. The Development of Scene Research](#)
- [3. Theoretical Concepts of \(Youth\) Scenes](#)
- [4. Paradigms of Research on Scenes](#)
- [5. Themes of Scene Research](#)
- [6. Life-world Analytical Ethnography of Scenes](#)
- [7. Methods of Life-world Analytical Ethnography of Scenes](#)
- [8. Conclusion](#)

[References](#)

[Author](#)

[Citation](#)

1 This article is based on a talk at the workshop "The State of the Art of Qualitative Social Research in Europe" organised by "Qualitative Methods" (ESA), "Qualitative Methods (DGS)" and "Interpretive Methods" (SGS) on September 9th and 10th 2004 at the Technical University, Berlin. The remarks draw on the (preparatory) work at the Chair of General Sociology, Faculty 12, of the University of Dortmund, to a considerable extent, especially on that of Ronald HITZLER, Ivonne BEMERBURG and Thomas BUCHER.

1. Introduction

The kind of ethnography presented in this article does not claim to be a genuinely new approach. In fact, it is the application of what was called "life-world ethnography"², specifically the life-world analytical ethnography of Anne HONER (1996), Hubert KNOBLAUCH (1996) and Ronald HITZLER (1999), to a specific object of research. This ethnographical concept is applied to post-traditional communities and in this case especially to (youth) scenes.³ Consequently, the research concept is further developed, as it were in passing. Before speaking about the preferred methods of this specific approach, I would briefly like to outline the state of the art of scene research by touching on its development, its paradigms and themes, and by placing our scene concept within this context. [1]

2. The Development of Scene Research

In the German-speaking world, the starting point for engagement with the modes of expression of youth culture was the "discovery of the life phase youth" in the late 19th century (cf. HURRELMANN 1995, pp.26ff) and the coining of the term "Jugendkultur" (youth culture) by the pedagogue Gustav WYNEKEN.⁴ For the first time, youth was seen as an autonomous life phase in the sense of the so-called "generation paradigm". This life phase is characterised by specific transitions from childhood to adulthood by means of which the adolescents are granted a "psychosocial moratorium" (cf. FERCHHOFF 1999, pp.67ff). [2]

In the United States, the foundations for scene research were laid in the 1920s with the concept of "subcultures" that originated within the context of research into juvenile delinquency and juvenile deviance (cf. GRIESE 2000, p.40). In this connection, it is assumed that the subcultures of adolescents effectively stand in contrast to the culture of the "world of adults", which entails a deviance from the norm. Research at the Chicago School of Sociology had a material influence on the development of the concept of a youth subculture (for example, cf. THRASHER 1927). In the German-speaking discussion, this concept was subsequently widely received and developed further at the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s.⁵ The notion that subcultural deviance reflects class relations stems from Great Britain, specifically from the "Centre for Contemporary

2 The notion of life-world ethnography is based on Alfred SCHUTZ's "Structures of the Life-World" (SCHUTZ & LUCKMANN 2004); the phrase was coined by Anne HONER (1993), who wanted to stress the importance of reconstructing the subjective perspective.

3 In English, the term "scene" is mostly used in the sense of a stage scene or of a video/film scene on the one hand. At the same time it is used with the meaning of site, or location (e.g. the scene of an accident, the scene of the Winter Olympics), and sometime with the meaning of a community as it is intended here (or a network of like-minded people, as e.g. the alternative scene, the jazz scene).

4 The term "Jugendkultur" in WYNEKEN means "(...) the emphasis on and the demand for an autonomy of youth as well as criticism of the 'culture as a whole'" (GRIESE 2000, p.39).

5 Cf. especially BELL's contribution (1965, p.83) about partial cultures or subcultures as "(...) relatively coherent cultural systems which form a world apart within the total system of our national culture (...)", and which develop structural and functional characteristics that to a certain extent distinguish their members from the rest of society. One may also refer to SCHWENDTER's (1971) "Theorie der Subkultur" ("Theory of Subculture"), which leads to an independent German discussion.

