

Towards a scaling-sensitive social research work

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Sociology's knowledge-making practices consist primarily in cutting social reality (realities) into distinct, but overlapping and abstract entities, which are variously juxtaposed and micro-/macrofied depending on the underlying theoretical assumptions as they are "worked" by researchers. (Social) research as an ongoing process of cutting abstract entities is thus producing an almost infinite plurality of scales. In this sense, it is not surprising that we periodically assist at the emergence of new "turns", from the cognitive to the material and the linguistic or emotional.

This group addresses persons who are interested in working on how persons-as-researchers-and-theorists-cut-and-invent-social-reality. For the organizers, the work of Andrew Abbott as well as Marilyn Strathern has inspired the following questions:

- How do social theories cut, invent and try to covenant social reality?
- How is social reality cut, invented and covenanted in so-called professional contexts?
- How is social reality cut, invented and covenanted by methods of social research?

Just to begin with... some irritating quotations

- “Specialists (in knowledge) tend to withdraw into pure work because the complexity of the thing known eventually tends to get in the way of the knowledge system itself. So the object of knowledge is gradually disregarded” (Abbott 2001: 22)
- “First, I sustain a running argument with what I identify as the premises on which much writing on Melanesia (though not of course restricted to it) has been based. These premises belong to a particular cultural mode of knowledge and explanation. Second, I do not imagine, I can extract myself from this mode: I can only make its workings visible” (Strathern 1990: 7)

Who are we? And you?

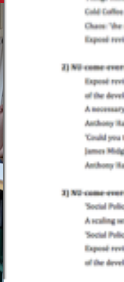
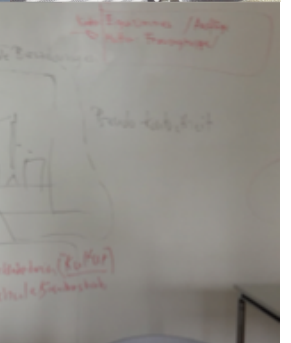
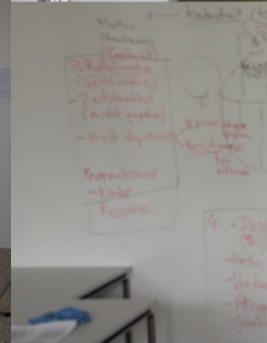
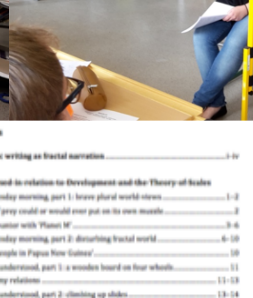
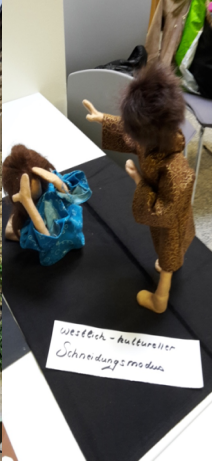


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Why are we here?

- Own preoccupation with social sciences knowledge making practises over the last 3 years and the development of a “Theory of Scales”
- Possibility (as we understood it originally) to discuss intensively our work in a format other than the usual 15 minutes presentations through the organisation of a working group
- More generally, our wish to exchange on what we have worked on in the last 2-3 years with persons at other places in time

What is driving us?

- How can we manage to stick to the “object” of knowledge?
- How can we deal with “phenomena” that doesn’t fit into the organising principles of maps (with core features) and taxonomies?
- How can we avoid to “sacrify” the “brokenness” of “things” for the sake of the unity of analyses (-> principles, patterns, etc.)?
- How can we create knowledge about persons and other entities that seem to continuously change in appearance and shape?

What do we want to do here?

Do some “relational scaling work” with you in a “postplural attitude”?

⇒ Short presentations as triggers for discussions

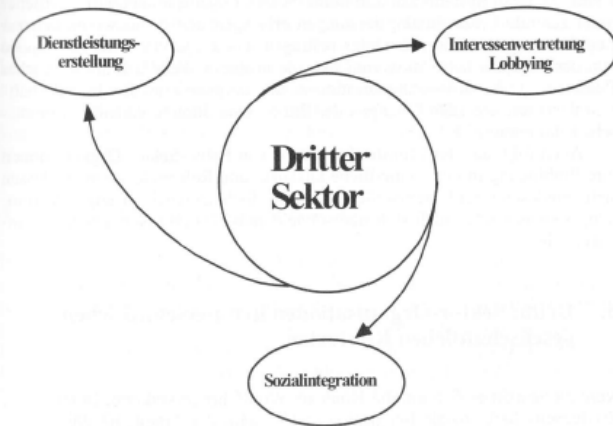
⇒ Taking time for intensive discussions

From mapping to scaling fields : Towards a relational and scaling-sensitive research work (Claude Haas & Thomas Marthaler)

