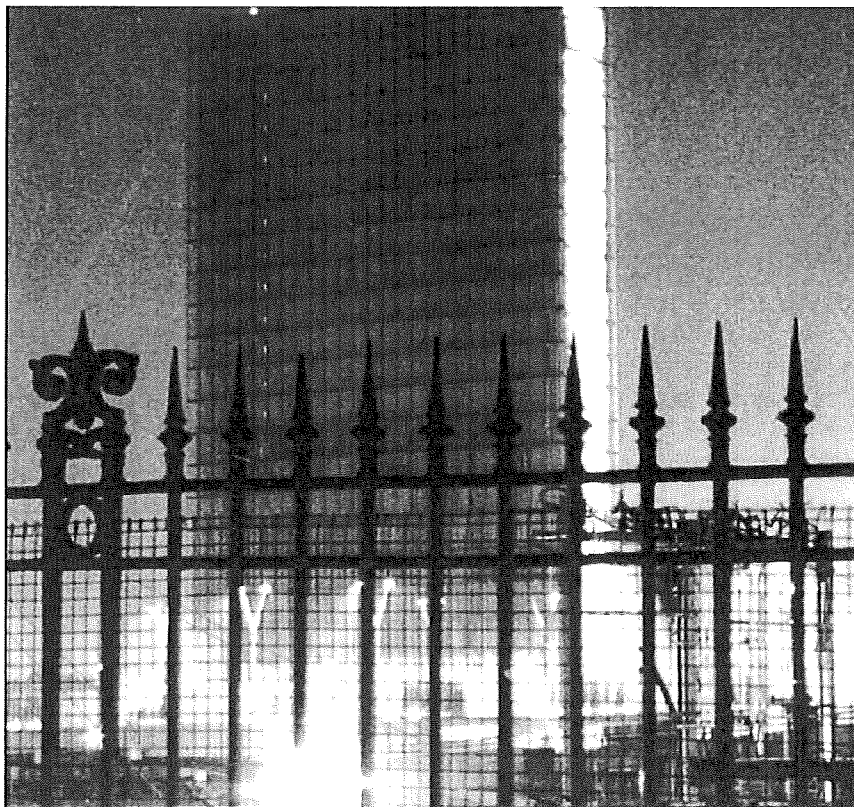




Perpetuating Entrepreneurship through Dialogue

- A SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONIST VIEW -

Chris Steyaert

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Between Research Paradigm and Practice

A Dialogical Account of the Research Methodology

Chapter three

Guideline. In this chapter, the methodological trajectory of this study is outlined with the help of the concept of the research circle. The research circle is used both in operational terms and in a metaphorical sense, and is initially worked out in *fragment 13*. This notion has been a great help to the author in the research process, and serves as a thread to guide the reader through this chapter. Using the research circle, the concrete research story can be structured and at the same time a number of more fundamental methodological questions can be situated. Throughout this chapter, the thesis is developed that a researcher in enacting the research project is caught between practical choices and paradigmatic positions. A methodological chapter becomes then an account as much of the pragmatics of the research trajectory as of the researcher's learning process in finding a paradigmatic positioning of his or her own. Therefore, this chapter will alternate between the practicalities and the basics of a qualitative research methodology and try to show how they are related. This dissertation thus forms part of a movement which is gaining increasing attention for qualitative research; it is intended as yet another voice to strengthen the interpretive approach in the entrepreneurship domain.

After presenting the research circle, the methodology of this research project is positioned within the qualitative research tradition and a qualitative methodology to study entrepreneurship is developed in *fragment 11*. Then, we travel along the research circle and explain how data generation (*fragment 12*), data interpretation (*fragment 13*), and the reporting of interpretations (*fragment 14*) were conceived and practiced. In *fragment 15*, the research trajectory is evaluated by engaging in a dialogue with different communities of knowledge.

Traveling along the Circle of Research

I can best describe the research of this doctoral study as having a circular trajectory. It has demanded a personal learning process that bears a strong likeness to 'going around in circles'. In the process I have constantly kept in mind T.S. Eliot's famous and insightful verse from Four Quartets: "We shall not cease from exploration/ And the end of all our exploring/ Will be to arrive where we started/ And know the place for the first time." Every exploration, including a scholarly investigation, moves in a circular way, having the same beginning and ending. As you explore and travel, you discover the space, you get a feel for the full expanse of the research, you delve into the material to be studied, you experience exploration. And you experience yourself. The point is not to understand what lies before you, but to watch understanding appear in what you do, and in what you do with what you do. The ultimate goal is to follow the path. The writer does not follow this path alone, but rather accompanied by the actors from the research and professional fields, each collaborating from their particular perspective and degree of involvement. I am using the idea of the 'circle of research' in both operational and metaphorical senses. The circle of research, seen operationally, offers a descriptive and pragmatic view of how a researcher acts while studying, while a metaphorical interpretation allows us to look at research activity as a circular event.

[181]

On the road

The route that I have followed for this doctoral study is singular, but not unique. Together with Eliot I say that the researcher starts out with only the foggiest notion of all possible options between which a choice could eventually be made. The route becomes clear by setting out upon it, as one simultaneously identifies which possibilities are available and which ones must be left to one side. As I have traveled I have become more and more intrigued by the possibility of fixing my chosen path firmly within the 'traditions' of qualitative research and linking that path with published research scenarios in order to frame the self-paved route within the habits of various research communities and to learn about the latter at the same time. It had become clear to me - or I felt a growing fear - that 'my route' might just end up running through quicksand. Hanging in the ether, like a carpet floating on the water. As a result,

in conflict, as if they had just discovered it (Glaser, 1992; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Strauss & Corbin, 1994).

This pragmatic/paradigmatic combination seems to me a necessity, in the first place as strengthening of the research process. I realized quite quickly the importance of making a detailed overview for others and keeping an eye on the proceedings when doing qualitative research. This was however not sufficient. The idea behind what I was doing seemed to me at least as interesting as the activity itself. For example, as I interpreted I became fascinated by the act of interpretation itself and what it entails. Similarly, during the interviews I began to consider more and more the very interview process and the complexity of this very unusual kind of conversation, when you stop to consider it, and the broad spectrum of possibilities offered by the interview. A cycle alternating between action and reflection was set up as a result. Standing still the better to move, and running hard to let off steam. Secondly, my chosen method constituted a break with my scholarly background, as I learned a new vocabulary, developed a different line of thought, and addressed a different aspect of myself, one with which I was not so familiar. "*I have been working to change the way I speak and write*", as bell hooks once formulated it (cited by Denzin, 1994). During my period of training I had become conversant with interviewing and fieldwork, but I kept running into a wall that seemed insurmountable as I hoped to process and streamline observation data and interview protocol. How could I learn to transfer the successes of such an impressive data-collecting system effectively to the interpretation and results phases? This was an acute and practical first question. Such an about-face brings with it a certain alienation. Alienated from yourself and your own words, from the university environment, where colleagues raise eyebrows, from the scholarly discipline that you had so confidently made your own. Freeing myself was one thing, but finding the way back, "*se retrouver à rapport des autres*" – it was for this that the methodological discussions were necessary, the reading in the philosophy of science salutary. I then enthusiastically bit off a second, implicit question: What should I call my new way? As a result of this process there grew in me a certain methodological ambition. To begin with, next to my contribution in terms of content, I wanted to add a methodological element in the area of data analysis that might perhaps be of operational use for other researchers. Secondly, there grew the fond hope of undertaking positioning-work around the possibilities of qualitative research thereby offering a basis or at least a starting point for other researchers, and thus creating a precedent. Although methodological (self-)formation is a necessary but not sufficient condition for producing a doctoral thesis, it can still be in part an end in itself. This explains the double aim of this methodological chapter. Firstly I shall describe and document the research process, making use of the circular research cycle and crystallizing it in a method of data analysis; that is,

I wanted to ground myself, not so much in the sense of laying a foundation, but by getting my bearings and connecting with a network of scholarly actors. Through this establishment of relations there arises the possibility of relativizing my own approach, and reducing its uniqueness. Was it not so that uniqueness fit an aesthetic context better than scientific logic? This was my starting point, parallel with the practical enterprise of a concrete study, which took me on an epistemological quest often leading far from research practice, but which – to continue in my grandiloquence – carried me on an intellectual journey and showed me new horizons such as that of epistemology and paradigm-thinking, while it brought me into contact with other texts, affording a new view of science itself. In this way I found myself in a two-fold story, a research story and a story about research: a story with a story on the side. And so I went on my way, having caught the methodological bug, tossed back and forth between practice and paradigm. A double bind. Probably blinded as well by the sophisticated discussions. However, the penetrating questions I've hit upon have been indispensable, having come into being through practical experience and more fundamental reading. I mean to answer a number of these questions in this chapter:

- is the distinction between the qualitative and the quantitative relevant for this study?
- how can I ground this study paradigmatically?
- according to which criteria can I judge this study? what does the quality of a qualitative study consist of?
- what role do I as researcher play in the development of scientific knowledge?
- what skills do I need for the job?
- how can a bridge be built between research and practice? how can I conceive the relevance of this study?

My growing interest received a further impulse from my immediate scholarly environment. Originally there was scant methodological and scientific-philosophical attention paid and new literature was scarce. For example, the 'grounded theory' – the approach I have used from the beginning and which had already appeared in 1967 – turned out to be largely unknown. Then the tide turned. Doctoral seminars around qualitative methods were set up in a European context, in the domain of entrepreneurship, and in my own department. A wave of publications broke (Silverman, 1993; Morse, 1994a; Cassell & Symon, 1994; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Erlanson et al., 1993) invading all areas of social research, from the study of aging (Gubrium & Sankar, 1994) right through to social work (Riessman, 1994) and nursing studies (Morse, 1991). Some twenty years later it appeared that Glaser as well as Strauss published on the subject of the 'grounded theory' – the zenith of which I thought had passed – separately and even

setting up meaning configurations. Secondly, I want to relate my way of methodological handling and thinking in the diverse academic and theoretical disciplines in which I have been working, such as entrepreneurship, psychology, social constructionism, and organizational science. It will thus be a report about the route followed, right down to the roadbed.

Describing the Circle of Research

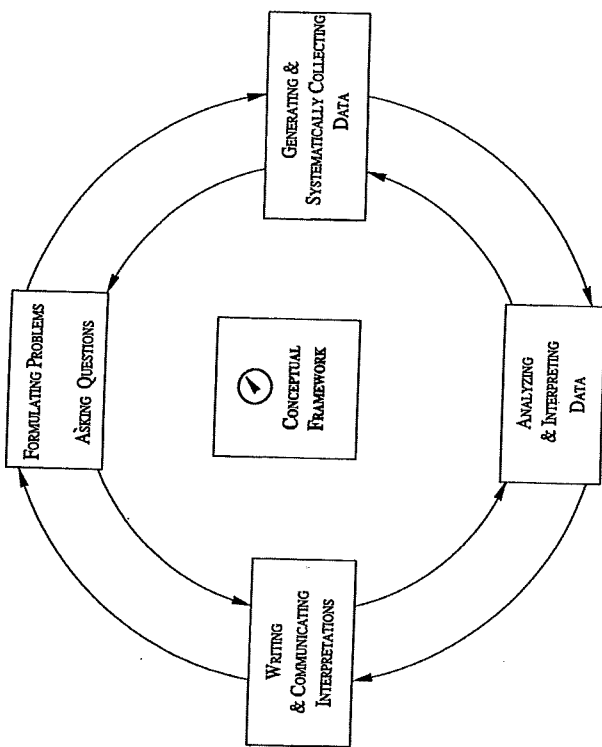
In operational terms

The research process, as shown in figure 1, can be operationalized as a circle with four anchoring points: posing a problem and formulating questions, generating and systematically collecting data, analyzing and interpreting the data, synthesizing and reporting the results. These anchor points are dynamically formulated. I have learned from Weick and Ely¹ about speaking and writing in verbs and in terms of movement. This leads us to four subdivisions which are constantly present: as a researcher your research question is never far off, you are always generating and collecting data, it is difficult not to interpret, and you are constantly wondering where this research will take you and how you can articulate it all. These are at the same time the four classic steps in the traditional approach to research work: problem formulation, data collection, data analysis, and a discussion of the results. There they are presented as distinct and separate phases (Huijtes & van Buuren, 1992; Morse 1994b²). I shall thus describe each step, each phase, and make mention of the special position of the conceptual framework as it has been accounted for in fragment 5 of chapter two. I want to emphasize however that the research process is dynamic and that the various steps are present simultaneously. The researcher spins a complex web between them all, moving constantly back and forth between each step, and making connections between them. Even though each step comes to the fore during the process, the other research elements play important roles in the background. No single step is ever completely absent. The research steps thus trade places as figure and ground. Consequently, it is at least as important to understand how phases relate to one another, how transitions are made between them, and how research essentially consists of forward and backward motion, as it is to discover the intentions and means of each separate phase.

¹ For the importance of verbs as claimed by Weick, see fragment 3, chapter one. The book by Ely and her colleagues, *Doing Qualitative Research*, is structured in six chapters, and makes consistent use of verbs in order to stress that researchers are in the first place acting: grounding, starting, doing, feeling, interpreting, and reflecting. This book is an exception on the market of (qualitative) methodological books in the attention it pays to the learning process of research, since research is always 'researching'.

² Cf. the format of articles in research journals.

Figure 10.1 The circle of research



During the phase of problem formulation the researcher looks ahead and tries to anticipate the results, planning how data will be generated, deciding how data can be analyzed, and formulating suppositions about the expected results. With the arrival of the data-collecting phase, interviews and observations are not merely instrumental for 'data collection': by making use of the (first) interviews, the researcher looks back at the formulation of the problem, exploring its range, and considering various meanings in the process. The problem formulation is adjusted, extended, and/or reformulated. During the following phases - respectively, data interpretation and data reporting - an analogous movement takes place, in which the problem formulation is further filled in and given depth. At the same time, the interviews are also used - forwards - in the initial processing and interpretation of data. The researcher tries out different ways of dealing with the data, and considers the different interpretations this could lead to. This first level of understanding has implications for the subsequent approach and the content of the interviews: when the researcher goes back to data collection the interview has to be changed. It thus becomes clear why data collection can never be considered a standardized operation - a new interview is never the same as its predecessor and the last interview is never just like the first - but is in fact a circular movement in itself.

The next phases may also be represented *mutatis mutandis* as circles of research within the circle of research. When the researcher reaches the phase of data analysis and interpretation, the data are viewed in terms of the problem formulation and the research questions in general, and in terms of the concrete interview situation and specific interview interventions in particular. However, here too there is a forward movement, as the researcher questions how formulated concepts and developing interpretations can be articulated and organized, and which forms of reporting are suitable. And there is more: during the interpretation phase there is a change in direction as the researcher begins to look increasingly at the problem formulation in a forward rather than a backward orientation: he or she reasons in terms of answers to particular questions, seeking to discover which affirmations will be formulated. As has been noted, this phase is a circle of research all on its own: it is not only an intensive phase of analysis and interpretation – and hard work – but also a step that has implications for each of the other three anchoring points. During the reporting phase the researcher looks forward, probes different audiences, becomes aware of the process of writing and how it offers room to construct an appropriate framework of interpretations. However, the researcher also follows the circle backwards, looks up again, and evaluates the particular approach for each of the steps, above all replaying previous texts which have been partly superseded, partly rediscovered, and partly retained. The confrontation between the two movements creates a tension in which beginning and end are more and more placed in relation to one another; an immense difference exists but so does an affinity, an overflowing, the understanding that beginning and end are in a sense tangential, that the cherished end-point would actually make an ideal beginning, giving in to the feeling that if one could do it all over again, one would know exactly how to proceed. The research path in the form of a circular movement is a holistic process in which each part only makes sense in relation to the others.

Within this circle the conceptual framework receives a special status. The framework travels (together with the researcher) along the circle of research and from it he or she gives form to each of the research steps. More specifically, it helps the researcher to formulate questions during interviews, indicating how they are to be handled and interpreted, and how these interpretations may be written down. All the while the framework is being shaped and transformed by the various research steps, as interviews are introducing new themes and new concepts emerge from the interpretation analysis. The 'end-point' of research will be a (generative) theory, a local understanding which gives the initial framework – which is based on 'pre-scientific knowledge' and/or theories from the literature – a jolt, and reforms it into a new, grounded, and socially constructed model (fragment 5, chapter two). The 'end' thus fades into the point of departure, an insight that Eliot suggested a good time ago. The dif-

ference and the quality of our understanding is a direct result of the way in which the research path is followed.

The circle of research exhibits many similarities to Weick's organizing process, essentially a process of sensemaking which I present in fragment 8 as a succession of 'enactment-selection-retention' and which arises from ecological changes. The generating of data may be seen as a process of enactment in which the researcher creates a context from which and in which his or her understanding can develop. Interviews are staged in specific settings (e.g. with various degrees of structure) within which dialogues may be carried on. In data collection and in interviews the researcher brackets a portion of the formulated problem. Asking a question is a direct form of bracketing, of indicating what the researcher does or does not find interesting. This implies further that research is in the first place research-action. Research activities offer the researcher experiences that call for sensemaking. During the analysis and interpretation of data the researcher considers what the experiences might mean and makes a selection from the possible interpretations on the basis of the formulation of the problem, the conceptual framework, or by making a new interpretative scheme. The reporting phase is essentially a retention phase during which a researcher ponders what he or she is going to retain and through which certain conclusions are discredited in order to keep the understanding open for as long as possible. The formulation of problems can equally be linked to 'ecological changes' in the form of evolutions and shifts which are social (e.g. the rise of high tech), organizational (e.g. the rise of networks), or scientific (e.g. the epistemological discussion of a new book).

Denzin (1994) describes a similar research process as a complex and reflexive one in which the researcher moves from the field towards the text and from the text towards the reader. These three activities – fieldwork ('writing' experiences), interpreting ('reading' experiences) and finally reporting ('committing' experiences to paper) – constitute the complete process of interpretation in which each of these acts is allowed to take turn in the research process. Interpreting is a textual phenomenon whereby, according to Denzin, the researcher creates successive texts during the process of studying: in the first place a field text consisting of transcripts of interviews, observations in note-form, and observations from the field; secondly, a research text based on note-form interpretations, analyses on filing cards or so-called 'vignettes', and working texts; and thirdly a series of public texts – publications being a form of public action – which are sometimes interim and sometimes finalized reporting in which a researcher passes insights back to the actors of the research situation, in both the social and the scientific fields, where the research originated in the first place. From this vision of the world as text it becomes clear that a researcher is 'always' writing – producing text – and not only during the reporting phase. The passing from one sort of text to another may then be seen as

the initiation of a dialogue between the researcher and the differences between the texts. Furthermore, it here becomes clear that the researcher completes the circle, arriving again at the starting point; namely, at the publication of articles, directed towards the various audiences that provided inspiration at the outset or served as an 'initial text' on the unfolding research theme.³

I have here made an initial presentation of the circle of research and shown in general terms how a researcher operates within it. Further discussion of the research methodology of this project will be situated within this circle allowing us to explore it in detail from the inside out. I have attempted to sketch out this circle in a descriptive and pragmatic way to supplement the models researchers are expected to follow - models which are often normative and in practice unattainable (cf. linear models). However, besides its operational significance, the circle of research is also a metaphor for observing research. Within interpretive research the circle of research becomes a hermeneutical circle which can help clarify the way in which the researcher is involved in his or her research activities.

The metaphorical sense

This is in fact not the first time that the qualitative research process has been represented as a circular movement rather than a linear progression moving from problem formulation through to reporting. Ely (1991) has represented the act of qualitative research as 'circles within circles'. In hermeneutics the 'hermeneutical circle' stands for the whole within which the understanding is involved: this understanding is built up as a circular movement between parts and whole (Oudemans, 1992). A part participates in building the whole and the part only derives meaning in relation to the whole, an idea already developed by Dilthey in the nineteenth century (Goossens, 1991). The circle is not vicious, but expands "*in ever-widening concentric circles*" (Oudemans, 1992, p. 127). An interpretation is made in the context of a particular expectation which is crucial for concrete interpretation and understanding (Oudemans, 1992). According to Heidegger (1962), every researcher brings 'pre-interpretations' and 'pre-conceptions' to any particular problem. The point here is that all researchers are prisoners of the circle of research: it is impossible to be free of interpretations or to remain 'purely' objective or free of values (Denzin, 1989). The hermeneutical circle circumscribes the research process (Denzin, 1989). A researcher doing interpretive work is always a part of what he or she is researching. Whatever the researcher does constitutes the research: "*Inquiry itself is the behavior of the questioner*" (Heidegger, 1962, p. 24). This is where understanding begins and

grows. How? According to Addison (1992) the hermeneutical circle makes a spiral motion from understanding to interpretation, and from there back to a deeper understanding, returning yet again to a more coherent, firmer, and more complete interpretation. When the researcher considers the interpretation to be finished, it is in fact not complete nor may the researcher leave the circle. After having entered the process of interpretation there is no getting out again and you remain part of what you were studying. Heidegger (Heidegger, 1962, p. 193) commented in this connection that "*what is decisive is not to get out of the circle but to come into it in the right way*." "The right way" means placing the researcher and the co-actors in the center of the research (Denzin, 1989). Phases in which one interrupts research do not entail abandoning the study or stepping out of the circle. The involvement never disappears, it only becomes dimmer as the researcher removes and distances him/herself from the vacated center. If the researcher chooses to return to the phenomenon, he or she will interpret from within the circle's orbit mindful of prior interpretations and insights.

The researcher's work is not one-sided, however. Understanding is a joint understanding. According to Heidegger, the researcher stands together with 'the subject' at the center of the research process. This creates a double hermeneutical circle and a dual system of interpretation: that of the people who tell me their story and that of my own interpretation of the story, an interpretation which in turn becomes another story. To the degree that I as researcher can empathize with the personal experiences of those interviewed, the two circles will overlap. Complete or quasi-complete overlapping is never completely possible, but this need not preclude such a possibility - such a hope, as Denzin puts it (1989, p.54). No discouragement, says Denzin; but also, no necessity, say I. Keeping a distance and a watchful eye over the difference between differing perspectives can heighten the richness of differing interpretations and do justice to the particular qualities of 'insider' and 'outsider' perspectives. A blending of visions can work counterproductively, making one of the two visions superfluous. Here, I am distancing myself both from the idea that a researcher imposes his or her world for a cycle of experience from everyday life, and from the notion that he or she remains completely open to the actors from the research field. In the first case there is a danger of ethnocentrism (Czarniawska-Joerges, 1992), of reification, and especially of the negation of the social character of the social events in which one is interested: "*It is not open to him (the researcher) to arbitrarily impose his own standards from without. In so far as he does so, the events he is studying lose altogether their character as social events*" (Winch, 1958, p. 108). Thus a researcher cannot move beyond the terms in which the actors interpret their own environment. This is in fact a golden rule of social research, since actors themselves assign meaning, interpret, and describe themselves (Hughes, 1990, p. 126; also Winch, (1958)): "*actions can, therefore, only be identified through the*

³ In my case, I can point to the public discussion around *Flanders Technology: Derde Industriële Revolutie* (third industrial revolution), a research proposal presented to the Dienst Programmatische Wetenschapsbeleid (Department of Scientific Policy Programming) as a first, limited bibliography of entrepreneurship.

actor's own concepts in accordance with the actor's view of the world." That particular world, and how it is translated, is the focus that the researcher strives for, sometimes collides with, and in any case only with difficulty makes an abstraction of. "When the theorist approaches social reality he finds the field pre-empted by what may be called the self-interpretation of society. Human society is not merely a fact, or an event in the external world to be studied by an observer like a natural phenomenon... it is a whole little world, a cosmos, illuminated with meaning from within by the human beings who continuously create and bear it as the mode and condition of their self-realization" (Hughes, 1990, p. 126). It is simply not possible for the researcher to identify completely with that world, even if it is desired, since the universes and vocabularies of researcher and actors are partially separated and not immediately bridgeable. Van Maanen and Kolb (1985, p. 27; cited by Bryman, 1989) go so far as to warn against making a principle of the idea that both circles can coincide: "The fieldworker's understanding of the social world under investigation must always be distinguished from the informant's understanding of this same world. To argue that we have become part of the worlds we studied, or that we understand them in precisely the same way as those who live within them do, would be a grave error." A researcher maintains a personal perspective which is developed in interaction with the field, during which process personal concepts may be freely drawn upon. Furthermore, every sensemaking cannot simply be selected from the field or transplanted into the academic world without falling into the trap of exoticism (Czarniawska-Joerges, 1992). I prefer the image of the two circles existing side by side in an open tension: researcher and actors construct interpretations in interaction with one another and can offer different interpretations.⁴ This view is in agreement with Gadamer's approach (1975) which conceives of interpretation as a dialogue and a collision of horizons. An interpretation is only possible because we as actors participate in a particular time and culture. At the same time we only interpret the past or a previous experience from the present moment in which we are plunged. The meeting of a text from a distant or less distant past has its beginnings in the horizon of the current reader and his or her own pre-understanding - *Vorverständnis* - in which other texts play a role (Goossens, 1991). A tension thus arises between the *Vorverständnis*, necessary for reaching an understanding, and the critical treatment of this *Vorverständnis* which must be 'surpassed'. This implies that "interpretive understanding is not reconstructing the past in and for the present, but is 'mediating' the past in and for the present" (Hughes, 1990, p. 138). Meetings between individuals, between researchers and actors for instance, are thus also meetings between their horizons, an 'intersubjective fusion of horizons' where the limited visions of each is broadened by the historically anchored perspective of the other in a continuous process: "The process of transcending our own historicity, our own partial understandings in broader and broader horizons goes on

⁴ In chapter five, fragment 23 I shall present a vision, based on the ideas of Bakhtin, which considers the difference in perspective to be essential to a creative dialogical development.

in an endless process" (Hughes, 1990, p. 139). Gadamer thus also interprets the hermeneutical circle as a continuous process of hypothesis and revision through a dialogue of interpretation. Gadamer's hermeneutical circle is wider than Dilthey's (Goossens, 1991, p. 95) since it involves a mediation of the received text and one's own text, the other's understanding and one's own. Our doubling of the circle of research fits this process nicely. For Dilthey and especially for Gadamer, language plays a major role because experience cannot be separated from the language we use to express it. Using language we enter into a dialogue, and through dialogue we develop our own horizons: "So to know a language is to be open to a dialogue with others that can transform and broaden the horizons from which we begin" (Hughes, 1990, p. 139). Interpretive research is then not the establishment of truth on the basis of analyzed data on 'research objects' with an aim to increase knowledge, but the development of a plurality of truths through dialogue with these research objects, whereby new insights need not drive out old ones (Goossens, 1991). In this way, tradition and innovation may confront one another, and Gadamer comprehends Heidegger's idea that the goal is not to quit the hermeneutical circle: thanks to historicity both interpretations cannot coincide (Oudemans, 1992). In operational terms this means that not only the researcher but also the actors can proceed along the circle of research and further develop their 'horizons'. The added value of research may thus be found in the initiation of a dialogue, rather than in the assuming of a vantage point. There are a number of scenarios concerning the manner in which the two paths are connected and how the dialogue may be entered into. Merely by conducting research, the researcher sets off on a journey in the company of others, but he or she can apply more explicit forms of concerted research such as co-inquiry and participatory action-research. I shall discuss these scenarios later. It should here suffice to note that the procession through the circle is a relational event and that the researcher's relationship with the research context is a crucial one.

Positioning a Qualitative Research Methodology in the Study of Entrepreneurship

In this fragment, I shall establish the position of qualitative research methodology within the methodological habits of entrepreneurship research, which has only a limited appreciation of qualitative research methods and for which we will suggest alternative paths. I will first review the status of qualitative research in general, as it will become clear that (qualitative) research methods are not bound to disciplines. This more general positioning can then be helpful in outlining a research methodology for an entrepreneurial study.

The Status of Qualitative Research

Up until now I have used the term 'qualitative research' to describe a general tendency of the research approach in this study, without providing either a clear description or any sort of positioning. In this paragraph I shall try to situate this collective term. The title of this paragraph is meant in two senses. In a neutral sense, I am presenting my version of the situation in which the research method called 'qualitative research' now finds itself. This is not really a *status questionis*, for this was in fact not even possible in the 1600 manuscript pages which served as the basis of Denzin and Lincoln's prestigious handbook (1994). It is rather the concrete situation such as it has played a part in the background of this research project. Underlying it all is the tangible question of whether qualitative research has any sort of status at all in terms of a societal position and a scientific standing, or whether it is just second class work. I am always reminded of what Mintzberg himself wrote in connection with his own doctorate: he was told that he had not done too badly but was encouraged to get on with some serious work – and qualitative research was not considered to be a part of it. A bit of a shock, that. Something you are likely to encounter more than once. This brought up the question for him of whether it was more valuable to attempt a case study of one organization or a questionnaire study of around 200 firms. I have also never forgotten his answer. This anecdote typifies the 'inflammability' of the status of qualitative research and the often misplaced low opinion with which it is viewed.¹ Such attitudes may often be traced back to "a *prejudgment*, based on a *conception of social science*

¹ Similar anecdotes can be found in Ely (1991) and Cassell & Symon (1994).

where qualitative research is expelled or relegated to a secondary position" (Kvale, 1994, p. 2). Equally illustrative is Kvale's article (1994) in which, even though he realizes that "the discussion may be outdated philosophically and of little interest theoretically", he still finds it necessary to refute the ten standard objections to qualitative research interviews. Despite the fact that *The Case for Qualitative Research* has been written for quite some time (Morgan & Smircich, 1980), qualitative research remains stuck in a spiral and must continually defend its own values and logic.

