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Abstract: One of the central innovations of situational analysis is the methodological concept of theory/methods packages. In this article, I argue in favor of such a theory/methods package based on social practice theory and situational analysis. Central theoretical concepts from practice theory are investigated in the context of an empirical project dealing with mobility practices. In addition to basic questions of ontology, I draw from prominent figures of thought, referring in particular to the work of Theodore SCHATZKI. Following on from the idea of practice theory as a flat ontology, with his concept of *sites*, SCHATZKI offers promising parallels to Adele CLARKE's *situation*. On this basis, further concepts such as the *plenum of practices*, *chains of activity* and Elizabeth SHOVE's *three elements model* are critically examined. I will show that such a theory/methods package is both possible and promising when it comes to empirical research, as it captures empirical complexity while also providing analytical tools and a theoretical vocabulary.

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1. Introduction

Situational analysis is a multi-theoretical methodological approach. As a comprehensive development of grounded theory methodology, especially from a methodological point of view, the efforts of Adele CLARKE, Carrie FRIESE and Rachel WASHBURN (2018) to "push[ing] grounded theory around the interpretive turn" (p.41), were built on a broad foundation. Situational analysis has its roots in science and technology studies, symbolic interactionism and especially pragmatism, with CLARKE et al. also integrating post-structuralist approaches (pp.77ff.; see also DIAZ-BONE, 2012). It thus encompasses a variety of theoretical traditions. Following traditional grounded theory, the aim of situational analysis as a research style is the *genesis* of theory or theoretical concepts. Regarding this qualitative postulate, a strict separation between method and theory is rejected. Rather, methods are understood as *always already* theory-loaded. At the same time, sociological theory always needs to be an empirical theory if it is to have explanatory potential. This line of thought is strengthened in situational analysis: The idea of theory/methods packages—that is, certain methods pairing especially well with certain theories—is a central theorem of CLARKE et al.'s approach (2018, pp.23ff.) With this paper, I address such a theory/methods package that combines situational analysis with social practice theory. Based on a dissertation project in which I deal with practices of automobility in a qualitative way, I will show the possibilities of such a package. On the one hand, I am outlining how a practice-theoretical perspective benefits from the analytical tools of situational-analytical work. On the other hand, I elaborate how the theoretical potential of practice theory can also help to compensate the analytical blind spots of situational analysis by providing a theoretical vocabulary. The result is a win-win situation which, in addition to strengthening empirical research, can also enrich the overall toolbox of situational analysis. [1]

With this contribution, I critically examine and elaborate the fit between the approaches of social practice theory and situational analysis. My intention is to start a debate and stimulate thought on the possibilities of such a combination. Such debate is particularly necessary because a fit in fundamental ontological and epistemological questions is key to avoiding the pitfalls of an instrumental use of methods. CLARKE et al. (2018) seemed aware of such problems arising from a truncated understanding of research methods:

> "Qualitative research recently gained legitimacy and funding, which led to 'quickie qual courses' for quantitative investigators to expand their research repertoires for mixed-methods projects. Many such projects ignore the philosophical grounding and epistemology of the methods. Thus they do not seriously engage qualitative methodologies as epistemologies with built-in assumptions about the world and social life" (p.24). [2]

As the authors emphasized, it is crucial to take ontology and epistemology, as well as the built-in assumptions seriously. Thus, instead of *using* theory, in doing situational analysis, researchers are concerned with *working with* theory or

theoretical concepts. In doing so, it is important to critically assess the compatibility of the theory, theoretical concepts, and methods under consideration. Next to this investigation, I also address a specific problem with the empirical research landscape. Drawing on the concrete example of everyday mobility practices, I then point out the hands-on analytical benefits of the postulated theory/methods package. In this way, I demonstrate how such a research design can strengthen empirical studies by taking into account the complexity of everyday phenomena and lead to well-grounded results. [3]

This article is structured as follows: After providing some guiding insights into the research project and its empirical basis (Section 2), I will outline the basic features of situational analysis that are relevant to the theory/methods package (Section 3). Next, I will present the characteristics of practice theory as a flat ontology and the resulting consequences (Section 4). These consist mainly of a fit to the definition of the situation and the relational character of situational-analytical work. I will then take up further concepts presented by Theodore SCHATZKI and Elizabeth SHOVE (Section 5) and consider how they work together with situational analysis (Section 6). The article is concluded by a consideration of empirical operationalization and practicability with concrete examples (Section 7). [4]

The idea of combining situational analysis and social practice theory is not entirely new. German sociologists have tentatively elaborated the idea of an integrated perspective in recent years. For example, Jörg STRÜBING (2017) briefly pointed to the potential of such a theory/methods package in the context of the discussion on pragmatism and theories of practice. However, this discussion remained on a theoretical level. Regarding empirical research, Angela POHLMANN (2018, 2020) used a combination of social practice theory and situational analysis in her ethnographic field research on renewable energy. Both STRÜBING and POHMANN explicitly referred to SCHATZKI's *social sites* (2002), a concept that is also taken up here. However, with this article, my aim is to move beyond this concept and further specify the compatibility of practice-theoretical concepts and situational analysis. In addition to the flat ontology, I will elaborate on the concept of activity chains, which opens a processual perspective that helps to locate practices within the situation. Turning to the analytical work with social practice theory, I will then take up conceptual ideas presented by SHOVE that have the potential to substantially change the existing approach to situational mapping. [5]

