

Comment exprimer les qualités particulières de l'espace qui font que les sociétés y manifestent certaines propriétés liées à l'existence des groupes ou des individus ? En un certain sens on peut dire que, dans cette action des groupes sociaux, la société est tout et l'espace n'est rien. Dans le chapitre *Espace et inscriptions sociales* nous présentons des textes qui montrent les modes d'action sur l'espace qu'accomplissent les sociétés en fonction de l'idée qu'elles se font de la parenté, des sexes, des classes d'âges, du statut, etc.

Mais des changements surviennent constamment dans l'espace des sociétés, des groupes, des individus; ce sont de ces modifications sociales et spatiales et de leurs conséquences réciproques que nous traitons dans le chapitre *Reformulations*.

Enfin, dans un dernier chapitre intitulé *l'espace et son double* nous faisons la distinction entre les figurations de l'espace et l'espace de représentation, faisant l'hypothèse que les représentations graphiques informent et spécifient, au même titre que les autres dimensions, les espaces propres aux sociétés.

Depuis la révolution industrielle, l'espace est devenu un enjeu stratégique entre les classes, les groupes, tandis que parallèlement certains lui attribuent des vertus thérapeutiques majeures. On assiste de plus en plus fréquemment à des actions de reprise, de remodelage, de transformations des territoires par le biais de l'urbanisme et de l'aménagement du territoire. Il convenait donc de mettre en garde sur les conséquences que de telles actions peuvent avoir sur l'espace lui-même mais aussi et surtout sur les sociétés concernées.

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ETHNOGRAPHY OF CODES AS A RESEARCH APPROACH FOR THE STUDY OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Introduction

The exciting issue of the concept of 'Umwelt', of environment, is for me the perspective of seeing man as an integral part of a greater whole. In the following I want to present a methodology that applies this concept consequently to the study of a specific environment: the family living room. The way the family uses the medium 'living room' in their interactional behaviour is the study's subject matter.

The interactional, communicational scope of the study shows the living room from a particular vantage point: not as an indicator of the owner's personality or the family's social position. Other questions are of interest: Are there interactional rules for the setting 'living room'? What set of rules apply in this environment? Is there something like a 'living room code' that is incorporated in the family's communicational stream? Do other families of comparable social position share this code or is it rather an individual family generated code?

Birdwhistell, who initiated my project, suggested I view the living room itself as 'slowed down behaviour' instead of seeing it as a box where people and their belongings are stuffed, as a static thing, or as the physical boundary of the inhabitants' domestic behaviour.

Under the name 'ethnography of communication' Dell Hymes, Susan Ervin-Tripp, John Gumperz and others promote the study of language in contexts. I will outline how this approach can be adopted to the study of non-linguistic codes, specifically in the use of settings in contexts. Context is defined as a set of rules, which shape and give meaning to every event that happens within its boundaries (Birdwhistell 1970). Contexts, that often include the setting 'living room' are for instance a formal visit and a Christmas celebration.

The Method

What particularities belong to the subject matter that are of relevance for the choice of method? A living room is different from a museum, for example, where anyone has free access and behaviour such as standing around for hours and taking notes is not inappropriate. This does not hold for the living room. How can an unknown researcher study private behaviour such as living room behaviour in situ? The best way I see is also the most direct one: To contact the dwellers, stating explicitly that one's wish is to study their living room, to look at it, to measure it.

How will a family after having agreed behave once the researcher has entered the house? They will most likely do at least two things: talk to the researcher and show him or her the living room. They will ascribe a role to this strange person and the researcher should not interfere with their definition. How they define him or her is of interest. Which role ever they give him or her, this role is an acceptable one for this living-room context. The researcher shall use herself as an instrument to elicit the behaviour she wants to study. The family members show a particular behaviour that happens within the context of the explicitly stated task 'studying your living-room'. Thereby all their behaviour in relation to my presence as well as the apparent absence of such behaviour is performed in the context 'studying your living-room'. and that is what I am interested in.

I gather data with all tools that seem appropriate in the situation: observation, measuring with a yardstick, participant observation and interviewing. I am not really interested in the content of many of the questions I am asking and conversations we are having. It is rather that I take a fitting role for giving them the opportunity to

live their way of life in front as well as with me for some hours. I fill an available position in their living-room related behaviour patterns.