The negative image suffered for so long by qualitative research is a result of its always having been compared with the quantitative approach. Three tendencies are in evidence in the debate surrounding the comparison of the two methods. Firstly, no one seems to be able to escape the *mêlée* to get some perspective on this question, but at the same time, neither is anyone able to settle the debate. For some - chiefly those who approach the issue from an epistemological standpoint - the two positions are like fire and water. Others speak of an exaggerated distinction, since in practice they can in fact be characterized as easily combined. Some have strong objections to the somewhat shadowy position of qualitative research, and invest a great deal of energy actively assailing its position. Still others find this shadowy position neither useful nor necessary and have left the whole debate behind them, but encounter great difficulties getting their work in qualitative research financed or published. All in all, the whole discussion around the relationship between the two approaches seems to be stuck in an endless sequence (Hetebeij & Wardelker, 1986; van Ijzendoorn & Miedewa, 1986; Fetterman, 1988) in which the debate has a number of times been considered closed (Smith & Heshusius, 1986; Smith, 1994), superseded (Reichardt & Cook, 1979; Howe, 1988), or as an object to be deconstructed (Hammersley, 1992), only to be explicitly or implicitly reopened (Kvale, 1994; Reichardt & Rallis, 1994). Everyone has gotten into the act, but it has all actually grown quite tiresome. My point of view is that the debate is rather crucial and must therefore be carried on, but that it in no way should paralyze the practical work of the researcher. In a basic sense there is no way to settle the debate, and 'qualitative research' deserves to be recognized as a kind of research with its own possibilities and limitations. In a pragmatic sense, researchers need options when setting up research projects, for, once one chooses qualitative research, there always arises the question, How do I handle this situation in concrete terms? It is noteworthy that now that there is an extensive qualitative handbook that summarizes and expands upon the underlying principles, more and more pragmatic versions are appearing on the market: Cassell and Symon (1994) have published a practical guide, while Ely and company (1991) have brought out an experience-oriented methodological book which a researcher can use when comparing his or her daily experiences.

Secondly, the distinction between qualitative and quantitative research is made in order to bridge over other related distinctions (Frank, 1994; Hamilton, 1994), such as *erklären* versus *verstehen*, theory-examining versus theory-generating, nomothetic versus idiographic, causative versus interpretive, objective versus subjective, closed versus open, random versus theoretical sampling, observer versus observed, and so on. The general distinction between qualitative and quantitative thus masks a number of important nuances. Further on this study I shall working with the distinction between explanation and understanding.

Thirdly, Bryman (1989) has remarked that in explaining differences between qualitative and quantitative research there is an epistemological as well as a technical account which can be observed. Cassell and Symon (1994, p. 7) together characterize quite well how qualitative research essentially differs from quantitative, but they do indeed mix paradigmatic and pragmatic arguments: "*A focus on interpretation rather than quantification; an emphasis on subjectivity rather than objectivity; flexibility in the process of conducting research; an orientation towards process rather than outcome; a concern with context - regarding behavior and situation as inextricably linked in forming experience; and finally, an explicit recognition of the impact of the research process on the research situation.*" The same applies to Denzin and Lincoln (1994) who suggest that quantitative and qualitative research are doing the same things differently, in respect to using positivism, accepting postmodern sensibilities, capturing the individual's point of view, examining the constraints of everyday life, and obtaining rich descriptions. We shall retain this distinction between the paradigmatic and pragmatic levels as essential to the further characterization of our research approach.

A Closer Look at the Status of Qualitative Research

It may be generally agreed that qualitative research has only with great difficulty acquired some sort of status. I believe there are two reasons for this. A first factor has to do with the relationship between qualitative research and disciplines, and a second points to the distinction between a paradigmatic and a pragmatic level.

A qualitative research method, not bounded by, but still anchored in its discipline

Qualitative research has evolved into a collective name for a richly varied family of terms, including interpretive anthropology or sociology, hermeneutics, cultural studies, phenomenology, symbolic interactionism, ethnomethodology, the case studies method, ethnography,

deconstructionism, participating observation, and clinical studies (Denzin, 1989). And this list is by no means complete, for Tesch (1990) counted 46 terms which are applied to some form of qualitative research, while Patton (1980) lists ten theoretical traditions. Such long lists are a result of specific contributions made by the various disciplines in the social sciences. This has led to an enormous diversity in methods and approaches - a diversity which has transcended the disciplines themselves. However, we may ask whether this extended repertoire does not simply remain on the level of theoretical potential. Even if the researcher is not as such impeded by disciplinary limitations in the choice of a certain design or method, there remains nonetheless a disciplinary anchoring which he or she must take into account. It is clear that the status of qualitative research as described above, and the evolution it has undergone, differ within the various disciplines in the social sciences. Within psychology, for example, in contrast to sociology and pedagogy, the need for qualitative methods has been felt less, because of the presence of the experiment as the most important research tool - which for epistemological reasons has been strongly defended. Furthermore, methods that are effective within one discipline are not directly transferable to another. The sort of ethnography which in anthropology has developed into a broad spectrum of often widely divergent approaches (Hammersley, 1992), does not automatically function the same way in an organizational context. We shall presently examine a form more in keeping with this study: organizational ethnography. In the following paragraph, in discussing our own research approach, the tension between what is habitual in the domain of entrepreneurship and the alternatives that appear possible in other disciplines will also come into play.

The tension between pragmatic and paradigmatic accounts

Besides Bryman (1989), Smaling (1987, 1994) has stressed the distinction made between paradigmatic and pragmatic arguments concerning the factors which influence the choice for and the design of a qualitative research project. Paradigmatic elements concern preferences which are related to ontological, epistemological, ideological, metatheoretical, and ethical views, while more pragmatic elements concern the concrete situation of the research project, including the object of research, the problem formulation, and the competencies of the researcher. On a paradigmatic level, there is, parallel with the discussion of the relationship between paradigms and theoretical approaches (fragment 2), a debate on the relationship between paradigms and research methods. Although research methods may not be coupled to one particular paradigm, researchers espousing certain paradigmatic approaches seem to have preferences for certain methods and for the way they conceive of them (Morgan & Smircich, 1980; Gioia & Pitre, 1990; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Such paradigmatic differentiation is useful for ordering the mix of

research approaches and data collecting methods (Jacob, 1988 or Gherardi & Turner, 1987) which a researcher can use to become better oriented². It should nevertheless be noted that it is impossible for the researcher-at-work to operate completely within the prevailing distinctions. A concrete study continually undermines and surpasses a theoretical taxonomy or a paradigmatic arrangement, however exhaustive and clear it may be. It is my experience that the tension that the researcher experiences between paradigmatic and pragmatic possibilities and limitations is crucial in understanding how a study proceeds in practice. There is too little attention paid to this situation in the literature, and the two are all too often de-linked.

To me, learning to understand this distinction as a crucial tension and to deal with it constructively, has been important in the dynamics of my own project. According to Smaling, there is no one-to-one relationship between a paradigm and a method since paradigms are underdetermined by methods and, vice versa, methods are underdetermined by paradigms. He defends a perspectivist position regarding methods and paradigms, underlining the idea that no method nor paradigm has any absolute value and offers only one of the possible perspectives. The vision which Smaling seems to claim involves approaching methods and paradigms as commensurable, defending a kind of 'anything can be related to anything' world. But pragmatically, it remains difficult to see how any method can be related to any paradigm during research practices. From our research experience, keeping the tension between paradigm and practice has seemed crucial in the evolution of the research project. A researcher is then recommended to use his or her wits to keep a balance between the two. From a paradigmatic point of view, this has meant that I have had to find a middle way between the various forms of qualitative research and to learn their peculiarities and differences through my field experiences and conversations with colleagues. In this way, relativization and critical evaluation of the grounded theory approach are consequences of the exchange between the systematic application of this method and an engrossment in hermeneutical texts on textual analysis. From a pragmatic point of view this has in part meant learning a different form for structuring data than the usual factor or variance analysis, and developing a more interpretive attitude in order to 'read' experiences and texts. The most important lesson has however been to learn how to deal with the tension between a paradigmatic arrangement and a pragmatic operation. As a researcher one tries to 'steer' a dialogue between paradigmatic suggestions and pragmatic opportunities. In particular, the contexts in which the researcher is involved set the scene for dealing with this tension and form the concrete outline of the project. There is no

² A certain transdisciplinary ordering can be applied to this array by considering it from the historical standpoint of a number of successive periods (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). In the historical evolution of qualitative research we may distinguish five phases which span the twentieth century and which remain directly or indirectly in operation: the traditional period (1900 - 1950), the modernist or golden phase (1950 - 1970), 'blurred genres' (1970 - 1986), the crisis of representation (1986 - 1990), and the postmodernist movement (1990 on).

absolute commensurability possible which expresses the idea that science itself is a social construction where researchers have limited free choice, emerging from their own creative acts and from their accounts of their social environments. This means that the dialogue between paradigm and practice cannot be held on a theoretical level but needs to be contextualized in the course of the research project, as we shall document in the different 'stages' of our research trajectory (fragments 12, 13, and 14), after having integrated this discussion into the entrepreneurship domain.

Opening Up the Qualitative Methodology in Entrepreneurship Research

Research methods in entrepreneurship

Methodological practices of a young discipline: beyond 'exploration'

According to Paulin, Coffey and Spaulding (1982), 80% of the research in entrepreneurship is exploratory. The general research strategy is the use of sample surveys (64%). The general research design is realized by descriptive and case studies (52%). Data collection techniques consist of questionnaires (35%) and interviews (48%). They concluded that more formal research on entrepreneurship has been done than had been anticipated. While the earlier work tended to use non-methodical, contemplative, or anecdotal methods, the trend towards more systematic, empirical methods has begun. Although more explanatory and correlational designs are being employed, exploratory sample survey approaches, descriptive or case study designs, questionnaires, and interviews are still the predominant methodologies in the field. Churchill and Lewis (1986) came to a comparable conclusion in their review of the research methodology: "*An examination of the methodologies utilized in the research studies, shows a preponderance (77%) of observational and contemplative theory-building and surveys, and a few (less than 4%) field studies or examples of computer modeling.*" Wortman, who reviewed the American (1986) and European (1991) entrepreneurship research, also concludes in a similar vein: "*Throughout these studies, the use of mail questionnaires and interviews with structured or nonstructured schedules is the overwhelming type of research methods used by most researchers.*" Furthermore, he complains about the lack of sophistication in the statistical data analyses, and this seems to differ little for the United States, Canada, and Europe.

This short review indicates that most research is taken to be on an exploratory level. While there is agreement to go beyond this exploratory stage, there is far less agreement on how to realize this in the practice of research. There is a call for more causal studies and for

more advanced statistical analysis-methods, as well as for elaborating more longitudinal research (Van de Ven, 1992), but a similar lack of paradigmatic awareness can be noticed on the methodological level, as we assessed this for the domain in general in fragment 4. Many alternatives formulated seem to follow a tendency to go towards a mode of explanation and prediction, in line with a positivist or functionalist paradigm. The possibilities of qualitative research have received very little attention (Kent, Sexton & Vesper, 1982; Sexton & Smilor, 1986a), enjoying a status similar to what we suggested for the social sciences in general. Although many interviews and case studies are used, they are mainly undertaken from a positivist perspective and boast a one-sided appreciation.

I would like to suggest that the distinction between exploring and explaining leads to a false choice, and that there is at least a third way: the idea of science as 'understanding' (*verstehen*) which fits an interpretive paradigm and in specific a social constructionist perspective. While exploratory and explanatory research have often been equated to qualitative and quantitative research (Duncan, 1979), this distinction between exploration and explanation has still been rejected many times before in other disciplines, and there is no reason to doubt such arguments within the field of entrepreneurship. An example is Silverman (1985), who has stated that "*both approaches (interactionism and ethnomethodology) reject the positivist assumption that descriptive concepts are simply a first stage towards the test of explanatory hypotheses [...] but are, in themselves, adequate scientific explanations.*" Similarly, Halfpenny (1979) earlier argued that "*in contrast with the sharp distinction between concepts and explanatory hypotheses within the positivist approach, the way in which explanation is achieved in the interpretivist approach is by understanding the actions and interactions of respondents, by virtue of grasping and comprehending the culturally appropriate concepts through which they conduct their social life.*"

I think that considering qualitative research from an interpretive perspective which sees knowledge of entrepreneurship as a form of 'understanding', can lead à la fois to revaluing the full potential of qualitative research methods and diminishing the unsatisfactory evaluations of the 'exploratory' qualitative research approaches so far. This suggestion is in line with a more recent tendency in which qualitative research methods are considered as 'real' alternatives in the entrepreneurship domain. The qualitative silence in the eighties seems almost abruptly to come to an end when Churchill (1992, p. 593), in outlining future research needs, calls 'ethnography' one of the two most promising research methodologies for entrepreneurship research in the 1990s. Therefore, I would like to suggest that the interpretive research approach can be an important alternative methodology in the entrepreneurship domain, which is in keeping with the recent rise of the interpretive voice in the research of entrepreneurial scholars.

The interpretative 'voice' in entrepreneurship research

Curran and Burrows (1987, p. 8) are among the first scholars who have argued in favor of an ethnographic approach to the study of the small business owner and entrepreneurship: "Overall, therefore, what emerges from this evaluation of studies of the entrepreneur-owner-manager is a clear picture of the exhaustion of conventional theoretical approaches and methodologies. Even where the theoretical approaches show signs of sophistication, the methodological support is inadequate in the reliance on relatively simple, 'unit counting' strategies linked to an epistemological position which assumes causalities are mainly established through some quantitative interpretation. From time to time, qualitative approaches have been employed, most frequently to illustrate conventional studies and, even more rarely, there have been occasional attempts to shift to alternative paradigms. The latter rest on the notion that the study of social phenomena necessarily requires a distinctive epistemological and methodological approach which makes human meanings, intentions and actions essential to the generation of an adequate interpretation of a given social phenomenon." Undertaking such a paradigmatic shift, Curran and Burrows choose for ethnography and argue that "the overall aim of an ethnographic approach to small business research, would be to produce a descriptive and 'explanatory' analysis of the historical, situational and biographically mediated interpretations offered by entrepreneurs and small business owners of their economic involvement and its significance for themselves and the wider society" (1987, p. 10). Peterson (forword in Stewart, 1989) also realizes that the use of case studies asks for a methodological and paradigmatic shift because "casual grounded observation seems to be naïve, when it is not based on established ethnographic techniques and when it is not based on holistic paradigms."

Thus, a possible methodological shift in studying entrepreneurship should be co-aligned with a change in paradigmatic approach. This is in line with our argument that practice and paradigm are in tension with each other. The suggestion of Morgan and Smircich (1980) that research methods should be weighted in terms of their ontological, epistemological and human assumptions, is in our opinion valid for entrepreneurship as well. Their argument that "a preoccupation with methods on their own account obscures the link between the assumptions that the researcher holds and the overall research effort, giving the illusion that it is the methods themselves, rather than the orientations of the human researcher, that generate particular forms of knowledge" can directly be applied to the entrepreneurship domain: the discussion of research methods is isolated from more fundamental issues and solving methodological problems is seen as a mainly technical problem, without any need to debate the role which the researcher plays in the conduct of the research. Such a paradigm shift towards a more interpretive methodology, using ethnography, grounded theory, case-studies, and in-depth interviews, can recently be noticed in doctoral dissertations (Stewart, 1989; Brytting, 1991; de la Ville, 1995), and in research colloquia on qualitative methods in the field of entrepreneurship (Strasbourg, Copenhagen, Dallas).

A highly interesting alternative which is in line with such a paradigmatic shift as well as with a flux-perspective to reality, has been developed by Stevenson and Harneling (1990) for the entrepreneurship domain. The implications of shifting from an equilibrium to a change view for research assumptions and practices are summarized in the following figure:

Figure 11.1 Research assumptions in theories of change and equilibrium

THEORY OF CHANGE	THEORY OF EQUILIBRIUM
Change is normal Longitudinal studies are necessary Understanding the sequence of events is critical Reciprocal causality is normal Idiosyncratic phenomena are the most important Small "n" studies give insight Functional relationships are shifting over time Key relationships are nonlinear Multiple noncommensurable measures are required for understanding Observers are biased Observation impacts the outcomes Valid observations may not be replicable Data collection is highly valued and requires great skill	Equilibrium is normal Time slices provide valid insight Sequence is immaterial Unidirectional causality separates independent from dependent variables Repetitive phenomena are the object of study Only large "n" studies can be valid Functional relationships are stable Linear relationships can explain most observations Measures must be commensurable Observers are objective Observers have no impact An observation must be replicable to be valid Data collection is relatively mundane and should not be rewarded

The characteristics of this change perspective form a good outline, but they should be complemented by more concrete methodological suggestions. Our social constructionist scope can be helpful in this. We will elaborate two such suggestions, for which we will go outside the domain of entrepreneurship.

Methodological alternatives from a social constructionist point of view

Using organizational ethnography

Instead of opting for sophistication in data analysis, there is in our view a greater need to develop a 'sophisticated' interpretive methodology within entrepreneurship in which qualitative research methods are used to their full value. One possible way to do so is to follow the line of so-called organizational ethnography (Rosen, 1991; Czarniawska-Joerges, 1992), which has recently been developed within organizational studies, and to apply it in a specific way to the domain of entrepreneurship. Rosen (1991, p. 6-7) has argued that organizational ethnography is a method in line with the social constructionist paradigm, giving another direction to the

exploration/explanation distinction: "The social constructionist researcher actively seeks to deconstruct borders between herself or himself and the subject... social constructionist research is thus an exploration in a basic sense." Although anthropologists have long been involved in developments in the entrepreneurship domain (Czarniawska-Joerges, 1992), the ethnographic interest of organizational researchers and the organizational interest of anthropologists - partly due to the great attention paid to organizational culture in the eighties - have only recently flooded into one another. Schwartzmann (1993, p. 2-3) expresses this tendency as follows: "More and more researchers both within and outside the discipline of anthropology have begun to recognize that ethnography is a particularly valuable method of research because it problematizes the ways that individuals and groups constitute and interpret organizations and societies on a daily interactional basis." Organizational ethnography is a recent development and the diversity of interpretations (Dubinskas, 1988; Nash, 1981; Sachs, 1989; Schwartzman, 1993; van Sluijs, 1991) provides little insight into how its profile is going to evolve further.

The development of organizational ethnography can be drawn along two lines. One line involves the integration of the anthropological perspective more within organizational studies (e.g. Rosen and Czarniawska-Joerges), be it in an adapted way. Organizational ethnography is different because the culture of an organization is partial and more superficial. The aim is more to learn to see the usual as unusual: "the ethnographically inclined organizational researcher, on the other hand, must be concerned not with understanding the clearly strange or the exotic, worrying that the truly foreign might never be made familiar, but staying with at home and claiming sufficient bravado to transform that which is culturally familiar into a subject upon which to interpret understandings" (Rosen, 1991, p. 14). He or she must seek to attain an essentially self-reflexive understanding in which the ethnographer encounters the forces of his or her own culture, seeking to stand at a sufficient distance to conceive its *gestalt* and yet at a sufficient proximity to grasp the local minutiae of its detail, the whole process - at its best - achieving what Geertz (1983) terms a "continuous dialectical taking" between the parts and the whole "in such a way as to bring them into simultaneous view." Czarniawska-Joerges (1992, p.197) also defends an organizationally adapted anthropology: "Torn between anthropological orthodoxy and organizational realities, researchers tend to choose other approaches." These can be participating observation, non-participating observation, or ethnographic interviews, seen as repetitive, open, and extensive interviews aimed at achieving a representation of people's work and organization. This results in an important practical distinction with anthropology, which chiefly makes use of participating observation.

A second line takes as its starting point a critique on case studies as expressed, for instance, by Smircich and Subbart (1985) who are very critical towards 'conventional case studies' when doing research using an interpretive approach: "Typical case studies are not conducted from an inter-

pretive perspective, or a synoptic perspective, and usually avoid the ambiguity associated with multiple perspectives." The case study is for many social scientists nevertheless the standard for qualitative research³ (Yin, 1989; Hujes & van Buuren, 1992), an even more prevalent situation in the management and organizational domains, with the exception of organizational psychology (Hartley, 1994). The familiarity of the case study and its many forms in the organizational domain (Sake, 1994) need not be lost however, and it can be integrated into organizational ethnography. The inclusion of case studies in a more ethnographic approach can also prevent this sort of criticism: one can in this way avoid having to study isolated and didactic 'cases' which can be 'passed on' as completed products. The potential of the case study for understanding and problematizing social processes may thus be tapped.

In summary, we thus see an evolution of case study research towards organizational ethnography, directed towards a deepened, process-oriented understanding of organizational phenomena and processes by which both the anthropological and the case study approaches can be integrated. The adaptation to the context of organizations means (besides the reassessment of the relationship between the known and the unknown), a presence in organizations on the basis of efficient time management, practical relevance, and from a relation of 'co-inquiry'.

Stimulating a further direct link with practice

The entrepreneurship domain grants a high priority to the practice and relevance of research: "Entrepreneurship research is a discipline that is close to the hearts of its practitioners" (Churchill, 1992, p. 595). A second alternative that can here play a part is to explore the possibility of action research. Although Stevenson and Harneling have stated that it is almost impossible to consider the process of research (and teaching) as not being some form of action research in the field of entrepreneurship, few attempts have been made to apply action research or to link entrepreneurship research and teaching/consultancy. One of the main questions for the entrepreneurial scholar is to ask how far 'knowledge development' should become separated from its use. As in other scientific disciplines where theory and practice have sometimes become oceans apart, the entrepreneurship domain is risking the same danger by stimulating, unintentionally, a gap between researchers and practitioners. In many cases, theory development and practical applications are considered to be sequential. At the cutting edge, the question can be formulated as to who can be considered as the owner and user of the research and in what way the entrepreneur is involved. Is she or he the object of study, the mere informant, or actually stimulating and participating in the research? Principles like co-inquiry

³ Some quantitatively conceived case studies have been produced, however (Sake, 1994).

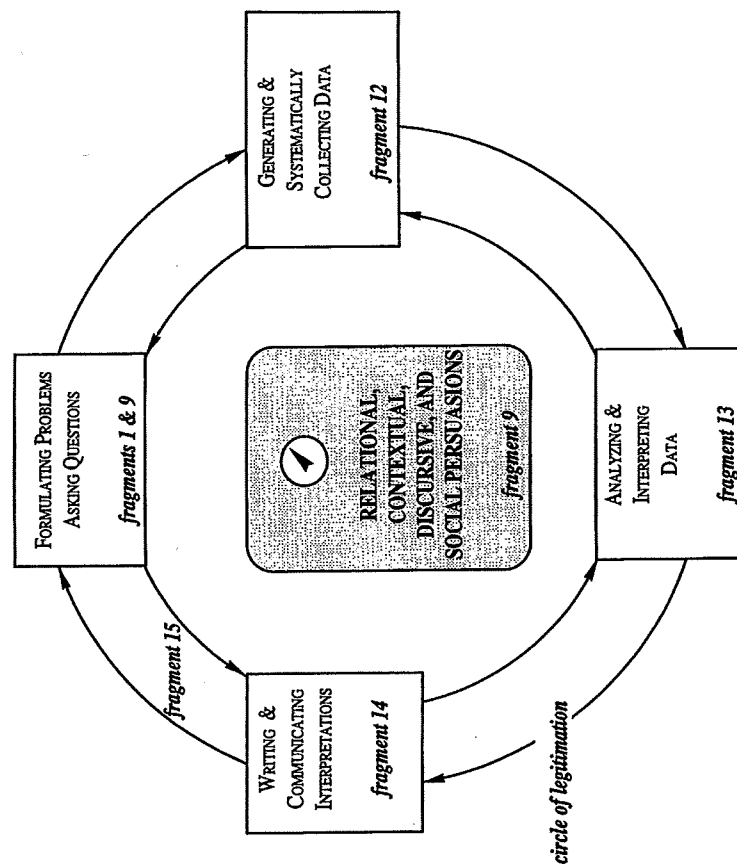
(Rowbottom, 1977) and co-generative learning (Elden & Levin, 1991), which have been developed in other domains to deal with this gap, should be explored in entrepreneurial research projects. A similar logic can apply to the entrepreneurial consultant: here the distinction between expert and process consultancy, and between the diagnostic and implementation stages should be reconsidered, as attempted in participatory action research (Whyte, 1991). Above all, the domain of entrepreneurship education and consultancy need not take the well-beaten path, but should try on new forms of support and training, both collective and long-term oriented, in which the entrepreneur or in fact the entrepreneurial firm plays a central role. Modest, locally based research cooperation will in the long term emerge as more relevant, useful, and insightful than a 'grand style' research project, both for the entrepreneur and for the entrepreneurial researcher. In chapter six we shall further explore the relationship between research and practice, and between the scientific and research communities, in part through a case illustration (fragment 25).

Towards an interpretative approach to entrepreneurship research

Our research approach can be typified as an interpretive study of the process of organization in innovative enterprises. The way we have outlined and positioned a qualitative research approach to entrepreneurship can be made gradually concrete by proceeding along the research circle. By taking the research questions as formulated in fragment 4 and as revisited in fragment 9, and locating our social constructionist directions as developed in fragments 6, 7, and 8 and as summarized in fragment 9, within the conceptual framework, we can (now) travel along the research circle and explain how data generation (fragment 12), data interpretation (fragment 13), and the reporting of interpretations (fragment 14) were conceived and practiced. Data generating and collecting emerged from phenomenological and story-telling interviews with actors from four high tech firms. In this research context, interviews were the most accessible method for entering into a conversation with these high tech firms; interviews give an 'impression' of the various perspectives and how they are connected to one another, and they provide some insight into the interrelation between the interpretation of meanings and interactions. Data analyzing and interpreting were enacted by combining three different practices: interpretive grounded theory, constructing meaning configurations, and story telling. Interpreting requires a dialogue between the researcher and the texts as voiced by the interviewees. Using analytical and synthetic devices to interpret these texts, the researcher attempts to revoice their stories, listening to them from his or her own context as it has been enacted through the development of specific research questions and conceptual directions. Reporting and communicating insights, interpretations and theoretical propositions requires a

dialogue with different audiences using different textual devices and forms. The researcher is writing different (oral and written) texts, which can be seen as a creative, narrative, and rhetorical constructions of the researched reality. In short, the ground modus of our interpretive approach can be typified as 'dialogical': a dialogue with actors, with texts, and with different public settings. In fragment 15, the research trajectory - as it will be written down by traveling through the research circle - will be evaluated by engaging in a dialogue with different communities of knowledge. Evaluation will not be seen as something which takes place (only) at the end, but as a form of dialogical legitimization which is at stake all along the research process.

Figure 11.2 Situating problem formulation, social constructionist persuasions and research methodology within the circle of research



Generating and Collecting Data through Phenomenological and Storytelling Interviews

Conducting Interviews for Organizational Research

Interviews are in themselves an oft-used method in organizational research because of their accessibility. Increasingly, interviews are getting credit from a theoretical standpoint. In the first place, interviews are validated within organizational ethnography, which integrates a cycle of interviews as an 'ethnographical experience'. Secondly, the independent 'interview-moment' is theoretically underpinned by social constructionism with its recent views of communication and dialogue.

The interview as organizational ethnography

The case studies in this research project have mainly been undertaken in interviews. This is not in line with classical ethnography, which favors participant observation, but with the emerging perspective of a so-called organizational ethnography.¹ Czarniawska-Joerges (1992, p. 198), one of the main instigators of such an organizational ethnography, summarizes the mistrust of interviews within the anthropological method as follows: "*By interviewing people we learn about the reality of interviewing, and not about some other reality behind, let us say, the ethnological methodologists. By interviewing people we create an artificial reality that does not relate to the 'real' reality, that is, the ethnographers. And by interviewing people about something we miss an authentic insight, that of the phenomenologists.*" But she rejects these objections on pragmatic grounds. Since conversation is the main method of the social sciences, and "*because the interview can be seen as the most accessible technique for research in organizations*" (p. 199), I conclude with the Polish author that "*our interest lies in maximizing the advantages and minimizing the disadvantages*" of the interview method.