Cultural Studies" (CCCS) in Birmingham (e.g. cf. CLARKE & HONNETH 1979, HEBDIGE 1979, WILLIS 1979). [3]

As a result of the marked effects of modernisation—such as pluralisation, individualisation, multi-optionalisation and experience orientation—different forms of socialisation have progressively developed that have primarily been subsumed under the label "youth cultures" since the mid 1980s. In the relevant literature of the 1990s, these youth cultures were less and less regarded as class- or stratum-specific and increasingly as style- and theme-specific phenomena, thus as cultures "without emphatic sub" (FERCHHOFF 1999, p.34, but also see BAACKE & FERCHHOFF 1995, BAACKE 1999a). [4]

In the course of this development of youth research—from the subculture approach to the concept of pluralistic youth cultures—the term "youth scenes" has turned up almost incidentally but increasingly frequently in prominent passages since the mid-1990s. The import of this term from everyday language into German-speaking sociology of youth can probably mainly be ascribed to Dieter BAACKE (1987) who used the term "scenes" at an early stage but let its contours blur (again) with the term "youth cultures" in his socio-ecological scene model.⁶ Thus "scene" so far has remained one of those socio-scientific terms that is often used—especially in research on youth culture—but seldom defined or theoretically founded. [5]

3. Theoretical Concepts of (Youth) Scenes

John IRWIN undertook the first systematic and theoretical approach to the term scene in 1977 in the course of his description of juvenile cultural forms of expression. His work led him to identify the following characteristic properties of the phenomenon "scene":

"For instance, the label indicates that these worlds are expressive—that is, people participate in them for direct rather than future gratification—that they are voluntary, and that they are available to the public. In addition, the theatrical metaphor of the word 'scene' reflects an emergent urban psychological orientation—that of a person as 'actor', self-consciously presenting him—or herself in front of audiences" (IRWIN 1977, pp.23ff). [6]

In German-speaking sociology this proposal was not taken up. Only much later, at the beginning of the 1990s, the German sociologist Gerhard SCHULZE developed an ambitious theoretical concept to describe this particular form of socialisation, the "scene". He set forth his concept, which is largely "compatible" with the above-mentioned precursors, in his book "Erlebnisgesellschaft" (1992) which was well received in the German-speaking countries: "A scene is a network of audiences that arises from three kinds of similarities: partial identities of

6 On critical examination, it transpires that BAACKE's (1993) theory model does not allow for a clear discrimination between the term "scene" and the term "youth culture". In more recent publications too, the terms scene and youth culture are often used side by side without the indication of systematic theoretical distinguishing features.

persons, of locations and of contents." Subsequently he points out that "multilocal scenes [are] typical for our society (...) with a core audience moving back and forth between a number of different establishments" (SCHULZE 1992, p.463ff). What seems problematic about SCHULZE's definition is the absence of consideration of communication and interaction processes which (re-)produce the scene. Particularly missing are concrete conclusions a) about the formation and production of scenes, thus information about the "motors" of scenes, their intentions and the strategies and means employed by them, and b) about the inner structure of scenes, thus information about those outer forms, behavioural standards, values, and fragments of world outlook with which scene members assure themselves of their affiliation and confirm these against the outside world. [7]

Soon after, one of these desiderata was taken up by Hubert KNOBLAUCH (1995) who further developed and enhanced SCHULZE's conception by focussing on communicative actions: "Thus scenes differ from their immediate contexts by means of their typology: typical locations, typical cultural signs and typical forms of immediate as well as of media communication" (KNOBLAUCH 1995, p.247). But KNOBLAUCH first of all does not clearly distinguish between scene and milieu and, secondly, does not delve into the internal structure of scenes, for instance the relationship between scene-makers and scene-goers, the impact of scene events and communication media, or the relation between local and nationwide importance. [8]

