Making a Mess with Situational Analysis?

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Review Essay:

Abstract: Adele CLARKE, a student of grounded theory co-founder Anselm STRAUSS, uses situational analysis to develop both a methodology and a method which is able to represent the field's messiness, i.e., its heterogeneous and complex character. Grounded theory, CLARKE's starting point, is stuck in a modernist world-view, particularly by looking too much for a pure and over-simplified "basic social process". In order to make grounded theory post-modern, CLARKE considers discourses that are beyond pragmatism, e.g., those initiated by FOUCAULT, LATOUR, HARAWAY. This review essay argues that even though there remain some uncertainties in engaging in this epistemological hybrid, situational analysis provides a very good instrument for researchers to come into their material more deeply and, therefore, is a convincing tool for practice-oriented social science working with qualitative methods.

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1. Why Enlarge Grounded Theory?

Much attention has been given to grounded theory in qualitative research. This method, first presented by Barney Glaser and Anselm STRAUSS (1967), delivered a research tool that promised to make qualitative research more analytical and systematic. Moreover, through comparisons, theoretical sampling, memos and other techniques, research processes have facilitated more transparency and, therefore, less arbitrariness. Why, then, should grounded theory be re-thought? Adele CLARKE, a former student of grounded theory co-

founder Anselm STRAUSS and professor at the department of social and behavioural sciences at UCSF, sees one reason: even though STRAUSS' strategy of grounded theory is especially progressive, (mainly because of its pragmatic roots), it still maintains a modernist world-view, particularly by looking for a pure "basic social process" (CLARKE, 2005, p.16), by not analysing power-relations in a poststructuralist way, by not reflecting materiality sufficiently and by reproducing some basic modernist dichotomies. Adele CLARKE promises to avoid this by trying to push grounded theory around the postmodern turn with a "method assemblage" (LAW, 2004, p.13) she calls "situational analysis". Within this methodology she does not condemn all the aforementioned advantages of grounded theory. Open, axial, theoretical coding, sampling techniques, memoing, and systematic comparisons should not be dismissed; rather grounded theory should be enlarged in order to represent the field's messiness. With situational analysis, Adele CLARKE hopes to achieve more reflexivity, uncertainty, modesty and representation of contradictions. [1]

Astonishingly, situational analysis (published in 2005), has not gained much attention in Germany. This review essay retains the book's structure by first examining grounded theory's epistemological background and then CLARKE's extensions. I will then outline the layout of the three kinds of maps CLARKE presents: situational maps, social words/arenas maps and positional maps. I will conclude with a short discussion on epistemological problems that might occur in the method and—eventually—the main advantages that I see when applying situational analysis[1] in research. [2]

In short, Adele CLARKE structured the book as following: the first two chapters locate situational analysis within the wider debate on grounded theory and elaborate its methodological expansions. The following five chapters are more practical, explaining how to create the three kinds of maps, especially in the last three chapters: "Mapping Narrative Discourses", "Mapping Visual Discourses" and "Mapping Historical Discourses", providing a number of tips and tricks for engaging in situational analysis. For this she draws on examples from her own work or student projects, i.e., from the field of social studies of biomedical and nursing science and technologies. She also illustrates her point with images of such maps, which are very helpful to the reader and offer a very good guide for both beginners and advanced learners. [3]

2. Epistemological Backgrounds

As is generally known, grounded theory has two main approaches: that of Barney GLASER—defined as "empiristical" (STRÜBING, 2004, p.8) because of its roots in critical-rationalistic thinking inspired by Paul LAZARSFELD—and that of Anselm STRAUSS, who was inspired by pragmatist and interactionist thinkers. The ongoing debate between these two strategies and what this means for

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1 However, for the purpose of this review essay, I am ignoring the chapters where CLARKE attempts to apply situational analysis to three kinds of discourses: narrative, visual and historical. These chapters clarify in more detail the described epistemological roots and the approaches which need to be incorporated in order to constitute a new, broader kind of discourse analysis.

engaging in grounded theory has been discussed elsewhere (e.g., STRÜBING, 2004; MEY & MRUCK, 2007). For the purpose of this essay, however, it is important to know that CLARKE is explicitly following the STRAUSSian vision, because this strategy, so her argument goes, is the one that because of its roots in pragmatism has always looked around the postmodern turn in the road. The assumption that "truth is enacted" (STRAUSS & CORBIN, 1994, p.279) by the researchers' social and material contexts and must, as these contexts change over time, be seen as processual is thoroughly amodern: instead of applying a Cartesian style of reasoning that doubts the truth of everything, pragmatism teaches us to focus on the *practical consequences* in situations where truth is said to be found.[2] [4]