Conducting interviews with individuals from organizations demands that the interviewer keep an eye on the context that the interviewee brings to the interview. Researchers who are making a study of an organization are often interested precisely in this point: how can I get to know a part of the organization through this person? Interviews are thus useful for getting into the swim of the organization and its members. They represent relatively easy to organize

¹ We have presented the perspective of organizational ethnography in fragment 11. See also Rosen (1991).

experiences by which as a researcher one can have access to the conversations which are constantly going on within the organization's walls. Interviews do not form isolated events, but are connected to one another as 'ethnographic experiences'.

Enacting research through interviews

Through interviews the researcher can set the stage for her or his own research context. In the flow of organizational events, interviews are the means to bracket the relevant data for the research questions. The interview is to the case study as 'bracketing' is to 'enactment'. It is an open space in which a researcher, in a particular relation to the members of the organization, constructs a 'data pool'. In this way the interview is one of the most important moments of intervention by a researcher during a study. From this point of view the interview is by no means the problem-free, handy research technique that it is often claimed to be – the general wisdom is that we only have to ask the questions well and then get the answers down – (Mishler, 1986a), and it will be necessary, throughout this fragment, to develop a deeper understanding of this 'intervention'. This demands that interviewing be seen not only as a technical question but that it equally be embedded in a theory of communication.

Why interviews in this research project?

The choice mainly² to use interviews in developing of case studies was threefold. A first, pragmatic reason had to do with the organizational phenomena in which we were interested and the research questions that we asked about them. We wanted to try to gain some insight into fast growing high tech firms and the way they constructed social organizations directed towards collective creativity. Interviews – in contrast to questionnaires – seemed an appropriate method for getting answers. Interviews are indeed recognized methods in explorative research. A second, paradigmatic reason fits with our social constructionist perspective, directed as it is towards social interaction and communication. An interview is a conversation, a dialogue that follows specific rules. The interview itself is a prototypical form of social interaction and in my view perfectly suited to giving form to a study on social interaction. Such 'dialogical' views of interviewing will be brought more into focus in the course of this fragment. The third reason is both pragmatic and paradigmatic, and fits with the organizational ethnography situated above. In keeping with this perspective, we shall see that interviews, besides having an exploratory power, can be the bearer of a full and valuable study of an organization.

² Observations and documents were used in the context of interviews.

Generating or Collecting Data?

Traditionally, the data-collecting phase is a period of fieldwork in which the researcher collects the planned data from such and such companies and subjects, using these questions, in this or that period of time. It is the most practical phase, and the art consists of allowing it to transpire in the most standardized way possible. It is an active phase with passive thought-work. Researchers involved with fieldwork often have the flair of those conducting experiments, that repetitive ritual in which one subject after another is offered the same stimulus. It does not particularly matter, nor is it allowed to matter, who the subject is. All subjects are the same. And the researcher acts as if he or she knows what wants to be known. In field research, time is also spent collecting 'passive' data, as if data were like so many Easter eggs just waiting to be found, as if reality were an orchard ripe for the picking.

In my view, the researcher intervenes and generates rather than collects the data. In fact, the data generating phase determines the contours of the researcher's understanding, mapping out the territory for further interpretation. This is not a neutral activity, but a crucial step which can never receive enough attention. The kind of experimental logic described above is thus not transferable to field research into organizations-on-the-move. Here the researcher is in search of what he or she wishes to understand, and every subject represents a new step on this path. The researcher is caught up in the flow of the organizations being studied, even at the risk of being dragged along willy nilly. From experimental logic I retain the process of repetition, since it helps the systematic dimension necessary for every study. However, the fact that interviews need to be repeated does not mean that they are subject to repetition as standardized actions. The qualitative, interviewing researcher sets out and travels along with the object in question. This is by no means a passive ride, but rather, the researcher experiences the company, in the two senses of sharing its experiences and in helping to construct it. There are various ways to experience a company: I shall presently indicate how we undertook this in our research.

We know of the distinction between data collection and data generation from the ontological and epistemological distinctions we have previously noted between a positivist and a constructionist model. It is about the choice between 'the made as the given' and 'the given as made'. This second position is presented in an extreme version by Harré (1981, p. 17): "*There are no data, and a fortiori to attempt to formulate the descriptions of regularities in the sequence of human action as data, is a folly.*" The researcher enters into an interaction with the environment, with others, and this interaction is constitutive for what may be seen as 'data'. Data are not so much 'givens', but are 'mades', arrived at by mutual agreement. As a researcher in a field situ-

ation you must often explicitly negotiate about this: how many interviews, with whom, how long, about what? Individuals ask, "Can I say this?" or "Are you going to use this too?", and thereby express the notion that they are not only providing 'information' to an interviewer, but are actually saying something that they have never said before and will never say again. However, once something has been said, it has been said, so that whatever we have made becomes nonetheless a given, a 'datum'. It should here become clear that I am not making this distinction in order to preserve two irreconcilable positions the second of which I support. This distinction is important for me in order to indicate that there is more to this than merely 'given givens'; it is relative for me because I want to indicate that as a researcher one must move back and forth between the constructed and the constructed-as-made. I want in no way to make this distinction absolute. This is equally true in practice, where it is also a question of dealing with both positions. Generating data, but repeating too - that is what a researcher does. That is also why I include both in the circle of research.

It should be noted that not only interviews, but also questionnaires and experiments, are constructions, and may be fitted into a constructionist view.³ However, in contrast to the latter, the subject involved in an interview can play a stronger part in determining the course of the research; this is more in line with a social constructionist point of view, which conceives of knowledge as an interactive event. The degree of freedom in a questionnaire and an experiment is limited since the questions have already been asked, the conditions laid down. As methods, both are characterized by a higher reactivity (Hammersley, 1992). All the same, many researchers would be surprised to discover how creatively their subjects can often be in sidestepping or avoiding questions, or in providing their own data and not actually answering the questions asked. Such examples are generally not seen as fit for analysis. Equally, in experiments it is known that subjects are aware of the fact that they may or may not be reacting according to the logic of the experiment of which they are a part.⁴ In an experiment or a questionnaire, the information that is generated is in the same way socially constructed, but the relation between the researcher and the subject is more closely drawn, and the room for variation much more limited. In the interview the relational variation possibilities are theoretically much greater. In practice it comes down to the question of how structured the interviews are. This question lands us in a pretty paradox: on the one side we ascribed to the researcher an important role in the 'making of research' - the field researcher, too, maps out his or her

³ Better yet, they are seen to be basically artificial, because the researcher strives for quasi-complete control over the research situation, while ethnography and field research are considered to be 'natural' (Hammersley, 1992). What I am here claiming is that even field research is a construction, like an experiment or a questionnaire, and that the natural situation is a great deal less natural than is usually thought.

⁴ "It has long been a criticism of experiments that their findings do not generalise to the 'real world' because people's behaviour is shaped by their awareness of the experimental situation, and by the personal characteristics of the experimenter (or her/his assistants)." (Hammersley, 1992, p. 164).

territory - and on the other side, depending how much or how little the interview is structured, the subject's role can become that much more important, taking the researcher somewhere perhaps not thought to be part of the field at all.

A Typology of Qualitative Interviews

Conducting an open interview with little structure does not lead to 'empty' interaction. On the contrary, the spectrum of interaction possibilities becomes precisely that much broader. We shall first consider what 'more or less structure' means and we shall construct a viewpoint around the process of structuring in the activity of interviewing. From this viewpoint, then, we shall develop a typology of qualitative interviews, which can help to situate interviews that have been used within this project.

Interviews: structured or not?

I decided to use open in-depth interviews with little built-in *a priori* structure. The degree to which interviews are structured is often a criterion for distinguishing different types of interviews. Besides open, unstructured interviews there are standardized interviews - in fact, questionnaires delivered orally - and semi-structured interviews which hold the middle ground between open and standardized interviews - also known as 'structured open-response interviews' (King, 1994). The distinction depends to a large degree on the question of how firmly the researcher controls the conversation by proceeding from prepared questions and asking them according to a pre-determined pattern during the interview. A consequence of less structuring is that the external, ecological validity is increased (Hammersley, 1992; Maso, 1987). The structuring of interviews imposes a particular reality on the interviewee. There is a good chance that one will literally by-pass the subject's experience and foist a particular reality on the situation. In this sense, the chance of ending up with a fictitious story - a conversation outside the research question - is greater in a structured interview. My aim was to see how members of an organization were experiencing and participating in the evolution of the young high tech firm at which and on which they were working.

In a certain sense the question 'to structure or not to structure' is a false one. This is endorsed by Fontana and Frey (1994, p. 373): "Many scholars are now realizing that to pit one type of interviewing against another is a futile effort, a leftover from the paradigmatic quantitative/qualitative hostility of past generations." In the first place, it is perhaps more worthwhile to ask when and how often one should structure. Different degrees of structuration are suited to different situa-

tions and contexts. Depending on the research situation, the aim, the researcher's possibilities, and so forth, one can 'choose' more or less structure. King (1994) sets the different conditions within which one can opt for a qualitative research interview, for a structured open-response interview, or for a structured interview. According to King (p. 16), the qualitative research interview is most appropriate "where a study focuses on the meaning of particular phenomena to the participants, where individual perceptions of processes within a social unit - such as a work-group, department, or whole organization - are to be studied prospectively, using a series of interviews, where individual historical accounts are required of how a particular phenomenon developed [...], where exploratory work is required before a quantitative study can be carried out [...], where a quantitative study has been carried out, and qualitative data are required to validate particular measures or to clarify and illustrate the meaning of findings." For this research, the first four conditions apply.

This, however, is not the end of the story: interview and situation do not exist independently of one another. An interview cannot be a-contextually controlled as a previously fixed pattern that may be applied to any field situation. Interviewer and interviewee together create the interview context. In our case, interviews were always conducted at the company. Sometimes they took place in the reception hall at the front, sometimes in the office of the person in question, or later, in the internal meeting room. The subject was negotiated with over whether the door should be open or closed, or over the precise length of the conversation - shall we continue now or shall I come back for a 'second' interview? The conversation could begin with the issue at hand that day or with an agreement on whether the interview could be recorded. Structuring is thus a two-sided process.

To further clarify this process, let us in the second place ask the question 'what is structuring?'. I find 'unstructured' to be a rather unhelpful and even misleading description of an interview, as if an unstructured interview could not possibly involve any sense of structure. There are other ways to arrive at 'structuration' than by questions which have been prepared as to content beforehand. The structuring of an interview occurs, in my opinion, mainly according to the manner of interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee. This manner of interaction depends on the interventions of the interviewer, who makes use of questions about procedure and process (see below) and the quality of the interaction between the two individuals, which refers back to the sense of 'openness' during the encounter. The two parties enter into an open dialogue in which both keep an eye on where it is all leading and on whether things are moving in the right direction; that is, towards new and worthwhile knowledge in connection with the subject at hand. Using this view of 'structuring' as a function of how the interview is constructed, it becomes possible to develop a typology of qualitative interviews.

Interviews classified according to the nature of the interaction

There are many types of qualitative interview. There are also many ways to classify interviews, besides the degree of structuration. Among the more pragmatic and operational criteria are included the practical aims (research, therapy, personnel policy, marketing, politics) and the form (face-to-face, group interviews, by telephone). Besides these pragmatic reasons, more fundamental research choices can determine the type of interview one chooses. Silverman (1985) has shown how different paradigms conceive of their research interviews distinctively. He distinguishes interviews from a positivist, an interactionist, an ethnomethodological, and a realist perspective. The interviews in this social constructionist study accord best with the interactionist and ethnomethodological models. On the operational level, I find the most insightful classification to be based on the way the interview is 'structured', as I have said.

How do both participants in the conversation, the 'interviewer' and the 'interviewee', approach the dialogue? How does one construct a form of 'openness' in this situation? Where should the emphasis be during this collective construction? We shall look at a number of different interview types according to their own qualities: the ethnographic interview (Spradley, 1979), the phenomenological interview (Massarik, 1981, 1983), the appreciative interview (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987), the creative interview (Douglas, 1985), the life-story interview (Tagg, 1985), and the interview as 'storytelling' (Mishler, 1986b). Furthermore, I shall examine the ways a researcher can intervene. Although these ways may in general be characterized by non-directivity, one can still ask what this actually means. What does the researcher do if he or she chooses not to work directly? Figure 12.1 offers an overview of the different types of qualitative research interview.

Figure 12.1 Different types of the qualitative research interview

NAME	AUTHOR	FEATURE	MANNERS OF INTERVENTION
ETHNOGRAPHIC INTERVIEW	Spradley	cultural data	question typology
PHENOMENOLOGICAL INTERVIEW	Massarik	life world	process questions
APPRECIATIVE INTERVIEW	Cooperrider	peak experiences	appreciative questions
CREATIVE INTERVIEW	Douglas	new possibilities	extra-ordinary questions
LIFE-STORY INTERVIEW	Tagg	life story	process and structuring questions
STORYTELLING INTERVIEW	Mishler	organizational stories	process and structuring questions

Within the scope of the (qualitative) in-depth interview, the ethnographic interview (Spradley, 1979) is the most well known. As 'a particular speech event', it is in the first place a method to gather cultural data, as a complement to and as an alternative to participant observation. Although it shares certain common characteristics with the ethnographic in-depth interview, the phenomenological interview goes beyond the latter, particularly in its commitment to openness and unboundedness. Especially significant is the attempt to establish a situation of trust, and to create the chance for the interviewee as well as for the interviewer to give an encompassing account of their organizational experiences. Furthermore, the appreciative interview relates to the appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987) which stimulates organizational members to appreciate their work situation, to consider what makes the organization possible and to look for possibilities of change and improvement. The key characteristics of the appreciative interview are the assumption of health/vitality, a connection through empathy, personal excitement and commitment, a high level of intensity, generative questioning, belief, and an allowance for ambiguity and dreams. The creative interview, as described by Douglas (1985), invites the interviewee to go beyond the normally expected interview situation and to search for new possibilities by which the context of the interviewee can be re-presented as lively and as originally as possible. The life-story interview demands the interviewees' life story, which is obtained through in-depth questioning, often in a number of different sessions. A research example - an application to teachers' careers - may be found in Kelchermans (1993). The storytelling interview retains from the life-story interview the idea of narrative structure within which individuals can organize their experiences. It has been theoretically developed by Mishler (1986a, 1986b) and Wiedemann (1986).

For this study I have made use of a combination of phenomenological and narrative interviews which I shall now describe in more detail. The two forms are complementary, in my opinion. The phenomenological interview provides deeper insight into the nature of the relation between interviewer and interviewee, while the storytelling interview indicates above all how 'data' are exchanged within narrative structures.

Phenomenological Interviews: the Notion of 'Shared Concern'

It has been said that the dynamic of every kind of interview is dependent on the quality of the interpersonal and interactive process that takes place. We have distinguished between different types of interviewing based on how they give a certain answer to the question of how interviewer and interviewee 'relate' to each other. The phenomenological interview focuses

in particular on the interpersonal process and how different parties relate during the interview. It is specific in its commitment to openness and unboundedness. Especially significant is the attempt to construct an environment of trust, and create the chance for the interviewee to give an encompassing account of his or her organizational experiences. However, the phenomenological interview equally gives attention to the 'interviewer's' world, both as a researcher and as a human being. Massarik (1981, 1983) notes that in the phenomenological interview at its best, the line between interviewer and interviewee blurs.

Massarik (1981) has compiled an interesting list of characteristics to describe more profoundly the different dimensions of the relationship between interviewee and interviewer. Such a list is helpful to characterize in depth the interview as a relational event. Ten dimensions are distinguished:

- (1) acceptance - hostility
- (2) trust - distrust
- (3) mutuality - inequality
- (4) psychological closeness - distance
- (5) emphasis on total or material sector of 'life world' - emphasis on clearly defined reply
- (6) emphasis on shared concerns - emphasis on interviewer's or interviewee's concerns, one to the exclusion of the other
- (7) interview content and process determined primarily by interviewee, with facilitation by interviewer - interview content and process determined exclusively by interviewer, with possible interference by interviewee
- (8) unbounded time allocation - tightly bounded time allocation
- (9) balanced concern with both content and process - exclusive concern with process, or exclusive concern with content
- (10) intertwined spontaneous interviewer-interviewee response - rigid role separation between interviewer and interviewee.

After reading through these relational qualities of the phenomenological interview, its humanistic and phenomenologically oriented background becomes clear. The focus is on the experienced world, the *Lebenswelt*, of both interviewee and interviewer. The life-world can be seen as the historical and cultural setting in which experience originates. "*A person is not individual subject or ego, but a manifestation of Dasein within a space of possibilities, situated within a world and within a tradition*" (Winograd & Flores, 1987, p. 33). Sensemaking is not an activity of an individual subject (in this case the interviewee). As meaning is fundamentally social, the meanings constructed during the interview are social, and emerge through the specific context

The Narrative Interview: Telling Stories

Questioning the questioning process

Although interviews are classically seen as a situation of 'asking questions', in this study I prefer to see it as a situation where the researcher is eliciting stories from the organizational members. This can be called a kind of 'storytelling' interview. Such a conception of the interview is in line with a textual and conversational conception of organizational research. In the interviews, I did not go through a checklist of questions but proposed interviewees to tell their story 'from their first contact with the organization, or even earlier, if they find it relevant, until now, and also to relate how they see the future for themselves and their organization'. Regular research means asking direct questions in order to get direct answers. This situation keeps interviewees from bringing in their own experience and the 'data' they work with. Storytelling gives interviewees the chance to frame their own, relevant experiences. This guarantees furthermore the possibility of discovering new things which are at the same time relevant. Although 'asking' for stories can look unnatural to classically trained interviewers, many interviewees seem to be very natural storytellers,⁶ who enact the research situation as a way to (re)frame their past, present, and future within the firm and to frame their liaison with the firm. Often, interviewees told me that it was the first time they had given such an extensive account of their experience in that firm, and found the interview experience clarifying to themselves. Storytelling opens the research relation between interviewee and interviewer, and both roles must change as a result. Finally, it should be stressed that an interview cannot be seen on its own, but rather in relation with the stories of other interviews. A researcher cannot assume *tabula rasa* when doing a new interview, which means that the same questions cannot be asked in the same order. On the contrary, the interviewer should be curious about the sequence of the larger organizational story, which is formed by all of these individual stories.

The storytelling interview is receiving more and more attention in organizational research (Reason & Rowan, 1981) and in the social sciences (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994), in particular in pedagogical research (Carter, 1993; Kelchtermans, 1993). This is in keeping with a narrative vision of reality (chapter two, fragment 7). These ideas on storytelling come close to Mishler's (1986a, p. 69) description and motivation:

⁶ Persons telling stories from two to four hours were not exceptional. With a kind of ease and natural elegance they told of their organizational 'career'. Furthermore, sometimes people seemed to feel 'interrupted' when I asked a question (instead of feeling stimulated).

that interviewee and interviewer are enacting. This alters the position of the phenomenological researcher concerning the relationship between science and practice. Phenomenology,⁵ as developed by Heidegger, favors the position that practical understanding is more fundamental than detached theoretical understanding (Winograd & Flores, 1987). It is not the scientist as a detached researcher who has direct access to the world, but it is through practical involvement with the world in which we are acting unreflectively. This implies that we can no longer maintain the opposition between the activities of scientists and those of human beings. This does not mean that we should make all persons scientists as Kelly (1955) did in his constructivist theory of persons, but that science should focus on "that which is central to human being, and in doing this it will be an applied science, for that which is central to human being develops human being" (Bolton, 1991, p. 116). But what then is central to the human being? According to Bolton, it is 'shared concern', and this is not different for a human science: "There is no validation of shared concern other than shared concern; there can be no reference to independent criteria or to methodological sophistication as the ultimate court of appeal for the worth of an investigation. There is no alternative to reflection" (Bolton, p. 116).

Certain critical remarks can be made about the phenomenological interview. First, it can be seen as somewhat 'naïve' concerning how persons enter into dialogue with each other during an interview. Openness is not something which is suddenly there; it has to grow during an interview, and more importantly, while building a relationship with the entrepreneurial firm in general. However, individuals will sometimes be wary, or even reluctant or defensive, when telling of their experiences in an open mode. They can fear that what they tell will be known to other organizational members. As interviews take place in an organizational context, issues of power will influence the evolution of the interview. Therefore, it is also important to listen to what is left out during the interview, to hesitations and avoided parts. A second problem concerns the difference in life-world between the entrepreneur and the (academic) researcher, or in more rhetorical terms, their difference in language games. A phenomenological approach favors mutual understanding between the two parties in a much too 'easy' way. It can be questioned if a truly pertinent dialogue can take place, since each has been 'raised' in different discourses, and meanings of words can slip and slide in the course of the conversation.

⁵ Phenomenology is introduced in fragment 6.

Telling stories is far from unusual in everyday conversation and it is apparently no more unusual for interviewees to respond to questions with narratives if they are given some room to speak. [...] In general, researchers in the mainstream tradition either have not recognized the pervasiveness of stories because, as I have already remarked, the standard survey interview 'suppresses' them, or have treated stories as a problem because they are difficult to code or to quantify. We are more likely to find stories reported in studies using relatively unstructured interviews where respondents are invited to speak in their own voices, allowed to control the introduction and flow of topics, and encouraged to extend their responses. Nonetheless respondents may also tell stories in response to direct, specific questions if they are not interrupted by interviewers trying to keep them to the 'point'.

The narrative interview: mediating interventions

What is then the role of the researcher when not asking questions? I lead the interviewee's story somewhat by asking for clarification, concretization, examples, and discursions, creating in this way sub-stories. I ask literally 'hundreds' of questions, not on a content level, but to stimulate the process of storytelling, respecting the rhythm of the storyteller. One can even ask who is interviewing whom, since I ask questions elicited by the story I hear, and which are in the stream of the storytelling. However, questions on the content level are also asked, especially towards the 'end' of the interview, guided by the general research question, the information from others' interviews, references to the different parties, by considering what he or she is not telling and/or forgetting.

In the appendix 12.1 I have provided an overview of the interventions which were employed in the interviews. At the beginning of the interview and during its further progression it is important to make one's own method of working clear to the interviewee. Firstly, because people are generally expecting a pattern of question and answer. Secondly, because most people have never been interviewed before and probably never will be again. I am assuming that the interview is an important and not altogether self-evident moment of a person's life. If I as interviewer do not ask questions *per se*, or in any case if I do not begin with questions, it does not automatically mean that my role has been played out. Besides questions concerning content, we can make a distinction between structuring and process-oriented interventions which can mediate the course of the conversation.⁷ Structuring-questions stimulate the interviewee to clarify answers, to concretize, or to suggest examples. Other possible interventions include role clarification, summarizing, or suggesting an order of themes. Process-questions are an attempt to get a feeling for the quality of the relationship, and for the

⁷ In particular, the kind of questions Spradley (1979) distinguishes in the ethnographic interview, have been valuable. Besides structural and contrast questions, the category of descriptive questions contains grand-tour, mini-tour, example, experience, and native-language questions, which have been helpful during my interviews.

perception of both participants: How does one regard such a conversation? It demands a higher degree of involvement from both parties and creates the possibility of deepening and enriching the exchange of experiences. Examples of process interventions vary from minimal forms of non-verbal encouragement and active listening, to light forms of confrontation ('I think you can tell me a little more about this...').⁸ At the outset I would also ask if the interview could be recorded. The most important motives for recording are: the reliability of recording as a means of storing data (in the longer term as well); the way writing can interfere with the intensity of the interview and can disturb the course of the story; the increasingly accepted view that a complete text is necessary to text analysis. In each case, an extensive explanation was given and explicit permission was asked. All respondents agreed that there were practical advantages while some became interested by the 'precise' textual analysis and wanted to know more about it. An objection often advanced against recording is that it prevents respondents from broaching more sensitive material. At the end of the conversation, when the machine was turned off, respondents had space for such material. Although the conversation often continued for awhile from there, I usually did not have the feeling that a new level of confidentiality had been reached. Furthermore, it was often *during* the interview that, some subjects would indicate that a particular point was to be considered as 'confidential'.

Conclusion: Open Dialogue as the Core of Interviewing

This manner of seeing the interview as a process-oriented event proceeds from a different view of language⁹ and communication. On the level of language, the correspondence view has made an about-face towards a performative view (Steyaert & Janssens, under revision). On the level of communication, the notion of 'passive information exchange' has become 'open dialogue'. Communication is here not a stimulus-response sequence underlying the game of question and answer¹⁰. In this latter transmission model of communication, there is a one-way flow from the signaling sender to the decoding receiver. The receiver is passive, and, assuming good transmission and reception, intact communication is possible. Communication is here the exchange of unequivocal meanings. On the basis of Bakhtin's dialogical theory of meaning,¹¹ an alternative approach of interview as dialogue can be developed. Instead of a

⁸ A similar distinction has been made in outlining the group interview (see Steyaert & Bouwen, 1994a also for further examples).

⁹ See also chapter two.

¹⁰ That interviews are guided by the S-R principle has been extensively documented by Mishler (1986a). His alternative vision comes close to the one we present here based on the work of Bakhtin. Mishler sees interviews as speech events, where the discourse of interviews is constructed jointly by interviewers and respondents and where the meanings of questions and answers are contextually grounded. Analysis and interpretation are based on a theory of discourse and meaning, which follows very much a performative vision of language, in line with the linguistic turn.

¹¹ This aspect of Bakhtin's theory will be elaborated in chapter five.

single-voiced text, interviewer and interviewed together write what Bakhtin calls a 'multi-voiced text'. The meaning of an utterance is contextual, caught between past and future utterances. The 'receiver' of an utterance is active, and 'answers' with his or her understanding. There are always ambiguous meanings involved in the communicative exchange. Difference in meaning, far from being a problem, is a necessity for the continuation of the conversation.

This theory dovetails with Kvale's conception (1994, p. 10) of the interview as "*a conversation where the data arise in an interpersonal relationship, co-authored and co-produced by the interviewer.*" Bakhtin's dialogical approach, however, also sharply defines how the interview becomes co-authored and co-produced by the interviewee. This also fits with one of the most important developments concerning the role of the 'other', which Fontana and Frey (1994, p. 373) cite in their discussion of interviewing: "*The 'other' is no longer a distant, aseptic, quantified, sterilized, measured, categorized, and catalogued faceless respondent, but has become a living human being [...] finally blossoming to full living color and coming into focus as real persons, as the interviewer recognizes them as such.*" The development of knowledge through interviews is a relational event that takes place by mutual exploration, as each explores the other's understanding, and through the other, explores his or her own. Referring again to the double circle of research, it becomes clear here that the interviews explore the concrete settings within which both life-worlds meet and can learn from one another.

Further, the importance of difference, as we redraw this from a Bakhtinian view on dialogue, underscores the doubt concerning 'mutual understanding' as it is claimed in the phenomenological interview. It demands more caution in assuming that people can understand one another. Concepts such as 'empathy' and 'feedback', which dominate communication theory and are mentioned in handbooks on interviewing, must now be revised. Empathy becomes the way by which the interviewer gives the interviewee space to tell the tale, without displacing either's point of view. A merging of viewpoints blocks the flow of the conversation. Feedback here becomes more a manner of ascertaining if each side understands the other's difference in viewpoint, rather than a gauge of whether one has received the 'right' information. Difference of ideas, however, is in no way in conflict with the notion of 'shared concern' which we referred to in the discussion of the phenomenological interview; through shared concern conversation partners may consider each other as such - partners - and a potential conflict evolving from this difference may be counterbalanced.

Fragment Thirteen

Data Analysis and Interpretation through Interpretive Grounded Theory, Meaning Configurations, and Storytelling

Introduction

The third step along the circle of research involves analyzing and interpreting the generated data. Again in this fragment, practice and paradigm do not operate independently, and I shall be looking equally at the operational description and the methodical background of the analyses that have been used. Firstly we shall go through the analysis operations and their various phases. Four main steps can be distinguished. Step one consists of transcribing the interviews and observations, and reading through them. In step two, interpretive grounded concepts are developed and related to each other. In step three, second-order concepts are developed or meaning configurations are constructed as a way to reduce and link interpretive grounded concepts to each other. In step four, systematic comparisons of (second-order) grounded concepts and meaning configurations are made between different parties (persons, groups, firms) or between different periods, and three different options to represent interpretations are included.

These analysis operations will then be examined within the various possibilities offered by 'data analysis'. We shall look at our procedure in terms of three methodical backgrounds: a grounded theory approach, an interpretive approach, and a discourse-analytic approach. The way we tackle the data analysis will be based chiefly on Glaser and Strauss's grounded theory approach. However, I am of the opinion that the interpretive element receives too little attention in this approach: there is no analysis without interpretation. Therefore, we shall shed some light on the relationship between analysis and interpretation, and indicate how we arrive at a form of 'interpretive grounded theory'. The 'meaning analysis' approach that we shall here develop will then be elucidated against a background of the emerging discourse-analysis approach.