On the basis of (constructive criticism) of this preparatory work and with recourse to our own research results, we now propose to refer to that formation of socialisation as scene a) which does *not* constitute itself due to common life circumstances (such as milieus) or professional interests of the participants, b) that features a significantly *marginal* degree of obligation and binding character, c) whose structure is *not* in principle selective and excluding and calculated for an exclusive set of participants but which nonetheless d) acts as a thematically focussed community-building forum for experience and self-stylisation (cf. HITZLER & BUCHER 2000). [9]

Scenes thus are characterised by a mode of community building that need not over-ridingly be based on mutual acquaintance. Scenes form around a common thematic field of interest and can be arranged nationwide and partially also by the media. Consequently, their boundaries and criteria of affiliation are (at least for outsiders) not self-explanatory. In scenes, affiliation becomes the object of internal (and not necessarily verbal-discursive) negotiation processes, in which the (pertinent production of) knowledge and competence regarding the thematic orientation of the scene make up the main criteria. Thus we refer to a thematically focussed cultural network of people who share certain material and/or mental forms of collective self-stylisation and who stabilise and develop these similarities at typical locations at typical times as a scene. [10]

4. Paradigms of Research on Scenes

In recourse to these developments, one can at present make out three "strands" within the German-speaking "research on scenes". The researchers of the first "strand" still prefer the label "youth cultures" for their object—but (meanwhile) with an explicit reference to its scenic character (cf., for instance, BARTHELMES 1999; SCHRÖDER & LEONHARD 1998; VOLLBRECHT 1997; WENZEL 2001). The researchers assembled around the second "strand" continue to call their studies subculture research, but they (already) operate with concepts that to a large extent are similar to those used by the third "strand" of research. This strand is primarily represented by the representatives of the archive for youth culture (for this cf. FARIN 2001; FARIN & NEUBAUER 2001 and the "Journal der Jugendkulturen" ["Journal of Youth Culture"] published by the archive of youth culture) and the "Cultural Studies Research Group"⁷ as well as by various other authors (e.g. CREMER 1992, GRIESE 2000) who explicitly label their respective analyses as scene research. These authors, each with a different focus, are endeavouring to develop "scene research" as a research concept generally useful for sociology of youth and to realise it empirically (cf. GROßEGGER, HEINZELMAIER & ZENTER 1998, GROßEGGER & HEINZELMAIER 2002, HITZLER, BUCHER & NIEDERBACHER 2001 and ROHMANN 1999a). [11]

Despite the heterogeneity of the extensively defined field of scene research, some fundamental society-related diagnostic and conceptual similarities—thus, in a manner of speaking, "paradigms of scene research"—can be made out:

- a. Scene Research is Action Research: All of the approaches subsumed here as "scene research" generally operate against the background of action theory. In our case, this background is formed by a dramatology recursing on GOFFMAN (1959, 1974). The focus of our scholarly perspective in this case does not lie on the reconstruction of biographical geneses of attitudes and behaviour patterns but explicitly on the observation and typing of interaction scenes embedded in communicative settings (as it were as in drama scripts). Ethnography of scenes thus firmly devotes itself to situation analyses with regard to the reconstruction of interaction orders in terms of GOFFMAN.
- b. Scene Research is Research on Individualisation: The authors of the different approaches are unanimous that life in late-, post- or reflective-modern societies—and scene research only deals with such societies—is profoundly individualistic (cf. BECK & BECK-GERNSHEIM 2002). Pluralisation, optionalisation and subjectivation processes relativise the practical relevance of the hitherto-dominating class and social stratum structures of the industrial modernity. The design potential as well as the actual design of one's "own life" and the participation in certain "social circles" is no longer effectively tied to outer life circumstances but is increasingly at once contingent and viable.

⁷ Organisationally, this research group is embedded in the "Sociology of Culture" Section of the German Association of Sociology.