A translation of the concepts—situation, consequences, the processual nature of truth, the concurrence of action and thinking—into the social sciences was originally done by George Herbert MEAD[3]. His essential thesis was that personality and social action are formed through symbols—i.e., objects that have a concrete general meaning. However, the meaning of these symbols is reproduced, confirmed, and transformed in everyday interaction. The symbols' meaning in motion and, therefore, the processual and unstable nature of society can be studied by taking the situation as a unit of analysis. MEAD's student Herbert BLUMER who adopted the basic ideas of I and Me, Self and Mind, Identity, Symbols, etc. and merged it into symbolic interactionism, was the first who defined situation explicitly. According to him, a situation is the moment where people produce common meanings of symbols in interaction (BLUMER, 1973, p.84). [5]

Whereas BLUMER only analysed micro-processes, Anselm STRAUSS was also interested in macro-phenomena or what he called "social worlds/arenas". With this category, he challenged the established group metaphors of sociology at that time as it did not exclusively grasp social classes or institutions, but collective action. This, again, is retraceable to the pragmatists' assumption that the way things are done by groups enables us to make claims on collective ways of thinking. Thus, STRAUSS regarded it as very important to analyse "how social structures operate as 'conditions' under/through/over/in/around/within which social processes occur" (CLARKE, p.40). More importantly, STRAUSS (together with GLASER) invented a method that allowed social scientists to systematically analyse qualitative data in order to make claims on both structure and action. [6]

When it comes to situational analysis, CLARKE does not disagree with STRAUSS' enlargements of pragmatist social science and his suggested method(ology) in general; however, she wishes to expand on some of its basic features. It is especially grounded theory's attempts to ascertain something

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2   Take, for example, the frequently cited THOMAS and THOMAS quote: "Situations defined as real are real in their consequence" (1970).

3   Even though George Herbert MEAD regarded himself as a social behaviourist whose work was contradicting dominant psychological theories at that time, namely, behaviourism and psychoanalysis. MEADs' work became relevant for social sciences in the 1960s when it was used as an antithesis to Parson's structural-functionalist and anti-processual approach. The latter packed society into the four A-G-I-L boxes.

CLARKE calls the "basic social process" that prevents it from fully becoming postmodern. With that idea, CLARKE agrees with Kathy CHARMAZ, who also criticises that both STRAUSS and GLASER "write about their data as distanced experts" (CHARMAZ, 2000, p.513), thereby suggesting they keep an objective distance to the field. Both CHARMAZ and CLARKE find fault that, in grounded theory, the field is made smooth and pure; the results are presented as objective and rational; and it tends to represent a field with merely a few codes. Both seek to create a kind of grounded theory that avoids these "positivist underpinnings to form a revised, more open-ended practice of grounded theory that stresses its mergent, constructivist elements" (p.510). However, this leads to two different results: whereas for CHARMAZ a constructionist grounded theory "aims toward interpretive understanding of subjects' meanings" (p.510) CLARKE goes a step further: inspired by feminist and science and technology studies, her aim would be to emphasise "partialities, positionalities, complications, tenuousness, instabilities, irregularites, contradictions, heterogeneities, situatedness, and fragmentation—complexities" (CLARKE, p.xxiv). This is what CLARKE means by postmodernism and what she wishes to enable with situational analysis. Of course, there is more than one postmodern project going on in current social sciences; however, CLARKE assumes that gender, postcolonial, disability and science studies etc. have one question in common: "Who is authorized and not authorized to make what kinds of knowledge claims about whom/what, and under what conditions?" (p.xxv) It is not too difficult to see that this question is inspired by FOUCAULT. He delivers the first "new root" to grounded theory. [7]

By mainly focussing on the differences between gaze and perspective, CLARKE examines what BLUMER/STRAUSS and FOUCAULT would have agreed upon and where their divergences would have lied: most importantly, she sees a lack of reflexivity on questions of power in pragmatist thinking. FOUCAULT's work on the panopticon or the medical gaze, for example, used an accusatory language that basically showed how non-innocent the world is. In his analysis of disciplining practices, subjectivation techniques, or the production of intelligible bodies, FOUCAULT always came back to questions of power and, in his early work, he means this power to be purely negative, repressive and humiliating. When FOUCAULT became interested in the individual's agency, so CLARKE's thesis states, he came closer to interactionist thinkers, as they "have a long tradition of attempting to see the world from the perspectives of all those in the situation, including the underdog(s)—those with less (but never no) power" (p.58). Hence, CLARKE's synthesis is a combination of gaze and perspective, i.e., she wants to reflect questions of power, but does not want to do so exclusively: "Representing the multiplicity of perspectives in the situation, the various prisoners of various kinds of panopticons, 'minority' views, 'marginal' positions, and/or the 'other(s)'/alterity, also disrupts *representational* hegemony." (p.59) [8]