Analysis Operations

In presenting the research circle, it was said that data analysis and data generation could not be separated. While data generation is going on, data analysis and interpretation is started up,

which can lead to new questions for other interviews, as well as to interpretations that will be introduced to the same or other interviewees. However, the data analysis used here involves a systematic consideration of the interviews, which will be elaborated as a step-by-step process that is not, however, to be interpreted as a linear process. In a first step, tapes are transcribed into texts. In a second step, concepts are developed and related to each other. In a third step, different options become available: deriving second-order concepts or constructing 'meaning configurations'. The fourth step is of a comparative order; it can imply a systematic comparison of grounded concepts and meaning configurations between different persons, cases or time periods. The last step will also be related to how concepts and interpretations will be presented. We will shortly discuss each of these steps.

Transcribing and reading through the texts

All interviews were tape-recorded, a procedure to which the interviewees gave their consent; I stressed that this would give me the chance to be more actively involved in the interview (than if I had had to take notes), and that 'we are interested in the language persons use to phrase their experiences'. It was also stressed that the tapes would remain confidential (fragment 15). Afterwards, the interviews were transcribed by the researcher or a third person.

Before going into 'strict' data analysis, I read through the transcripts two or three times, sometimes listening back to the tape at the same time. This afforded the opportunity to 'see' the complete story, and to 'go back' to the interview situation.

Formulating and connecting concepts¹

After having read through the interview, I began deriving concepts from the textual material in order to ground concepts from the 'data' or the transcripts. In practice, the text was analyzed part by part: a part of the text was considered separately, and 'interpreted' by deriving a concept from the text. For instance, the text fragment, 'Even though we still didn't know what direction to go, at least we were going in the same direction', was interpreted as 'the need to go into the same direction' (example from vignette 12, vision case). Each time a concept was formulated, a so-called 'vignette' was made (for an example, see appendix 13.1). A vignette contains a code number of the case, a description (or label) of the concept, illustration(s) from the interview (i.e. the 'grounded parts'), and the involved actor (for a completed example, see appendix 13.2). Then the following part of the text was interpreted, by comparing it to the first concept. When not found appropriate, a new concept was formulated and a new vignette filled in. When the concept seemed to 'fit', the text fragment was

¹ Our working procedure follows mostly the stages as developed by Turner (1981).

added as a further illustration on the vignette. Sometimes the description (or the title) of the concept was slightly changed or extended: for instance 'consensus striving' was added to vignette 12, when confronted with the following text fragment of another actor from that firm: 'Departments are no longer set in opposition to one another. We are looking for consensus'. Further illustrations to a previously formulated concept were always added, as I found it important to see clearly which of the different actors had 'added' to this concept. According to Glaser and Strauss's outline, 'saturating the concept', i.e. accumulating examples of a given concept until it is clear what future instances would be located there, was seen as sufficient (Turner, 1983).

When constructing the vignettes, I continuously kept the following questions in mind:

- what meanings do the actors assign?
- to what actions do they refer in the text?
- are organizational forms mentioned (directly) in the text or can they be inferred?

Every concept was then coded as a meaning (M), an action (A), or an organizational form (F). On a vignette, it is already mentioned if the concept refers to a individual level (for instance concept 70 (M); 'self-responsibility'), to a group level (vignette 25 (F); 'individual projects versus team projects') or to an organizational level (vignette 56 (M); 'the whole world is there for us').

The formulating, defining, and illustrating of concepts was based on a constant comparison of text material with concepts (vignettes) and on a comparison of concepts with each other (through new text parts). This constant comparison, aimed at formulating new concepts or grounding more strongly existing ones, was also 'formalized' as concepts were compared to each other. As a result, relationships between concepts came to light. Concepts can be related by similarity or opposition and by influence or mutual tension. Similarity and opposition can be helpful to distinguish concepts as much as possible. This method asks a lot of concentration of the researcher, and this is generally executed over a longer period (from a few days to some weeks, interrupted by other activities). Sometimes a concept was formulated and written down, only to discover later that it closely resembled a concept formulated earlier. This similarity between concepts is indicated on the vignette. In some instances, a resembling concept was nonetheless formulated, if it expressed a subtle difference; only at a later stage it was sometimes noticed that two concepts could be merged or 'clustered' into an overarching new concept. For instance, vignette 11 ('the need to go in the same direction') was seen to be similar to vignette 2 (M) ('the organization needs to be overarching'), but was not fused as 'same direction' and 'overarching'; while both expressed 'communitarity', they pointed at a different ways to realize it. The notions of influence and mutual tension indicated whether

concepts were in a dynamic relation to each other according to a one-directional or a mutual influence. For instance, meanings and actions seem to influence each other, as do actions and organizing forms: the meaning concept (11) concerning the 'same direction' stimulates the action concept (4) that 'they move on as fast as the slowest one is going'.

Constructing second-order concepts or meaning configurations

The analysis of each case led to more than 100 concepts per case. We used two different strategies to reduce this large amount. One strategy consisted of formulating 'second-order' concepts, and a second of developing so-called meaning configurations.

Formulating 'second-order concepts' consisted of looking for more abstract concepts which were more removed from the interview fragments. These second-order concepts can be seen as emerging themes in the story which group or 'cluster' several (first order) concepts. They are the emerging clues which offer insight in the case, since they can help us in answering the research questions we are interested in. Second-order concepts are clustered according to relationships of similarity and/or influence. They are a way to structure the interview texts around larger parts, by formulating an overarching theme (for instance, issues concerning time) or event (the development of a marketing strategy). While looking over the concepts, some concepts seemed to indicate contradictory meanings or actions, and some first order concepts even indicated that persons were in the middle of making a choice between alternatives (for instance: concept 49 (M) 'addressing specific questions or striving for generalizability' (in the application and development of technology) showed that there was a tension between both options which could not be held open simultaneously). This led us to conceive of second-order concepts as 'dilemmas' (fragment 4). For instance, concept 49 was one of the concepts which directed us to formulate the route-dilemma between focusing and broadening: continuing to address specific questions sustained the tendency to keep the action domain open, while striving for generalizability implied that engineers accepted projects if they could contribute to the general technological option they were in sight of. Dilemmas for each case apart were documented in case reports which were handed over to the companies.

A second reduction and integration strategy implied the development of meaning configurations.² A meaning configuration is an interpretation of a person's or a group of persons' narrative on how they are constructing 'their' reality. They present a view on the variety of 'concepts' and their interrelationships as they have been 'bracketed' by the interpretative analysis activities of the researcher. Meaning configurations are developed based on the concepts, and especially on their relationships as developed in the second step (cf. above). The point of

departure for this construction process is a group of interrelated concepts, but this construction is a subjective and creative activity, in which the researcher goes through the list of concepts again and again, falling back many times on the interview protocols. Several types of meaning configuration have been developed: individual configuration, event configuration, team configuration, and organizational configuration. Individual configurations focus on integrating the concepts of a certain individual, for instance an entrepreneur, around a certain theme, for instance how he started up the firm, or how he sees his leadership towards his collaborators. An event configuration gives a cluster of meanings around a certain event (e.g. the arrival of a new entrepreneur) as seen from the actors' different perspectives. A team configuration is the configuration of different actors' meanings (for instance actors on a direction team or in an R&D unit), assembled as an 'integrated' figure. An organizational configuration is an integrated view of the different meanings attached to the organizing process of the firm. Such an organizational meaning configuration can be derived from the view (and interviews) of one person, a team, or all the actors interviewed, and can then be named an organizational meaning configuration of (by) the organization.

For each case, the different concepts (cf. second step) were integrated as different meaning configurations (Quartet case, 12; Vision case, 14; Duo case, 8), and handed over in a report to the firm.

Making synthetic interpretations through comparison

The fourth step varied according to the research question and the development of the project (i.e. the theoretical and personal development of researcher). Three practices were used: formulating and selecting dilemmas, developing interpretive charts, and storytelling. However, each practice had as goal to arrive at synthetic interpretations and was based on a similar device, i.e. comparing cases.

The first synthetic practice consisted of formulating dilemmas by comparing the dilemmas identified in the three high tech firms in the preceding step. The idea was here to understand one case by comparing it to a second (or more) case(s). Out of the differences, the specificity could then be more firmly explored. Furthermore, some similarities could be obtained by retrieving similar concepts or by seeing if concepts which did not belong to the concept list of the other firm could apply and help to understand the one in question as well. Sometimes, if such a concept still was not applicable, it stimulated the formulation of a new concept which was a different concept on the same theme. However, the working strategy was that 'selecting' concepts which 'applied' to several case-studies, should attain a certain relevance and help us to find 'core' concepts, i.e. basic dilemmas.

² A theoretical discussion of meaning configurations in relation to 'cognitive maps' can be found in fragment 21.

In fact, this comparative step was executed closely with the preceding step, as we tried to ground dilemmas derived from one case with text material from the two other cases. The comparison among the cases could thus help to find similar dilemmas within each case and retain these dilemmas as a third order concept, which could be grounded for all three cases.

A second synthetic practice consisted in comparing different meaning configurations both within and between the cases. In the set of meaning configurations of each case, a synthetic meaning configuration was developed, which formed an overall (and conclusive) organizational configuration of the organization. This configuration sketched the development process of the firm, as interpreted by the researcher. They could be seen as interpretive charts, offering a hypothetical theoretical description of the organizing process of each firm.

A third (synthetic) practice involved a very different working strategy, combining the generation of concepts and meaning configurations with the development of a narrative. The aim of the narrative is to emphasize the context in which concepts and configurations gain their meaning, and to compensate for the de-contextualization as a result of the analytical operations, which are implied in grounded theory analysis.³ Furthermore, it is desirable to represent the voices of the different actors more directly, as grounded concepts often become decoupled from the perspective in which the concept emerged. As a consequence, the insights and interpretations on the second research question is documented by developing a narrative, in which the concepts are used as devices to 'structure' the story, while the meaning configurations are conceived of as multivoiced stories instead of being presented in a chart. The theoretical and epistemological reasons for this change will be developed in chapter five.

The results of these three synthetic steps are presented respectively in fragment 16, 17 and 22.

Reflections on the Process of Analyzing and Interpreting

Having presented this operational description of how I dealt with the interview material, I should now like to look more deeply into the backgrounds of the various methods which I used. In using an 'interpretive-grounded theory' approach, I have combined a realistic with a constructionist tradition, and a symbolic-interactionist with a hermeneutical tradition. The confluence of interpretations and grounded concepts in meaning configurations once again recalls 'cognitive mapping', a concept originally from cognitive psychology. The background of meaning configurations and their relation to 'cognitive maps' is outlined in fragment

³ This argument will be elaborated below.

21 (chapter five). This situating can be seen to be in keeping with our (theoretical) search for a deeper conceptualization of the social nature of the organizing process (fragment 20), which accords with the (methodical) use of meaning configurations. I shall now outline the background of an interpretive grounded theory in two steps, first looking at the grounded theory approach itself and then discussing the interpretive embeddedness of data analysis through 'grounding'.

Beyond grounded theory

In fragment 5 (chapter two), I analyzed critically the grounded theory approach in connection with the possibilities it offers for theory development. Grounded theory is not only a general qualitative research strategy but also a method of data analysis. I shall here discuss the grounded theory approach as a manner of data analysis that leads to grounded concepts. In short, grounded theory is an inductive, theory discovery methodology that allows the researcher to develop a theoretical account of the general features of a topic while simultaneously grounding the account in empirical observations or data. According to Glaser and Strauss (1967), grounded theory should be seen against the observation that most researchers never develop independently theoretical accounts. By developing their grounded theory approach, they wanted to shift the focus towards theory development or, in their terms, 'discovery', instead of towards theory testing, the usual focus within the verification-paradigm. Although initially there was little interest in this approach, grounded theory has become a well-used method within sociology (Smaling & van Zuuren, 1992). It has been scarcely used in psychology (for an example, Hoenkamp-Bisschops, 1986). In organizational behavior it has been advocated and elaborated by Turner (Turner, 1981; 1983; Martin & Turner, 1986). As a way of concept derivation, the basic conception of grounded theory, originally formulated in 1967 by Glaser and Strauss, has been further elaborated in Glaser (1978), Strauss (1987), and Strauss and Corbin (1990). Still, there is no single overarching version of grounded theory, a fact that was recently made clear by the controversy between Glaser (1992) and Strauss (1994, with Corbin) whose version of grounded theory could be called the 'true' one.

The way of deriving concepts that we have here developed asks for creative as well as receptive, for analytical as well as holistic skills in formulating concepts and making interpretations. According to Turner (1981, p. 228), "*the competent development of grounded theory rests, in part, upon a sensitivity to these often tacit processes of perceiving and understanding, and upon a willingness and an ability to bring them into the open for discussion.*" This implies that each researcher is developing to some extent his or her own version of grounded theory. I have modified this approach in operational terms by using the vignette-method and by developing meaning con-

figurations. The vignette-method transforms the data as well as the intuitive process of interpreting into a concrete and manipulatable form by which the analysis method becomes systematized: vignettes are stored, can be easily retrieved, and can be completed and reworked at any time.⁴ The transformation of generated concepts into the construction of meaning configuration is an alternative and more systematic procedure to developing a more synthetic view from the generated concepts instead of formulating second-order concepts. Furthermore, it should be stressed that grounded theory scholars underestimate the interpretive element when scholars are deriving concepts, and making selections from the text material, an argument which is also raised in more fundamental terms in fragment 5. This argument will be extended to cognitive maps, which are sometimes treated in an isolated and de-contextualized way (fragment 21). This interpretive embeddedness of data analysis will now be further commented upon.

The interpretive embeddedness of data analysis

Deriving grounded concepts⁵ implies an interpretive process. This process of making interpretations can be seen at the same time as covering (1) a research tradition, (2) a research process, (3) a day-to-day activity, and (4) a research step (both in quantitative and qualitative research).

Firstly, interpreting seen as a research tradition refers to the interpretive approach which is used in a variety of academic disciplines within the social sciences. In psychology, the interpretive approach is known as 'hermeneutics', where it has been especially used in psychotherapy, psychoanalysis and psychopathology (Messer et al., 1988). Still, in general, psychology has been more reluctant towards hermeneutical analysis than other disciplines, such as sociology and anthropology. One of the reasons is that hermeneutics has mainly been developed within a philosophical framework (Messer et al., 1988). In the field of organizations, Gummesson uses 'hermeneutics' as the overall name for interpretive management research. Together with discourse analysis, hermeneutics can be considered as one of the most fruitful methodological approaches for social constructionist research. Hermeneutics, meaning literally 'to interpret'⁶ refers to the process of grasping the meaning of texts, initially in biblical exegesis, jurisprudence, and literary theory. It is not very different from phenomenology in its attempt to bring unintelligible situations to understanding. However, "*whereas phenomenology is primarily oriented toward the immediate phenomena of human experience, such as thinking and feeling, hermeneutics is more context directed. In interpreting human 'traces', hermeneutics often tries to go beyond the observable in order 'to read between the lines'. It can therefore be characterized as more transphenomenal.*"

Secondly, Denzin (1989) developed so-called 'interpretive interactionism', which is one of the many variants within the interpretive tradition. Interpreting refers then to the complete research process. Denzin (p. 48) describes six phases or steps in this interpretive process:

1. *framing the research question;*
2. *deconstruction and critical analysis of prior conceptions of the phenomenon;*
3. *capturing the phenomenon, including locating and situating it in the natural world and obtaining multiple instances of it;*
4. *bracketing the phenomenon, reducing it to its essential elements, and cutting it loose from the natural world so that its essential structures and features may be uncovered;*
5. *construction, or putting the phenomenon back together in terms of its essential parts, pieces and structures; and*
6. *contextualization, or relocating the phenomenon back in the natural world.*

Thirdly, we can consider 'interpreting' as a day-to-day activity (fragment 7). With this 'interpretation' of interpreting, it is acknowledged that a person is continuously assigning meaning to his or her experience. As such, it can be seen as a metaphor which describes human beings as fundamentally interpretive, i.e. perceiving and thinking: "*In social life, there is only interpretation*" (Denzin, 1989, p.11). According to Heidegger (1962) and Gadamer (1975), interpreting and understanding are an essential part of being in the world. This daily sensemaking has become important for understanding organizational behavior. In the organizational context, persons assign meaning to all kind of events. Interpretation is then "*the process of translating these events, of developing models for understanding, of bringing out meaning, and of assembling conceptual schemes among key managers*" (Daft & Weick, 1994, p. 73). As a consequence, organizations can be conceived as 'interpretation systems' (Daft & Weick, 1994), where meaning is collectively constructed into shared models. In chapter two, fragment 7, a conceptualization of the organizing process in terms of narrative meaning making is developed for the study of entrepreneurial endeavors. Characteristic to entrepreneurial activities is that traditional frames of meaning are deconstructed and new meaning configurations created (Czarniawska-Joerges, 1991).

Finally, interpreting refers to a specific research step, in which meaning is given to the (analyzed) data in relation to the problem formulation and/or related theory. The aim is to arrive at an interpretation that accords with the description that the researcher has made. Interpreting is necessary in order to go from description towards understanding. Just as it is important to distinguish between thin and thick description, it can be fruitful to suggest a distinction between thin and thick interpretation as well (Denzin, 1989).

⁴ Using this method of grounded interpretive concepts, the storage of concepts has been realized in using the computer program *Kvalitan*, see De Weerd (1995).

⁵ As well as constructing meaning configurations

⁶ From the Greek 'hermeneuein'.

In the research approach of this study, the grounded theory and interpretive approach are combined as a research tradition, research strategy, and 'analysis method' in an attempt to combine their respective complementary strengths. It is a confrontation between the 'holistic' interpretive style with the 'highly analytic' character of grounded theory. In deriving grounded concepts, one experiences as a researcher the need for an 'interpretive grounding' of the grounded theory approach, since it says very little about the researcher's interpretive awareness in bracketing, naming, and defining a concept, and in connecting concepts into a meaningful 'whole'. Addison (1989) gave a similar account of his research experience: "*Although grounded theory addresses some of the inadequacies of positivist research methods, as I conducted my investigation, I learned how it fell short of being a consistently interpretive or hermeneutic method of research.*" In reverse, Lueger and Hoffmeyer-Zlotnik (1994) stress the value of the grounded theory approach as a complement to hermeneutic procedures, since grounded theory is elevated above hermeneutic approaches in the sense "*that it generates theory as a principle according to which research can be conducted.*" Hermeneutic procedures neglect the aspect of systematically generating data, and the principles required to go from interpretive reconstructions towards generating theory (e.g. through constant comparative analysis).

Defining the interpretive step

How can this interpretive step be summarized? Overcoming the above shortcomings, through what Addison calls a 'grounded interpretive research' and 'grounded hermeneutic research', implies certain practices for the grounded hermeneutic researcher (1989, p. 113):

1. *Immersing oneself in the participants' world in order to understand and interpret the participant's everyday practices*
2. *Looking beyond individual actions, events, and behaviors to a larger background context and its relationship to the individual events*
3. *Entering into an active dialogue with the research participants, research colleagues, research critics, the account itself, and his or her own values, assumptions, interpretations and understandings*
4. *Maintaining a constantly questioning attitude in looking for misunderstandings, incomplete understandings, deeper understandings, alternative explanations, and changes with time and context*
5. *Analyzing in a circular progression between parts and whole, foreground and background, understanding and interpretation, and researcher and narrative account*
6. *Offering a narrative account of the participants' everyday practices that opens up new possibilities for self-reflection and changed practices*

7. Addressing the practical concerns of the researcher and the research participants against a larger social, cultural, historical, political, and economic background.

More concretely, this 'interpretive grounding' implies that a researcher moves between a part and the whole in the interpretation of a text or of an event that can be considered as a text. This is a central tension which may be linked to movements between closing and disclosing, between concrete and abstract, and between nearness and distance. The tension between part and whole is formulated by Brown, Tappan, Gilligan, Miller and Argyris (1989) as follows: "*The hermeneutic circle points to the fact that complex human phenomena (e.g., interview narratives) can only be understood in a somewhat paradoxical fashion that involves a circular consideration of both the whole and its parts.*" These authors also quote Dilthey (1900/1976): "*Here we encounter the general difficulty of all interpretation. The whole of a work must be understood from individual words and their combination but full understanding of an individual part presupposes understanding of the whole... [Thus] the whole must be understood in terms of its individual parts, individual parts in terms of the whole... Such a comparative procedure allows one to understand every individual work, indeed, every individual sentence, more profoundly than we did before. So understanding of the whole, and of the parts, are interdependent.*"

I see no contradiction between systematically plunging into the parts of an interviewee's text, which proceeds from a grounded theory approach, and a more interpretive approach of the interview text; on the contrary, each can be advantageous to the other, as Dilthey suggests convincingly. An overall interpretation will remain superficial when there is no clear understanding of some parts, and the understanding of some parts is only meaningful when it forms part of a general in-depth understanding of the case. The grounded theory approach has been very helpful to me in learning to disclose (laying open) interview texts in small parts (the so-called vignette), in going gradually and slowly from the concrete to the abstract, and in staying close to the text and (parts of) the stories of the interviewee. Taking a more interpretive stance, I have learned, is necessary for 'sliding' the parts together, and for making a 'leap' into the abstract, while getting some distance from the interviewee's sayings.

The main advantage of the grounded theory approach – namely that it helps (the researcher) to systematically lay open the different parts of the text in and to connect these parts – has turned out to be an important disadvantage as well. As a consequence of this grounded analysis, the researcher arrived at a large amount of grounded concepts (in the three cases, each time more than 100 concepts), which were not easy to reduce in a more integrated whole. One of our solutions was to 'connect' them in complex interpretive charts (so-called meaning configurations) on the basis of the relationships indicated between concepts. Although this

solution was appropriate for the researcher in keeping track of the relationships within the text and between texts of interviewees, these configurations were not easy for readers to grasp, as each configuration implied an extensive story as well. Both shortcomings, the large number of concepts and the complexity of the charts, come down to the same issue in my view; namely, that the context is being lost sight of. As a consequence, we have opted, in analyzing and interpreting the interview texts of the second period, to balance concepts and configurations on the one hand and story and citation on the other hand. The meaning of a concept and a configuration (for the reader) emerges from the story-lines and cannot be disconnected from these narratives. This implies that, besides the mentioned analytical and interpretive skills, narrative and rhetorical competencies are required from the researcher: he or she needs to learn to tell stories and create forms to 'report' (fragment 14). This underscores further the 'logic' of the circle of research: as data generation and data interpretation cannot be separated, interpretation and reporting are closely intertwined as well. For connecting the different activities of researching, the researcher is himself or herself the connecting thread, while his or her social context can strengthen (or weaken) the ties.

Connecting interpreting and reporting

As a consequence of this learning process in interpreting (from analyzing through (interpretive) grounded concepts and reducing concepts through meaning configurations, to gaining interpretive skills and exploring narrative forms), the presentation of results (in chapter four and five) will evolve from 'abstract' to 'concrete' (while one normally expects it the other way around). Firstly, interpretive grounded concepts have been obtained in the form of five dilemmas by comparing first-order concepts from the different cases. These dilemmas are illustrated with fragments from the interviews, however without giving the complete stories (fragment 16). Secondly, the derived interpretive grounded concepts have been linked in interpretive charts around certain events or themes within each case; these charts have then - through comparing the three cases - been integrated into a developmental chart for each separate case. These developmental charts are presented using grounded concepts which are woven into the sequence of events and which are illustrated with fragments from the interview-texts (fragment 17). Thirdly, the interpretation on the basis of the interviews of the second period is presented by telling the stories of the development of the high tech firm, in which the grounded concepts and meaning configurations emerge as the texture of the story and in which the meaning configurations give voice to the different involved actors. I believe that each interpretation (through illustrating dilemmas, through describing developmental charts based on interpretive grounded concepts, and through telling stories focused on the meaning configura-

tions) can imply each time a new understanding of the development of the high tech firm, with a gradually growing balance between concepts and context, between charts and story.

Conclusion: the discursive future of 'meaning analysis'

In the analysis and interpretation of the interview texts, I have emphasized four points. Firstly, we stressed the value of the grounded theory approach for systematically disclosing texts into concepts, while suggesting two changes. In operational terms, the vignette was introduced for storing concepts and seeing clearly the relationships with other concepts. In paradigmatic terms, the notion of 'interpretive grounded concept' was proposed in order to account for the interpretive presence of the researcher in data analysis. Secondly, meaning configurations were introduced as an option to reduce and link grounded concepts in a meaningful way. This analysis method was used in a double way, as a heuristic device for the researcher to integrate insights into an interpretive chart, and as a way to represent and to link the multiplicity of meanings of the different actors involved. Thirdly, combining storytelling with concepts and meaning configurations was seen as an way to balance concepts and context. Fourthly, further emphasizing the dynamics of the research circle, it was stressed that data analysis and interpretation should be closely linked to the reporting activity and to the development of the narrative and rhetorical skills of the researcher.

Using interpretive grounded concepts, meaning configurations, and storytelling are three devices for working with the given text and for reworking it into the researcher's interpretive text. These concepts complement rather than oppose each other, and we could bring them under the same denominator, i.e. 'meaning analysis'. They have partially different approaches to the question, 'what does this text teach me about my research question?', but they do all deal with that same question. Within the range of analysis and interpretation methods, meaning analysis is located between data management and a realistic form of grounded theory on the one side, and discourse analysis on the other. Data management, in the version of Miles and Huberman (1984), is recognized as an analysis of content. With discourse analysis, we find ourselves in an interdisciplinary approach to the text, which ranges from structural analysis to semiotics and goes as far as a deconstructionist textual method. Although content analysis already has a long history and discourse analysis is quite recent, it is not so easy to distinguish them. According to Potter and Wetherell (1987) the main difference between them is that discourse analysis is interested in language as "*a social act... used to persuade*." Meaning analysis and content analysis are alike in that they both involve managing 'data' by encoding text fragments into categories. However, in content analysis, the categories are usually derived *a priori* and the major processing afterwards consists of counting frequencies of categories. Meaning analysis is

also a kind of discourse analysis. Discourse analysis is "a new interdisciplinary field of study that has emerged from several other disciplines of the humanities and the social sciences, such as linguistics, literary studies, anthropology, semiotics, sociology, psychology, and speech communication" (van Dijk, 1988). As a new discipline of text/discourse studies, it is a vast field, "in which it is perfectly possible to have two books on discourse analysis with no overlap in content at all" (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Both qualitative research and discourse analysis seem in part to have sprung from the same soil, similarly to conversation analysis and ethnomethodology, for instance. Meaning analysis can be seen as a kind of discourse analysis, since it tries to shed light on the different discourses used by the various actors and since it emphasizes taking the context into account, by stressing that the emerging concepts should be found in the story lines.

Orienting meaning analysis towards particular forms of discourse analysis will, in my estimation, lead to the emergence of new and valuable possibilities for data analysis and interpretation in organizational research. A rhetorical analysis of interviews forms an important trace for creating new possibilities of empirical social constructionist analysis. Such an analysis, could, for instance, focus on metaphors which refer to the specificity of entrepreneurship or on what interviewees omit or evade, and on the 'empty' spaces in general which can be 'seen' in the text of an interviewee. Examples in the organizational field can be found in the recent work of Marshall (1994) and O'Connor (1995). Also, the influence of the French poststructuralists can be taken into account. Potter and Wetherell (1987) provide a hint: "Continental analysis such as Barthes, Foucault, and Derrida have suggested that some of the crucial insights from semiology could be maintained, particularly the stress on underlying structure, while paying more attention to language use and process of change. This modified semiology (sometimes known as 'post-structuralism') has had a huge impact on literary theory, and is now starting to penetrate social psychology, particularly in research on the self." Besides Potter and Wetherell, other examples in social psychology can be found in Stainton Rogers, Stenner, Gleeson and Stainton Rogers (1995).

The meaning analysis we have used and the suggestion to move into rhetorical approaches, requires however a vision of the (ontological and epistemological) status of a text, and a consideration of the question 'what is a text?'. Now, as we move along the circle of research to the stage of reporting and of writing and communicating interpretations, this question becomes even more pertinent. An attempt to answer it will be elaborated in fragment 14.

The Text and the Reporting of Research

Much attention has recently been paid to the phase of reporting and the question of how researchers arrive at a text (Atkinson, 1990; Marcus & Cushman, 1982; Clifford & Marcus, 1986; Geertz, 1988; Van Maanen, 1988). This seems to me not unreasonable, considering that the text is without a doubt the most important result of their qualitative research. The role of the text is now most visibly being specified in ethnographic and anthropological research - Geertz (1988) speaks of 'the anthropologist as author' - but in every social science more and more interest is now being shown in the question of how a scientific 'account' comes into being. Researchers have always been writers, and although the literary qualities of Freud or Maslow have always been appreciated, it is now being explicitly recognized just how important the process of writing is in giving a sense of reality to the researcher's work.