- c. Scene Research is Research on Community-Building: As a result of individualisation, new "post-traditional" forms of social integration have come into being and are taking their place next to the traditional forms of integration (such as family, neighbourhood, congregation, association) and gradually gaining in importance (cf. HITZLER 1998). In this way, group formations are emerging, establishing and consolidating themselves in ways which, depending on the strand of "scene research", are called "youth cultures", "subcultures" or "scenes", and lately also "tribes" (MAFFESOLI 1988) or "neo-tribes" (HITZLER & PFADENHAUER 1998).
- d. Scene Research is Lifestyle Research: Scenes are lifestyle communities and as such are not geographically but symbolically, aesthetically and thematically located "territories" in social space (cf. MILES 2000). The affiliation to scenes is not determined by ascriptive personal attributes but by stylistic aspects of behaviour, communication, consumption, ways of thinking, etc.
- e. Scene Research is Interaction Research: Scenes are interactive spaces of experience; their existence is not only bound to the constant communicative process of assurance but also to the communicative generation of common interests by its members (cf. KNOBLAUCH 1995). The central significance of interaction and communication suggests the conception of scenes as (albeit very complex and widely ramified) networks of networks (i.e. of circles of friends, of cliques, of posses), within which different groups maintain specific connections. [12]

5. Themes of Scene Research

All the relevant research work regarding the phenomenon of "scene(s)" is characterised by a pronounced interest in the identification, location and differentiation of styles and style packages (as essential reference see POSTREL 2003). Stylistic presentations and the forms of experience of scene participants can at simultaneously be regarded as an expression of affiliation and an instrument of dissociation (cf. VOGELGESANG 2005). The ambivalence of integration and distinction, of difference and unity, is a constitutive element of such post-traditional communities (cf. HITZLER & PFADENHAUER 2002). [13]

Depending on the conceptualisation of the studies, researchers zoom in on music styles, clothing styles, consumption styles, communication styles, interaction styles, etc. They trace arrangements and reconstruct "underlying" meanings, either with the goal of depicting the scene territory of youth culture as *comprehensively* as possible and of classifying it (e.g. cf. FERCHHOFF 1999, BAACKE 1999a, BARTHELMES 1999), or of describing *individual* scenes (see, for instance, HELSPER 1992; HITZLER & PFADENHAUER 1997; KLEIN 1999, VOGELGESANG 1998). [14]

Besides such style-related typing, systematisation and classification attempts, the theoretical ambitions point mainly in two directions. On one hand, the goal consists in concentrating the empirical data into an ideal-typing structural model of scenes. On the other hand, a) questions concerning the socialisation effects of

the participation in (specific) scenes are *pedagogically* relevant (e.g. cf. DEINET 1999 or the anthology of SCHRÖDER & LEONHARD 1998) and b) questions regarding the consequences which the increasing "scenification" has for the structure of the "life phase youth", pursue *traditional topics of sociology of youth* (cf., for instance, BARTHELMES 1998; MÜNCHMEINER 1998). In both cases, the ambivalence of the rising importance of scenes is pointed out; the focus, though, is often not on the *chances* this development may hold but rather its risks (such as violence, crime, drug abuse). [15]

6. Life-world Analytical Ethnography of Scenes

Methodologically, the various research studies that delve into scenes are very differently conceived. The methodical spectrum ranges from standardised enquiry and analysis procedures over different non-standardised interview techniques to participant observation. Most recently, since the reception of the research work of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, non-standardised procedures are becoming increasingly prevalent in German-speaking research on youth. [16]