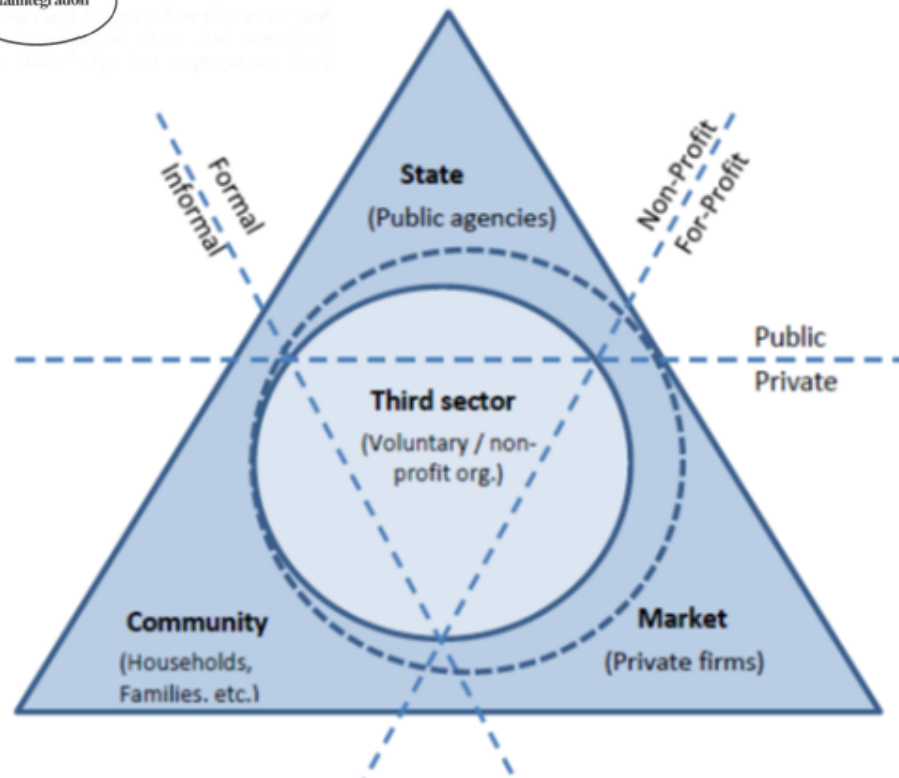
Mapping fields, and more general maps, belong to the classical instruments of social research. Back in 2013, we started with the idea of developing a mapping methodology in order to visualise the embeddedness of social work as a profession in human service organisations and organisational fields. Our theoretical and methodological point of departure consisted in neo-institutional organisation theory. More specifically, we had developed an idea of organisational fields as institutional archetypes of interaction. By means of expert interviews we tried to reconstruct the field dynamics. But we 'fell short of abstraction', as we would put it today, facing the fractality of the data collected through persons.

It is in this context, while maintaining our irritation and relating to the work of Marilyn Strathern, Roy Wagner or Martin Holbraad, that we begun to develop a 'new' approach, which is basically about how in relating to the 'world' as a recursive process of eversion of environments within, persons or life-world-bubbles-at-different-places-in-time, unremittingly (re-)invent and covenant scales of various 'animate' or 'inanimate' entity into ontological being in relational scaling work, i.e. ideational-emotional-material cutting. The aim of the present contribution is to give an insight into our ongoing theorising work and methodology development.

Abb. 1: Multifunktionalität von Dritte-Sektor-Organisationen



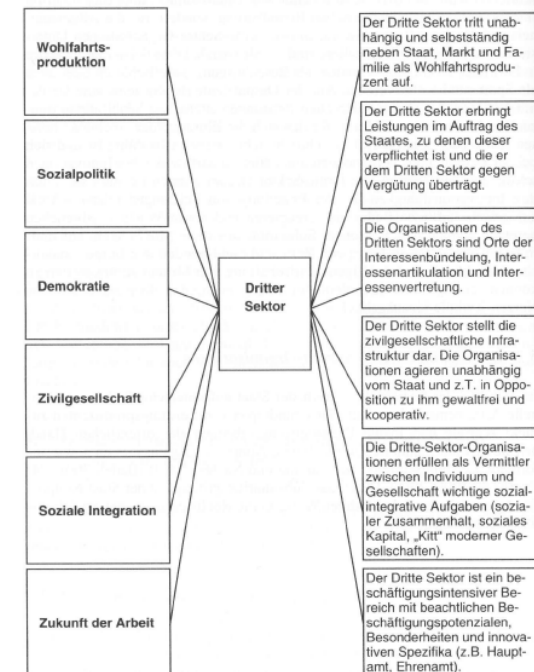
Quelle: Eigene Darstellung.