The second new root CLARKE inserts in order to push grounded theory towards the postmodern turn is the "nonhuman". She emphasises that pragmatist thinking had always done this, but failed to do so explicitly or with methodological reflexivity. By drawing on actor-network theory and its basic assumption that semiotics and materiality must be analysed symmetrically, and both human actors

and non-human actants have agency, she suggests using "the situation as the locus of analysis and explicitly includ[e] all analytically pertinent nonhuman (including technical) elements along with the human in situational maps" (p.63). In order to avoid essentialist reasoning, e.g. not to think in entities, she uses the metaphor of the hybrid and cyborg (HARAWAY, 1991). However, what exactly CLARKE means by avoiding thinking in entities, but instead engaging in relational reasoning, i.e., to focus on the qualities of relationships and how, say, humans and nonhumans permanently (re-)produce each other, should be explained in more detail for the benefit of the reader (see below on ordered situational maps and in the final discussion). [9]

The third strategy to push grounded theory around the postmodern turn is to enlarge STRAUSS' and CORBIN's social worlds/arenas maps into situational maps. CLARKE does so by mainly rethinking the relationship of condition and situation. As stated above, STRAUSS' innovation was to expand symbolic interactionism from focussing micro-events to also analysing its conditions. CLARKE, however, would destabilize that distinction. "*The conditions* of *the situation are* in *the situation.* There is no such thing as context" (p.71, her emphasis). Taking this into account, STRAUSS' and CORBIN's maps, which focus on individuals surrounded by family, organisation, community, region, nation, etc., appear attached to modernist reasoning; the world is assumed to be separable. There are indeed some analytical advantages in distinguishing between poles such as micro and the macro, individual and society, etc; however, according to CLARKE, the fundamental question is "*How do these conditions appear—make themselves felt as consequential*—inside *the empirical situation under examination?"* (2005, p.72, her emphasis). [10]

3. Doing Situational Analysis

As one can see in her critique of STRAUSS' and CORBIN's social worlds/arenas maps, the problem solely lies in the modernist thought-style behind them and not, indeed, in maps in general. On the contrary, CLARKE's very idea is to use maps in order to provoke new ideas, to help the researcher to interpret the field differently and more deeply. According to her, maps enable "relational analyses, [are] excellent 'devices to materialize questions' […they are] great boundary objects—devices for handling multiplicity, heterogeneity, and messiness in ways that can travel" (2005, p.30).[4] Thus, for situational analysis, she suggested three kinds of maps:

1. In *Situational Maps* all actors (individual or collective) and actants (elements, bodies, discourses) are mapped and then their relationships to each other analysed.

2. *Social worlds/arenas maps* keep hold of different "universes of discourse" (as defined by STRAUSS in 1978), i.e., they map collectives and "sites of action" (CLARKE, 2005, p.86).

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4 Ironically, she further regards it as positive that "[m]apping is a fundamental cognitive process— we can 'just do it' " (2005, p.30). A few years earlier Barney GLASER (1998, p.1) provoked caveats with exactly this "just do it"-quote (e.g. in STRÜBING, 2004, p.71)

3. *Positional Maps* are designed to grasp the sites of the stated and, more importantly, the non-stated positions taken in the field. [11]

In order to outline the layout of the three kinds of maps, I will use shortened sketchier presentations of CLARKE's maps. [12]

3.1 Situational maps

The goal of situational maps is to define ontologically different types of elements, both human (individuals and collectives) and non-human (objects, discourses, etc.), that are in the situation and quickly write them down as they occur. The production of this dirty and messy map is more or less a brainstorming exercise: "Who and what are in the situation? Who and what matters in this situation? What elements 'make a difference'?" (CLARKE, p.87). CLARKE emphasises that the symbolic meaning of these elements must not be forgotten. If, say, McDonalds was an element in your situation of inquiry, there might be different symbolic meanings clustering around it (e.g., global capital, foe of local cuisines, place for children's birthday celebrations, etc.). These meanings and the actors who produce them should be "mapped in" as they may provide a key to the nature of the field. Here the open question occurs, where should one stop?—to include and exclude elements from a map is, as LAW would remind us (2004), a political statement. [13]

Figure 1 gives a section of a situational map which CLARKE produced to capture the elements of one of her student's projects (which was on the status of nurses "emotion work" in a neoliberal health-care system). Obviously, it would be unfair to call this an ordered map; on the contrary, it is consciously kept messy as "too much order provokes premature closure, a particular hazard with grounded theory" (p.95). This is not to say that these maps should remain like this; rather, maps should be done in each phase of the study in order to achieve some theoretical sensitivity over time and make the research process more transparent.