Ethnographically oriented "scene research" in turn is interested in the respective scene-specific "know how" and the situated "how to do", thus in concrete cultural orientations and practices. In particular, this kind of research must be referred to as ethnographic if it—by means of an artificial change of attitude—is decidedly geared towards the discovery of foreignness in the seemingly familiar (cf. HAMMERSLEY & ATKINSON 1995). This research must be designated "life-world analytical ethnography" if it methodologically makes the attempt "to reconstruct the world seen, as it were, through the eyes of an ideal type of (some) reality" (HONER 2004, p.114). The scene research we do from the Chair of General Sociology in Faculty 12 of the University of Dortmund is based on the concept of a sociological life-world analysis that was formulated and developed in the tradition of Alfred SCHÜTZ and Thomas LUCKMANN (2004). [17]

Sociological life-world analysis takes a special interest in the *perspective* with which the people who are the objects of research perceive the fragments of the social world relevant for them. Following Benita LUCKMANN (1970), such relevant fragments viewed from a certain perspective are called "small social life-worlds". A small life-world is not exactly the same as a "social world" in the sense of STRAUSS (1993), but "the correlate of the subjective experience of reality in a partial or in a temporally districted culture" (HITZLER & EBERLE 2004, p.70).⁸ What can be experienced here is not the experience of sharing a (life-) world with others but the experience that parts of what is important to me are not simply determined by me but are generated together with others. In other words, the correlate of subjective experience in small social life-worlds is a "we-experience", and it is not shared experiences but the experience of community that is comprehended under "we-experience". [18]

8 If these fragments sufficiently correlate with "frameworks" whose construction logic aims at evoking specific experiences, and certain qualities of experience, then we speak of "worlds of cultural experience".

Within the framework of this explorative-interpretative research paradigm of life-world ethnography, we have for some time now been working on the contouring and conceptualisation of a youth- and culture sociological scene research under the label of "*Dortmunder Szenen-Ethnographie*" (*DoSE*).⁹ As far as the *theoretical* aspect is concerned, the main focus lies on the description and explanation of community-building processes subject to conditions of individualisation on the one hand and on the specification of the term "scene" on the other hand—in the medium term definitely with the intention of generalisation in socio-structural respect.¹⁰ As far as the *material* aspect is concerned, our joint research work in this respect has so far concentrated on the scene of club culture (see e.g. HITZLER & PFADENHAUER 1997, 1998a, 1998b, 2001, 2001). Lately we have both begun to observe the urban fashion scene of the "stylish people" with some interest while other members of the Chair have for a long time investigated other scenes.¹¹ [19]

7. Methods of Life-world Analytical Ethnography of Scenes

For the exploration of these scenes, and for the reconstruction of small social life-worlds in general and of worlds of cultural experience in particular, we make use of a number of procedures from the arsenal of methods of empirical social sciences (reaching from, inter alia, document analysis over interviews, including standardised surveys—employed with the greatest care—to systematic observations). Our basic approach, however, is *observant participation*. *Observant participation* means that we go into the social "field" we are examining as intensively as possible and try to become as similar as possible—up to their linguistic and habitual customs—to the people we are examining. Of course, an attempt to observe and participate in this way does not always succeed and if it succeeds it may fall short of prior expectations. In the *extent to which* it does succeed, we reap a kind and quality of data we would hardly obtain with other research methods: information about how and what one really *experiences* in such worlds. [20]

Observant participation thus differs from participant observation in various regards (cf. PFADENHAUER 2003): 1. with respect to the research objectives: ideally it is about the production of observation data *and* of experiential data; 2. with respect to the relevance assessment: participation—if a decision has to be made—takes priority over observation; 3. with respect to the researcher's

9 Translation note: "Dose" is the German expression for "can".

10 In particular, the network-like character of scenes has so far been taken into account by us less in terms of analysis techniques than in terms of research strategy: "Our" scene research—by virtue especially of the experience gained during our long-lasting participation in the techno-party scene—meanwhile "ideally" begins with the identification of nodal points of communication (i.e. with the so-called "organisation, performance, and interpretation elites") and successively broadens with the build-up of "relationships" to relevant actors along the identified network structures to include as diverse as possible actors, groups and events. The access to and the successful and data-wise "fruitful" interaction with scene elites in turn presupposes a relatively "intimate" acquaintance with the communication and interaction specifics of the respective scene on the part of the researcher.