Four core ideas of ethnography were taken as fundamental to the proceeding:

- a) the basis of any ethnography is detailed description,
- b) the recording shall not follow an a priori classification system,
- c) the researcher shall be aware of his/her participation in the investigated situation,
- d) the unstructured research design gives the researcher freedom to amend but also continues responsibility to reflect and to report on the research process.

The study

I did study the living-room of two American families in a large city on the East Coast, USA. The two families were both living in the wider vicinity of a university, the one 12 and the other 20 blocks away. The Afro-American family had 3 children of 7, 9 and 11 years of age, the father being a biology school teacher, the mother have her own 'Art Nursery'.

The other family, being of North-European ethnic background, had two children of 2 and 6 years of age, the father being professor for computer science, the mother having a degree in computer science was not working outside the house.

both pairs of parents were in their mid-thirties, both families owned the houses they lived in, being 3 to 4 storey high houses built around the turn of the century in the Victorian style. The white family was living in this house for one and a half years, the black family for 12 years.

My tools were paper and pencil for recording. I took notes on my own as well as their behaviour, I took measures of the room with a yardstick and I did some drawings. The measuring and drawing I did not so much for knowing the exact size of the couch. That was hardly of any interest for me. The advantage of this tactic was that it released me from the role the family had ascribed me. In one family I had the role of a guest. As a guest I am blind for many aspects, such as dust, or the wall behind the curtains, etc. This job legitimised me to stand up and go to every corner. It gave me a perspective of the room that was not restricted to that of a guest. Secondly it calmed the inhabitants. They seemed suspicious as to whether it was actually their living-room under study. My preoccupation with the material as evident by measuring and drawing relieved them.

I took notes on everything I noticed. A detailed record of the field trip and a post-hoc elaboration in a detailed journal is basic to the method. the analytical work is an a posteriori sorting of the relevant aspects which depends upon adequate description. Obviously it is impossible to describe everything exhaustively. As a help for finding out what is relevant in a particular domestic context, it is most useful to interview the inhabitants.

Some aspects have also been invisible for me. For instance, it was only by talking to them that I learned that both houses have a second living-room! To talk to them about the living-room had more advantages: it introduced me to their style of communication. Their language showed me what criteria they used to categorise their living-room behaviour. The woman of the caucasian family told me that this was 'the most livable house' they ever had, because it had a second living-room upstairs. On further queries I learned that the downstairs living-room, the one in use and I was invited to study was more used 'when we have guests' and the upstairs was described as being the place for the tv set, the sewing machine, and the 'kids can sleep there'. I interpreted that as a public and private living-room, where the private one is defined in terms of activities that are generally done when no-one besides the nuclear family is present.

In the black family I was told that the upstairs living-room, called 'our room' by the parents was the only living-room that was used in the summer 'because it has a breeze'. The downstairs living-room was used more in winter and characterised as the 'talk room'. When they have guests that they have not seen for a long time or never before, they know that they will talk a lot and they will be in the ground floor living-room. When they have talked 'enough' they move their guests up to the second living-room. Here, too are cues that the criterion of differentiation is the public versus the private sphere. Their programme 'having guests', however, has two phases: the beginning with its definition or redefinition of the interactants' relationships fits in the contexts of the downstairs and for the end, when they have settled on a freindship relationship, the upstairs living-room is appropriate. Their concept of the two rooms provides them with a tool to manifest a development in the relationship with their guests. This is an example of how the setting 'living-room' is incorporated into a family's communication system.

There are other advantages to interviewing the people than pure observation. However, this should not become a dogma. Fundamental to the ethnographic method is its flexible nature. Which way ever the researcher takes, the action should harmonise - unless she/he purposefully wants the contrary - with the studied people's way of life.

In the white family, the woman and I were talking about 10% of the 4 hours I spent there. Most of the time I was alone in the living-room. The black family let me alone for less than 5 minutes. When I took measurements we continued talking or they conversed with each other.