Figure 1: Section of CLARKE's situational map on Nurses' Emotion Work (CLARKE, p.95) [14]

I do not focus that much on the tips CLARKE gives on how to produce these maps, but more on two other techniques that should be applied in situational mapping. Indeed, the first step is to make an ordered version of the mess, i.e., put the elements in the categories suggested below (CLARKE, p.90):

Individual human elements / actors	------	Nonhuman elements / actants
Collective human elements / actants	------	Implicated / silent actors / actants
Discursive constructions of individual and/or collective human actors	------	Discursive construction of nonhuman actants
Political / economic elements	------	Sociocultural / symbolic elements
Temporal elements	------	Spatial elements

Figure 2: The classification system for an ordered version of situational maps [15]

According to CLARKE, these ordered maps are tools to keep a general conspectus over the elements; it is not meant to overcome the messiness, but is instead used for practical reasons. However, while engaging in this analytical exercise, the ontological different elements are sorted into a conservative classification system. Perhaps, CLARKE anticipates this critique when she reassures with: "Some people may not even want to do the ordered working version. That's fine. It isn't necessary" (p.89). [16]

The second technique which should be applied in situational maps is more essential to CLARKE's project: in *relational analysis*, each element of the map should be put in relation to the others and the quality of the relationship should be

considered. "Literally, center on one element and draw lines between it and the others and *specify the nature of the relationship by describing the nature of that line.* One does this systematically, one at a time, from every element on the map to every other" (CLARKE, p.102, her emphasis). Figure 2 and 3 are examples from her research. In Figure 2, she centers on the "Nurses" element and draws relationships between it and the other marked elements; in Figure 3, she uses the same map; however, she focuses on "Nurse's Emotion Work/Caregiving".
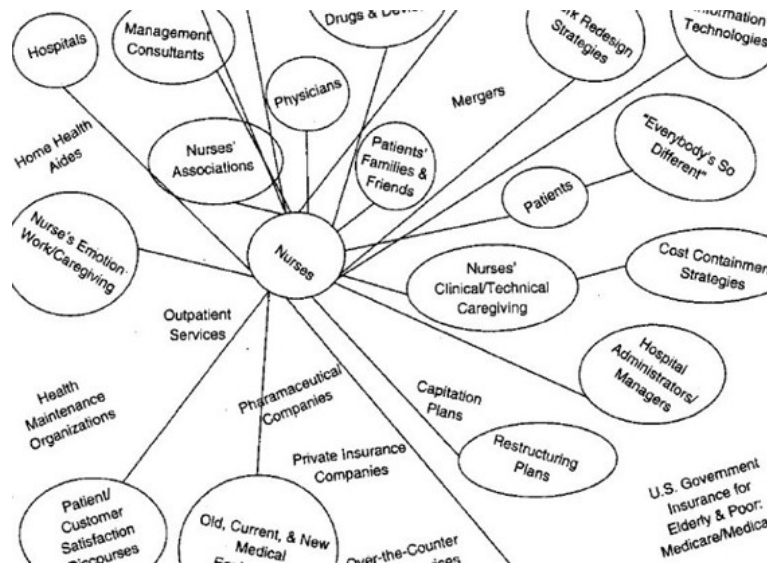

Figure 3: A section of CLARKE's relational map 1 (CLARKE, p.104)
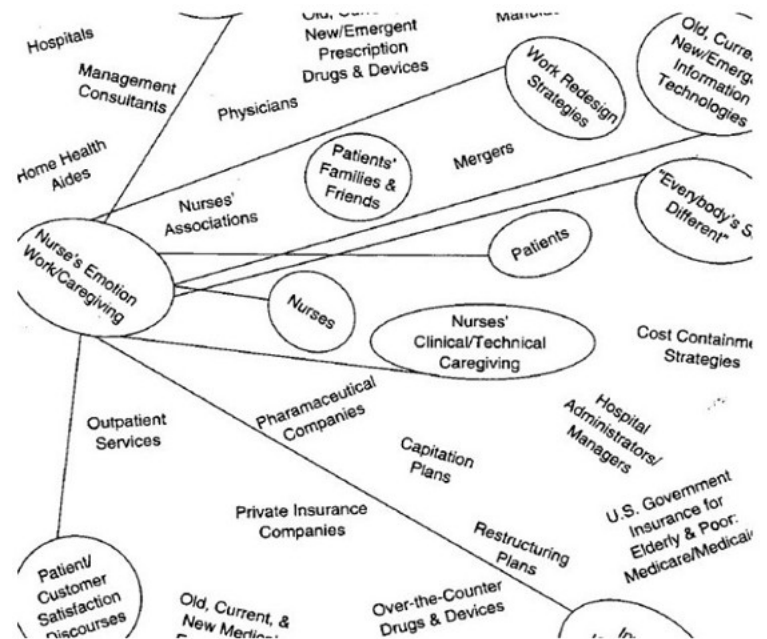