11 The home page <http://www.jugendszenen.com/> created by the chair gives an overview of these research activities.

perspective: he/she strives for an existential insider's perspective gained through subjective experience instead of for an (inevitably) aloof outsider's point of view; 4. finally, with respect to the consequences for the evaluation of the data gained: the interpretation of subjective experience data calls for a special, namely a *phenomenological* analysis (cf. HITZLER & EBERLE 2004; MASO 2001). While this experience data proves unwieldy for written documentation because it is sometimes difficult or impossible to clothe what we experience in words, all observations as well as data obtained with other procedures must be textually recorded as well as analysed in this form (cf. EMERSON, FRETZ & SHAW 2001). [21]

Observant participation in this spirit is the procedure that eminently characterises *life-world analytical* ethnography. The second characteristic of life-world analytical ethnography is the expert interview, employed in a much *stricter* sense by us than is usual. In our opinion, the expert interview does not simply differ from other kinds of interviews in that the people consulted are regarded as "experts". The special feature of the expert interview is, in fact, that in this case the researcher and the interviewee are ideally conducting an interview at the "same eye-level" (see PFADENHAUER 2002). And the most essential condition for this is precisely not only the status of the *interviewed* actor as an expert but also a corresponding status of the interviewing *researcher*. In order to be able to conduct an acceptable expert interview in this strict sense, the researcher must therefore *beforehand* acquire a high degree of relevant thematic competence for each interview. The expert interview, as employed by us, therefore has many prerequisites and for this reason is a very time-consuming instrument to generate data. Hence it is *not* suited as an instrument with which one can "quickly" collect data and can thus make up the great deal of time needed for participation. In fact, it takes many competencies for granted that are (only) gained within the scope of participation. [22]

Much of what we would like to know about our research object *cannot* be gleaned by means of these two procedures that are "central" to our research. Therefore, as a matter of principle, we employ the whole range of methods of empirical social research for our field studies. It has emerged that the so-called non-standardised procedures are, as a rule, particularly well suited to our *ethnographical* cognitive interest. To overcome the limits of interviewing and participant observation, we also employ the procedure that Margarethe KUSENBACH (2003) referred to as "Go-along", by dint of which especially temporal and spatial perceptions of actors can be ascertained. It is by no means rare that observations are conducted at the same place several times in order to compare these new insights with those won at an earlier point in time.¹² [23]

Even more important for us than the question of data *collection* procedures is the conceptualisation of methods and techniques of data *analysis*. *It is required that* both of these satisfy scientific standards and are pragmatically useful. We are thus, so to speak, continually tackling fundamental problems of optimising effort and output when choosing appropriate *interpretation methods*. In particular, our

12 Michael BURAWOY (2003) refers to this research practice as the "ethnographic revisit".

experience with methods such as those subsumed by Anne HONER and Ronald HITZLER (1997) under the label of "social scientific hermeneutics", has led us to agree on a relatively easy to learn basic analysis technique which one could characterise as "quasi-Socratic". First hermeneutic loop: explain what you believe you see (*e.g. in a text passage or on another artefact*), and justify (*against my interpretative resistance*) on the basis of which (*in turn explicable*) criteria you believe you see what you believe you see! Further hermeneutic loops: explain what you believe you see after passing the previous hermeneutic loop; etc.¹³ We combine this basic analysis technique with different codification procedures as the need arises—inter alia also with "ethnographic semantics" (which were developed by SPRADLEY [1970] and established in the German-speaking discussion by MAEDER & BROSZIEWSKI [1997]) because we have to "crack" diverse special semantics depending on our fields of study.¹⁴ [24]

