



Call for Papers for the bilingual Conference (German/English): “Social Worlds, Arenas and Situational Analysis: Theoretical Debates and Empirical Research Experiences”

Social worlds and arenas theory as developed by STRAUSS (1978, 1982a and b) forms part of the ecological, relational tradition of the Chicago School. It is an essential component of grounded theory-based situational analyses (CLARKE, FRIESE, and WASHBURN 2018; CLARKE & STAR 2008). Social worlds are regarded as a “universe of discourse” (MEAD 1934), and their members collectively establish specialized bodies of knowledge pertaining to the solution of particular problems (STRAUSS 1993). Originating and often applied in research on organization, occupations, and professions, the theory was further developed in Science and Technology Studies (CLARKE & STAR 2008, p. 115; SCHÜTZE 2016a and b). The interactionist approach of social worlds must be distinguished from similar concepts such as lifeworld, everyday world, or community (SCHÜTZE 2016b: 89). In its take on collective action and through the notion of the arena as the site of negotiating controversies, it resembles approaches such as Bourdieu's field theory (DIAZ-BONE 2013).

Last but not least the conceptual appeal of social worlds and arenas theory lies in its scalability and adaptability to the object of investigation. It can be used to deal with socio-spatially and historically wide-ranging topics and questions as well as spatially and temporally more limited interaction situations. By taking a closer look at the formation of social order in its entanglement of discourses and practices (Strübing 2007), the pragmatist-interactionist theory tradition is highly compatible with poststructuralist and practice-theoretical approaches. Discussions of theory at these intersections are particularly fruitful, raising questions about practice-theoretical inspirations for pragmatist theory-building and about pragmatist inspirations for practice-theoretical work alike (DIETZ, NUNGESSER & PETTENKOFER 2017).

The aims of the conference are to debate the theory of social worlds and arenas and to collect researchers' hands-on experiences from working with situational analysis. Questions that may arise include the following:

- For which empirical phenomena is social worlds and arenas theory suitable? What can it offer for the analysis of non-professional collectives?
- How much empirical work is necessary to define a phenomenon as a social world? What is the relationship between theoretical presuppositions and empirical elaboration if social world theory is to be a “sensitizing” rather than a “definitive” concept (BLUMER 1954)?
- What are the advantages, but also the challenges, of empirically analyzing social worlds and arenas?
- How can relationships of social worlds and social movements and other social entities be grasped empirically and conceptually?
- How is the practice of situational analysis shaped by specific traditions of doing research, such as the German-speaking emphasis on hermeneutic traditions of interpretation?
- What distinguishes the conception of collectivity in the theory of social worlds and arenas? What significance do objects and materialities have in this context? What concept of the public sphere does this give rise to?
- How do the concepts of “boundary objects” and “boundary infrastructures” relate to this?

- To which conceptual stocks is the social worlds/arenas theory connectable? To what extent do basic assumptions such as relationality create connections to other theories and approaches (i.e. posthumanism, ethnomethodology, poststructuralism)?
- In what ways does social world and arena theory resemble and differ from other social theoretical proposals for the analysis of late modern societies, such as Bourdieu's concept of field or the Deleuzian and Guattarian concept of assemblage?
- How does the theory of social worlds and arenas appear in light of debates of i.e. practice theory or posthumanist approaches? What is the relationship to ethnomethodological and other interactionist theoretical perspectives?

This non-exhaustive list of questions is intended to invite theoretical, empirically-based, and methodological engagement with social worlds, arenas, and situational analysis. Based on working papers from the presenters, we will engage in an exchange, identify common themes and connections between different approaches, and aim to issue a joint publication. We welcome proposals for contributions from a variety of disciplines that address these and other questions about social worlds, arenas, and situational analysis.

Dates

The conference is hosted by the Department of Qualitative Methods and Interpretative Social Research at the University of Tübingen's Methods Center and will take place **online** on **April 6, 2022 (9am-15pm CEST) and 7 (9am-12pm CEST)**.

Deadline for work-in-progress papers is **March 15, 2022**.

Abstracts of max. 1000 words can be submitted until **October 30, 2021**: methodendozentur@esit.uni-tuebingen.de. You can also contact this address if you have any questions.

Conference Organizing Committee:

Dr. Renate Baumgartner (Center for Gender and Diversity Research, University of Tübingen)
 M.A. Anne Cress (Department for Political Science, University of Tübingen)
 M.A. Birte Kimmerle (Department of Nursing, University of Witten-Herdecke)
 M.A. Anna Reinhardt (Department of Educational Science, University of Osnabrück)
 Assistant Professor Dr. Ursula Offenberger (Methods Center, University of Tübingen)
 M.A. Tamara Schwertel (Research Training Group "Doing Transitions", Universities of Tübingen and Frankfurt)
 Dr. Olaf Tietje (Department of Sociology, University of Munich)

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