2. Practices of Automobility and the Need for a Theory/Methods Package

The issue raised here results from the empirical work within an ongoing PhD research project on urban mobility practices, focusing in particular on the practices of car use. The aim of the project is to explore the persistence of automobility under the impact of socio-ecological transformation, without one-sidedly reducing the perspective to moral appeals or rational motives. Given the research interest in the use of cars and especially in the way they are embedded in everyday life, taking a practice-theoretical perspective seemed promising for several reasons. Its main advantage is to shift the researchers focus away from individual actors or rational decision-making and instead draw attention to the collectivity, regularity and shared implicit knowledge of everyday actions. In contrast to the individual act of driving a car, employing the perspective of the "system of automobility" (URRY, 2004, p.27) opens up a widespread, materially grounded way of being mobile that implicitly follows the same patterns. Taking this perspective reveals the constitutive role of materiality (car, asphalt), infrastructure (roads) and other artifacts (traffic lights, carparks), as well as special competences (driving skills) and institutionalized regulations (driving tests, traffic rules). All these aspects and entities interact within, or rather, *form* the practice of driving, and thus become relevant in different ways, long before a driver starts the engine. For example, the complex interplay of spatial and temporal elements, as laid out by SCHATZKI in his practice-theoretical concept of sites (2002, pp.63ff.), becomes obvious when looking at certain traffic points at rush hour. These include spots such as Stuttgart's *Pragsattel*[1], which, *depending on* or *in combination with* the timing, structure of the day, purpose of the journey, type of vehicle, family situation and other factors, are decisive in determining how a route is planned and realized. [6]

Such a shift in focus, especially in combination with an empirical object like mobility, shows that analysis cannot stop at a single practice or the local micro-level alone. Rather, it is precisely the mutual interweaving of different practices that is made possible by the use of the car in the first place and that ensures the stability of automotive practices. The empirical complexity of the interplay between everyday practices is made accessible on a theoretical level by means of practice-theoretical considerations. At the same time, however, it also requires a methodological approach that can capture this complexity and consider its implications. There is a delicate balance between isolating social practices to make them accessible for scientific analysis and doing justice to their empirical complexity and their relations to each other. To find this balance, I rely on the benefits that situational analysis has to offer. With situational analysis, I can do methodological justice to the integral relational character of social practices. Moving beyond a single practice and identifying, understanding, and analyzing how it is embedded in everyday life and social situations helps the researcher to gain analytical insights that move beyond mere description. With the research

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1 Pragsattel is the name of a major crossroads in Stuttgart's road and traffic network. With three federal highways intersecting, it is the most frequented intersection in Stuttgart. The term Pragsattel is therefore often used as a metaphor for traffic jam among Stuttgart's citizens.

style of situational analysis, researchers are enabled to achieve such moving, as "engaging complexities" (CLARKE & KELLER, 2014, §3) is a central issue here. [7]

These complexities were also taken into account during the research process, in which I followed the principles of theoretical sampling that were implemented from the very start of the project. The first step to entering the field and its complex relations was holding focus group discussions on different mobility patterns among Stuttgart's citizens. These allowed me to obtain a wider perspective on the situation and to further specify my analytical focus on the mobility practices of car-driving. In order to reconstruct everyday life and its relation to these practices, I then conducted qualitative interviews. As became evident, the performance of mobility practices is also closely related to certain political measures and their perception. Thus, to depict this broader situation and inform the analysis, I supplemented my empirical data with various discourse materials (e.g., newspapers, policy papers) and ethnographic data in the style of multi-site research. [8]

Social practice theory and situational analysis each include a set of tools within which a combination of theory and method is already inherent—albeit rather implicitly in the case of social practice theory. For example, with his concept of sites, SCHATZKI evoked a concrete empirical idea of the nexus of spatial and temporal elements. On the other hand, CLARKE grounded the concept of *situation* theoretically and thus clearly went beyond a mere descriptive category. Metaphorically speaking, both theorists thus took a step into foreign territory, but it is through this complementation that researchers gain access to the full analytical potential of combining practice theory and situational analysis. However, before presenting such a theory/methods package, it is important to consider its theoretical and ontological foundations. To prevent possible shortcomings, I will begin by elaborating the basis for a theory/methods package in the following section. [9]

3. The Conceptual Grounds of a Theory/Methods Package

Situational analysis is a further methodological development of Anselm STRAUSS's grounded theory methodology and is therefore to be categorized as a research style in the field of theory-generating qualitative research. CLARKE et al. (2018) substantiated their proposal to "push GT more fully around the interpretive turn" (p.xxiv) with extensive methodological and theoretical underpinnings as well as concrete procedural proposals for data analysis and interpretation. At the heart of these innovations is *mapping,* a set of cartographic heuristics. With the idea of a postmodern or interpretive grounded theory methodology, CLARKE et al. aimed at building a bridge between American pragmatism, especially symbolic interactionism, and French post-structuralism, closely related to Michel FOUCAULT (DIAZ-BONE, 2012). Being located within the early Chicago school tradition, as well as emphasizing power/knowledge and thus the importance of discourse, there are certain basic assumptions that have to be taken into account. Of particular importance to the relationship between situational analysis and practice theory discussed here is CLARKE's

understanding of the situation, its relationality and the overall concept of theory/methods packages. [10]

Given that "general cause-effect explanations are less and less viable in a plural world as we face it today," it is necessary to pursue an approach that can "capture the actual complexity of multi-perspectively experienced and shaped sociality" (STRÜBING, 2014 [2004], p.102)[2]. In this respect, CLARKE et al. (2018) explicitly distanced themselves from an analytical reduction of complexity and emphasized the mutual interconnectedness of elements. It is necessary to allow for "the possibility of multiple social processes as being characteristic of a particular phenomenon" (p.39). Although situational analysis is, in many aspects, a further development of grounded theory methodology, the departure from a reductionist *basic social process* represented a break with classical grounded theory methodology, especially regarding oversimplified explanations and the neglect of empirical complexity. In particular, the innovations that CLARKE et al. introduced with situational analysis—that is, explicitly taking material and non-human elements into account and facing empirical complexity by adapting mapping strategies—laid the foundation for a bridge between practice theory and situational analysis. Moreover, these innovations were guided by symbolic interactionism and science and technology studies, two theoretical streams that were also constitutive of the genesis of practice theory:

> "However, through interactionism and science and technology studies, Clarke had come to understand 'coconstitutiveness'— *that entities in relation to each other are constitutive of each other*. They help make each other up through their relations in the situation that 'matter most'" (p.17). [11]

This demand for relational analysis and thus multi-perspectivity, as well as the possibility of multi-causal explanations, makes it necessary to open up the analytical perspective so that "*the situation of inquiry itself broadly conceived becomes the key unit of analysis*" (ibid.). The consequence is spatio-temporal extension, which conceives all elements present in the situation as constitutive and thus initially relevant. The basic assumption of such a pointed concept of situation is "that everything in the situation both affects and co-constitutes most everything else in the situation in some way(s)" (p.46). This assumption is simultaneously accompanied by an analytical dissolution of micro-macro distinctions[3], which were still, although perhaps only implicitly, present in grounded theory methodology through the conditional matrices. For CLARKE and colleagues, these matrices kept "in-principle dualisms as action versus structure" (p.45) which they saw as "highly problematic with the interpretive turn" (ibid.). [12]

Framing a research object this way requires some specific tailoring with regard to the analytical treatment. CLARKE et al. highlighted the concept of theory/methods packages as one of the central methodological foundations for situational analysis. The basic assumption of such packages is that theories and

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2   All translations from non-English texts are my own.

3   As I will show, it is precisely this resolution of micro-macro distinctions that provides the fundamental bridge between situational analysis and social practice theory.

methods are not separable from each other, which in turn means that methods are not neutral tools to serve theories, as both are mutually shaped in research. Certain theories and methods therefore build "particularly stable connections" (STRÜBING, 2014 [2004], p.102), since they are based on the same epistemological and ontological grounds. As CLARKE and colleagues (2018) argued, this is the case with grounded theory methodology and symbolic interactionism, as both are rooted in American pragmatism. Relying on these and integrating STRAUSS's social worlds/arenas theory (1978) means that situational analysis is itself already a theory/methods package. [13]

As social practice theory is also related to symbolic interactionism by its underlying pragmatist ideas (DIETZ, NUNGESSER & PETTENKOFER, 2017), it is with regard to ontological and epistemological questions in particular that suitable connections to situational analysis can be made. *Firstly*, there is the broader access to empirical phenomena and their multi-perspectival analysis, which also means turning away from action- and thus actor-centered constrictions. *Secondly*, the contribution of non-human entities, material artifacts, symbolic and cultural elements, spaces and places as well as discourses is emphasized in this turning away. Following on from FOUCAULT, CLARKE (2015) demanded "to move beyond 'the knowing subject' as centered knower and decisionmaker to also address and analyze salient discourses dwelling within the situation of inquiry" (p.91), and primarily aimed at the integration of discourse analysis into the toolbox of grounded theory methodology. This decentering of human actors (as "knowing subjects") is also at the core of practice theory, as individualistic theoretical approaches are considered critically here (RECKWITZ, 2002, 2003; SCHATZKI, 2018). Instead, practice theorists were concerned with conceiving human actors as *carriers of practices* (SHOVE, PANTZAR & WATSON, 2012), as participants (HIRSCHAUER, 2004) and entities that are endowed with competences and bodily skills the origins of which lie outside of themselves, namely in practices—or, more precisely, in their execution/performance. [14]

In addition to ontological questions, there are also conceptual parallels between the existing package of situational analysis and social practice theory. I argue that the objective of situational analysis and practice theory is undoubtedly of the same nature, and it is promising to use this basis for further conceptual development. STRÜBING (2017) pointed out that "for the still underdeveloped analytical repertoire of praxeological research, the approach of situational analysis [...] offers a powerful basis from which to develop adapted theory/methods packages in concrete research practice" (p.60). One starting point for such adapted packages thus lies in the *new grounds* upon which CLARKE and colleagues (2018) built their theory/methods package of situational analysis. They emphasized several theoretical traditions that are, to some extent, grounded in pragmatist and interactionist traditions[4] and which, I argue, in part overlap with concepts that are also relevant for social practice theory. This

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4   That is, FOUCAULT's (1978 [1976]) work on power and discourse, a focus on materiality and non-humans following on from LATOUR's (2010 [2007]) actor-network theory and, in particular, STRAUSS's (1978) social worlds/arenas theory.

concerns in particular FOUCAULT's work on materiality and his relational perspective on knowledge/discourses as "a framework of analysing the relations between bodies, agency, knowledge and understanding [...] [which] can likewise be understood as 'praxeological'" (RECKWITZ, 2002, p.243). CLARKE et al. (2018, p.81) explicitly referred to FOUCAULT's concept of practices and reflected on its overall commonalities with pragmatism and interactionism. They mainly pointed to the concept of *dispositif* (FOUCAULT, 1978 [1976]) and its parallels to the situation, as it also focuses on the relationship between the different entities rather than the entities themselves. They thus concluded that "situational and relational mapping are based on similar 'ensemble' assumptions to those Foucault articulated" (CLARKE et al., 2018, p.83), and "that there are clearly important and interesting resonances among the concepts of situation and dispositif and the practices that undergird them" (ibid.). [15]

Similarly, I argue, there are resonances between CLARKE et al.'s understanding of the situation and SCHATZKI's practice-theoretical vocabulary of sites. Sites are made up by the relations between different material entities, and it is these relations that are the primary focus. Since there are obvious parallels between these approaches, the question arises of why CLARKE and colleagues did not explicitly refer to (SCHATZKI's) practice-theoretical work and its connections to the situation. To illuminate the resonances postulated here, I will begin by providing some more input on social practice theory in the following section. On this basis, I will then elaborate on an integration of practice-theoretical concepts into CLARKE et al.'s situation. [16]