As a rule, our *ethnographical* cognitive interest is "actually" satisfied with the output of the analyses based on this whole arsenal of methods—of course only when these outputs are available in written form and thus have been made accessible to the scientific community.¹⁵ We are constantly being asked—by no means only but especially and particularly emphatically from *outside* the discourse of our academic subject—what such insights reveal about "our present society" and about the social life we can expect to have. [25]

Well, to add this, and in conclusion: in order to be able to classify, assess and evaluate the objects of our ethnographical research work, we strive for a synoptic view, i.e. for sufficient competence to be able also to recognise typical features, respectively structural traits shared by the various phenomena of youth culture despite all their idiosyncracies, complexities and inconsistencies. In view of this objective, we constantly accompany our ethnographical "single case" explorations with a relatively undirected 360°-sampling of the theme field (or "surroundings"), in other words with "scanning", and with a target-oriented surveillance of themes and elimination of information gaps, in other words with "monitoring". In such a way we are gradually reaching more and more abstract, and one could also say "diagnostic", conclusions. [26]

This "subtle", hardly systematisable, quasi-*synoptic* work thus aims at elaborating the generalisable characteristics of ethnographic matters—as in, for example, typical courses of development of juvenile life-worlds. To achieve this, we, for instance, try to reconstruct the "careers" of scenes—from their first "flaring up" over peak phases with good publicity to their gradual decline and then their entry into the so-called "mainstream". Or we endeavour to reveal the symptomatic path

13 For the basic concept of social scientific hermeneutics cf. SOEFFNER 2004.

14 As mentioned above, the experiential data obtained qua existentially involved participation can only be insufficiently analysed with these techniques, which is why we basically return to a phenomenological description for this purpose.

15 Christin J. CHURCHILL (2005) has recently labelled ethnography as a form of translation. Concerning the problems of ethnographic transcription—between description and representation—cf. KALTHOFF (2003, p.88): "Viewed from this perspective, the translating ethnographic text does not only act as representation or materialisation of a culture but generates what it describes by means of its depiction."

which aesthetic "style packages" take that are "tied up" in the core of the scene and are then successively absorbed by increasingly broader (scene) circles until they finally diffuse into the general popular aesthetics; etc. In conclusion, the most abstract theoretical questions we direct our attention at deal with scenification tendencies in the whole of society or with the structural divergence of youthfulness as mental disposition on the one hand and young people, particularly adolescent people, as an age category on the other hand. [27]

8. Conclusion

Ethnography of scenes presents itself as a further development of life-world ethnography in three ways. [28]

On the one hand, our research on club-culture communities—or, more generally and theoretically, on post-traditional communities—genuinely centres on precisely the object of life-world ethnography: namely on the analysis of what the theoretical construct "small life-worlds" is really about, viz. the subjective experience of community and self-experience as "we-feeling". The label "ethnography of scenes" thus first of all refers to the correlative of the subjective experience of reality of a part, that is of a part-time-cultural community as an object of research of life-world ethnography. [29]

On the other hand, our scholarly interest explicitly focuses on the observation and typing of interaction scenes embedded in communicative settings (almost like in drama scripts) instead of on the reconstruction of biographical geneses of attitudes and behaviour patterns. The ethnography of club culture thus devotes itself to situation analyses with regard to the reconstruction of interaction orders in terms of GOFFMAN. [30]

Finally, in the course of our research work our grasp on the arsenal of methods of empirical social sciences has gradually become more systematised and in a way more sophisticated. While participation proved to be not only a practically indispensable basic procedure of this approach but in fact also the *first* step of the research process into the respective research fields, procedures such as expert interviews on the one hand and (systematic) observations on the other hand, whose full epistemological potentials have often been overlooked in the hitherto customary use, turned out to be time-consuming additional research procedures which we only employ relatively late in the research process. For the analysis of the data, on the other hand, we return to a downright pragmatic interpretation technique we refer to as "quasi-Socratic" which—depending on the data and the research question—can be complemented and advanced by various interpretation procedures from the field of social scientific hermeneutics. [31]

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