As we arrive in the research circle at the stage of reporting, it becomes important to address the 'status of a text', which tries to capture the result of a research process. In the genesis of a text with scientific ambitions, I can discern three intertwining levels which help to de-scribe this writing process: the creative, rhetorical, and narrative aspects. My analysis should thus not be confused with the other often good guides with mainly pragmatic contents which set out to inform research writer how best to commit a research report or a treatise to paper (Eco, 1990; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Lefebvre, 1993).

The Birth of a Text

The creative and primary dimension of a text lies in the extension of our social constructionist approach, and has already been dealt with in the discussion of 'data collection' (fragment 12) and of social constructionism as paradigm (fragment 6). In the writing process, and perhaps especially in the writing process, it becomes clear (once again) that "researchers (like artists) are makers of the reality they study", a point made by Czarniawska-Joerges (1992, p. 215). In the context of writing, a significant part of the discussion deals with the representative nature of the text, and thus asks if the author represents reality - in particular in his or her research discoveries - or in fact makes constructions - to be seen more as research inventions, as it were. But by so doing, I have unnecessarily polarized this creative dimension. Peters and

Rothenbuhler (1989) warn against such hasty divisions between fact and fiction, between fact and artifact, between symbol and reality.¹ 'Fact' and 'fiction' are etymologically related - they both point to 'making' (Lat. *facere*; cf. van Nierop, 1992). They refer to each other as twins, "separated only by the relative density of interconnections to other human productions, and not by any essential underlying (ontological) difference" (p. 16). That the symbolic and the real recall one another is also argued by Czarniawska-Joerges (1992), and she in turn makes a reference to Geertz (1980a, p. 135-136): "The confinement of interpretive analysis in most of contemporary anthropology to the supposedly more 'symbolic' aspect of culture is a mere prejudice, born out of the notion ... that 'symbolic' opposes to 'real' as fanciful to sober, figurative to literal, obscure to plain, aesthetic to practical, mystical to mundane, and decorative to substantial." The dichotomy between content and form ultimately falls to bits, and this Polish author suggests combinations like 'structurings of content' and 'embodiments of form' in order to think her way past such a dichotomy. One cannot regard content as separate from form - there is no form without content - and inversely one cannot separate form from content, as if there were a formless content, which subsequently could be canned and boxed, retaining the same content.

But what is this 'making', more closely examined? In terms of this creative dimension of a text, the Bulgarian writer Kristeva, now living in Paris, speaks of 'l'engendrement de la formule', which Broekman (1993) translated as into Dutch as '*verweken van het woord*' - literally the 'begetting of the word'. This brings home the idea that a text is made, is created. However, Broekman 'brews' his definition of 'engendrement' as follows: "A word is not made; it is not about a word, an expression, a formula, a text fragment, an idea put down on paper, a poem, a novel, a philosophical concept rendered in essay form which is made, and once made, exists. It is about the much deeper and feminine mystery in which words and formulations are 'begotten', and in fact never cease being 'begotten'" (p. 127). In everything that I write or say, I am involved in a process of 'begetting', of 'bringing into being'. What happens as I 'beget' this doctoral thesis? According to Kristeva, I write the world in which I grew up, and as I write, I call this world into presence. This thesis is less an individual accomplishment than a vestige of the culture in which I, as a doctoral student, have grown up. Kristeva assumes that it is probably less important to look at 'what I write', and more at 'that I write', and how I thereby conjure up a scientific culture and become part of it. The writer is involved (as a part) in the whole. To observe the writing of a scientific text, my hand as it hesitates, my pen as it scratches, my fingers as they strum - to observe all this is not as easy as it looks: it demands resolve, because it makes us aware of how a scientific culture comes into being. By choosing the word 'beget', Kristeva suggests the inti-

¹ Although they set out from a 'made reality', they attempt to go beyond this apparent separation, in rather short order, in fact; however, their argument here is curious: "The symbolic, performative, and discursive production of reality is ordinary - a given of human society and experience" (p. 16). I have emphasized the word 'given' because it would appear that everything is given, except for this assertion itself.

mate and complete nature of writing. Just as a person constantly begets his begotten life, so a text is continuously being called into presence and being made present. As the writer of a text, I declare myself; in the process, a culture and a tradition add their voices, and in fact must do so, otherwise I am placing myself above the tradition. By associating the text with 'begetting', its instrumental character is exceeded. This dissertation is thus less an instrument than an attempt to advance a scientific culture. Writing becomes a vital necessity.

While reading what Broekman writes as he reads Kristeva, I am reminded of the image of a swimmer. I suggest, I accentuate, I let myself sink in a body of thought until I swim back up to the surface. As I exhale words and spit them out, they bubble up and float to the surface. Whatever I breathe in, I breathe back out. I grasp at my words firmly as I do at the water. Sentences slip away from me, even as they cling to me like gleaming, quivering, splashing droplets. The most naked contact with the world: words. Writing is swimming, lifting up and pushing down, diving down and resurfacing, propelling yourself forward, but in the first place, being able to float. Writing is for Kristeva at once a personal act and not a personal act. In writing I am present as a complete person in whom thinking, writing, and speaking blend with one another, a culture makes its presence known: I am a track that bears a track.

By examining two other textual levels, the rhetorical and narrative, I shall now clarify how the writer creates, rather than represents.

The Text Persuades

The second level regards the rhetorical power of a spoken or written text. A rhetorical perspective concentrates on the question of how a text is able to persuade. Even a scholarly text is more than an unalloyed and precise imparting of information. There is an extra dimension which allows a research report to persuade, without as a result becoming unfaithful to the facts. The power to prove co-exists with the power to persuade. For many it however remains an open question as to whether a rhetorician merely gives the truth a hand up, on the assumption that every rationally thinking being must be persuaded, or that he or she in fact does harm to the truth, thinking that a rhetorical 'treatment' undercuts the information *per se*. We may perhaps speak either of a neutral or of a more heavily laden version of rhetoric. In the latter case, the rhetorical stands in opposition to the real, the untrue in opposition to the true.

In such situations, we like to speak of 'empty rhetoric', as if the packaging undermined or emptied the contents. Speaking as word-spinning, as bombastic talk - or, to put it somewhat less starkly, as feigning, distracting, sowing confusion, manipulating, in order to pervert the

truth, as Plato puts it. Rhetoric becomes deception and illusion. In the first more neutral version, we speak of rhetoric as that part of discourse which 'goes public' and makes use of a particular form and emphasis depending on the audience. Speaking is rhetorical interaction in which we influence, signal, please, or hoodwink one another.

Between the neutral and the deceptive versions lies a twilight zone where the ambiguity of words and images gives the speaker free rein, and where nothing 'goes without saying'; that is, without the speaker amplifying, shedding light on, speaking out.² Reality is here a world of appearing, of seeming and resembling, of likeness and mirror-image, of almost and as if; it is mimetic, is artificial, but it is also a world which brings things to light, reveals, so that they stand out clearly. In this way, clearly defined categories are jumbled together. Peters and Rothenbuhler (1989) emphasize that the ancient Greeks already sensed this when they saw Hermes simultaneously as the god of communication - messenger of Good and Evil - of invention, of deception, of commerce, and of thievery, as well as patron of travelers and of the robbers who beset them, and finally as the god who guided the dead to Hades. Both the inventor and the liar invent things. Peters and Rothenbuhler (1989, p. 26) put forth the idea that Hermes, as the incarnation of the idea that the polymorphous (per)versions of human behavior are all related, should be appointed patron saint of rhetoric: "*Let us embrace the whole Hermes - not only the messenger of the gods but the clever fellow who displays the fruits and foibles of human creativity in all their glorious raucousness.*"

I believe that we may encounter a number of interesting research themes and analyses within this twilight zone: what are the rhetorical dimensions that exist within the interactions between executive and co-worker, between entrepreneur and surroundings, between employers and employees, between interviewers and interviewees? How does a rhetoric of business come into existence? What is the impact of a speech by a CEO, or an article in a company newsletter, a workaday memo, or an advertisement? Leadership, motivation, and both internal and external daily communication become a linguistic matter with a rhetorical undertone in which the question is how, by addressing each another, we become involved with each another, and stay involved in the organizational process. We are faced with questions and themes in the area where marketing, communication, and organizational theory meet. In that border zone between enterprise and market, between salesman and customer, dwells a process of persuasion that drives this interaction and gives it shape. The forum, that marketplace, has always been a maelstrom of voices competing with one another in concert.

The matter becomes trickier when science itself is seen in a rhetorical light, when one considers the rhetorical content of strategic scholarly debate, when "*behaviors, cultures, entire*

historical epochs might be viewed as texts, scientific data as symbolic constructions, scientific descriptions and theories as narratives, mathematical proofs as rhetorical tropes, the ongoing activities of scientific communities as conversations" (Simons, 1989, p. 5). Scholars - when they write and speak - persuade, develop arguments, engage in debate, present opinions, and speculate, deliberate, 'talk into', and dispute. In this so-called 'rhetoric of science', the production of scholarly texts is studied. Whatever a scholar utters, whether in a colloquium, a scientific journal, or during an informal chat over coffee, always takes the form of rhetoric. I see this 'rhetorical turn' as one of the most interesting 'renewals' in socio-scientific thinking - and one which (as usual?) is the target of a seemingly mandatory skepticism (Hammersley, 1992). In fact, a more precise label might be 'rhetorical return' (Simons, 1989), since rhetoric was one of the basic disciplines of Classical civilization. With this revival, a different path of approach is attempted in order to call fundamentally into question the objective first principles upon which scholarship is built (Simons, 1989). This is not an isolated attempt, but one which, according to Simons (1989) is linked to structuralism and post-structuralism, to post-positivism and critical pluralism, and to hermeneutics and critical theory, while at the same time being related to radical feminism and elements of literary criticism, scholarly sociology, and the generative (read social constructionist) paradigm. Likewise, in organizational theory the rhetorical nature of models, theories, and texts has become a subject of research interest (Golden-Biddle & Locke, 1993; Hatch, 1994).³

Texts As Stories

A third level that plays a part in the process of writing involves the story-telling character of a text. I have looked at the narrative quality of reality in fragment 7. If human reality comes into existence in story form, then there is no reason why it should be any different for the researcher. The use of narrative and writing the text as a story may be seen as one possible rhetorical approach to the scholarly publication of research experience. The experience and the story are inextricable. Not only is it the case that "*human experience can be considered qua experience only when it is told as a story*", in the words of Peters and Rothenbuhler (1989, p. 19), but, referring to the philosophy of Arendt (1958) and MacIntyre (1984), the experience does not in fact take precedence over the story. The relationship between experience and meaning, as formulated by Eliot's "*we had the experience, but missed the meaning*", is not dictated by antecedence or consequence, but rather by coincidence. There is no primary experience

³ For a much earlier reference, see J. Gusfield (1976) *The Literary Rhetoric of Science: Comedy and Pathos in Drinking Driver Research*, *American Sociological Review*, 41, 16-33.

² Dutch *niet-spreken*, to utter.

followed by a secondary, told experience. Peters and Rotherbuhler voice this view (1989, p. 19): "Experience is not something raw and dumb that gives our words their meaning; rather, our words give meaning to our experiences. [...] Experience of the world is always already symbolic." Conversely, meaning may not be seen as inseparable from experience, nor truth from experience. Czarniawska-Joerges (1992) observes this in reference to Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and their experiential conception of truth, another attempt to reconcile objectivism and subjectivism, in which meaning is seen as metaphorically structured experience which has been interactively negotiated. Our understanding of an utterance or of a metaphor, and our addition of the predicate 'this is true' to that utterance, to that concrete story, comes into existence because it is linked to our understanding of a particular situation; it is linked to our way of experiencing. In order to illustrate how truth and story, experience and metaphor are inseparable - they are two sides of the same coin - I have coupled two sources; namely, a rhetorical approach to communication (Peters & Rotherbuhler) and an anthropological view of culture (Czarniawska-Joerges). Czarniawska-Joerges adds that both sides - in her analysis, that means symbolic realism and experientialism - may be seen as the two sides, a reflective and active side, of the same *pragmatic* solution.

The above discussion may also be condensed into a short story: "The Master gave his teaching in parables and stories which his disciples listened to with pleasure - and occasional frustration, for they longed for something deeper. The master was unmoved. To all their objections he would say, 'You have yet to understand, my dears, that the shortest distance between a human being and Truth is a story'" (Anthony de Mello, 1985). This story takes up the discussion of the relationship between fact and fiction, but follows a different route, by suggesting the power and the veracity of 'telling a story'. In the bargain, it is told in a form which cleaves to its own suggested content, a story about stories.

Qualitative research on the basis of a case study is usually reported in story or narrative form. The interpretations which I as researcher have made (often separate bits, not yet hanging together) call for continuity and melt into the form of a text with line, a narrative text. As researching author I make a new intervention and thus attempt to make my insights as clear, but above all as lively, as possible. This is no caprice. Such a narrative approach is not a stylistic choice in order to make the report more attractive, but is rather "inherent in the purpose of case studies and the nature of their inquiry" (Ely, 1991, p. 169). In this way the scholarly text attains the status of a literary truth.

Various authors have suggested ways to report research 'differently', with, as I see it, an increasing degree of extremity. I shall now consider the proposals made by Van Maanen (1988), Rose (1990), and Richardson (1994).

Van Maanen (1988, p. 7) distinguishes three forms in which a story may be written: realist tales, 'confessional' tales, and impressionistic tales.⁴ He describes them as follows: "Realist tales... provide a rather direct, matter-of-fact portrait of a studied culture, unclouded much by much concern for how the fieldworker produced such a portrait... Confessional tales focus far more in the fieldworker than on the cultures studied... Impressionist tales are personalized accounts of fleeting moments of fieldwork cast in dramatic form; they therefore carry elements of both realist and confessional writing."

The realist tale is the most prevalent form, while there are numerous objections to confessional or autobiographical tales (Burgess, 1984; Van Maanen, 1988). The autobiographical report answers the researchers' need to look back over their path, to make it known, to learn from it themselves, and to free themselves from it to some extent. It also becomes possible for others to learn from their experience, and through autobiographies we may gain a more systematic view of qualitative research. The realist and autobiographical versions by no means exclude one another, and can, in my opinion, be complementary: the meaning of the research tale can be strengthened against the background of the researcher's own tale. This methodological chapter thus includes a number of personal fragments which may reflect the researcher's learning process. An autobiographical story picks up on the idea of the log-book in which the researcher makes lifelike yet careful notes on his or her experiences. The impressionist version, which combines both of the preceding versions, draws on the storytelling qualities of the researching writer in search of a good tale or a gripping yarn.

A story is one literary genre, but there are many others. In Rose (1990) we find a radical plea - perhaps too extreme for some - for the written forms of scholarly publications to be torn asunder. We are dealing here with more than a change in our writing style, the insertion of a quotation, a comparison or an allusion to art, or playing around with the table of contents; Rose aims for a sea-change, an ethnography of "intimacy, not distance; of stories, not modes; of possibilities, not stabilities; and of contingent understandings, not detachable conclusions" (Van Maanen, Manning & Miller, 1990). This demands an examination of the relationship between text and (organizational) life, out of which a future authorship of many new forms can grow, "a polyphonic, heteroglossic, multigeneric construction" (Rosen, 1990, p. 56). What has Rosen got in mind? He himself provides examples of ethnographic poetry, but the spectrum of forms is much wider: novellas, visual material, mini-essays, critiques, personal and emotional impressions by the author,⁵ but also letters, postcards, performances, dialogues, recordings... The main idea is not that one chooses an alternative form, but that one allows different forms, voices, and genres to co-exist within one text or volume.⁶

⁴ He also mentions the critical, formal, literary, and jointly-told story.

⁵ See Rosen (1990, p. 57).

In its most extreme form, writing becomes in itself a research method. Laurel Richardson (1994) defends this point of view when she says that writing is always a manner of 'knowing', and not simply of 'telling what is already known'. Writing is a manner of discovering, both in the sense of exploring and revealing, and of inventing, in the sense of giving meaning to one's experience. The relationship is turned around: not writing what you know, but knowing what you are writing. Crucial in this 'knowing' are the written forms which the author applies. The format of the scientific publication is to a large extent pre-scribed, in terms of structure, length, language use, style, manner of reference. Such conventions – in fact, literary conventions – exercise a strong influence over content, and even more over how the text will be read and by whom. In this sense, we are speaking of a limitation to the essence of the author's work, and the expression of his or her discoveries. As a result, some researchers are in search of new writing formats, which Richardson (1994) brings together under the name of 'experimental representations'. Common to these formats is that they run roughshod over the prescribed rules of writing, and seriously exceed the usual frontiers of socio-scientific documentation. Scholarly writing becomes no longer a habit or ritual. Richardson distinguishes five alternative forms of evocative writing. A first form is 'the narrative of the self', comparable to Van Maanen's confessional tale. Here, the researcher narrates his or her research experience, writing not so much about the other, as about himself or herself in relation to the other. In this way the writer in fact becomes the other, writing more under his or her own name than in the name of others. Through ethnographical, fictional representation, writers describe their work as fiction, as a product of their imagination. Building further on the narrative of the self, the writer begins to make use of more stylistic means, in order to evoke the cultural situation being examined. This is not a true-to-life representation, but a form of fiction in which some elements are emphasized and placed in a particular time sequence, and where persons and viewpoints are sharply characterized, perhaps to the point of caricature. Although we are here considering a form of fiction, the question remains how this form relates to the 'real' or to what is normally called fiction. The poetic representation is a third form of evocation, and above all plays on the emotional connection between reader and writer. The poem is marked in its constructedness, and as such makes us aware of the constructedness of each text. It is one of the most powerful forms for seeing the world and social realities in a new light, and calling up a deepened, more direct understanding. Fourthly, in the ethnographic drama, various points of view and perceptions appear simultaneously, as their mutual relationships are revealed. Furthermore, drama is a direct form which crosses the borderline between

⁶ Such statements may seem extreme, but Kariel and Sanders (1989) note that, for example, the use of epigraphs, those clever little quotations placed at the beginning of scholarly texts, at first glance appearing to be nothing more than plesanteries, is already outside the conventions of scholarly writing, and can be seen as an example of Bakhtin's multivoicedness.

the written and the spoken text. A last form of expression, which comprises a number of possibilities, consists of a hybrid of scientific and literary genres. The hybrid is for Richardson a deconstructionist critique of triangulization, so highly praised in traditional circles. In short, the repertoire from which the scholarly writer may choose becomes markedly larger: tale, ethnographic fiction, poetry, drama, or a hybrid form. In all of these forms, the voice and the sensibility of the researcher becomes more pronounced. This is in contrast to the situation where the researcher is taught to write 'scientifically', and thus not from himself or herself. The traditional approach leads to texts which resemble one another, and scientific scholarship which arises from a movement of homogenization (fragment 2). It is however not clear if this broadening of the spectrum can count on much acceptance in the scientific community.

The Truth of a Research Report

Once we accept that we construct reality, the question becomes how we construct reality, and how we can judge these constructions. This demands revision and broadening of the criteria that we are accustomed to using.⁷ Usually we say that a text must be accurate and authentic. Inspired by rhetoric, Peters and Rothenbuhler show us how to think our way past these criteria. I shall begin with this last remark.

The point of departure is that reality is constructed on the basis of rhetorical means. The task in forming criteria consists of moving beyond the distrust that these means incite inside and outside the scientific community: What is the reality of these rhetorical constructions? Peters and Rothenbuhler (1989) see two sources for this distrust. Truthfulness, i.e. the accuracy with which the world is represented, is called into question, and there is a fear of a loss of authenticity, i.e. the intensity and quality of human experience estimated on the basis of proximity. These are the two objections which could be expressed against the present text as well: how accurate and authentic is the presentation of the case narratives? The accuracy objection asks to what extent the case story is a faithful copy of the case itself. Is it a truthful reflection? In order to achieve an affirmative answer, the researcher must intervene and mediate as little as possible. Here, the researcher is a nuisance, for he or she forms an obstacle to a clear view of the phenomenon. However, Peters and Rothenbuhler point out that this approach continues to deny that the researcher not so much mediates as constructs and creates reality. It is as if a taboo hung over the latter idea. To this they somewhat laconically add: "*The only scandal is how long we believed that we did not make reality*" (p. 23). A research text is not a form

⁷ The question of research criteria is considered in fragment 15, but I shall here introduce a few ideas in connection with the phase of research reporting.

of communication about something, but rather the communication is the research itself: knowledge too is reality. The authenticity objection follows on closely and proposes that 'What, for example, has occurred and continues to occur in a company' can never be conjured up in a research text, just as a football match seen at the park is more authentic than one seen on television. Images and stories are not in the same league with the 'real experience'. I would here answer that both are experiences, that each is different, but that neither can claim the label of 'more authentic' or 'original'. The contexts of researching and of the company itself are involved with one another, but neither is replaceable by the other. Events in the company cannot be the research, and conversely, the research is not of itself the company reality.

This 'relativizing' of accuracy and authenticity, the typical representation criteria, demands a further development of criteria which, in keeping with the creative and narrative dimension of a text, can become enlarged into political, ethical, or aesthetic criteria. I shall keep the discussion (and the quest for criteria) more on the *pragmatic* side. Having acknowledged the trend sketched out above, and thus free from stylistic rigidity, I can develop my own style of writing as researcher. To tell the story of a company, on the basis of open interviews, observations, and texts, demands a handling which takes the form not only of a data analysis, but also of a composition: putting concepts into words, writing out themes, interpolating quotes from interviews, arranging fragments, linking empirical and theoretical notes, finding points of entry and focus, such as incidents, metaphors, 'events', epiphanies... Even more than in the analysis phase, personal variations will play a part, making it necessary to put into words how the research is being put into words. A researcher must keep an eye on the process of writing.

'Keeping an eye on writing' is a social process in which one can make use of two strategies: interruption and revision. Through interruption as continual revision, it becomes possible for writers to 'muddle through and organize what they know in order to find a line of argument, to learn anew and to discover what was not known before (Fitzgerald, 1987). Lofland and Lofland (1984) advise researching writers to regularly lay aside the texts they are working on. Gaining perspective by taking breaks can both help to maintain the will to write and to provide a fresh overview of how one is doing. However, even more important is the process of revision, when others look at the text, as a result of which the habit of 'scientific publication' is applied. The self-critical abilities of the writer are encouraged. In the 'publication process' the author is often asked new questions which lead him or her back to the data to perform selective analyses and come to new interpretations. During the publication process of the article on texture as metaphor as a means of gaining insight into high tech companies (Bouwen & Steyaert, 1990b), two case studies were originally compared with one another, until the editor of the publication (*Journal of Management Studies*) proposed using one case

study, which then could be more extensively and deeply dealt with - a 'thick description'. At the same time, guidelines were offered as to how a case study could be described in concrete terms (resulting in the overview of events, p. 641). As a result, I made a new selection from the interview text, structured it differently, and broadened the discussion of the case to a large degree. In reaction to the revised version, the editor wrote that the case and the model came into sharper focus. This example of formal text revision shows clearly how a published text is an intersubjective construction, to which one or more authors put their names, but in which other authors directly or indirectly play a part.

Interruption and informal revision have had a complementary effect on the way I have conceived the present text. When I asked people to read and comment on one of the fragments, this implied also an interruption in the writing process. I only returned to the text after having received their reactions and responses to the text. As a writer in the process of writing, you start a direct dialogue with a few of your (possible) readers. But the interruption means also a 'rupture', and it was sometimes with great difficulty that I tried to learn to look at my text with the eyes and the significations of these readers who told me where in the text they got stuck, enchanted, confused, bored, or surprised. The variety and differences of their comments about content, structure, and style gave me the necessary distance from my texts to allow me to rework and rewrite them in such a way that they can become more accessible to future readers. Still, one cannot overestimate the value of such a revision process, as these lectures are always only 'rehearsals' for the next reading by another reader, who will create a new version of the text as he or she formulates new objections and different insights. At the same time, through these remarks I learned to see the possibilities and limits of my way of articulating, as readers kept asking such tough questions as 'what do you mean by that?'

Translation can be seen as a specific form of interruption and revision in the writing process of this text. Three kind of texts have been rewritten through translation: fragments in Dutch, fragments directly written in English, and fragments which were a somewhat awkward combination of both. Through translation the writing process was doubly interrupted as I returned to a text which had been read by a reader who had rewritten the text in a most fundamental way; in fact, I returned to a new text.⁸ As a writer it was for me a 'jump' into a new cultural bed. Furthermore, I cannot think of any other more systematic form of 'informal revision'. This implied that the translator, in addition to the other informal 'revisors', presented many new questions with regard to the content as well as the color, the rhythm, and the tonality of the text... His questions do not only have the undertone of 'what does this mean?', but more important, 'what *can* this mean?', creating in this way new possibilities for the text

⁸ For a vision of translation as 'creating', based on a performative view of language, see Steyaert and Janssens (forthcoming).

and its writer. Such a generative effect of translation was especially possible as the text was translated while still in the process of being written.

The Dissertation As Text

Writing is the final step in the researcher's learning process, since the publication - the final text - is bound up with the retention in the practice of the research circle and of a study. All the same, the beginnings of a final text take place earlier, and in the present case, much earlier: this dissertation has been thoroughly 'rehearsed', prepared, ground-out, and test-flown in note-form, discussions, interview scribbles, company reports, interim reports, research documents, colloquia, seminars, training sessions, conversations, books, and journals... and finally this text itself becomes part of that list. Again paraphrasing Weick, I write in order to obtain an answer to the question 'how can I know what I learned/researched until I see what I have written?'. And I do not so much answer that question myself as I do through conversations with others, to whom I send my texts for commentary in the form of scratch-marks in the margin, telephone calls, questions, notes, silences, brief reactions, and long discussions. Others make it clear to me what the text means, what it does not mean, and what it could mean. As a result, the text lies idle, now for a short time, now for a long time, with new life breathed into it, or completely blocked, and then taken up again. All to the text's improvement, one hopes. Equally, the doctoral defense is another intersubjective writing moment in the life and death of a dissertation.

I have chosen to write this dissertation in fragments (fragment 26), which allows the possibility of various genres, forms, styles, structures, and lengths, that may be bundled together into a kind of *library* - a multi-referential selection - (fragment 2), as *circle* - leitmotif (fragment 10), and as *labyrinth* - a maze where one repeatedly returns to the same point, or what appears to be the same point (see *Entrate*).

Envoi: The Role of the Reader...

The metaphor of the library assigns great importance to the role of the reader in the 'writing' of a text, and of a dissertation text in particular. In that respect, this treatise on reporting in relation to the status of a text has too one-sidedly stressed the creative, narrative,

and rhetorical interventions of the writer. The role of the reader has to be fully acknowledged in the creation of textual meaning, next to the author's intention and the produced text: there is no dialogue without reader. The creative and aesthetic role of the reader has been argued in the work of, among others, Eco (1989) and Barthes (1986),⁹ and it has gradually been transmitted from literary texts to other kinds of texts, such as translations, 'publications' produced by business firms, or scientific dissertations.¹⁰

As a text exists between author and reader, and emerges from the relationship they establish, we need to document the dialogue between researcher and co-actors, such as persons of the high tech firms we were in contact with, scholars also involved in our topic of innovative entrepreneurship, as well as the advisor and colleagues. Since this fragment concludes the documentation of every stage of the research circle, we can in fragment 15 re-walk the research circle and illustrate the interactions of the researcher with the 'public', the different audiences he has been in contact with. The aim of sketching these consecutive meetings is meant as a way to bring the evaluation of this research into the dialogue between writer and reader. The dialogical principle will be offered as the main feature of this legitimizing process, as it is an important path for continuing the process of knowledge production (instead of fixating on it, as can be the case in evaluation pure and simple). In the account of evaluation (which can be read in fragment 15), the author can 'describe' his way of working and clarify his intentions. Once this (fragment) has been written, I, like every other author, have to admit the reader: the text is all yours!

⁹ See among others their respective notions of *opera aperta* or 'open places' (Andriaga, 1991) and *textes scriptibles* or 'writable texts' (in connection with readable texts which force the reader into the role of consumer, see Bertens and D'haen (1983)).

¹⁰ For an application of the so-called reader-response theory to organizational life, see Yanow (1994).