Source: based on Pestoff (1992, p. 25)

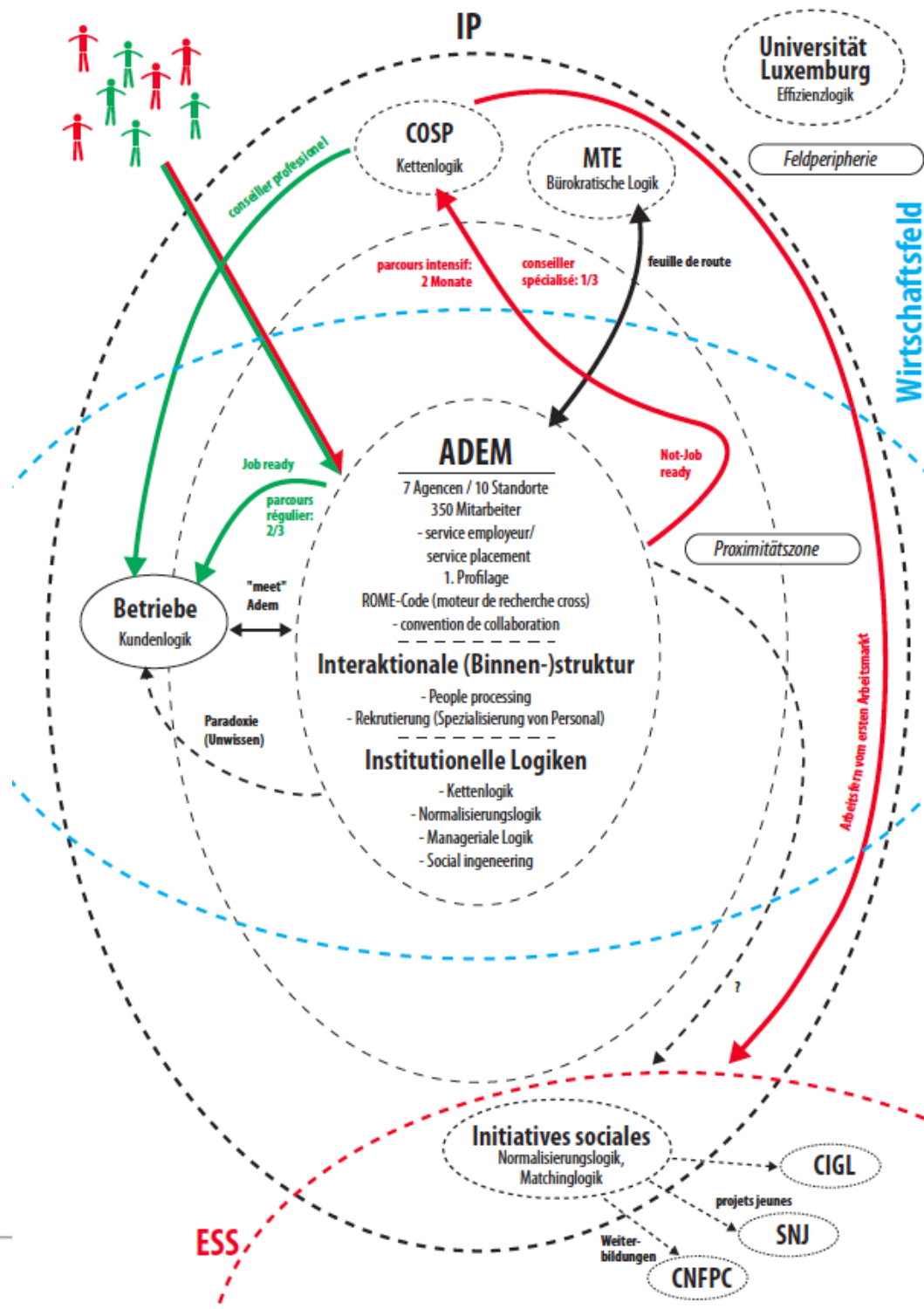
Maps of the third/social sector

Abb. 2: Kontextbindungen des Dritten Sektors



Quelle: eigene Darstellung.