4. The Plenum of Practices as a Flat Ontology

Although the field of practice-theoretical approaches is wide-ranging, there are nevertheless common features; core points, that are to be considered under the label of practice theory[5]. First of all, practices are to be understood as a "nexus of doings and sayings" (SCHATZKI, 1996, p.89), as "the smallest unit of the social" (RECKWITZ, 2002, p.245) and thus as the central object of analysis. In opposition to individualist and structuralist explanations of the social, the focus here is *neither* on individual (rational) action *nor* on structures external to the individual, but on social practices. "Fundamentally, practice theorists share the conviction that 'the social' (only) exists in practices" (POHLMANN, 2018, S.59). Following on from early practice theorists such as Pierre BOURDIEU and Anthony GIDDENS, it was SCHATZKI's work on the so-called *practice turn* in particular that led to the rise of social practice theories (RECKWITZ, 2002, p.244). RECKWITZ offered a comprehensive definition of practices as a

> "routinized type of behavior which consists of several elements, interconnected to one other: forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, 'things' and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge" (p.249). [17]

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5   For a brief but comprehensive overview, see SCHATZKI (2018), also RECKWITZ (2002).

He therefore concluded that social practices are "a routinized way in which bodies are moved, objects are handled, subjects are treated, things are described and the world is understood" (p.250). This definition is grounded on similar basic assumptions to those SCHATZKI has named for practice theory: The inclusion of different human and non-human elements, materiality and knowledge dimensions extends over different levels, which, however, dissolve through their mutual connection. They form what SCHATZKI (2016a) called a "flat ontology." He explained that "not only does practice theory deny that what 'micro' and 'macro' designate fall into distinct levels, but it problematizes the ontological significance of this distinction" (p.31). He claimed "that the realm of the social is entirely laid out on a single level (or, rather, on no level)" (p.28). Thus, *the social* and everything connected to it consists only of (differently sized) practices, which ultimately leads back to RECKWITZ's well-known concept of the practice as the "smallest unit of the social" (2002, p.245). In making this claim, SCHATZKI contradicted an understanding according to which practices must necessarily be small phenomena or aspects (see for example, HIRSCHAUER, 2016), pointing out "that the basic ingredients of all social phenomena are of a piece" (SCHATZKI, 2016a, p.31). [18]

Practice theory *mediates* between two poles: individual actions producing (social) structures, and structures within which human action takes place. Analytically, both action and structure are ultimately understood as an interplay of practices and material arrangements that is *connected* to other practices, becomes *understandable* in relation to them and differs only in *size and complexity*. What appears as structure is merely a larger, more organized, or stable bundle of practices. According to the flat ontology, these bundles do not have a different status to the practices constituting them, and building on the so-called "plenum of practices" (p.33) any distinction between micro- and macro-phenomena thus is rejected. Instead, it is the interplay of social practices and material arrangements that constitutes sociality—either as a bundle of a few practices or as a complex, all-encompassing constellation, depending on the scale applied. This rejection of different ontological levels is momentous: Social structures do not exist in themselves; they are no more external to the individual actor than materiality is. They acquire their meaning as a *component of* or in *relation to* social practices. It is the persistence of spatio-temporal practices or bundles of practices and arrangements that has a certain structuring effect and thus *keeps practices going*: "The activities, entities, rules, understandings, and teleologies that are at work in any interaction or local situation are elements of phenomena [...] that stretch over time and space beyond such situations" (pp.32f.). [19]

With regard to the cross-situational relevance of practices as the mode of the social, as the ongoing processing of interwoven practices and materialities[6], I see

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6   SCHATZKI later developed his ideas further towards a more systematic perspective on practices, including the concepts of materialities, sites, teleoaffective structures, bundles, activity chains and large social phenomena (see for example SCHATZKI, 2019). Indeed, the key figure of practices and arrangements remains the same, even if it is scaled up to large social phenomena: "A constellation, I wrote, is a nexus of bundles. It is just a larger bundle. [...] Large social phenomena are large nexuses of practice-arrangement bundles" (SCHATZKI, 2016b, pp.16f.).

two commonalities with an overall pragmatist understanding of sociality and thus with CLARKE et al.'s concept of situation. *Firstly*, the rejection of separation into micro/macro levels (cf. CLARKE et al.'s critique of the conditional matrix), and *secondly*, the emphasis on and essential significance of relationality. Addressing this issue, CLARKE et al. (2018) clarified the possible misunderstanding that a situation is a temporally and spatially fixed event, as "it usually involves a somewhat enduring arrangement of relations among different kinds and categories of elements that has its own ecology" (p.17). This fundamental fit of ontological assumptions—the shared understanding of sociality as processual and relational, as spatio-temporal and not reducible to less fruitful dualisms— offers the starting point for the theory/methods package. [20]

5. A Situation of Practices?

The term *situation*, as an analytical concept, is easily misunderstood due to the prevalence of the use of the word in everyday life. Day to day, it is generally used to refer to a short, self-contained and (usually) precisely temporally and spatially localizable event. Abstracted to a certain extend, situations can be understood as temporally definable places and times at/in which things happen: an argument, an accident, a conversation, etc. All of this also applies in one way or another to what CLARKE and colleagues meant by situations (in the plural). Yet, *situation* within situational analysis still has its own meaning, as CLARKE et al. integrated spatial and temporal relations into this *momentum* of happenings. In practice theory, RECKWITZ (2002) used the term situation with a pragmatist slant to locate the occurrence of practices in everyday life and to locate the *motor* of changing practices:

> "For practice theory, then, the 'breaking' and 'shifting' of structures must take place in
> everyday crises of routines, in constellations of interpretative indeterminacy and of
> the inadequacy of knowledge with which the agent, carrying out a practice, is
> confronted in the face of a 'situation'" (p.255). [21]

The *carrier* of a practice, i.e., the actor who performs a practice, is confronted with different things in a certain situation: adversities, problems, uncertainties, not-knowing. A mother picking up her children from school might be stuck in an unforeseen traffic jam caused by a construction site, or she may be late because her car suddenly breaks down. These confrontations force reactions, some of which may make a difference to future performances, while others are simply compensated by routine. Looking at this *concrete* situational happening from a relational perspective, it resembles an in-depth approach similar to that achieved by situational analysis. One could easily identify varying entities within a situational map: the woman's car, the school and its geographical location, construction companies, road systems, "time squeeze" (SOUTHERTON, 2003, p.9), various discourses such as *the caring mother* and so on. According to CLARKE et al. (2018), such an understanding would be narrow but feasible, "as 'the situation' is elastic—capable of stretching to be broad and inclusive or narrowing down to a high-resolution focus" (p.17). Nevertheless, as it includes spatial and temporal dimensions, integrating historical processes of *becoming*

and *having become*, CLARKE et al.'s concept of the situation has a certain notion that cannot simply be transferred to the outlined common uses of the term. It seems somewhat *the same but different*. [22]

Once again, SCHATZKI offered a concept for approaching this package from the perspective of practice theory. He spoke of "site[s] of the social" (2002, p.101), and thus put the primary focus on the spatio-temporal dimension of social practices. "A site is, first, the location where something is or takes place" (p.64). He explicitly conceived of sites as one (or more) form(s) of context, in the sense that sites form the contexts *in which* practices take place and become understandable as such. The location of the school, where the children need to be picked up, in combination with the road system, builds the site in the aforementioned example. The hurry of the mother driving her car, the interpretive indeterminacy, becomes understandable within this context. In his early approach to practices, SCHATZKI included (only) social practices and material arrangements. Developing this idea further, the notion of site became a more elaborate, more structured kind of material arrangement: the site of the practice, which, in addition to material elements, also included other entities that are correspondingly defined as different contexts. As POHLMANN (2018) concluded: "His [SCHATZKI's] concept of social sites defines sites/situations as meshes of orders and practices. He combined and intertwined action and situation by elaborating how these two constantly (re)generate and modify each other."[7] (p.92). This figure of thought is close to CLARKE et al.'s concept of situation, as SCHATZKI also put the mutual (re)production of action and situation at the center. Thus, it is promising to further investigate these concepts in terms of fit. [23]

5.1 Sites and situations

As outlined in the previous section, it is worth taking a closer look at the concepts of site and situation. Like SCHATZKI's idea of site, a situation is neither fixed in time nor place, but rather the totality of relations pertaining to the phenomenon of interest. CLARKE et al. grounded the concept of situation on the definition of situation that has become known as the *Thomas theorem* (THOMAS & THOMAS, 1928), which is somewhat methodologically elaborate. While SCHATZKI's sites form a type of context in which practices take place, CLARKE et al. detached themselves from the idea of a situational context that is relevant in an *indeterminate* way. Instead, spatio-temporal localizations and realizations of actions or practices (SCHATZKI [2016b, p.9] called them *chains of action*) dissolve in situational analysis, as do the material and symbolic entities contained in them:

> "The conditions of the situation are in the situation. There is no such thing as 'context'. The conditional elements of the situation need to be specified in the analysis of the situation itself as they are constitutive of it, not merely surrounding it or framing it or contextualizing it, or contributing to it. They are it" (CLARKE et al., 2018, p.46). [24]

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7   The idea of meshes mentioned here is related to FOUCAULT's work, especially on *fields of practice* (CLARKE et al., 2018, p.82).

In a sense, SCHATZKI's different versions of *context* form a functional equivalent to CLARKE et al.'s situation—which categorically excluded speaking of context. CLARKE et al.'s rejection of *context* stems not least from their dissatisfaction with the methodological toolkit of grounded theory methodology, in which context functions as a residual category that surrounds the situation. However, such an understanding has little in common with SCHATZKI's contexts, which he also described as *(con)textures*. With the image of a surrounding and interwoven, texture-like entity, SCHATZKI (2002, pp.63ff.) provided a more nuanced picture of the kind of relations he had in mind. Hence, the relational character and the co-constitutive formation of entities that form a site, while at the same time contextualizing themselves as entities of that site, matter. Thus, both CLARKE et al. and SCHATZKI overcame the idea of simple surrounding context by stressing "that sites or situations are made up of different entities and their mutual relations" and that "all entities that take part in a situation influence and constitute all other entities in some ways" (POHLMANN, 2018, p.93). [25]

While SCHATZKI (2002) stated that the social is created *within* its context, for CLARKE et al. (2018, p.17) *access to* sociality can only take place through the situation, because the situation builds the main analytical unit. The relational character of both practices and situations—the fact that both were fixed neither in time nor in space—also means that the character of practices is not only situational but also cross-situational, as STRÜBING (2017) pointed out: "Discourses as well as practices [...] outlast each respective situation and span a multitude of situations by relating them to each other in a spatially and temporally extended way" (p.16). It is through practices that doings and sites are linked and related over time. This linkage serves as an important brick on the way to the theory/methods package. In the following section, I will elaborate how this relationship can be further specified over time by combining concepts from social practice theory with situational-analytical methods. [26]