Figure 4: A section of CLARKE's relational map 2 (CLARKE, p.105) [17]

Relational analysis is a very important tool for CLARKE, as it suggests that "worlding" (HARAWAY 2003) does not happen because of the self-organisation

of single elements; rather, it is the intertwinement of the individual elements that makes the ongoingness. This is also similar to BLUMER's thesis that the meaning of symbols is permanently (re-)produced; that nothing is finished and closed forever, but reshaped in everyday interactions. Beyond that, HARAWAY and actor-network approaches take the materiality of symbols into account (as stated above). [18]

Considering this, it is striking how CLARKE applied relational analysis: she explains that the starting point should be to ask what nurses, to take her first example, "*had to say* about all the other elements" (2005, p.103, my emphasis). While this kind of analysis would provoke the researcher to analyse the material more deeply, I am wondering if "say" would mean the same as "enact", to repeat the term STRAUSS and CORBIN used in the above cited quote. Instead of asking what nurses had to say, one should think on how nurses are being (re-)constructed in that situation, by whom and, conversely, how nurses alter or stabilize other elements. I will go into this point in more detail below. [19]

So far, it should have become clear that situational maps are the ones that grasp all elements present in the situation and that these should be mapped in a rough and dirty way *in order to* represent the field's messiness. Furthermore, the technique of relational analysis is meant to reflect on the quality of relationships between the single elements. [20]

3.2 Social worlds/arenas maps

The difference between social worlds and social arenas is basically that worlds are narrower in scope—there are several social worlds (i.e., collectives which participate in the same discourse or, to describe it simply, a number of people acting together) within one arena. To make a social worlds/arenas map, then, means that one

> "enters into the situation of interest and tries to make *collective* sociological sense out of it, starting with the questions: What are patterns of collective commitment and what are the salient social worlds operating here? The analyst needs to elucidate which social worlds and subworlds or segments come together in a particular arena and why. What are their perspectives and what do they hope to achieve through their collective action? What older and newer/emergent nonhuman technologies and other nonhuman actants are characteristic of each world? What are their properties? What constraints, opportunities, and resources do they provide in that world" (CLARKE, p.110) [21]

Note here the enlargement of social worlds/arenas maps in comparison to the understanding of STRAUSS and CORBIN. One can see (as stated in the previous section) the insertion of the new, postmodern roots: FOUCAULT, actor-network theory and the abolishment of the internal-external dichotomy. [22]

The challenging task to perform this kind of analysis is to appropriately layout the size, locations, intersections of the social worlds within one arena (that also