An NI-inspired actor-centred map (Haas & Marthaler, 2014)

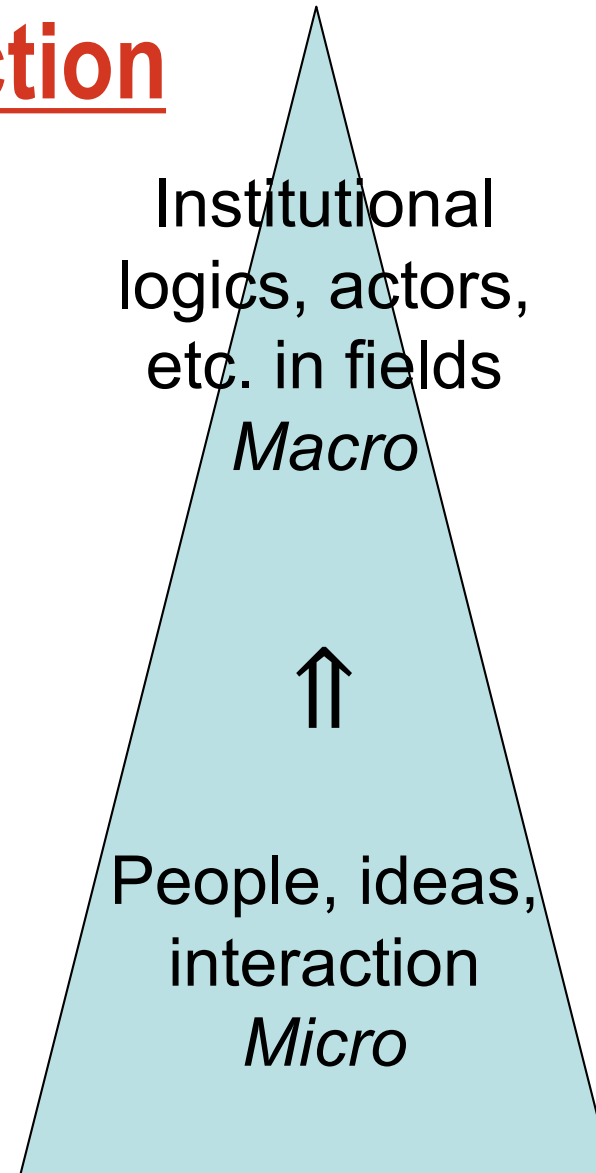


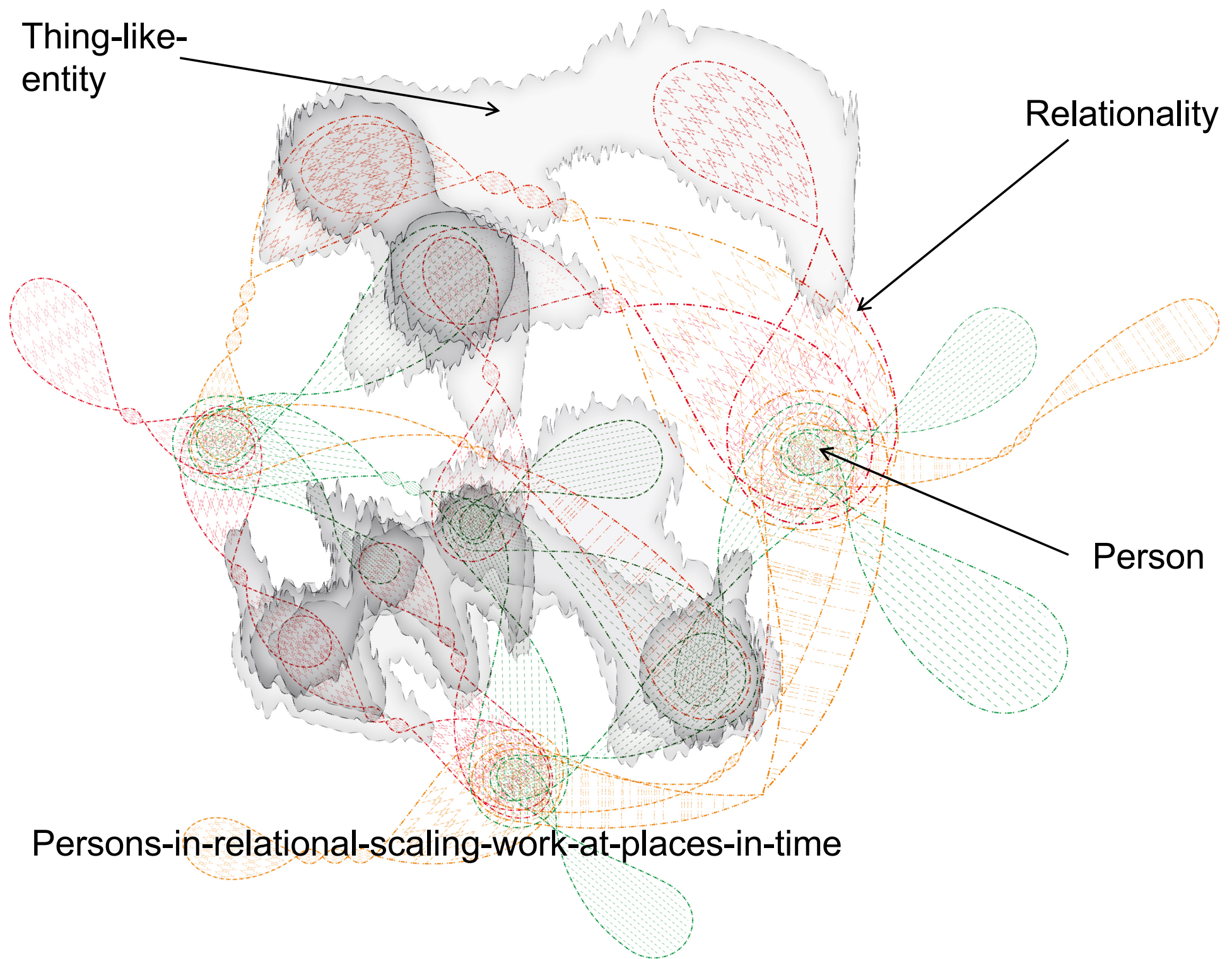