5.2 Extending situations: SCHATZKI's concept of activity chains

For practice theorists, it is a fairly basic assumption that social practices *transcend* situations. The practice of driving a car is a good example of this connection between entities and doings over time and space. Practices are related to past and future, either as a precise expression of the concept of the *stream of action* prominent in pragmatism and pragmatism-inspired approaches (DIETZ et al., 2017; STRÜBING, 2017), as a structuring process (GIDDENS, 1984), bundles of activities (SHOVE et al., 2012) or chains of actions (SCHATZKI, 2019). SCHATZKI, as well as SHOVE et al., further specified this dimension of practices by distinguishing between the practice as a nexus or *way of doing* and the concrete*, empirically observable* practice. As a researcher in the field, I can observe people driving their cars at/within specific sites, in various ways, while on their way to work, school or home. Sitting at my desk, mapping or writing a memo, I can describe and analyze the practice of driving a car by abstracting from these observations. With this differentiation between *practice as entity* and *practice as performance*—in its basic features strongly based on GIDDENS' theory of structuration—it is possible to conceptualize the interplay

between concrete realization and commonly shared understanding. As *entities*, practices are stable and transcend situations because they are repeatedly updated, adapted and reproduced in concrete, situational performances. Most people know and have some common understanding of what driving a car means, how it is done and what it requires, and this knowledge is reproduced with every drive undertaken or observed. However, since situated *performances* always connect to preceding practices, and thus at the same time produce or exclude future connections, practices are also cross-situational. How it was done yesterday shapes how people will drive tomorrow. If more people start to share cars, the practice of *driving a private car* might slowly fade. As a result, this recursive concept ensures both stability and change. This processual perspective has been increasingly taken up in social practice theory in recent years (BLUE, 2019). [27]

Social practices are, in their fundamental constitution, cross-situational. As *performances*, they take place in situations, but always follow on from earlier performances. SCHATZKI (2016b) described this processual notion through the idea of *action chains* as "a series of actions, each component of which reacts to the previous action or to a change in the world that the previous action brought about" (p.12). Following this principle, these actions (as part of practices) also have an impact on future performances of that same practice: future performances are preconfigured by current actions. In their ongoing performance, individual practices span temporal as well as spatial structures, and relate different practices or individual entities involved in them to one another. As mentioned above, as the hurrying mother becomes understandable within the specific *site*, the same holds true for our understanding of the overall situation. A change in working practices at her office might be brought about by new colleagues or changing market situations, which in turn affects the temporal structuring of her day. This slight change could make a difference in how she picks up her children, for example with her getting lunch on the way in order to make it in time. The concept of practices elaborated here lies close to the pragmatist idea of the stream of action. To approach practices *analytically* then means to consider and grasp their situational conception and embedding *within* this stream. The analytical concept of the situation (according to CLARKE et al.), constructed by situational maps, is thus more reminiscent of a slice through the *plenum of practices*—which, however, through the elaboration of the relationships, represents more than just a snapshot. [28]

In his writing on the site of the social, SCHATZKI (2002) put a similar emphasis on a relational understanding on the one hand, and the embedding of practices on the other:

> "As these examples [of herb production] substantiate, furthermore, this fabric of practices was also the site where the above actions transpired. [...] They transpired as components of these practices: That is to say, they were moments of the temporally unfolding stream of activity that were these practices. In fact, they were the actions they were only as part of these streams" (p.97). [29]

The nature of entities involved in practices can only be reconstructed *in relation to* or *from the perspective of* this very practice. On this basis, I have identified some potential for situational analysis methods here, which I believe offer a promising tool. Taking the analytical heuristic of mapping, I can elaborate or reconstruct practices by examining and deconstructing their situational realization —that is, their performance. I can look at the entities involved, draw upon the relevance of the carrier, and identify crucial materials and discourses that shape the performance of the practice. Moreover, this situational shaping may in turn have a serious impact on future performances and thus the practice as an entity. Essentially, the result is a win-win situation: With situational analysis, the multiple embedding, elements and connections of situated practices can be revealed and elaborated, while, by means of practice theory, these can be conceptualized with the help of a theoretical vocabulary. [30]

5.3 It's a match

To briefly summarize the considerations made so far: According to the offered perspective, practices are the things happening in situations. These actions are not carried out by humans alone, as they are the outcome of mutual relations between humans, materiality, knowledge, meanings and shared understanding. As practices are cross-situational—happening as chains of activity within sites—it is simply another theoretical way to conceptualize (inter)actions between human and non-human elements (as well as other entities) within an unbound spatio-temporal situation. This situation has concrete spatial and temporal manifestations, but is at the same time extended towards a cross-situational nexus that relates past actions with future performances. [31]

Up to this point, I have identified conceptual and ontological parallels, similarities and possible areas of connection where practice theory and situational analysis go hand in hand. In order to understand the value of this combination, I will revisit the query raised at the beginning of this article. As a qualitative approach, the aim of working with situational analysis is—less than with classical grounded theory methodology, but nevertheless—to generate theory and theorize empirical phenomena. This theorization does not simply emerge from the analysis or data, but is a product of analytical work and carefully crafted interpretation, combined with what BLUMER (1954) called sensitizing concepts (CLARKE et al., 2018, pp.36f.). Theorizing is mutually informed by existing theoretical approaches and analysis, and it requires theoretical vocabulary. Social practice theory, with its solid and appropriate vocabulary, usefully complements the analytical toolbox of situational analysis in this regard. Moreover, working with social practice theory benefits from the analytical repertoire of situational analysis. With mapping, the analyst breaks down empirical phenomena (and the conditions within their situation) into their component parts. Adding practice theory, they can take these single parts and use them to build practices, in other words to empirically deconstruct and analytically reconstruct them. *Deconstructing empirical social phenomena and reconstructing social practices* can therefore be seen as the core of practice-theoretical situational analysis. [32]