Research Evaluation As a Legitimation Process

Introduction: Evaluation and the Legitimation Process

What criteria can I use to judge this study? What constitutes the quality of this and other qualitative studies? Our answer to these questions begins with the distinction between research as process and research as output, and entails arguing for a transition from a situation which emphasizes research criteria that are applied externally to both the research process and to the actions of the researcher, to a position in which a researcher legitimizes his or her study in relation to different audiences. A legitimation perspective allows researchers a chance to look self-reflexively at how they, together with others, legitimize themselves and claim a form of authority. In order to smooth out this path, we shall once again make use of the pragmatic/paradigmatic tension. From a paradigmatic perspective, research criteria are approached variously in function of the paradigmatic lens that the researcher is using. From a pragmatic point of view, it is important that a researcher's path be visible and negotiable. Whether a researcher appeals to paradigmatic arguments or to pragmatic developments, the goal will be a form of legitimation, an explanation of the reasons why particular utterances are made. In legitimation, the researcher mixes paradigmatic and pragmatic utterances in a complex or an implicit manner. This means that the researcher must have the courage of his or her convictions and must write out a route. This often comes down providing the basic assumptions, but it can be much more extensive. I discovered an example of this sort of courage in Czarniawska-Joerges (Steyaert, 1994b), who, interested in developing an anthropological perspective for organizations and in investigating its methodological implications, found it necessary to begin her book with a sort of self-justification, and then spent the whole course of the book making a method: "*I opened the old box with dichotomies such as positivism and romanticism, realism and idealism, objectivism and relativism, and chose and put together those that fitted my purpose at hand, in a pragmatist spirit*" (p. 224). For this process she refers to Mills (1967), who in one of the most imaginative books about research, *The Sociological Imagination*, proposes that "*each man be his own methodologist*" (p. 123). Wolcott too advises first-time researchers to 'find their own way'.¹ In this connection he speaks of 'posturing'. This verb can be used in two ways: in the positive sense of 'positioning', gaining a strategic position, where researchers link

¹ Cited by Hamilton (1994).

theoretical assumptions and work practices, and develop their own place within the marketplace of ideas; and a more negative version, as in 'posing', or adopting an artificial, affected, or false position. In this case the prescription is again pragmatic, and according to Hamilton (1994), eclectic, pluralistic, and synthetic. This leads immediately to further legitimization and clarification about how to deal with the different approaches which we are here combining. One does not inherit traditions, even though as researcher it may often seem that way. For example, anyone who uses a grounded theory approach that initially never intended to set itself up as dogmatic, can still get the impression of being closed within a system and is treated as such: one is questioned as to one's coherence according to the premises of the system. Traditions can be better seen as preferences, 'compiled or invented' (Hamilton, 1994), meaning that in each study the tradition is experienced, rewritten, and further carried on. To paraphrase Mills, each researcher can be his or her own tradition.² Legitimation is at the same time a researcher's way of making explicit a way of researching. This is not as simple as it seems, for it is something like asking the dancer how he dances. This requires a more explicit account of the 'tacit knowledge' that a researcher builds up while researching. I have attempted such accounts in the course of the methodological chapter: on the basis of research experiences, I have tried to come to a practical knowledge of how to do qualitative research, and to locate this singular approach in the maelstrom of traditions and possibilities.

In legitimizing this dissertation I shall accent three points. Firstly, consistent with the vision of research as a circular movement, I shall inscribe the discussion of criteria in the circle of research. Legitimation is not a post-research activity, but demands space during the project. Like the conceptual framework, legitimation is involved throughout the procession through the circle of research. Secondly, I shall emphasize the pragmatic side above all - even though some will point out that such a choice is paradigmatically slanted - as Seidman (1991, p. 136) suggests: "*Instead of appealing to absolutist justifications, instead of constructing theoretical logics and epistemic casuistries to justify a conceptual strategy... I propose that we be satisfied with local, pragmatic rationales for our conceptual [interpretive] approaches*" (cf. also Lather, 1993). Thirdly, I believe that legitimation entails a more personal evaluation of the learning process in research.

Closely allied to these three accented points, the *relevance* of a study also deserves a central place in the legitimization process. Researchers from the organizational and entrepreneurship fields, who have often developed a similar feeling for practicality, can here let their own presence be felt, within a debate that, as it is carried on in the social sciences (Denzin & Lincoln's handbook is no exception to this tendency), often ignores or at least deforms the voices of organization actors. In many studies the question of the relevance of the study is the last step

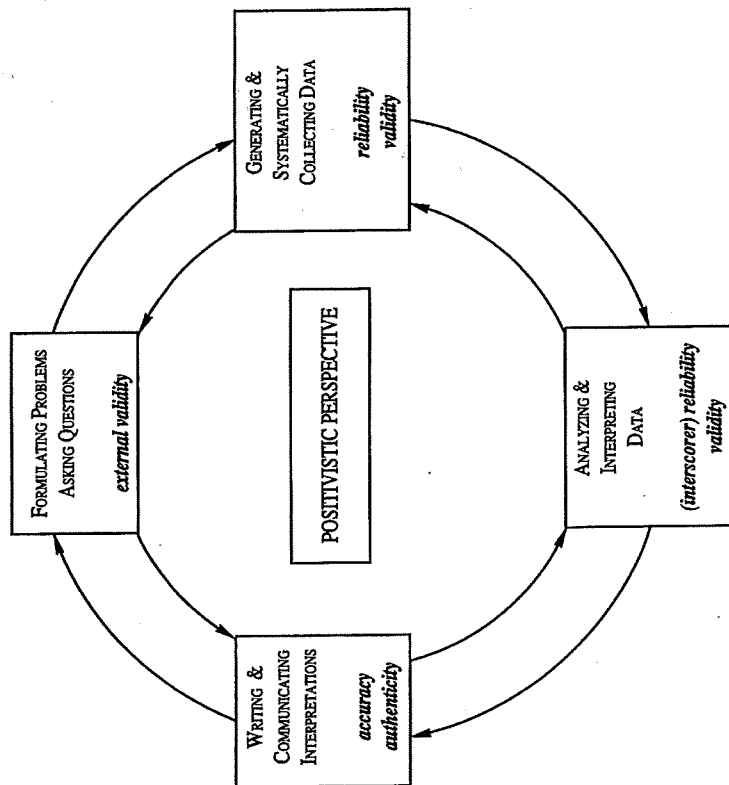
in the process. There is often an abrupt swing from research practice to the practical situation and the possible usefulness of the study. Studies within the organizational domain often attach greater importance to practice and attempt to break with such scenarios. This becomes apparent from the fact that, given the general division between positivist and interpretive research approaches, there is often a third type added; that is, action-oriented research as an overarching term for the extensive attempts to couple theoretical and practical relevance (Chisholm & Elden, 1993; fragment 11). Action-oriented research was to a large extent developed within the field of organization theory (Argyris & Schön, 1978; Elden & Chisholm, 1993; Torbert, 1991; Whyte, 1991), with extensions to communities and regions (Finsrud, 1994). I believe that a researcher in the organizational field cannot choose between scientific strictness and practical relevance as if it were a question of the one or the other. Maintaining the tension is crucial. A tried and true means of dealing with such a tension consists of a sequential strategy (Steyvaert & Janssens, under revision), in which two poles are dealt with one after the other. Priority is given to the fundamentally directed research that - eventually - will be put into practice, often by others. A sequential bridging has however meant that science and practice have moved ever further apart. The question then arises of whether there are other ways to maintain the tension. In chapter six I shall deal explicitly with the theme of the relevance of a study and look at the possible approaches to this problem that could be taken from a social constructionist standpoint. The position I would like to develop, based on a contextualist view, is that there is no general relevance, but that knowledge is bound to an audience and that relevancy arises from the specific dialogue between the researcher/interventionist and the various fields under consideration.

Legitimation Through Research Criteria: a Question of Perspective

Criteria can be specified in function of the different parts of the circle of research. However, determining research criteria and allocating them to the course of the research circle are processes that are not independent of the paradigmatic discussion. Hammersley (1992) distinguishes three stances which researchers try to adopt regarding the question 'what criteria shall I use to judge my research?'. A first stance calls for employing the same criteria that the quantitative researchers do, since all scientific criteria are after all generally applicable. It is here a question of the classic criteria of objectivity, reliability, and validity. In the circle of research (figure 15.1), the most important criteria, as they are employed according to the positivist stance, are allocated to the different stages of the research question.

² This argument will be elaborated in our account on reporting and writing a scientific text (see fragment 14).

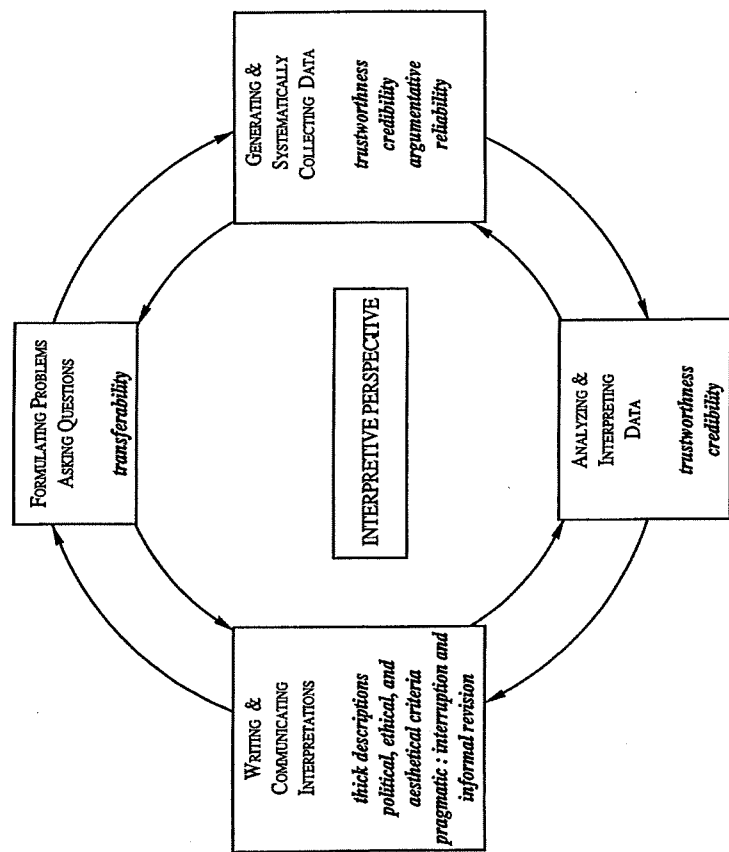
Figure 15.1 Research criteria from a positivistic perspective



A second group would have it that ethnographic research needs to reformulate these criteria or to develop its own criteria for the study of the life of society, since ethnography represents a methodological philosophy different from the quantitative approach, which reflects the positive sciences. The criteria, as developed using an interpretive perspective, are found in figure 15.2.³

³ We shall limit ourselves here to the constructionist criteria within the interpretive paradigm. For the criteria of critical (Marxist, emancipatory) and feminist-post-structuralist research, see Denzin & Lincoln (1994).

Figure 15.2 Research criteria from an interpretative perspective



A last stance rejects criteria altogether, since their development is in conflict with the very nature of ethnography. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) link these three stances to the various paradigmatic positions. The first stance is consistent with a positivist position, the second with a post-positivist position (although the criteria differ depending on whether it is a matter of a constructionist, critical, feminist, or cultural perspective), the third with postmodernist or post-structuralist positions which respectively see no advantage in forming criteria or suggest completely new criteria without any ambition of laying a foundation. From these three stances, it becomes clear that there are multiple perspectives for legitimizing the research process of a concrete project. There are no absolute criteria; rather, criteria are inserted in function of the perspective of the researcher and the evaluators, who can agree upon which criteria to apply. The criteria are then used in the dialogue between the researcher and the different audiences being interacted with. In this project, we would like to follow a pragmatic path, seeing legitimization as a process of dialogical intersubjectivity. This leads us down the

third road, where we will try - together with Schwandt - to develop an anti-foundationalist route which aims at a constructive and perspectivistic dialogue between the different actors involved in the creation of this text.

Pragmatic Legitimation: Dialogical Intersubjectivity

A researcher legitimizes his or her work not only with reference to external criteria, but also by indicating what activities are being undertaken and where these criteria have been discussed in the course of the research. Such discussions have two characteristics. They are directed to different communities of knowledge and they proceed intersubjectively.

Research as a meeting between different 'interpretive communities'

The knowledge which is built up in a study is not an unmovable monolithic block that offers truth independently of the user. Knowledge is intended for different audiences, just as many readings and many books can be hidden in one book (fragment 2, on the organizational library). These audiences have different questions, interests, problems, and concerns, and they employ their own criteria in order to view knowledge as knowledge. In a study, knowledge is thus constructed in interaction with different so-called 'communities of knowledge' or 'interpretive communities' (Denzin, 1994; Fish, 1980). Every community of knowledge takes different positions concerning "*writing, description, inscription, interpretation, understanding, representation, legitimation, textual desire, and the logic and politics of text*" (Denzin, p. 511). There is a real danger that such communities are quickly dealt with paradigmatically, even though I am of the opinion that interpretive communities should also be seen as local communities or networks, in which knowledge and the principles of knowledge-constructing arise through interaction. It is more than just a question of a handful of paradigmatic communities as in the case of Denzin, who together with James makes a distinction between a 'tender-minded' and 'tough-minded' interpretive community, or in the case of Snow (1964), who speaks of 'two cultures'. I see a growing realization that organizations are intelligent systems, or knowledge systems, and that this applies equally to a research institute or a university, as well as to a primary school for special education, a fish market, or a museum. All of these are systems in the process of learning, in which knowledge is being produced about how kids with disabilities can learn, about the right way to fillet fish and keep it fresh, or about how to set up exhibits and art-shows. Primary school teachers, fishmongers, and museum directors are 'knowledge workers'. The overwhelming claim made by the idea of the 'learning organization' is a clear

illustration that knowledge comes into being in many different localities, and that research as a special (plat)form of knowledge-construction must find its own ways for these various sorts of 'knowledge-pools' to confront one another, and to incorporate its own knowledge system into these local communities. The generalizability of knowledge is then based not only on its ability to be transferred and inscribed into new contexts - to be seen as a form of contextual 'communicativity' - but also on its inherent generative and 'multiplicative' effect. The use of knowledge bound to a specific context within another context asks that this understanding be multiplied and (further) developed, so that a new understanding can arise (Steyaert, Bouwen, Van Looy, forthcoming). This new understanding is both a continuation and a renewal of the other model, that is nonetheless in no way invalid: it is understanding, pure and simple. The development of knowledge in accordance with a contextual epistemology (Tsoukas, 1994, fragment 26) is thus dispersive and synthetic. Cronbach (1975), known for his important psychometric accomplishments, also recognizes the worth of a qualitative approach in which general truth is always in tension with local values: "*When we give proper weight to local conditions, any generalization is a working hypotheses, not a conclusion.*" Knowledge development is not a reductionist and defensive activity, but an enriching, imaginative, and creative one.

I suspect that there are a number of audiences through which this text has come into being. To simplify things I have made a distinction in the figures below between a university and a business organization. (For the university, the field is often the local community; for businesses, the university is usually a local community). However, for a singular study like this one, there arise very soon a great number of communities of knowledge that could be mentioned, from the academic Department of (Organizational) Psychology in Louvain, to the Entrepreneurship Division of the Academy of Management, from the Strategic Plan for the Kempen, to the Euro-region Project and the Chamber of Commerce in Brussels - all places I have worked as a researcher. The nature of this multiple, local legitimation is thus intersubjective. The researcher is in dialogue when he or she generates, collects, interprets, and reports data, in the first place with the members of the organizations under study, but also with scholars, colleagues, publications... Field research invites intersubjectivity. The researcher must explain the study afresh with each new interview, and invites the interviewee to tell his or her story. In this research the subject being researched can 'talk with' and 'talk back'; the researcher cannot surreptitiously sneak in and 'gather' a little data before just as surreptitiously disappearing again by a backdoor. The researcher's presence is acknowledged. This applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to the production of knowledge within scientific communities, where it is a case of collaborative thinking, making objections, confronting criteria - in short, where research-in-progress is legitimized. It is also the researcher's task to make his or her personal

biases available for discussion, to build credibility, and to adapt and develop personal contributions through 'peer debriefing', 'peer examinations', 'consensual validation', 'member checks', 'communicative validation', and 'action planning'.

Intersubjectivity as a pragmatic criterion

Creating a frame for intersubjective evaluation

The intersubjective 'criterion' is increasingly being given priority in the legitimization of a study's quality, and, more important, there is interest in the way intersubjectivity can be conceived of and made concrete. One of the earliest attempts to accomplish this came from Reason and Rowan (1981). According to these two authors, validity, within what they call 'new paradigm research', must be based on an interactive, dialectical logic, in which research is seen as a human process. If research is not universally objective, it does not necessarily have to bear witness to individual subjectivity and solipsism. As a researcher, you get perspective, a personal view from a distance. As a qualitative researcher, you try to keep in 'distant proximity'. Knowledge in the latter case may be called neither objective nor subjective, but intersubjective. "Reality is neither subject nor object, it is both wholly independent of me and wholly dependent on me. This means that any notion of validity must concern itself both with the knower and with what is to be known: valid knowledge is a matter of relationship." Reason and Rowan (1981, p. 244) sum up a few principles which increase validity; significantly, they refer to the quality of the research process itself and to what the researcher is doing: "*Validity in new paradigm research lies in the skills and sensitivities of the researcher, in how he or she uses herself as a knower, as an inquirer. Validity is more personal and interpersonal, rather than methodological.*" More recent are the similarly pragmatic approaches that can be found in Czarniawska-Joerges (1992) and Kvale (1994), who inscribe conversation and dialogue within the evaluation of research.⁴ Czarniawska-Joerges (1992) takes a pragmatic course, as I have pointed out, which leads her, together with Sederberg (1984), to reject the idea that social science can reach a consensus on what the relevant social facts are. She stresses the politics in the evaluation of quality, something which is rarely admitted. A researcher is under social control in regard to whether the dominant criteria are being followed. As a consequence, researchers follow the dominant coalition, while the

⁴ We can here also point to Smaling's work (1992, 1993). Smaling (1992) distinguishes five forms of intersubjectivity: by consensus, by regimentation, by explicitness, by argumentation, and by dialogue. Smaling (1993) has subsequently studied in particular the dialogical aspect in relation to the role played by openness in social research. Dialogical openness is however dealt with dialectically. Furthermore, the author finds the asymmetry between the researcher and the subject to be a problem for a dialogue one wishes to conceive of symmetrically. In chapter five, fragment 23, we shall review the idea of (a)symmetry in communication, resulting in a dialogic, rather than a dialectic, vision of legitimation. For the rest, Smaling maintains a strongly individualistic view of people, and considers it the primary task of researcher and researchee to keep the human quality from being degraded.

innovative potential of science is undermined. Czarniawska-Joerges (p. 221) notes that "*students are directed toward findings and facts, whereas it is only ideas that count and stay*", but she gives no alternative paths for reaching this goal. The generating of ideas is an important aspect for examining the legitimization process but should be linked to alternative forms of power, i.e. dialogue. Kvale (1994, p. 22-23) states that a social constructionist view shifts the emphasis from observation to conversation and interaction with the social world, "*which in turn involves a communicative and a pragmatic concept of validity.*" Kvale distinguishes between two complementary forms of validation, communicative and pragmatic. While communicative validation concerns testing knowledge-claims in a dialogue, dependent on a specific public, pragmatic validation is about how some claims work in practice, for example in action research. One can doubt if this distinction is fruitful, as we have noticed that there are more than two audiences (there is no such a thing as theory and practice, or 'theory-oriented audiences' and 'practice-oriented audiences'). Furthermore, it is quite impossible to suppose that dialogue with an academic audience is not an action, and a practice in itself. Finally, the pragmatics of evaluation will be in essence a communicative action, as Schwandt's vision, which now follows, will show.

Evaluation through dialogue

One of the most recent, far-reaching, and illuminating propositions comes from Schwandt (1995) who in four respects accords with our methodological and social constructionist argument: in the first place, he makes a distinction between a philosophical and a pragmatic manner of broaching the criteria question; secondly, he emphasizes that a theoretical and a methodological pluralism found in many authors ceases when the discussion of criteria begins: they then often fall back on simple solutions; thirdly, he seeks a way out via a dialogical approach; and fourthly, he faces the need for creativity and imagination (cf. above: Czarniawska-Joerges). Schwandt speaks of a 'foundationalist', 'non-foundationalist', and 'anti-foundationalist' approach to the problem of criteria.⁵ The non-foundationalist or post-positivist approach to formulating such alternative criteria as, for instance, 'authenticity', cannot be argued for in the absence of "*what Bernstein labels the 'Cartesian anxiety', [that] motivates the continuing quest for definitive criteria, although, generally, non-foundational epistemologies rule the day*" (Schwandt, 1995, p. 2). Schwandt then attempts to write in an anti-foundationalist vein, without in the process falling into relativizing with its characteristic confusion, chaos, or skepticism. He breaks off the quest for criteria, and begins to develop the question of the quality of research "*as a problem of moral and political judgment [seeking] a solution through recovering concepts and insights from the pragmatic tradition of practical reasoning*" (p. 2). Schwandt (p. 13) accounts for

⁵ This is roughly parallel with the three positions distinguished by Hammersley and Denzin & Lincoln.

this pragmatic change of course in three ways, referring in the process to Bernstein (1983, 1991): "The pragmatic tradition accepts anti-foundationalism and a thorough-going fallibilism (but not epistemological skepticism) as an alternative to foundationalism. Further, it endorses 'the social character of the self and the need to nurture a critical community of inquirers' and is keenly aware of and sensitive to 'radical contingency and chance that mark the universe, our inquiries, and our lives' (1991, p. 238). Finally, the pragmatic ethos signals that there is no escaping the plurality of traditions, perspectives, and philosophical orientations."

Such a shift requires a redefinition of social inquiry. Starting from an analytical (or scientific) rationality, the proposal is to return to a practice-centered conception of rationality. Producing or using social inquiry is a distinctive form of human activity that requires a sort of knowledge which can only be acquired through guided experience, a kind of practical wisdom or practical art⁶ which values contextualism. Understanding practical rationality requires an exploration of conversation and deliberation, since, in Bernstein's words (1983, p. 223), "we seek to discover some common ground through debate, conversation and dialogue." Schwandt (p. 16-17) characterizes the nature of such a dialogical encounter using six features. Firstly, dialogue is less a matter of reaching intersubjectivity, than it is concerned with the production of knowledge in a conversation to which all members can make a contribution. Secondly, the researcher that engages in deliberating through conversation, is committed to a community of interpreters, to whom he or she is willing to listen without losing his or her own view.

Not listening is more an ethical than a cognitive failure. Thirdly, the deliberation is rhetorically located. This does not mean that our arguing and persuading is relative, since it is always specifically located. Fourthly, the deliberation is not among adversaries who confront each other, but among conversational partners who are responsive. Fifthly, the dialogue is less a matter of problem-solving than of generating imagination and possibility. And finally, enacting such a conversation requires a new vocabulary which can replace settled concepts as for instance truth or certainty. These dialogical features can concretize the ways of deliberating in several knowledge communities, and open our ways of cultivating practical reasoning. Schwandt (p. 20) summarizes his vision as follows: "I am suggesting that we might be better served by exploring what it means to cultivate types of dialogical communities in which we engage in practical discourse than by debating the merits of various sets of epistemological criteria for sorting out the legitimate from the not so legitimate methodology."

Schwandt's approach places a researcher in his or her own research context; it is centered on the relationship between the researcher and the various critical audiences with which the conversation is being held. This interaction and conversation is a neither a universal event nor

⁶ This view goes back as far as Aristotle.

a neutral debate in search of one truth. The conversation is localized and as such sensitive to the quality of the relationships and the conversations which are being carried on. The dialogical characterization⁷ allows one to keep an eye on the interaction and ultimately to stimulate it to the point that the legitimization process becomes a development process. Research is then not something which you put behind you, but is in development, for if the conversation is pursued, knowledge will be taken a step further and transformed.

Legitimizing this research project

A pragmatic legitimization of this research through cases⁸ becomes then the reporting of moments of the researcher's conversation with the various audiences within the parts of the circle of research here distinguished. In figure 15.3 and figure 15.4 a survey is made of both trajectories. For legitimization within the field community, we were in contact with four Flemish high tech firms, three of which were enacted as research cases, and one as a research/intervention case. For the intersubjective legitimization within the scientific community, the following 'audiences' can be mentioned: advisor, privileged observers, colleagues, research sessions (collective interpretation sessions), parallel research projects (including master theses), presentations at scientific colloquia, doctoral and methodological courses, and (reviewed) publications. We shall presently discuss in more detail both circles of research. The legitimization in the direction of the field communities contains a description of how companies were chosen, how data were generated, of the involvement of the researcher in other contexts leading to a possible heightening of the understanding of the context of these high tech companies, and of the moment when researchers exchange insights through reports and seminars. The idea is to arrive at an account of the breadth and depth of the researcher's field experiences throughout the research cycle. The legitimization regarding scientific communities

⁷ In the fifth chapter, we describe the dialogical features in the process of continuing creativity, based on the vision of Bakhtin. It is noticeable that both descriptions (Schwandt/Bernstein and Bakhtin) are quite familiar, and that Bakhtin's vision, which is the more sophisticated, can enrich this idea of dialogical deliberating on the quality of research. The first and the fifth feature would then be stressed: it is the responsiveness of the interlocutors which makes a difference, and this difference between individuals or interpretations is essential for creating new ideas. The generation of new ideas, creativity, and (after all) development, are essentially at stake in a dialogue. This would mean that as a criterion, the generation of new ideas is the goal of research much more than it is the discovery of some truth (see also fragment 1, chapter two; and Fineman & Mangham (1983)).

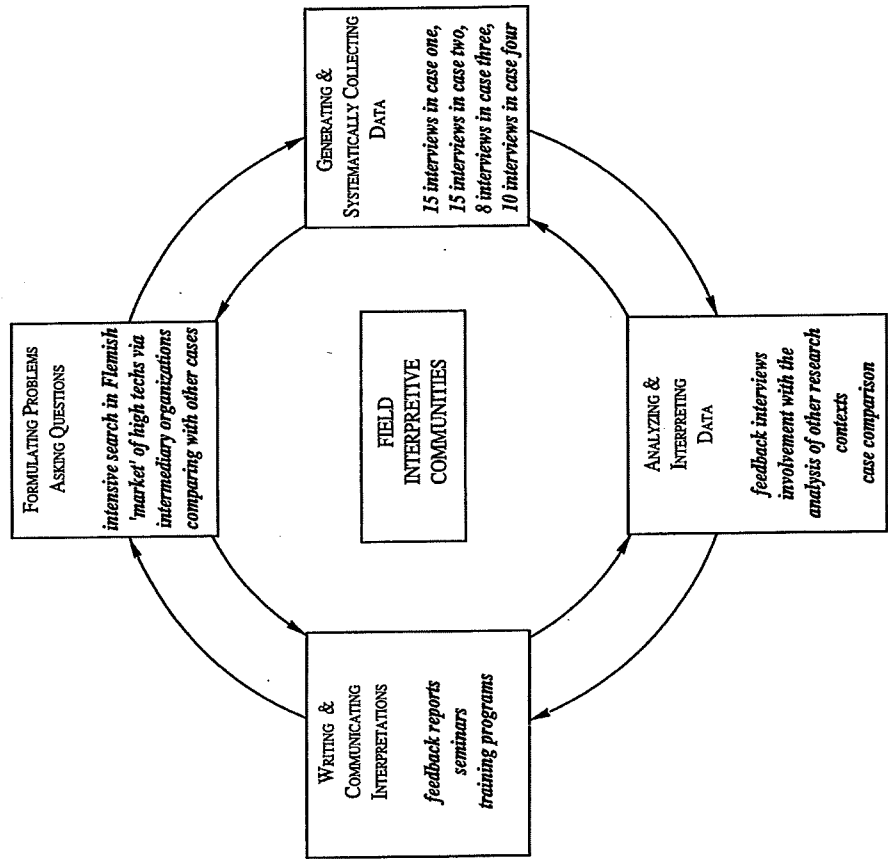
⁸ The way we make an account of the worth and quality of this research using cases thus constitutes a break with the discussion dealing with the traditional objection that typical and particular case studies are difficult to generalize about (Stake, 1994; Tsoulas, 1989), and with the many often ingenious 'solutions' to this problem (Eisenhardt, 1989; den Hartog, 1991; Firestone, 1993). Firestone discusses three strategies: sample-to-population extrapolation, analytic generalization and case-to-case transfer. This sort of discussion does not however integrate the contextual (and unbreakable) link between case and context, neither is a role assigned to the audiences in the production of understanding. This may be seen, for instance, in the way that Eisenhardt (1989) judges the theoretical possibilities of case studies. She sees as the main strength of case study research its real chance to generate novel theory. Among the dangers, she mentions that this sort of theory can be both complex and idiosyncratic, in opposition to the qualities of 'good theory' - she follows the definition of Pfeffer (1982), stating that good theory is parsimonious, testable and logically coherent - and not leading to 'grand theory'. 'Grand theory', assuming that we still subscribe to this principle, becomes a question of the 'accumulation' of different studies. Nothing is said about the way such an accumulation comes into existence, but it seems to proceed without a context or an audience.

contains a description of how I as researcher exchanged and deepened the data and interpretations through interactions with the academic field, with the intention of increasing my research possibilities. The two sorts of legitimization overlap when dealing with the generation and interpretation of data and the involvement with other comparable contexts which, as it is here a question of field experiences, are described in the following section.