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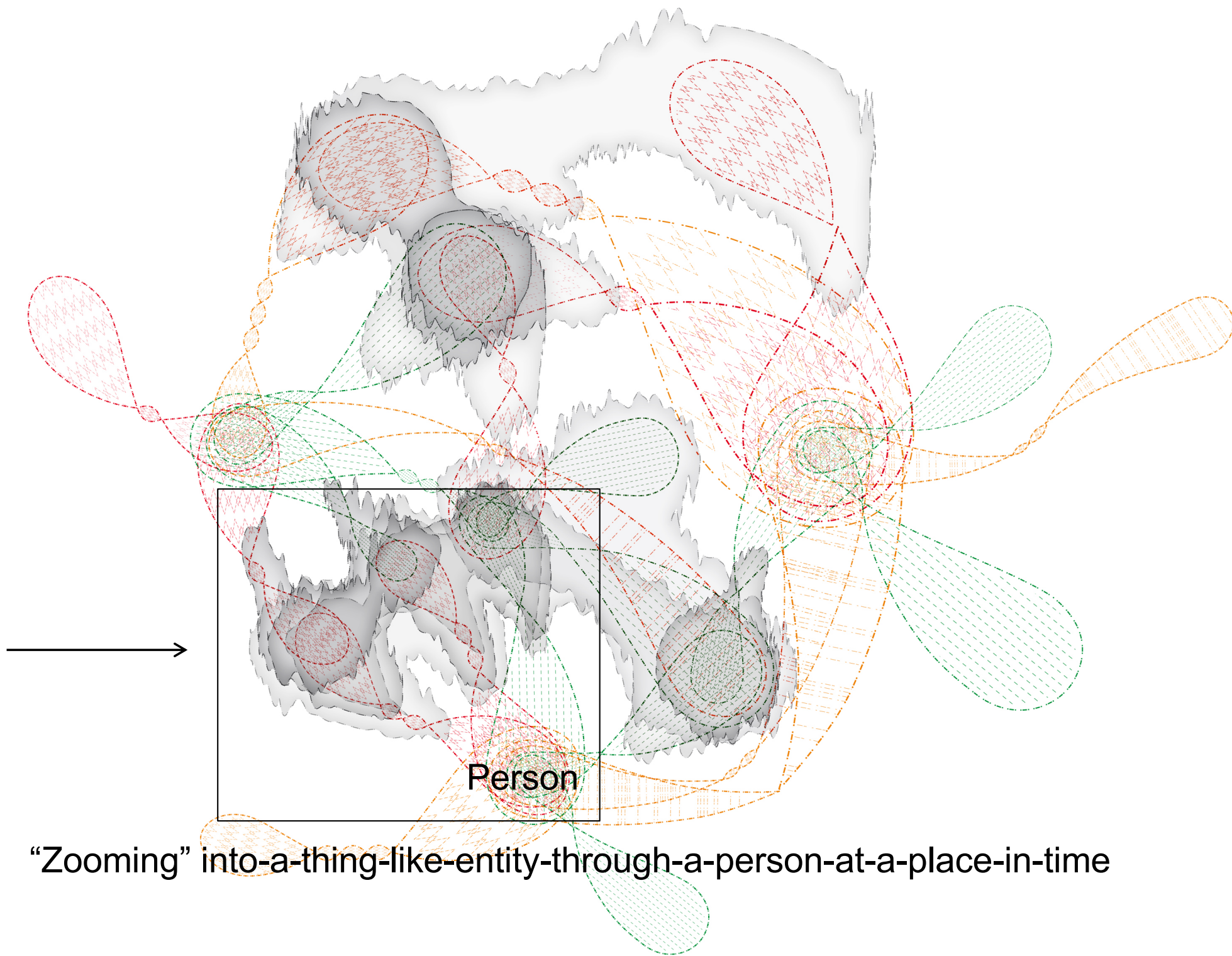
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ON SOCIAL AND INDIVIDUAL
DEVELOPMENT