means that each map is supposed to look different). CLARKE promises that this analytical exercise alone would help the researcher to get more engrossed in her/his material. Furthermore, the birds eye view over the situation helps the researcher keep in mind the broader field of interest. This also enables interpretation of data more easily or precipitates stumbling across ethnographic sequences that seem strange in comparison to the anticipated practices of the social world. This also means that social worlds/arenas maps (as with the other maps) are supposed to be reworked over time in order to achieve saturation at the end.
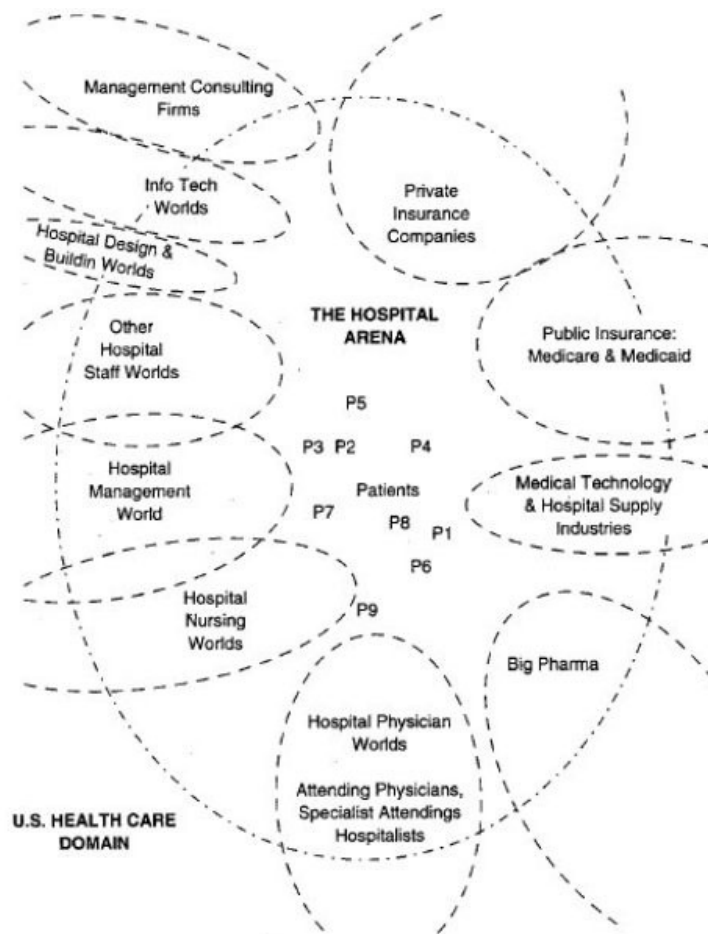

Figure 5: CLARKE's example of a social worlds/arenas map (CLARKE, p.118) [23]

In Figure 5 CLARKE's example of a social worlds/arenas map is shown, where the smaller circles indicate the worlds, the bigger one the arena. To take the above mentioned example of CLARKE's student, whose research project Figure 5 describes, this map helps to contextualise the nurses and define which social worlds cluster around the hospital arena—all on behalf of the patients. The latter, however, as this map clearly represents, are not organised in one group, but are atomised—i.e., there is no collective social action which solely comes from patients. Even though social worlds/arenas maps are capable of capturing these atomised individuals, it does not become clear what these maps do not grasp:

what, to take this example, about media? What is made invisible when we do not map them in? This, again, is an open question. [24]

The knowledge gained from social worlds/arenas maps facilitates the clarification of what is possible in that situation. Thus, to gather different present discourses and collective actions in a social world also means to enable conjectures on how things can further develop. It allows the researcher to make claims on interactions and power-relations and also includes actors that might have other perspectives. The basic benefit of social words/arenas maps, however, is that it makes the situation more abstract and locates it in the broader field of interest. [25]

3.3 Positional maps

Whereas situational maps and social worlds/arenas maps should enable the researcher to define elements and collectives present in a situation, positional maps reflect the different points of view taken within it. The challenge of this analytical exercise lies in CLARKE's suggestion to not consider individuals or groups when defining which positions are taken—which is also why positional maps are supposed to be seperated from situational and social worlds/arenas maps.

> "I am ironically arguing that articulating positions independently of persons, organizations, social worlds, arenas, nonhuman actants, and so on allows the researcher to ultimately, downstream, see *situated positions* better. Contradictions abound and positional maps enable us to see the broader situations, as well as specific positions, better." (CLARKE, p.127) [26]

Her emphasis on contradictions is crucial here: whereas linking positions to social worlds or individuals would oversimplify the matter and represent them as consistent entities, mapping the positions taken in isolation enables the researcher to create spaces between actors and positions. This possibly allows the researcher "to articulate doubts and complexities where heretofore things had appeared 'unnaturally' pat, sure, and simple" (CLARKE, p.127). [27]

Moreover, the example of her student's project clarifies the fact that CLARKE is not only interested in the positions itself, but she also stresses the importance of capturing the sites of these positions. CLARKE recommends applying a similar layout of positional maps as in the example below. The map should feature two axes; the description of extremes at each end of these axes defines the scope of the space in which positions can be articulated.
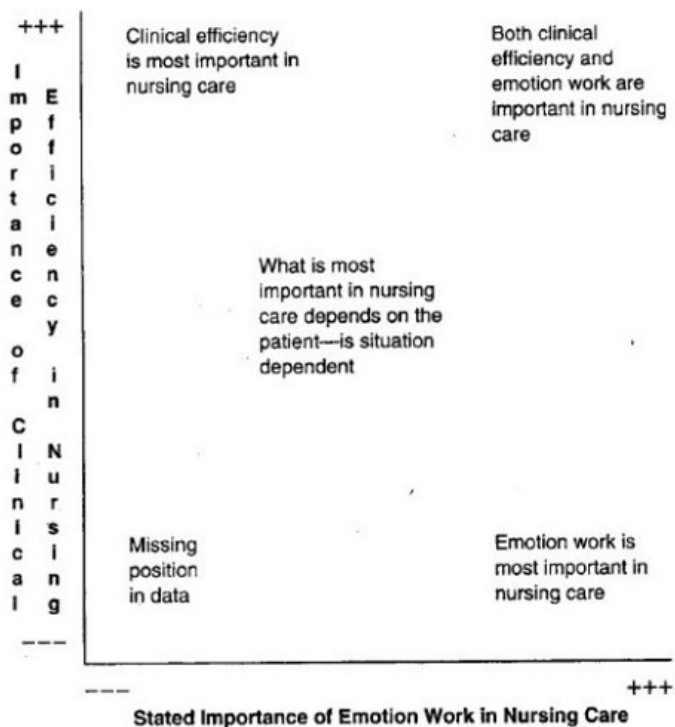
Figure 6: CLARKE's example of a positional map (CLARKE, p.130) [28]