This endeavour to follow their style and not to impose in details an elaborated research design is the core point of the method. Epistemologically the researcher is conceived as not being a remote observer but as an integrated part of the event under study. That implies that the investigator also has to take his/her own behaviour into account as data as well. On the assumption that there are situational rules that hold for everyone involved, the researcher's own behaviour is often a manifestation of the context's rules. For instance the white woman offered me a cup of tea while I was alone in the room and measuring. Some minutes later she called to me 'your tea!' which she was putting in the adjacent room. I went there

and we talked more than we had earlier in the living-room. I drank half of the cup, put it back on the dining-room table and continued my measurements in the other room. Without being aware of it while I was doing it, I behaved against my interests - I had to go back into the other room for having another sip, but when I did that the cup was even gone. What I probably did was behaving in a context conforming manner. This was a cue to a possible rule, that activities like drinking tea and having a conversation are fitting in the dining-room context, less well in the living-room context.

I think the only way to do justice methodologically to the concept of 'Umwelt' as Uekull and later other did develop it is to consider the researcher an integral part of the investigated event. This requires recording of own behaviour and willingness to let the traditional 'subjects' make one behave, that is to be fitted into their behaviour patterns.

The different behaviour I showed in the two families, in the one mostly measuring and observing, in the other mainly conversing, were the kinds of behaviour that the inhabitants prompted me to perform. I concluded that for each living-room existed different sets of rules. For the Afro-American family's living-room there was a behaviour programme which had only one position that I could take: the conversing guest. The other family gave me access to the room and allowed me to take measurements freely, just as one would give access to the gasmeter reader. Here the white family showed that their living-room concept did not require a conversation beyond greeting and presentation of the task. This and other cues such as the tea event, the disposition of assemblages of material (such as rubber bands, sunglasses, fabric samples, a bag with 3 gallons of chemical liquid near the entrance, the absence of children's toys in the first half of the room) the woman's behaviour at the door upon my arrival, where she opened the wooden front door but not the screen door, waiting for me doing it, as well as a floor plan map that I produced showing each family member's path in the room, let me generate the hypothesis that their living-room was mainly a room to pass through. I considered more indices in this caucasian living-room, such as the fact that I was told not to walk after dark in the multi-racial neighbourhood. All these I interpreted as signs for a conceptual division of the room in two parts: the first half with the house entrance serves as a buffer zone between the neighbourhood and 'home'. In this half, however, the couch had its place. Since I was told that it was used when they have guests, the first half of the room seems to be subject to at least two sets of rules, two contexts: one is the 'having guests' programme, the other the more frequent 'pass through' programme. Both programmes appear to be relatively public in their nature. Their 'home' does not seem to include this first half of the room; what is 'home' starts behind the couch.

The Afro-American family did the contrary. They enlarged the boundaries of their home by incorporation of the street. While I was in the living-room the mother took a seat from which she could see me and also her playing children without moving. She went out of the house three times during the interview to settle some trouble having the children. She never ever mentioned her going in and out. The

fact that I noticed the absence of a behaviour that I had expected her to show - a sentence such as 'I'll be right back!' - indicates that our conceptions of the living-room differed.

In this sense I used myself as the instrument against which the studied people's behaviour code system is measured; the researcher as the wall, against which the 'subjects' are asked to play their ball. This whole approach bases on the assumption that such very obtrusive methods reveal data that allow interpretations of how the people behave when the researcher is not present.

This project had the objective to explore ethnographic procedures for the investigation of the use of domestic space as socially coded behaviour. As the concept of 'Umwelt' requires it, the researcher is seen as a fully integrated element of the event under study.

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INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES IN HOW CHILDREN CODE AND DECODE ENVIRONMENTAL MEANINGS THROUGH DIFFERENT MEDIA

The paper contributes to the literature on children's "cognitive mapping." This is part of a larger study of the development of map symbol formation in children aged five, six and seven years. Two different media for representing environments, modelling blocks and pictures, are compared. The paper describes and interprets individual differences in the types of symbols that children made for places in a fantasy environment. Differences in how these symbols were decoded is also examined. Presentation will be made via video tapes and color slides. Implications are drawn for future research in cognitive mapping, educational practices and participatory planning and design.

The presentation focuses on individual differences in how children represent and access meanings of places in environments through the use of modelling blocks and pictures. By accessing environmental meanings we mean the penetration of a symbol system in such a way that the various perceptual, functional, social and affective dimensions of the places represented are realized.

Little attention has been given in the research literature to media-related differences in the mental representations of environments. Even less concern has been given to individual differences in the use of media for coding and decoding these meanings. In fact, most of the existing research on cognitive mapping often assumes that the representational media, such as map sketches or modelling, do not affect