The research circle in the field community

The process of legitimizing within the field community will now be discussed using the research circle (figure 15.3; also appendix 15.1).

Figure 15.3 Pragmatic legitimizing: field interpretative communities



This research project is centered around *three cases of young high techs and a fourth research/intervention case*. All four cases are of Flemish origin. We have numbered the cases from one to four, in the order that we became acquainted with them. Their code names are respectively: Quartet, Vision, Duo, and Coat. The first three case studies were started in 1986 in the context of a research program of the Ministry of Science. They agreed to collaborate after a period of intensive search for promising young high techs (this involved attending study evenings, and contacting the main SME functionaries in the chambers of commerce for the different provinces of Flanders, as well as the Center for Investment and the Center for Education. Case one (Quartet) is in the sector of hardware and software (informatics), case two (Vision) in the sector of vision electronics, and case three (Duo) combines both sectors. The entrepreneur of case one reacted spontaneously to a letter sent around by the researcher, which led to a first meeting at his office in the company of my research advisor; I met the entrepreneur of case two during a study evening set up by a professional organization (VKW) and which took place at another high tech, and he agreed to my request 'to meet once' after explaining the aims of the research project. Case three was suggested by various sources as 'fruitful and interesting' and I phoned the entrepreneur in order to have an appointment to discuss the possibility of undertaking a case study. For rating how 'high' these high techs are and for ranking them, we used (1) their own evaluations, (2) evaluations of expert informants (funding agencies/venture capitalists), and (3) evaluations of their 'colleagues/competitors'. Case two can be seen as having the highest level (there are very few firms with technology this advanced: they in fact have only one American competitor), followed by firms three and one. Firm one has the 'lowest' level but can be seen as more advanced and innovative than most of its competitors (software and hardware dealers). These three firms have a more or less similar context, since they were all started up at the beginning of the eighties by persons with at least 5 years of professional experience in large organizations. At the beginning of the research project, these firms had an employment rate of between 25 and 50, they all had fairly small financial bases, and were making use of financial assistance from the Belgian public authorities, which means they had been screened as 'feasible'. Our contact with case four, the Coat case was established through an intermediary person, affiliated to this high tech firm's parent company, which saw a mutual interest in the progression of Coat and the research center which hosts this study project. In general, all four cases were considered as belonging to the group of Belgian high tech firms which are representative, promising, and unique of their kind. This means that the ecological relevance of the cases can be estimated as high.

The generating and collecting of data in the first three cases was realized in two periods. In the first period, between 1986 and 1988, generation of data was realized in two phases.

The first phase consisted of an extensive intake interview of the entrepreneur, followed by in-depth interviews with his collaborators and a second interview with the entrepreneur. Then, for Quartet and Vision, a specific feedback report (Steyaert, 1987a; Steyaert, 1987b) with analyses and interpretations was written and handed out. For case three, there was a verbal feedback session in the course of a two-day seminar. Also, a general feedback report was handed out in which the three cases were compared to each other, as well as to six so-called innovative generation SME's (Bouwen & Steyaert, 1988). In a second phase, follow-up interviews were undertaken with a selective number of persons. The number of interviews in case one amounted to ten interviews, in case two nine, and in case three eight.

In a second period (1992-1993), these cases were contacted for a follow-up study. All seemed to have gone through turbulent to very turbulent periods. In Quartet, new professional management had come in and the financial ownership of the firm had changed. The performance of this firm had fluctuated greatly during the preceding five years. In Vision, important events included a management buy-out on the financial side and an important expansion of their market and strategic focus. Duo had gone bankrupt and was partly reintegrated in a new firm. A follow-up of cases one and two was executed, through five and six interviews respectively (followed by a feedback interview). There was no possibility for a follow-up in case three, as the company no longer existed as such. One part had been taken over by another company, but its general manager was not eager to collaborate.

The data generation in case four consisted of ten interviews, followed by a feedback report and feedback interviews. A detailed description of the trajectory can be found in chapter six, fragment 25.

The researcher was also involved with the analysis and interpretations of a research project on the innovation process in large firms (Bouwen et al., 1988; Bouwen, De Visch & Steyaert, 1988), a single case study of a comparable high tech organization (Kwint, 1988), a study of female entrepreneurs (Vansinjan, 1993), and a field study concerning the external support for growth and innovation in SME's (Bouwen et al., 1994).

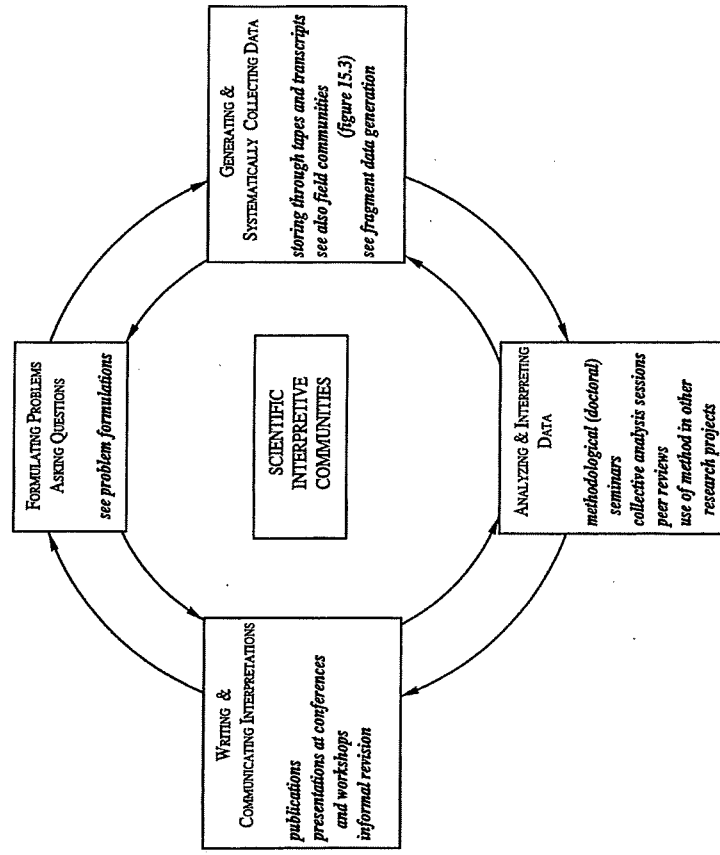
Finally, a comparison of the Flemish cases with an in-depth study of a French high-tech firm (de La Ville, forthcoming) was carried out, both on the level of interpretation and on the level of theoretical integration (Steyaert & de La Ville, 1993; de La Ville & Steyaert, 1995).

For legitimization in the phase of 'writing and communicating interpretations' in relation to the field communities, reference may be made to the feedback reports and to the various seminars and training programs with entrepreneurs, in which the researcher was involved. Such seminars offer the possibility of discussing and further developing insights from the case studies through conversations with other companies, and the exchange of experiences that entails.

The research circle in the academic community

The research circle will now be used to describe the research process in the academic community (figure 15.4; also appendix 15.1).

Figure 15.4 Pragmatic legitimizing: scientific interpretative communities



The legitimization in terms of the academic communities deals first and foremost with indicating the theoretical relevance of the study. This can be seen as an effort running concurrently with the research, which starts during the problem formulation and continues by abductively linking theoretical and empirical accounts.

Accounting for the generation of data towards the academic communities implies showing how the relation with the actors was established during the interviews (fragment 12), how data were obtained (cf. above), and how they were stored.

For legitimization in terms of 'analyzing and interpreting data', reference can be made to training sessions led by the researcher in the context of methodological doctoral seminars,

the organization of collective analysis sessions, peer reviews, and the use of our analysis methods in other studies. During the analysis of the data from the first phase, my research advisor and some colleagues participated in analysis sessions in which protocols were interpreted together. For the analysis of data from the second phase, a comparative interpretation was made with a case study of a French high tech firms (de La Ville, forthcoming). 'Peer review', in this study, means that colleagues of the researcher discussed parts of the analysis with the researcher and provided commentary on the provisional versions of the reports.

Finally, it may be mentioned that the method of data analysis and interpretation here applied - in particular the development of interpretive grounded concepts and meaning configurations - has also been applied in the research for a number of post-graduate studies (Vansinjan, (1993) on female entrepreneurs; Van Beneden (1995) on women's careers; De Weerdt (1995) on the implicit knowledge of consultants), and in a doctoral study of the organizing process of growth in small businesses (Brytting, 1991).

Legitimation during the phase of 'writing and communicating interpretations' consists of formal and informal revisions. The informal revision, in which a researcher passes on provisional versions of a text to colleagues and critical readers, is discussed in fragment 14. Formal revision occurs through presentations at conferences, workshops, and in publications (cf. Library).

Back Home: a Personal Legitimation

Throughout this chapter I have tried to illustrate that the researcher, together with and through others, creates his or her own research context in which action and understanding are combined. Traditionally, the role of a researcher is to a large degree preordained, regulated and normalized, structured, and ritualized. In a particular brand of positivism this role is so clearly described and instrumentalized that it may be considered to be played out. The researcher is replaceable. With the qualitative approach, the researcher is brought back into the research and is allowed to make a difference. The activities, interactions, and texts that the researcher uses in order to interpret his or her role form a complex whole based on technical competence, accumulated experience, and tacit knowledge. When it comes to how this 'complex whole' acquires concrete form in the learning processes and professional forming of a researcher, very little is in fact known and less has been written, let alone systematically researched. If the qualitative researcher is his or her own instrument, as is so readily emphasized in the interpretive literature (for instance Reason & Rowan, 1981; Gummesson, 1991) - and who can deny it once it is realized that a researcher carries out all the steps of the research circle and binds them

together, from building relationships with firms, contacting and contracting them, interviewing individuals from a very different world, analyzing and interpreting data, feeding back interpretations, gaining access to publications by others and by oneself - then this selfsame researcher has received very little help. I have more than once heard fellow doctoral students complain of the loneliness of the researcher (de La Ville, 1992). On the other hand, I have found few explicit models in the methodological literature which offer profiles of qualitative researchers concerning competencies, skills, style, and personal attitude. Compared to the extensive modeling regarding the professional development of organizational consultants (Steyaert, 1994d), we may speak here of a lacuna.⁹ In more than 600-pages of Denzin & Lincoln's handbook (1994), the most that is said is that the researcher is a '*bricoleur*', but that is, to put it mildly, a rather vague and elementary metaphor. For the rest, there is a reference to the researcher's 'personality' (p. 86) - again, a less than original, 'thick' concept for exploring the personal functioning of a researcher. Only in Ely (1991) have I been able to discover as an explicit theme professional development and what it entails. Now that I have - at least in a certain sense - completed the circle, and in the spirit of Eliot, after a long journey through the world of innovative entrepreneurship, having made all the connections that I there found worthwhile, have come home for the first time, it is fitting to ask the question of how I may look back in a more personal way and legitimize the research project for myself. I shall formulate the result of this backwards glance using the image of two fields of tension: between the other and myself, and between tradition and innovation. They will complete the general field of tension which I have attempted to conjure up in this methodological chapter, that between paradigm and practice.

A first field of tension between the other and myself arises from the idea that as a researcher, I am fundamentally in search of the 'Other', but must firmly address, get to know, and change myself in order to accomplish this. The other is the unknown who is yet to be met, and at the same time I am the other. To realize this I must make the classic choice between approaching the other 'from the outside' or 'from the inside'. Both choices are problematic, however. In the first case, I as a person remain on the sidelines and objectivize the other, so that he or she cannot truly be heard from. In the second case, the other speaks, but there is a good chance that as 'spokesperson' I will intervene too often (how can I allow the other to speak and not do all the speaking myself?), or indeed too infrequently (how can I allow the other to speak without making myself seem superfluous?) resulting in an undermining of understanding. It is a difficult balancing act, parceling out this too much, too little.

⁹ Note that Gummesson (1991) draws a parallel between the work, the respective roles, and qualities of the researcher and the consultant.

The solution that I have learned to appreciate is the exploration of the difference, of the in-between zone; trying out dialogue as a passage for exploring the difference between the other and myself, between paradigms, theories, persons...

In one way, this tension may partly be translated into the exploration of the middle area between my own vocabulary and that of the actors from the field of experience, and the discovery that what they say and what I say that they say does not have to be identical, nor indeed can it be. In another way, we are dealing with the tension between remaining true to one's own 'psychological roots' and the development of other complementary competencies. A dissertation in Psychology turns on the development of my - here comes a big word - psychological identity. Paradoxically enough, I had to go outside the field for this, which initially made me feel as if I was reneging on my basic assignment. (One solution could lie in a collective, multi-disciplinary study.) This led me on a fascinating ramble through various provinces of sociology, philosophy, and literature. A telling example for me was reading Mills' *The Sociological Imagination*, which connects the individual to the social, the biographical to the historical, an insight that helped me to understand the perspectives of cultural studies, contextualism, and narrative psychology. This showed me a meso-way between the individual entrepreneur and the entrepreneurial organization, which allowed to return enriched to one of the elemental points of psychology: conversation and dialogue. For me, this return to my starting point is comforting and calls for an attitude of humility, since I begin to understand what Mills (1967, p. 164) has known for some time - Mills, who himself so cautiously and humbly writes: "*The idea of some 'human nature' common to man as man is a violation of the social and historical specificity that careful work in the human studies requires; at the very least, it is an abstraction that social students have not earned the right to make. Surely we ought occasionally to remember that in truth we do not know much about man, and that all the knowledge we do have does not entirely remove the element of mystery that surrounds his variety as it is revealed in history and biography. Sometimes we do want to wallow in that mystery, to feel that we are, after all, a part of it, and perhaps we should; but being men of the West, we will inevitably also study the human variety, which for us means removing the mystery from our view of it. In doing so, let us not forget what it is we are studying and how little we know of man, of history, of biography, and of the societies of which we are at once creatures and creators.*"

A second field of tension points to the tension between tradition and innovation to which several sub-dilemmas may be related. The leitmotif of the research group within which I carried out this project was that the study of innovation also demanded an innovative study. As a result, it was decided to search for new methodological and theoretical approaches, and to get to know them from the inside out. Once this step had been taken, a whole new world opened for me, a world that I wanted to seek out, explore, and contact. At the same time,

I slowly came to the realization that I did not have to leave the old world to do all that, and that speaking in terms of old and new is in fact misleading. Innovation requires as much contact as rupture with traditions. I have discovered that the old can sometimes be quite new, depending on how well I discern that each renewal is firmly linked to the past, how playing always demands fore-playing. The art is to connect old and new to the present, to the fleeting moment of understanding and illumination.

This field of tension can partly be translated in terms of the dilemma that I have described concerning the organization process of high techs, especially the dilemma between creation and integration. We are here dealing with the principle of the researcher who does research, lays it out, lets it run its course, in search of a new understanding while at the same time having to practice restraint, taking into account personal limitations and those imposed by time, and learning to reap what has been sown. I believe that I have ventured 'far' into the library of science, this great playground where so much is going on. I have gone the wrong way more than once, lost my (over)view, and exceeded my time limits. Wandering back and forth between what could be and what must still be accomplished. The most difficult thing for me to learn has been the integrative aspect, learning to use the limitations, to follow the plan, to choose one and leave the other, to reconcile time and my sluggishness. Even though I realize that research demands standing still in order to gain depth, at heart research is a quest, the excitement of corraling the unknown and revealing the power of creation. If we still need to find criteria to judge research, then I choose this one: research that brings other people to ideas. Research that makes room for that which exists. That shows a touch of originality. The main criterion is thus originality, a word that we have always used for the first things (the oldest) and the most recent (the newest), and that we always recognize by the number on its uniform, as if it were drenched in the past, without coinciding with it. Part of understanding an organization is not that you have become accustomed to it, but that you allow it to exist further. Taking the path between innovation and tradition means that as a researcher you are traveling, in search of adventure, choosing the life of the restless wanderer, and that, no matter how often you tell yourself, 'I know this, I recognize this', you seldom have the feeling that you have really come home.

Appendix

Appendix 11.1

EXAMPLE OF A VIGNETTE

No

CHARACTERISTIC/PROPERTY OF THE CONCEPT

LEVEL OF THE CONCEPT (I / G / O)

SPECIFICATION (DATA)

RESEMBLANCE TO OTHER CONCEPTS

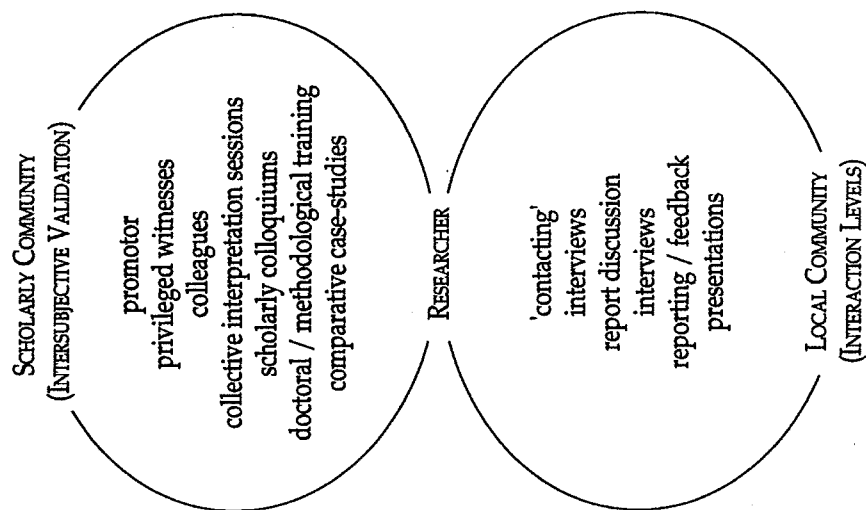
Hydroxyl

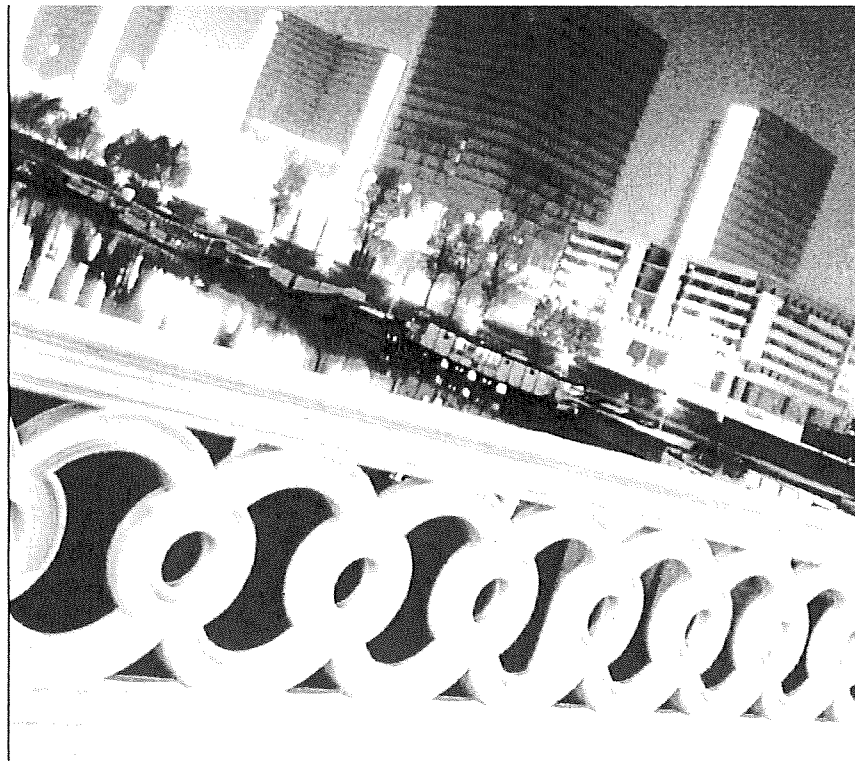
RELATED TO OTHER CONCEPTS

relation

own impressions; writing down experiences and observations
telling the interview story to colleagues
reworking notes or making transcript

CHARACTERISTIC/PROPERTY OF THE CONCEPT





Perpetuating Entrepreneurship through Dialogue

- A SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONIST VIEW -

Chris Steyaert

[ENTRACTE]

Tussen-Fragment (Extrakte)

Looking Around...

Het Boek der Veranderingen

Mag niemand veronachtzamen.

De Tao ervan is altijd veranderend -

Omzetting, beweging zonder rust,

Stromend door de zes lege ruimtes,

Rijzend en dalend zonder vaste wet,

Standvastig en meegaand vormen elkaar om.

Ze zijn niet in een regel te vangen,

Het is alles verandering wat hier werkt.

Uit I Ching

Middle Fragment (Extrakte)

Looking Around...

The Book of Changes

May no one neglect.

Its Tao is always changed -

Transformation, movement without rest,

Flowing through the six empty spaces,

Rising and falling without constant law,

The firm and the flexible form one another.

They may not be captured in one line,

Here, everything at work is change.

From I Ching

In het midden beland. In het 'tussenin'. Tussen zes hoofdstukken. Als zes lege ruimtes. Elke ruimte spreekt van zichzelf, maar is slechts hetzelfde verhaal op een andere manier. Hoofdstukken die elkaar weerspiegelen, reflecteren, verder zetten. Hoofdstukken en fragmenten over, voor en naast elkaar geschreven. Opgestapeld als een palimpsest. Het ene fragment verschuilt zich voor het andere, achter het andere. Tekst die niet uit te wissen is, enkel te overschrijven en over te schrijven.

De schrijver, vermoed want van ver gekomen, heeft nog ver te gaan. Beseft dat dit tussenin de weg zelf vormt. Vertrouwend op de stroom die elke schrijver meeneemt. Denkt onrustig aan de lezer, die - misschien nog vermoediger - even halt houdt, rondkijkt, een glas drinkt, een duik neemt, met de ogen knippert. Evenals de schrijver, verdwaald, '*medio flumine aquam quaerit*'¹.

De schrijvende en lezende reiziger, met nostalgische herinneringen en utopische vooruitzichten. Maar het voorbij is minder oud dan de nog te verwekken toekomst. Uirdinende concentratie. Ter plaatse rust! Kom op adem. Ontladen en ontspannen na de opgehoopte schrijf-spanning, geprangd tussen de broosheid van een planning en de vermetelheid van poëzie.

Naar het tussen, minder leeg dan de ruimte, want hier gaat het om een verbindende tekst, een heilige en geheime zone. Lezer en schrijver op zoek naar een luier- en kuieroord, beiden actief *ad interim*. Ze bekomen van de reis bij valavond in een verkwikkend tussenspel. Ze lezen en schrijven tussen de regels. In het schemerlicht. Ze blijven bij de parafrase. De lezer en schrijver, eindelijk onder vier ogen.

Intermezzo. Interludium. Interruption. [Barthes, auteur die de esthetiek van het fragment het best begrepen en (nog voor Barthele) in de praktijk gebracht heeft, dacht na over de relatie tussen fragment en intermezzo, en hoe fragmenten

¹ Zoekt hij midden in de stroom het water.

We arrive at the middle. At the 'in-between'. In the midst of six chapters.

Like six empty spaces. Each space speaks for itself, but is only the same story in a different way. Chapters that reflect one another, mirror, continue. Chapters and fragments written over, before, and beside one another. Layered like a palimpsest. Each fragment effacing itself for the other, behind the other. Text that may not be erased, only written over and 'written over'.

The writer, tired with a long trip behind him, has still so far to go and knows that this in-between is itself the road, trusting in the flow that all writers take along with them. Thinking anxiously of the reader, who - perhaps even more tired - takes a break, looks around, drinks a glass, dives in, blinks. Like the writer, lost, "*medio flumine quaerit aquam*."¹

The writing and reading traveler, with nostalgic memories and utopian prospects. But the past is less old than the as yet unaroused future. Concentration in upheaval. Here take your rest! Catch your breath. Take a load off and relax after a build-up of writer's cramp, squeezed between the fragility of a plan and the audacity of a poem.

Towards the between. Because it's a connecting text, less empty than space, a holy and secret zone. Reader and writer in search of a place to wander and wonder, both active *ad interim*. They recover from the journey at eventide in a reviving interlude. They read and write between the lines. In the twilight. They keep to the paraphrase. The reader and writer, face to face at last.

Intermezzo. Interludium. Interruption. [Barthes, the author who has best understood the fragment and put it into practice - even before Barthele - reflected on the relationship between fragment and intermezzo, and how fragments in succession are nonetheless organized: "...the fragment is like the

¹ He stands in the stream, looking for the water.

die op elkaar volgen toch georganiseerd zijn: "Het fragment lijkt daarin op het muzikale idee van een cyclus (*La Bonne Chanson*, *Dichterliebe*²): elk stuk is zichzelf genoeg, en toch is het nooit meer dan de tussenruimte tussen de twee aangrenzende stukken, het werk bestaat slechts uit wat buiten de tekst valt. Iemand die de esthetiek van het fragment het best begrepen en in de praktijk heeft gebracht (voor *Wëbern*), is waarschijnlijk Schumann; hij noemde het fragment 'intermezzo'; hij maakte in zijn werken een veelvoud van intermezzi: alles wat hij produceerde was uiteindelijk ingelast, maar tussen wat en wat? Een pure opeenvolging van interrupties, wat wil dat zeggen?"

Labyrintisch gevoel, een intuïtie die anticipeert op de vondst, een verlangen dat voor de vernieuwing komt, een duizelingwekkende verleiding als stap voor de stap. Net als bij duiken, een bij uitstek grondloze tussenbeweging alvorens te zwemmen. In de ban van de ring, uiteenvluchtend in concentrische cirkels, in een hyperbolisch labyrint. Geen bevinding zonder ervaring. Geen bemeestering zonder begeestering. Geen dood zonder leven.

Tijd om op adem te komen, en de stroom het werk te laten doen. Het moment van schrijven om te schrijven van momenten. Zoals we het moment van het organiseren willen verstaan, om momenten te organiseren. Tijd en ervaring, tijd en praktijk als over elkaar schuivende en dansende sporen die elkaar voortstuwen en verdragen. Tijd om wat rond me heen te kijken, te mediteren in de lommer van *De Boom Der Kennis*, schamele schuilplaats voor de onzekerheid. Op het gevaar af dat ik weer begin te zoeken. Naar schrijvers van het labyrint die het al lang voor mij hebben bekeken, beleefd, beschreven: Borges, Robbe-Grillet, Eco, Wittgenstein, Nietzsche, Barthelme, Derrida, Portocararo ... Ik ben de volgorde vergeten waarin ze zijn opgedoken; één voor één tuimelden ze binnen zonder me te spreken van hun verwantschap. Meer nog, ik had ze niet herkend. Naaktheid is nog steeds de beste vormomming. Hun beelden en bustes opgesteld in *De Tuin Der Paden Die Zich Splitsen*, overschaduwd door de heilige boom.

² *La Bonne Chanson* voor sopraan, strijkkwartet en piano is van Gabriel Fauré op tekst van Paul Verlaine. *Dichterliebe* is van Robert Schumann op tekst van Heinrich Heine.

musical idea of a song cycle (*La Bonne Chanson*, *Dichterliebe*²): each piece is self-sufficient, and yet it is never anything but the interstice of its neighbors: the work consists of no more than an inset, an hors-texte. The man who has best understood and practiced the aesthetic of the fragment (before *Wëbern*) is perhaps Schumann; he called the fragment an 'intermezzo'; he increased the intermezzi within his works as he went on composing: everything he produced was ultimately intercalated: but between what and what? What is the meaning of a pure series of interruptions?

A labyrinthine feeling, an intuition anticipating a discovery, longing that precedes renewal, a dizzying enticement like a step before taking the first step. It is like diving, that groundless between-movement *par excellence*, before getting into the swim. Under the spell of the ring, escaping in concentric circles, in a hyperbolic labyrinth. No discovery without experience. No inspiration without domination. No death without life.

Time to catch a breath, and to let the flow do the work. The moment of writing to write about moments, just as we try to understand the moment of organizing, to organize moments. Time and experience, time and *praxis*, as it were sliding over one another: dancing paths that propel and bear one another. Time for me to have a look around, to meditate in the shade of the *Tree of Knowledge*, humble hiding place for insecurity. With the danger that I might begin searching again. Searching for writers of the labyrinth who have seen, experienced, and described long before me: Borges, Robbe-Grillet, Eco, Wittgenstein, Nietzsche, Barthelme, Derrida, Portocararo... I've forgotten the original order they turned up in. One by one they tumbled in, without even informing me of their relations to one another. What's more, I didn't even recognize them at first. Nakedness is still the best disguise. Their statues and busts displayed in *The Garden of the Paths That Diverge*, overshadowed by the holy tree.

² *La Bonne Chanson* for soprano, string quartet and piano is by Gabriel Fauré (words by Paul Verlaine). *Dichterliebe* is by Robert Schumann (words by Heinrich Heine).