While the extremes in this map vary from "+++ = more so" to "--- = less so" (CLARKE, p.129), this is not necessarily always a must. It is more important to note that maps like these not only grasp the range of positions, but also capture what is not articulated; this may then provide a key to understanding the nature of the situation. In further analysis, it may also become clear that some groups or individuals do not only stand for one position, but, on the contrary, they contradict themselves by taking in two or more point of views. This, again, is at the heart of what Adele CLARKE wishes to achieve with situational analysis. [29]

4. Discussion

Even though the presentation of CLARKE's three suggested maps was certainly rudimentary, I hope to have made clear what the essential intention of her project is: with situational analysis, she wishes to represent the field's messiness, contradictions and heterogeneities while provoking the researcher to reflect on this. Secondly, with this method she hopes that social scientists will allow themselves to be surprised by their own data and become researchers who reflect more on the categories that they have constructed and are more modest in their claims. While I do not disagree with this very sympathetic plea for more modest research and self-reflective science, I now wish to specifically focus on two points about which I have reservations. First, the definition of situation and second, as already stated above, the understanding of relational analysis. Note that, concerning these two points, I do not mean to evaluate CLARKE in terms of grounded theory positions; I am more concerned with her contributions to

qualitatively working social scientists in the science and technology studies (STS) realm. This is, indeed, a discourse with which CLARKE feels closely aligned and where she thinks she has delivered "innovations [which] may be central to some of the next generation of interactionist STS studies" (CLARKE & STAR, 2008, p.129). [30]

In the beginning of her book, CLARKE gives a short definition of situation. Influenced by pragmatist and feminist thinkers, mainly Donna HARAWAY, this definition reflected the situatedness of knowledge, truth, action, etc. It may be due to my my background in ethnographically working social science, but according to my understanding both definitions of situation describe more or less narrow spatial and temporal units. Take, for example, the above definition (see section 2 "Epistemological backgrounds") of situation in symbolic interactionism; it would be difficult to define when a situation begins and when it ends or where exactly it is and where it is not; however, a situation would be bordered, it would be the short moment where different actors meet, negotiate on symbols' meanings and, afterwards, reproduce or transform it. HARAWAY is not that far away from this understanding; as I read her, situated knowledge means that all kinds of knowledges, significantly the scientific ones, are produced by individuals or groups engaging at different sites and embedded in different networks. Knowledge production, then, is a relational process that depends on these networks, the means involved in their production, moral and ethical issues, etc. Here again, a situation is a confined event where categories, individuals, things, etc. are being (re-)made. [31]

What is my point? From an anthropologists standpoint it is striking that, in CLARKE's maps, we find elements, social worlds/arenas of and the positions taken in *the field*. For me, the question arises as to whether there is a difference between a field and a situation. The difference must lie in the scope: whereas a situation is a narrow temporal and spatial unit, e.g., an ethnographic sequence, the field is the overall object of investigation. This might lead to the assumption that I am engaging in the above mentioned situation-context dichotomy. However, I wonder whether the above cited, "there is no such thing as context" (CLARKE, p.71) quote necessarily means to move the focus away from confined events. To take her example of "emotion work" in a neoliberal health-care system: why map all elements, social worlds/arenas, positions that are in the *field* and not those from an ethnographically observed event? The elements might come from an observation in a hospital unit: it could be physicians, patients, nursing clothing, medical equipment, standard-documents, audit forms, etc. An ethnographical situational analysis, then, could be applied in order to demonstrate how each element in the situation is enacted. As stated above, this is a critique of a social scientist working ethnographically who is arguing that CLARKE might not engage enough in small-range analysis. More importantly, this kind of situational analysis would also fit with what interactionist thinkers and HARAWAY seem to have meant when they emphasise the importance of considering the situation. [32]