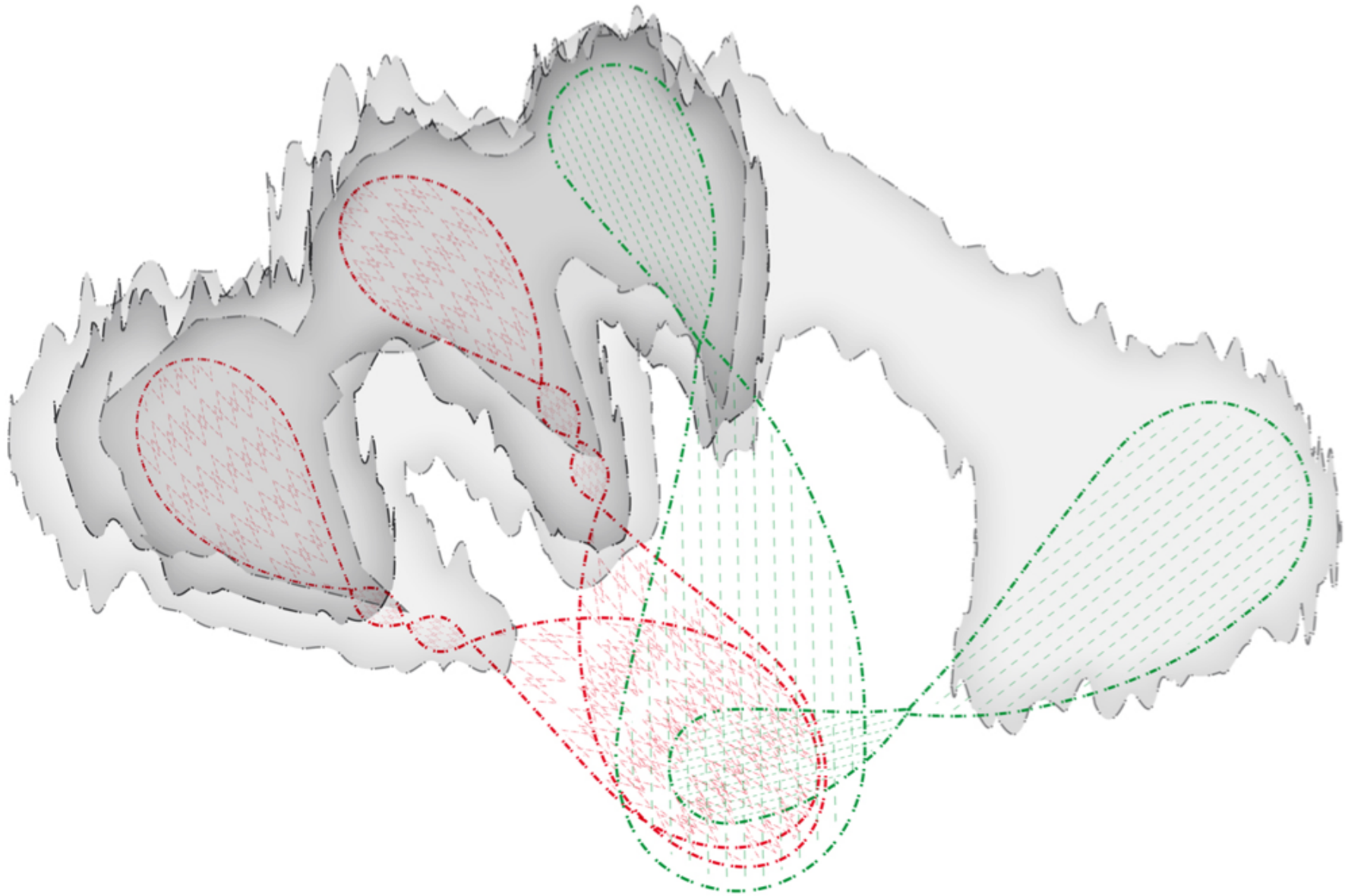
Mapping fields as a movement of reconstructive abstraction