6. The Situation of Practices: Hands-On

SHOVE and colleagues fostered practice-theoretical ideas empirically by working on and with material (HUI, SCHATZKI & SHOVE, 2017; SHOVE & WALKER, 2010; SHOVE et al., 2012; SHOVE, WATSON & SPURLING, 2015). They built on the rather philosophical thoughts of SCHATZKI and systematized their approach to social practices empirically. Although SHOVE deliberately gave no advice or instructions for analytical work (quite the contrary[8]), her consolidation made a suitable starting point for an empirical-analytical elaboration[9]. Social practices were conceptualized "as an organised bundle of the three element types: embodied knowledge, materials and meanings" (POHLMANN, 2020, §16), which were performed by human actors as their *carriers*. On a pragmatic basis, it is particularly the subdivision into different types of elements which is highly compatible with situational analysis. In fact, I take the ontological assumptions from SCHATZKI (2002, 2016a) and combine them with the consolidated approach of SHOVE et al.'s (2012) *three elements model* (p.29), which leads me almost directly to situational mapping. [33]

Following SHOVE et al. and using the example of car-driving in the 19th century, these practices are co-constituted by *competences* such as mechanical expertise, steering or braking, *materials* such as cars, engines or infrastructure, and *meanings*, e.g., the exhibition of wealth, freedom or flexibility (ibid.). By "zooming in" (NICOLINI, 2012, p.213) on these three elements, which constitute concrete situations, I created one messy and one ordered situational map, which opens up new analytical options for this approach (CLARKE et al., 2018, p.238). Having produced this kind of map using the three elements model, I can further conceptualize and ground practices within the situation. Zooming in on materials is an opportunity to draw relationships between infrastructure and political elements within which the wider situation is given. Zooming in on meanings, I can draw relations between discursive elements, which, in turn, are conceptualized as part of the practice. Each of the three elements in SHOVE et al.'s model consists of various smaller elements or bundles, and these can occupy different relevancies for the carriers of the practice. While for some people the car itself matters as a status symbol, for others it is its engine or the embodied competence of being able to drive a stick shift which gives the car its significance. [34]

CLARKE et al. (2018) highlighted that situational maps "should include all the potentially analytically pertinent human and nonhuman, material, and symbolic/discursive elements in a particular situation as framed by those in it and by the analyst" (p.128). They hereby also referred to an underlying pragmatist figure of thought that "establishes the perspective-boundedness of all experience and denies the universality of reality and knowledge" (STRÜBING, 2014 [2004],

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8   SHOVE (2017, n.p.) claimed that "there is no such thing" as practice theory methodologies and argued that questions of methods depend on the research interest and phenomenon. While this is hardly deniable, at the same time there are also elective affinities between certain theories and methods (KALTHOFF, HIRSCHAUER & LINDEMANN, 2008).

9   Due to the strong schematization of her approach, SHOVE and WALKER (2010) also spoke of a "slimline approach" (p.472), although SHOVE seemed increasingly critical of the diverse and often simplistic application that chiefly results from the *three elements model*.

p.104). At the same time, this perspective-boundedness is interlinked with the topic of relationality. In addition to the question of *what* is in the situation, there is always the question of *for whom* each situation arises and *which* of the situational elements are central in each case. As some empirical insights from my data suggest, focusing on relationality helps to open up the analytical perspective. For a mechanic, the car itself may be a completely different entity than for a single parent or a cyclist. For some car-drivers, speed limits and air quality measuring devices are an assault on the freedom of their performance of driving. Debates around speed limits on motorways or driving bans are thus interpreted as signs of failed or ideological politics that, in their perception, demonize the car (SONNBERGER & LEGER, 2020). Nevertheless, the very same elements are an opportunity for better health, more safety for their children, and a chance for the residents of main streets to break their silence. As an outcome of putting air quality and health issues on the political agenda, speed limits that reduce particulate matter and nitrogen oxide help give voice to formerly silenced actors such as residents. The concrete practice described in these short empirical insights is happening at a *site*, while its embedding and relations refer to an overall *situation* of urban (car) mobility. [35]

While the greatest strength of the situational analysis approach undeniably lies in capturing and representing the complexity of such empirical phenomena and thus making them accessible for analysis, it falls short when it comes to actually theorizing about the complex relationships between the different entities involved in the situation. While CLARKE et al. (2018, p.131) provided at least 13 categories for elements to be found in a given situation, they left it to researchers to take up and analyze this differentiation in theoretical terms.[10] This broad range of categories is clearly helpful and necessary for exploring the complexity of the situation and its elements. However, at the same time, it complicates the conceptualization of theories and theorizing: The more categories there are, the harder their conceptual consolidation. Once again, we strive to find the delicate balance between isolating empirical phenomena in order to analyze them and doing justice to their empirical complexity. With situational analysis, effective tools for breaking down social phenomena into their component parts are provided, but in order to realize its full analytical potential, further theoretical concepts and consolidation may be helpful. The question posed in this article is whether and how practice theory fills this conceptual gap in relation to the empirical object of the research in question. [36]

Following SHOVE et al. (2012), driving a car can be seen as a practice, whereas *using* the car to be mobile constitutes a bundle of multiple practices (e.g., shopping, working, living family life) and constellations (e.g., municipal infrastructures, governance, environmental activism), all the way to large-scale social phenomena (e.g., the automotive industry, national economies, green deal policies). Looking at these constellations from the perspective of social practice

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10 Leaving this issue unresolved is understandable not least because the aim of situational analysis is the genesis of theory or theorization, but also because the subject matter of interest determines which theoretical perspective can be considered appropriate, suitable and promising.

theory illuminates the relational interdependence between seemingly small-scale individual performances and the larger structures within which they are embedded. Every single car journey contributes to the stabilization of the entire system of automobility. The automotive industry maintains its power, normality is perpetuated and routines are fostered. When it comes to capturing these complexities, opening them up for analysis, zooming in and out between different elements and relations, and stimulating new insights, situational analysis is a fruitful approach. It indicates where to start the analysis and guides the researcher towards the relevancies within the field. [37]