As mentioned earlier, questions also occur in the methodology of relational analysis. This is another important theme in CLARKE's project: "There is no one

right reading. All readings are temporary, partial, provisional, and perspectival—themselves situated historically and geographically. There are no essences—we are postessentialist" (CLARKE, p.8). However, can we really grasp "partial connections" (HARAWAY, 1991; STRATHERN, 1991) in relational analysis? To give an example: in her "Companion Species Manifesto" (HARAWAY, 2003), Donna HARAWAY writes about partial connections within herself: her roots growing up in a Catholic house, her being a loving dog owner, a daughter of a sports journalist, professor of biology, feminist and Marxist, etc. What becomes clear, then, is that individuals have multiple identities which are all inhabited in one person at the same time, albeit in varying degrees. In postessentialist thinking, it would be wrong to speak of "individuals" as this would ignore these multiple identities and the multiple ways of being, say, Donna HARAWAY. Basically, the problem with CLARKE's relational analysis is that it starts by collapsing the different elements of the situational map, i.e., partial connections, into singularity. It first looks at what elements exist and then analyses how these can be brought in relation to each other. It does not ask, however, how these different elements are being produced and how they condense themselves into elements. While I appreciate that CLARKE is, at least to my knowledge, the first person to deliver a method of how one could engage in analysing the quality of relationships, I am wondering whether she promises too much when giving this result. Her rhetoric is auspicious and the offered solution very elegant, however, it is not necessarily congruent with the epistemologies of the thought styles she uses. [33]

Finally, I would like to comment on CLARKE's utmost concern: to enable grounded theory to not see only one basic, but multiple social processes in the field. Whereas grounded theory looks for a formal theory, which CLARKE criticises as representing fields as too homogeneous by giving oversimplified results (think of, for example, STRAUSS' body-biography-trajectories), situational analysis aims to produce complexity and represent heterogeneity. What I do appreciate is that CLARKE dares to take the step which avoids thinking in entities while at the same time satisfying grounded theory's means of "quality control" (see STRÜBING, 2004): a theory should be grounded in empirical data; a technique like theoretical sampling is a tool to secure consistency and the abundance of the theory; memos are an instrument to enable the retraceability of how the researcher came to his/her results. Hence, even though problems might occur in grasping "partial connections" in relational analysing, it is, indeed, a method that enables the researcher to analyse relationally without becoming eclectic or, to express it positively, by considering the empirical data. The real advantage of situational analysis, then, is that it provokes researchers to come into the material more deeply and enables them to analyse practice or, how she calls it, the "doingness of life" (p.52). [34]

5. Valuation—A Useful Tool for Social Sciences?

With situational analysis, Adele CLARKE delivers both a methodology and a method that would push grounded theory around the postmodern turn. While postmodernism might, indeed, be more than how CLARKE defines it, she delivers a good instrument to make mess with method. In the end, situational analysis challenges the researcher to live in uncertainty and to, finally, be more modest and quiet when making claims on the nature of the field. [35]

In this review essay, I have almost exclusively focussed on epistemological backgrounds of grounded theory, the new roots CLARKE wishes to insert into these and the layout and idea of the three maps. I did not constantly emphasise, as she does throughout her book, that situational analysis is a method which can expand grounded theory. Her suggestion is to construct a model on the nature of the field by using grounded theory in order to later deconstruct it—or at least incorporate heterogeneities, complexities, contradictions, etc.—with situational analysis. This also means that the standard techniques of grounded theory should be applied to her suggested method. CLARKE wrote a lot about how important it is to write analytical memos while engaging in, for example, relational analysis; that one must not forget theoretical sampling when defining a social world/arena, etc. I consciously did not reflect that much on these standard techniques of grounded theory. [36]

The stated epistemological problems are marginal in comparison to the answers CLARKE gives on how to method(olog)ically grasp what John LAW called the "hinterlands" in "After Method"—i.e., "a bundle of indefinitely extending and more or less routinised and costly literary and material relations that include statements about reality and the realities themselves" (LAW 2004, p.160). In comparison to LAW, who solely asks a lot of (justifiable) questions, CLARKE gives answers which are based on an established method of social science. Situational analysis, then, is not only of interest to the subdisciplines of medical sociology/anthropology, social sciences research on the body, and science & technology studies—i.e., the subdisciplines Adele CLARKE is involved in—but also to a wide area of practice-oriented research projects which engage in qualitative research. [37]

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