Abstracting and
visualising
embeddedness as
well as dominant
and conflicting
institutional logics
through qualitative
interviews









“Organisations/departments”...-come-scale-through-person-at-a-place-in-time

INSIDE

INTEGRATIVE RESEARCH UNIT
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DEVELOPMENT


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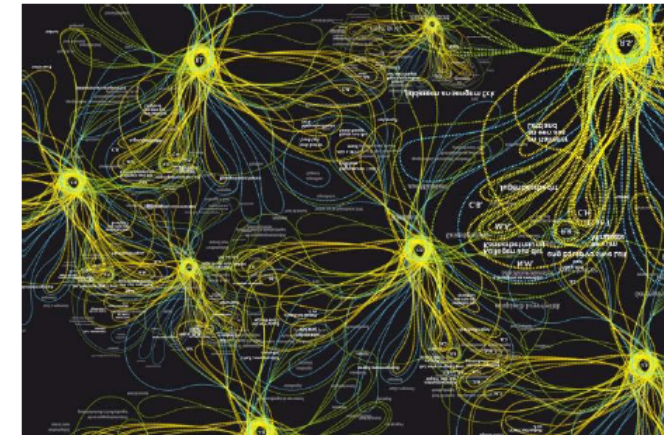
Just to get back to the beginning

- “Specialists (in knowledge) tend to withdraw into pure work because the complexity of the thing known eventually tends to get in the way of the knowledge system itself. So the object of knowledge is gradually disregarded” (Abbott 2001: 22)
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Some “closing” word

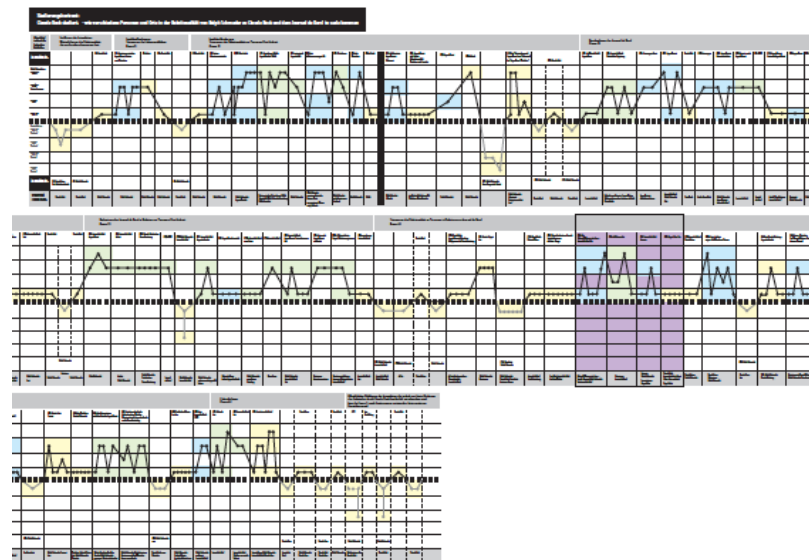
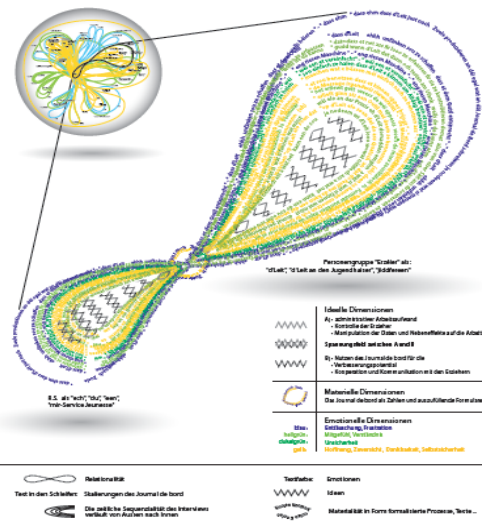
- We feel as if we were just at the “beginning” of a “whole” movement
 - ⇒ Developing a computational tool for relational and scaling-sensitive research
 - ⇒ Exploring the relational and scaling “principles” at work in conversations, papers, etc.
 - ⇒ Re-inventing social work/management/organising/education/museum expositions... as relational, scaling-sensitive bricolage work