Researchers doing situational analysis and practice theory can examine the same phenomena with different focal points. With practice theory, I can look at a practice (driving a car) and ask what competences, knowledge, skills and material elements are necessary to participate in the practice, i.e., to drive the car, and what additional knowledge is necessary to participate competently in road traffic as well (SHOVE et al., 2012, pp.26ff.). Doing situational analysis, I focus on a social phenomenon (driving a car) and ask what the situation of car use is. In doing so, various questions come into play: Which elements are part of this situation? Who and what is relevant and makes a difference? F*or whom* is it relevant? Thus, aspects of the situation like cars, car manufacturers, road works, traffic rules, traffic lights, advertisements, parking spaces, multi-lane and single-lane roads, shopping centers, moralizing appeals, bans, environmental issues, health problems, masculinity, etc. would all be identified—many more elements than I would focus on initially with social practice theory. With heuristics such as arena mapping, I can show how collective actors frame environmental problems as the outcome of political measures rather than technological issues, whereas positional mapping helps me to identify the differing discursive positions these actors rely on (LEGER, 2019). [38]

However, the concrete doings and interrelationships, which practices are performed and how they are embedded in the site/situation, remain analytically underrepresented within situational analysis alone. How is driving *practically done* in the face of media debates and discourse? How do these debates link or (de)stabilize the connection between driving a car and other practices? In what ways can moralizing debates foster certain lifestyles as a form of protest, which in turn lead to the rise of other (un)sustainable practices? Questions of where the practice of driving ends and that of shopping begins, and which preconditions and connections exist (e.g., the linking of routes, temporal rhythms of everyday life, matters of employment, experience, advertisement) are *addressed* and made visible through mapping strategies. But it is only by an integrated perspective that I can *answer* these questions. With mapping, I can capture the situation and methodically represent cars, roads, traffic rules, knowledge, shops, discourses and meanings. By means of practice theory, I can relate the relevant elements *as participants* in the different practices of car use as well as identify crucial and critical links and the mutual shaping of elements (SCHATZKI, 2016b, p.14). [39]

7. Conclusion

The main issue addressed in this article has its origin in the question of how to analyze social practices without (over)simplifying them, i.e., while doing justice to their relational character and without reducing their complexity. I have argued that it is through the integration into the situational analysis approach, that researchers are enabled to maintain the complexity of social phenomena while at the same time making use of concise, well-grounded and sound analytical tools. The result is a comprehensive analysis of everyday practices and their embeddedness within social situations. On a theoretical level, I also questioned the extent to which we can use the explanatory potential of social practice theories to inform situational-analytical work and thus build a theory/methods package. I argued not only that there is mutual potential in combining both, but also that doing so is an ontological possibility. While I contended that social practice theory and situational analysis share the same theoretical grounds and ontological positions regarding core questions, I was also able to demonstrate their differences. To *ignore* these differences would be to fail to seriously engage with ontology, while *working* with them can lead to productive analytical innovation. As there are only slight differences in terms and nuances of understanding, we can identify a kind of *sameness despite difference* that makes an integrated perspective promising. Such an integration might also strengthen the creative use of the analytical ideas of situational analysis (KNOPP, 2021) and open it to a wider field of research. [40]

With situational analysis, CLARKE et al. (2018) provided methodologically sound analytical tools as a heuristic. With the integration of social practice theory, a vocabulary for informing and theorizing empirical findings and analytical work, while drawing on a compatible ontology, is offered. The result is an analytical program by which researchers can comprehensively investigate and explain social phenomena. Being a *practice-theoretical situational analysis*, in this sense, the *toolbox* of situational analysis is extended and the requirements not to "ignore the philosophical grounding and epistemology of the methods" (CLARKE et al., 2018, p.24) as well as the appeal to "take ontology seriously" (SCHATZKI, 2016a, p.40) are fulfilled. [41]

In terms of the hands-on work within my empirical project, I have found this analytical program to be highly adaptable. Its practical benefits lie in the low-threshold heuristics of mapping, which can also be applied to social practices and open up a new analytical toolbox for creative advancement. Conceptually, combining the approaches helps me to situate everyday practices and to consider their complex emergence, as I have shown in the previous section. With this combination, I thus successfully avoid oversimplifying the practice of car-driving. However, it is important to highlight the downside of this approach: Especially when working with situational maps, adding in social practices (and their various entities) also means increasing complexity even further. To acknowledge and work with this complexity in a creative way is, I think, the crucial aim when using the wider toolbox of a practice-theoretical situational analysis. [42]

The thoughts set out here must be seen merely as a first, tentative draft of the potential of such an integration for creating a theory/methods package. The proof of such a package lies in future empirical research. However, a combination seems both possible and necessary, as "the power and scope of practice theory" also depends on the capacity to develop new concepts and approaches "that capture features of and processes in this plenum" (ibid.). Addressing the empirical world, SCHATZKI (2018) talked about whether or not it is possible to form what he calls "theoretical coalitions" (p.163):

> "In this way, practice theory can build alliances with other theoretical approaches and traditions to provide advantageous accounts of phenomena that transpire in the context of practices. To repeat, the main constraint on building these alliances is that these approaches be compatible with the thesis that practices are a basic reality. I believe that this stricture allows considerable free space for a range of approaches to join practice theories in broader theoretical coalitions" (ibid.). [43]

Although SCHATZKI was talking about theoretical issues here, I argue that his assertion also applies to the combination of practice theory with methodology, as I have outlined in this article. If this holds true, the result will be a kind of theory/methodology alliance—which is ultimately exactly what CLARKE and colleagues had in mind with the concept of theory/methods packages. [44]

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