Eco onderscheidt drie labyrinten: het Griekse labyrint, het paleis van koning Minos met in het centrum de Minotaurus waar Ariadne met een list Theseus bevrijdt; het maniëristische labyrint, een wortel-structuur als van een boom met veel doodlopende stegen en slechts één uitgang; en het netwerk, wat Deleuze en Guattari het rizoom noemen, zo gemaakt dat elke weg in verbinding kan staan met elke andere weg, zonder centrum of uitgang, en dus potentieel oneindig. Op basis van deze indeling wordt het mogelijk een organisatietheorie van het labyrint te schrijven. Zo een organisatie-labyrint is eerder metaforisch dan ruimtelijk op te vatten, en vergt eerder taaltheoretici dan architecten. De organisatietheorie van het labyrint wordt dan een taaltheorie. Met Wittgenstein als geschikte gids: "*De taal is een labyrint van wegen. Je komt van de ene kant en je weet de weg; je komt van een andere kant op dezelfde plaats, en je weet de weg niet meer.*" De taal is een stad, zei Wittgenstein nog, en de stad een labyrint. De taal is niet het touw dat ons uit het labyrint kan leiden, maar het labyrint zelf. Nietzsche die naar het zeggen van van Reijen met een hamer in het labyrint rondliep, beseft dit al toen hij schreef, "*Dwalen wij niet door een oneindig Niets?*" Dit dwalen is niet een lijnrechte beweging maar lijkt meer op het ronddraaien in een cirkel. Leven en werken, en de organisatie van beide, is zich begeven in de doolhof van betekenissen, in de carroussel van teksten. En hiervoor, om enig houvast te garanderen, zoals Borges zo vaak herhaalde, andere labyrinten bedenken, filosofische systemen, dogma's, godsdiensten en vormen van ketterijen.

Dit labyrinthische gevoel, dat te vaak te pas en te onpas kwam, valt niet langer te veronachtzamen. Al zoekend stel je plots vast dat je zocht naar iets wat een ander al lang gevonden heeft, en vooral beseft je dat je verder moet zoeken. Zoals na elke helling weer een nieuwe heuvel opdaagt. Ondertussen probeer ik een goed boek dat mij over het pragmatisme kan inlichten te vinden. *Barnes & Noble* is een meesterlijk opgebouwde boekenwinkel, in twee etages, verbonden door een roltrap, een koel toevluchtsoord in het vochtige

Eco distinguishes three labyrinths: the Greek labyrinth, the palace of King Minos with the Minotaur at its center, where Ariadne frees Theseus with a ruse; the mannerist labyrinth, like the root-structure of a tree, with many dead-end branches and only one exit; and the network, what Deleuze and Guattari call the rhizome, made so that each passage can connect to each other passage, without center or exit, thus potentially unending. On the basis of these distinctions it becomes possible to write a labyrinth of organizations. Such a labyrinth is better understood metaphorically than spatially, and demands linguistic theorists rather than architects. The organizational theory of the labyrinth thus becomes a linguistic theory. Wittgenstein is the perfect guide: "*Language is a labyrinth of paths. If you come from one direction you know the way; if you come to the same place from the other direction, you do not know the way anymore.*" Language is a city, Wittgenstein has added, and the city a labyrinth. Language is not the thread that can lead us out of the labyrinth, but is the labyrinth itself. Nietzsche, who according to van Reijen wandered through the labyrinth with a hammer, understood this when he wrote: "*Are we not wandering through an endless Nothingness?*" This wandering is not a linear movement, but is a lot more like going around in circles. Living and working, and the organization of both, means embarking into the maze of meanings, into the carrousel of texts; and to accomplish this, we can only begin to grasp of the situation, as Borges so often repeated, by imagining other labyrinths, philosophical systems, dogmas, religions, and forms of heresy.

That labyrinthis feeling, which has too often arisen willy nilly, can no longer be neglected. As you search, you suddenly realize that you were searching for something that someone else found long ago, and above all you realize that you have to keep on searching just as every downward slope is followed by the challenge of another hill. In the meantime, I am searching for a good book that might shed some light on the subject of pragmatism. *Barnes & Noble* is a masterfully constructed bookstore, with two stories linked by an

Evanston waar het meer geen koelte, een zeldzame boom geen lommer brengt, met muziek die zachties dit zwembad van boeken tot een tijdelijke oase voor onverstoord lezen omtovert. In een filosofie-tijdschrift voor Het Brede Publiek, waar ik zowaar een bespreking van Vlaamse fictie vind, staat op de binnenflap een aankondiging van een pas verschenen boek over het Amerikaanse pragmatisme. *It's that easy sometimes*. Maar het werk is er niet, net zomin als enig biografisch werk over Donald Barthelme. Als boeken zo goed zouden zijn als hun titel, wat zou ik dan al niet mogen verwachten van Bruner's *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds*? Maar mijn aandacht wordt getrokken door een boekje rechts van *Actual Minds*, namelijk *Acts of Meaning*, dat oogt als een novelle, en dat de cognitieve en culturele psychologie tegen elkaar uitspeelt. Maar nog sneller grijp ik naar een boekje links van *Actual Minds*, met als titel *On Knowing* en als ondertitel 'Essays for the Left Hand'. Geen wonder: het is geschreven in het jaar dat ik geboren ben, en ik ben zelf linkshandig. Bruner wil als rechtshandige psycholoog, sinds vele jaren een ijverig onderzoeker van cognitieve processen, zijn linkshandige stijl oefenen, en op een andere manier ontdekken hoe kennis gevormd wordt in relatie tot taal, wetenschap, literatuur en kunst. Bruner schrijft zoals steeds recht op zijn doel afgaand: "I have felt that the self-imposed fetish of objectivity has kept us from developing a needed genre - call it protopsychological writing [...]. The genre in its very nature is literary and metaphoric, yet it is something more than this. It inhabits a realm midway between the humanities and the sciences. It is the left hand trying to transmit to the right". Een oefening in het tussengebiet. Op dit bijna nachtelijke uur wordt mijn verlangen om de kunst van kennen op een nieuwe manier te leren verstaan brandend wakker. Doof het licht in het experimenteelabo. Ik verlaat *De Zwembadbibliotheek* ter elfder ure met de stroom van late lezers, en vervoege de volgende morgen, de ochtend-lezers, om mijn vondsten bijeen te garen en er mij van te vergewissen dat ik niet had gedroomd. Ik zoek tervergeefs een postkaart van deze boekhandel, om naar Europa te sturen, zoals

escalator, a cool haven in humid Evanston where the lake brings no relief, the sparse foliage no shade, where the music transforms this Swimming Pool Library into a temporary oasis for unperturbed reading. Inside the cover of a philosophy periodical for The General Public - in which I also find a discussion of Flemish fiction - is the announcement of a newly published book on American pragmatism. *It's that easy sometimes*. But the work itself is not there, and neither is another, a biographical piece on Donald Barthelme. If books are as good as their titles, then I fear that my expectations concerning Bruner's *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds* may be too great. My attention, however, is suddenly caught by a slim volume to the right of *Actual Minds*, called *Acts of Meaning*, which looks like a novella, and plays cognitive and cultural psychology off against one another; more interesting yet is the little book to the left of *Actual Minds*, entitled *On Knowing*, with as its subtitle "Essays for the Left Hand". As it has been written in the year of my birth, and I myself am left-handed, the work immediately strikes a chord. As a right-handed psychologist, diligent for many years in the study of cognitive processes, Bruner wants to develop his left-handed style, and to learn in a different way how the process of knowing is formed in relation to language, science, literature, and art. Bruner writes as always directly towards his goal: "I have felt that the self-imposed fetish of objectivity has kept us from developing a needed genre - call it protopsychological writing [...]. The genre in its very nature is literary and metaphoric, yet it is something more than this. It inhabits a realm midway between the humanities and the sciences. It is the left hand trying to transmit to the right." An exercise in the middle ground. As night approaches, a burning desire awakens in me to learn in a new way about the art of knowing. Bring down the lights in the laboratory. I quit the Swimming Pool Library at the eleventh hour with the stream of late readers, and join the morning readers the next day to string my discoveries together and convince myself that it wasn't all a dream. I search in vain for a postcard from this bookstore to send to Europe,

ik ook al deed vanuit de *City Lights Bookstore* in San Francisco en de *Cody* in Berkeley. Meer geluk in *Great Expectations*, een wetenschappelijke, bruine boekhandel die ruikt naar de sixties en die alles heeft om de organisatietheoretische grond met filosofie en literatuur om te ploegen. Labyrint der labyrinten, want met een viervoudig catalogussysteem volgens discipline, auteur, onderwerp en zelfs uitgeverij, is het voor de toevallige bezoeker geen sinecure om er een bepaald boek te vinden. Als ik vraag naar de *Promise of Pragmatism*, knikt de man, zegt de uitgeverij op uit zijn hoofd en haalt nog voor ik dit heb bevestigd, in dezelfde beweging, met de meeste beloftevolle zin voor pragmatiek, het blauwe boek boven, grijnst fijnjes, en gaat dan zijn lunch, de dagsoep, telefonisch bestellen, die hij even later met hetzelfde gemak aan een tafeltje bij het raam opeet. What a performance he gave of living in the labyrinth - zou ik zelf ooit leren met zoveel gemak te leven? - bedenk ik als ik buitenstap met Diggins en nog een stapel andere boeken onder de arm.

Een proefschrift, een verhaal van *bookstories and bookstores*, a *circular tour in the world of circulating libraries*.

In het midden van de bibliotheek, voorpost van een onzichtbare wereld. De lezer kijkt verbaasd rond. Overal ligt papier, alsof een winterwind door de boekhandel raasde, alsof de boekenkast door een snippermachine werd gehaald, alsof de herfst is aangebroken in de bibliotheek. Deze teksten verbinden schrijver en lezer; het zijn losse fragmenten, die het vermoeden van een ware tekst verraden. Een schimmenspel van een volmaakte ontmoeting. De lezer buigt voorover, grijpt naar een flard,

as I have already done at the *City Lights Bookstore* in San Francisco and at *Cody* in Berkeley. Better luck at *Great Expectations*, a brown and scholarly bookstore that smells like the sixties and has all the philosophy and literature necessary to plow up the field of organizational theory. Labyrinth of labyrinths, for despite its four-fold cataloguing system according to discipline, author, subject, and even publisher, there is still no guarantee that the chance visitor can find a particular book. When I ask for *Promise of Pragmatism*, the man nods, guesses at the publisher off the top of his head and, before I've even had a chance to verify his guess, has in one deft movement fetched the blue book from downstairs with the most promising sense of pragmatism, grinning coyly, and then going off to phone in his order for lunch, the soup of the day, which he is later seen eating with similar ease as he sits by the window. What a performance of living in the labyrinth he has given, I think to myself - would I ever learn to live *there* with such ease? - as I set off with Diggins and a further pile of books under my arm.

A dissertation, a story of bookstories and bookstores, a circular tour in the world of circulating libraries.

In the middle of the library, outpost of an invisible world. The reader looks around, bewildered. Paper lies everywhere, as if a winter wind has whipped through the bookstore, as if the bookshelves have been passed through a shredder, as if Autumn has come to the library. These texts connect the writer and the reader; they are separate fragments which betray the suspicion of the existence of a true text. A shadowy spectacle of a consummate meeting. The reader bends down to pick up a scrap,

THE MIND IS ITS OWN PLACE, AND IN ITSELF
CAN MAKE A HEAVEN OF HELL, A HELL OF HEAVEN.

JOHN MILTON

MIJN HELE LEVEN STAAT IN HET TEKEN VAN ONTWIKKELING,

BEWEGING, DIALOOG EN VERANDERING.

IK WIL GEEN ENKELE MORGEN ZIJN WAT IK DE VORIGE AVOND WA

A. SINAKOWSKI

I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY, MY MOUTH

COULD NOT SPEAK,

MY EYES COULD NOT SEE

AND SOMETHING IGNITED IN MY SOUL,

FEVER OR UNREMEMBERED WINGS

AND I WENT MY OWN WAY,

DECIPHERING THAT BURNING FIRE

AND I WROTE THE FIRST BARE LINE,

BARE, WITHOUT SUBSTANCE, PURE

FOOLISHNESS,

PURE WISDOM

OF ONE WHO KNOWS NOTHING,

AND SUDDENLY I SAW

THE HEAVENS

UNFASTENED AND OPEN.

P.N.

IT SHOULD BE CLEAR THAT THE STATEMENT THAT MAN PRODUCES HIMSELF
IN NO WAY IMPLIES SOME SORT OF PROMETHEAN VISION OF THE SOLITARY INDIV
MAN'S SELF-PRODUCTION IS ALWAYS, AND OF NECESSITY, A SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

PETER BERGER ENT

SI, TOUT CE QUI CHANGE LENTEMENT S'EXPLIQUE PAR LA VIE,
TOUT CE QUI CHANGE VITE S'EXPLIQUE PAR LE PEU.

LE PEU EST L'ULTRA-VIVANT.

LE PEU EST INTIME ET IL EST UNIVERSEL.

IL VIT DANS NOTRE COEUR IL VIT DANS LE CIEL.

IL MONTE DES PROFONDEURS DE LA SUBSTANCE ET S'OPPRE COMME UN AMOUR.

IL REDESCEND DANS LA MATIÈRE ET SE CACHE, LATENT,

CONTENU COMME LA HAINE ET LA VENGEANCE.

PARMI TOUS LES PHÉNOMÈNES, IL EST VRAIMENT LE SEUL

QUI PUISSE RECEVOIR AUSSI NETTEMENT LES DEUX VALORISATIONS CONTRAIRES :

LE BIEN ET LE MAL.

IL BRILLE AU PARADIS. IL BRÛLE À L'ENFER.

IL EST DOUCEUR ET TORTURE.

IL EST CUISINE ET APOCALYPSE.

IL EST PLAISIR POUR L'ENFANT ASSIS SÈGEMENT PRÈS DU POYER;

IL PUNIT DÉPENDANT DE TOUTE DÉSOBÉISSANCE

QUAND ON VEUT JOUER DE TROP PRÈS AVEC SES FLAMMES.

IL EST BIEN-ÊTRE ET IL EST RESPECT.

C'EST UN DIEU TUTÉLAIRE ET TERRIBLE, BON ET MAUVAIS.

IL PEUT SE CONTRÉDIRE.

Eén voor één glijden ze door zijn handen, maar de boodschap blijft blanco, de wereld mogelijk, het verlangen ongeschonden. Waar is de schrijver?, vraagt de lezer. Geen mooier echo dan die van een labyrint.

Naïef toch, als een zeerover het geheim van de wereld achterna zitten en elke keer tijdens je literaire reizen de schat voor je ogen weggekaapt zien, als een vertaler die het origineel pas vindt als de brontekst wordt losgelaten, als een zingende jongen die de echo van zijn lied poogt te vangen. Labyrint, gevangenis zonder bewakers. Alleen de gevangenis kan 'ontsnappen'.

Ik geraak gefascineerd door William James, toch één van de vaders van de psychologie, die eerst schilderde, zich door kunst in het algemeen aangetrokken voelde, maar van zijn vader moest horen dat dat voor meisjes was. Met een 'murdered self' achterblijft. En een zwenking maakt richting wetenschap, maar de grens met de kunst geregeld oversteekt en met inspiratie terugkomt. Wat hem ooit eens een levensgroot compliment van Lovejoy - de naam alleen al - opleverde dat de wonde gezalfd moet hebben: namelijk dat James "*the artist's freshness and purity of vision*" in de filosofie heeft gebracht. En aan zijn zij, zijn schrijvende broer, Henry, ooit voorbestemd voor de politiek, schrijver van *The Golden Bowl* en *The Turn of the Screw*. Wetenschap en kunst in één familie verenigd, maar nog voor ik dit heb bedacht, kom ik een referentie in die zin tegen (zie maar *The Jameses: A Family Narrative* (New York, 1991) van de hand van R.W.B. Lewis). Een perfect onderwerp voor een doctoraatsstudie: kunst, wetenschap, familie en oedipale situaties, *fin de siècle*, geschiedenis van de psychologie, en autobiografisch onderzoek. En voor een theaterstuk. En waarom verwerpt hij de grote organisatie, koren op de molen van dit proefschrift over kleine beweeglijke entiteiten: "*I am against bigness and greatness in all their forms. (...) The bigger the unit you deal with, the hollower, the more brutal, the more mendacious is the life displayed. So I am against all big organizations as such.*" Nog voor de bureaucratie, deze grote machine, werd uitgevonden, heeft James ze afgevoerd.

One by one they slip through his hands, but the message remains blank, the world possible, the desire intact. Where is the writer? the reader asks. There is no more beautiful echo than that of a labyrinth.

It's a bit naïve, isn't it, chasing after the secret across the world like a pirate, and every time during your literary travels seeing your prize snatched from before your eyes, like a translator who finds the essence only when the source text has been let go of, like a singing boy who attempts to catch the echo of his song? The labyrinth, a prison without guards. Only the prison itself can 'escape'.

I'm becoming fascinated by William James. After all, he's one of the fathers of psychology, who began by painting and was attracted to art in general but had to constantly hear that it was for girls. Left behind with a 'murdered self'. And swerving towards science, but regularly crossing the frontier of art and coming back inspired. It got him a life-size compliment from Lovejoy - the name says it all - that must have salved his wound; namely, that James had brought "*the artist's freshness and purity of vision*" into philosophy. And at his side his brother the writer, Henry, once destined for politics, writer of *The Golden Bowl* and *The Turn of the Screw*. Science and art reunited in one family - but even before I've thought of this, I encounter a reference along these very lines (just see *The Jameses: A Family Narrative* (New York, 1991) by R. W. B. Lewis). A perfect subject for a doctoral study: art, science, family and oedipal situations, *fin de siècle*, history of psychology, and autobiographical research. And for a theater piece. And why does he reject the big organization, thus becoming veritable grist for the mill of this dissertation about little flexible entities?: "*I am against bigness and greatness in all their forms. (...) The bigger the unit you deal with, the hollower, the more brutal, the more mendacious is the life displayed. So I am against all big organizations as such.*" Even before bureaucracy, this great machine, had been invented, James had dispensed with it.

We weten door de teksten die voor ons werden geschreven, maar we doen alsof *wat* we weten los staat van *hoe* er werd geschreven. Wittgenstein schreef in aforismen, gaf les in fragmenten, delen van een landschap, liefst aan een kleine groep. Mead schreef al sprekend, was in dialoog met zijn studenten, die de teksten van Mead voor hem opschreven. [Je kunt niet zeggen, dat *Mind, Self, and Society* van de hand van Mead is.] Bakhtin diende beducht te zijn voor zijn naam als auteur, en schreef ook onder andere namen. Het werk van Vygotzky werd vernietigd onder het Stalinisme, en later opnieuw op papier gezet, op basis van actieve herinnering van zijn omstanders. Nietzsche, op zoek naar een lichte vorm voor zijn zware uithalen, schreef hoofdzakelijk in aforismen.

Gevoel van een *never ending story*. Van betekenissen die onophoudelijk verschuiven en verglijden, ongrijpbaar als de tijd. Een grap. Ongeloof, verzet, en daarna met nieuwe moed een rode draad voor elk hoofdstuk uitschrijvend, in het besef dat een lezer beter met dan zonder mijn advies kan verdwalen.

Onderzoek in het labirynth, een geval van toeval, met de zes op zak, perfect getal in de wereld van het a-causale. Meer dan Poppers *Drie Werelden*, Eliots *Four Quartets* of Mintzbergs *Structures in Five*, in een poging de quintessens van het structureren van organisaties in één model bij een te brengen, maar minder dan Eco's *Zeven Dagen*, *Nachten en Misdaden*, Borges' *Siete Noches*, Quackelbeens *Zeven Avonden met Lacan*, of Haydn's *die Sieben Letzste Wörter von Jesus*'. Zes, evenveel als Calvin's *Zes Memo's voor het Volgende Millennium*, op zoek naar wat volgt, op zoek naar het moment van de eeuwigheid, zoals bij Yourcenar "*zes dagen geleden, zes maanden geleden, nu zes jaar geleden, straks zes eeuwen geleden... O! sterven om de Tijd stil te zetten...*"

Tussenfragment, gevecht met de lineariteit, met de liefde voor het begin, en de schrik voor een einde (we viëren de geboorte en niet de dood), terwijl de lezer en de schrijver tot een akkoord komen: *in medias res*.

We know things through texts which have been written for us, but we act as though *what* we know is separate from *how* it was written. Wittgenstein wrote in aphorisms, taught in fragments, parts of a landscape, and did so preferably with a small group. Mead wrote as if speaking, in dialogue with his students, who wrote up his own texts for him [you cannot truly say that *Mind, Self, and Society* is from Mead's hand]. Bakhtin needed to be concerned for his name as a writer, and thus sometimes wrote under other names. Vygotzky's work was destroyed under Stalinism, and later written down again on the basis of the active memories of those of his circle. Nietzsche, in search of a light form for his heavy stories, wrote mainly in aphorisms.

The feeling of a never-ending story. A story of meanings that incessantly shift and slip by, as elusive as time. A joke. Disbelief and resistance followed by new courage to delineate the thread of each chapter, knowing that it is better for the reader to lose the way *with* my advice than without it.

Research in the labyrinth, chance circumstance, with a six in my back pocket, perfect number in the world of the a-causal. More than Popper's *Three Worlds*, Eliot's *Four Quartets*, or Mintzberg's *Structures in Five*, an attempt to unite in one model the quintessence of structuring organizations; but less than Eco's *Seven Days, Nights, and Crimes*, Borges' *Siete Noches*, Quackelbeen's *Seven Evenings with Lacan*, or Haydn's *Die Sieben Letzten Worte von Jesu Christ*. Six, equal to Calvin's *Six Memos for the Next Millennium*, in search of what is to come, in search of the moment of eternity, as in Yourcenar's "*six days ago, six months ago, now six years ago, soon six eternities ago... O! to die and stop time...*"

Middle fragment, a struggle with linearity, with the love of beginning, and the fright of ending we celebrate birth but not death), while the reader and the writer come to an agreement: *in medias res*.

Peirce, God van het Toeval, waar ben ik die niet allemaal tegengekomen. En Bakhtin, ingefluisterd door Wertsch en Bruner, later uitgebreid teruggevonden bij Gergen en nog uitvoeriger bij Shotter. Bakhtin doet mij denken aan Kristeva, maar ik ben blijkaar niet de enige, realiseer ik me, wanneer ik ze later terug, aantref in dialoog met elkaar in een tekst op het getouw gezet door Simons. Bakhtin, gevangen en verbannen, in een wereld van conflict, op zoek naar het verschil dat creëert in plaats van stagneert, en Kristeva, vrouw die mij leerde dat schrijven niet enkel kopiëren maar ook bevruchten is, en dat een schrijver altijd een beetje zwanger is, iets in zich heeft dat hij niet kent, en ondanks zichzelf voelt groeien.

Hoe meer ik las, hoe meer ik de indruk kreeg weinig of niets te hebben gelezen. Elke auteur roept weer een andere schrijver op, en één boek noopt je om ook het andere te lezen. Schitterende ideeën in de literatuur zijn overal. We zijn er in de wetenschap op gericht het meest recente werk te lezen, in de veronderstelling hiermee al het voorgaande te hebben gelezen. In een bepaalde zin klopt deze veronderstelling, vermits een schrijver vroegere ideeën in zijn nieuwe tekst opsloopt. Maar nieuwe ideeën gaan terug op iets van vroeger dat nu terug op gaat, komen terug op een vroeger gemaakt punt, van de hand van visionaire schrijvers die voor-schrijven, en veel later - twintig, dertig jaar - in een bredere gemeenschap worden binnengelaten met een veel te laat welkom. De weg terug, de weg naar de klassieker, dit actuele anachronisme, is een enige leidraad naar ware verbindingen, een uitleiding in het verleden, om zo het heden tot geschiedenis te maken.

Pauze! Pauzeren, leestekens plaatsen. Tijd van woordenloosheid. *Entracte.* Tussen de acten, zo dicht bij 'interactions'. Hoe lang duurt de ideale interpunctie?

Hoe sterk is de eenzame onderzoeker? Maar onderzoek is collectieve arbeid, *choral work*, zoals Derrida beweert. Met een knipoog naar een muzikaal motief, naar het koor, symbool van meerstemmigheid en naar de onderzoeker

I keep running up against Peirce, god of chance. And Bakhtin, whispered in my ear by Wertsch and Bruner, and later found extensively in Gergen and even more abundantly in Shotter. Bakhtin, who reminds me of Kristeva - actually, not only me, for I discover the two later in dialogue with one another, after being put on track by Simons. Bakhtin, imprisoned and banned, in a world of conflict, in search of the difference that creates rather than stagnates, and Kristeva, the woman who taught me that writing is not only copying but is also fructifying, and that a writer is always a little bit pregnant, has something within that she or he does not know, which despite that fact can be felt growing.

The more I read, the less I seem to have read. Each author calls up another writer, and each book obliges further reading. Literature is full of brilliant ideas. We in the world of scholarship tend to read the most recent work, assuming that the preceding work has already been read. In a certain sense this assumption is valid, since writers always absorb previous ideas in their new texts. However, new ideas recall earlier things that reappear, and return to a point previously made by visionary writers who pre-scribe, to be admitted many years later - ten, twenty, thirty years later - into a broader community with a welcome long overdue. The way back, the way to the classics, this current anachronism, is the only lead towards true connections, passing out of the past, making history of the present.

Pause! Pausing, punctuating. Moment of wordlessness. *Entracte.* Between the acts, so close to 'interactions'. How long does the ideal pause last?

How strong is the solitary researcher? But research is collective work, *choral work*, as Derrida says. With a wink in the direction of a musical motif, towards the choir, symbol of polyphony, and towards the researcher who writes polyphonically. With a reference to 'coral', mineral material, and to the researcher who dives like a swimmer for treasures of the deeps. With the

die polyfoon schrijft. Met een verwijzing naar 'choral', materiaal van mineraal, en naar de onderzoeker als een zwemmer die naar koraalstenen duikt. Met de suggestie van 'chora', wat staat voor zeef, web of raster en voor de onderzoeker die door zorgvuldig en subtiel te zeven enkele broze betekenissen weerhoudt.

Een zaterdag, alles komt samen. Buiten stroomt het water in vlechten naar beneden, in deze mei-maand. Alle teksten vloeien ineen, de tussenruimte wordt leeg. Kan ik Wittgenstein en Giddens, 'language games' en 'structuration theory' aan elkaar verbinden, en hoe kan ik dat? Maar iemand heeft het voor me gedaan. McPhee en Poole, dezelfde Poole die bij Van de Ven heeft gewerkt, en daar naar mijn weten nog weinig woorden aan vuil heeft gemaakt. Een tekst teruggevonden in een boek dat al die jaren naast mij heeft gestaan. Alles is geschreven, en ik schrijf niet meer. Stop making sense. Duisternis. Alleen het wrede licht van *De Brandende Bibliotheek*. Ik duizel. Verdwaald. Als de pelgrims bij Dante, op weg naar de hel.

Leer van het tussen. Onderzoek naar de grens, de horizon, de grenspaal, de lijn, de muur, de rand, de boord, de omheining, de eindterm, de oever, en naar het verschil, de differentie, de scheiding, de drempel, de hindernis, het conflict, het meervoud maar ook naar wat de grens overstijgt, het exces, het sublieme, de overstroming, de ontsporing, en naar de reis, de overtocht, de rondvaart, de passage, het onderweg zijn, de doorgang, de vluchtroute...

Steek het licht aan, en kom mee. *Circulez!*

Licht in het labyrint. *En route!*

suggestion of 'chora', meaning 'sieve', 'web', or 'screen', and suggesting the researcher who carefully sifts for a few fragile meanings.

A Saturday, everything comes together. Outside, a lattice-work of rain streams down, in this month of May. All the texts flow together, the middle space becomes empty. Can I link Wittgenstein and Giddens, 'language games' and 'structuration theory'? And how can I do that? But someone has already done it for me. McPhee and Poole, that same Poole who worked with Van de Ven, and who, as far as I can make out, did it in rather short order. A text rediscovered in a book that has been right in front of my nose for years. It's all been written, and I'll write no more. Stop making sense. Darkness. Only the cruel illumination of the Burning Library. I'm reeling. Lost. Like the wanderer-pilgrims in Dante, on the road to hell.

Learn from the between. Search to the frontier, the horizon, the border post, the line, the wall, the edge, the shore, the fence, the final level of attainment, the bank, and to the difference, the differentiation, the separation, the threshold, the obstacle, the conflict, the plural, but also to that which crosses the border, the excess, the sublime, the flood, the derailment, and to the voyage, the crossing, the tour, the passage, the journeying, the passing, the escape route...

Light the light, and come along. *Circulez!*

Light in the labyrinth. *En route!*