Further visualisations into our relational and scale- sensitive research world



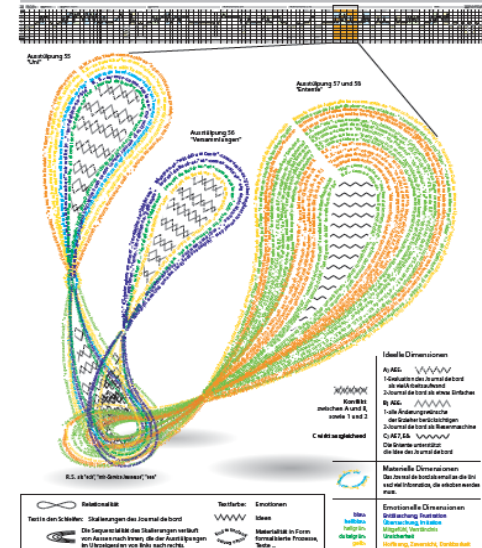
Skaleographie 2:

Das Journal de bord kommt scale in der Relationalität von R.S. zur Personengruppe "Erzieher".



Skaleographie 3:

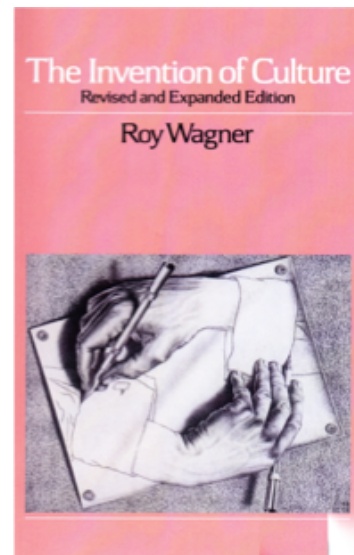
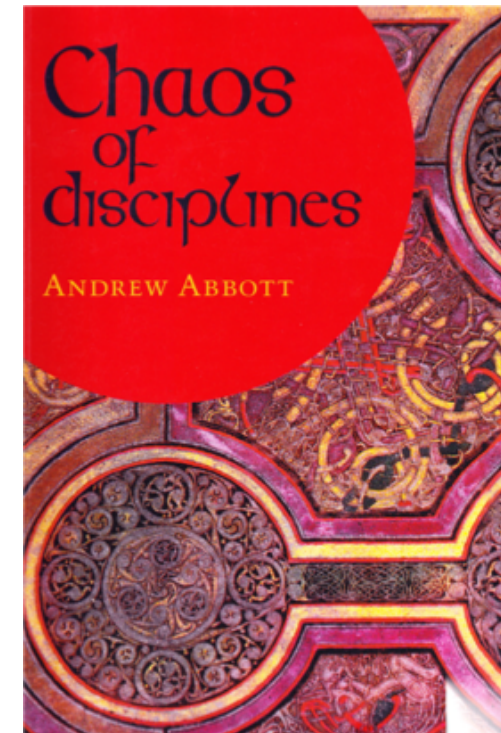
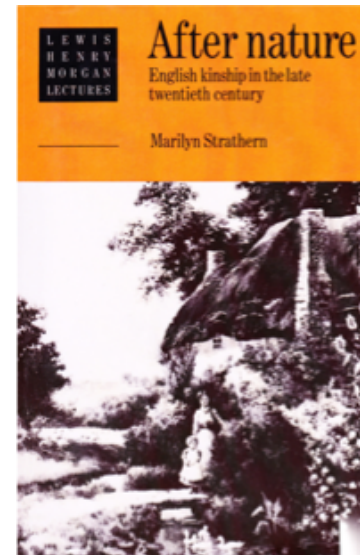
Visualisierung einer sequenziellen Folge von Ausstülpungen und Skalierungen von R.S. in relationaler Skalierungsarbeit mit Claude Rock



To learn more about us...

- A series of working papers
 - More than 100 memos (documenting our theorising process)
 - First communications and publications
 - A website under construction
 - First ideas about the foundation of an “Institute for relational and scaling-sensitive work”
- ... and a lot more to come, hopefully 😊

... and some sources of inspiration



... and some further sources of inspiration

- Henare, A., Holbraad, M. & Wastell, S. (2007.). *Thinking Through Things. Theorising Artefacts Ethnographically*. New York: Routledge.
- Jensen, C. B. (2007). Infrastructural fractals: revisiting the micro – macro distinction in social theory. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 25(5), 832-850.
- Nottale, L. (2011). *Scale Relativity and Fractal Space-Time: A New Approach to Unifying Relativity and Quantum Mechanics*. London: Imperial College Press.
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- Nottale, L. (2011). *Scale Relativity and Fractal Space-Time: A New Approach to Unifying Relativity and Quantum Mechanics*. London: Imperial College Press.
- Wagner, R. (2001). *The Anthropology of the Subject. Holographic Worldview in New Guinea and Its Meaning and Significance of the World of Anthropology*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Thank you for your participation!

