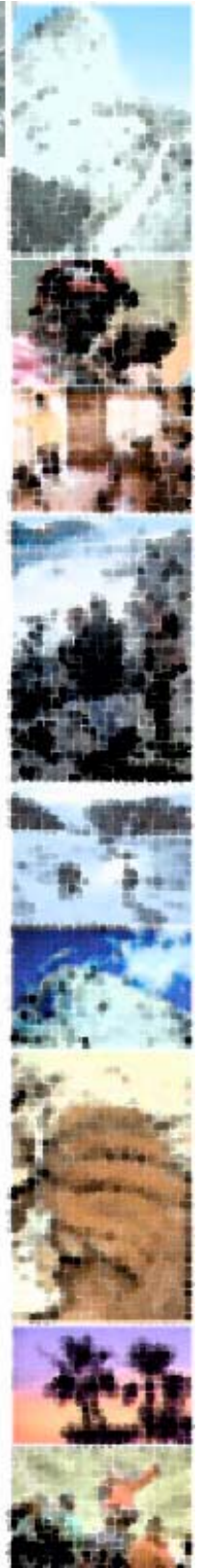# School of GeoSciences
Institute of Geography

Institute of Geography Online Paper Series: GEO-003

Respecifying Standardisation in

Geographical Research:

The Work of Street-Interviewing

submitted to Environment & Planning A

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Abstract

In this article the problem of standardisation in geographical research is reviewed by focussing on one episode of standardised social scientific research, namely the street interview or respectively the face-to-face delivery of a questionnaire in a public space. The central aspect of the paper is a detailed inquiry into a corpus of video data showing researchers investigating how people perceive comfort in open urban spaces by means of a questionnaire used in *ad hoc* street interviews. Constitutive features of standardised interviewing are described by carefully examining the *front end* of a chosen interview. Using detailed transcriptions and video stills of this episode, the article shows how an interviewer establishes contact with passers-by and prepares to start asking questions. I argue that the analysis of interaction between interviewer and respondent are necessary to circumvent the qualitative/quantitative debate, and to understand social scientific and geographical cultures of measuring and standardisation.

Don't play what's there, play what's not there.
Miles Davis

Introduction

Filled in by hand, answered on the telephone, on the doorstep, during an organised meeting in an office, or in an *ad hoc* encounter in a public place everyone of us has experienced, in one way or another, standardised forms. We participate in surveys, register officially or contribute, willingly or unwillingly, to marketing research. Standardised texts, such as questionnaires, are constantly circulating in everyday life. Not only are we more or less often confronted with questionnaires, but everyone has 'cultural knowledge' about how to handle, read, respond, fill in, but also to avoid, reject and sometimes misuse them.

These common experiences of standardisation are well known within geography and the social sciences, and they interest both, those in favour and those against standardised methods in geographical research. Traditionally the use of standardised methods has been discussed along a spectrum opened up between those who say that standardisation fails because of the uncontrollable diversity how questionnaires and forms can be handled, and those who see in standardised methodologies means to increase objectivity through reduction of this bias.

On the one hand qualitative oriented researchers, critics of the standardised questionnaire, and defenders of research methods like the personal, one-on-one interview, emphasise that the influence of the researcher on the research process (Herod, 1990), gender relations (McDowell, 1992; Herod, 1993), cultural differences (Shrumer-Smith, 1998), the spatial setting in which the encounter between researcher and interviewee takes place (Elwood and Martin, 2000; Hoong Sin, 2003) and ways of getting access to research settings (Cochrane, 1998; McDowell, 1998) are all constitutive features of the research process, and so cannot be ignored. From a qualitative perspective the engagement between the researcher and respondent is seen as a potential source of 'bias' preventing the respondent from 'truthfully' answering questions. Consequently, methodology has to be developed and promoted to undermine interaction as a potential source of trouble. Consider this advice given in Robinson's *Methods and Techniques in Human Geography*:

> "Depending on the underlying purpose for taking a questionnaire survey, it is also possible to provide some checks upon the input of the researcher's subjective values to the questionnaire by introducing elements of *replicability* and *standardization*. The former refers to a mechanism for checking whether a survey's findings are applicable in other contexts. For, example, if a second researcher administers the same questionnaire with a comparable sample, this provides a check upon possible biases. However, this requires standardization in which the conditions operating during the taking of the questionnaire are repeated, e.g. asking the questions in the same manner so that different replies to the same questions are a 'true' difference of opinion and not a reflection of how the question was asked of to the conditions under which the interview was conducted." (1998, page 384)

To avoid measurement error or failure, exactly the same procedure must be carried out in each interview. Any variation between the answers will then reflect real

differences within a given population, and not be an effect of the research procedure nor of the research tool, in this case the questionnaire. The more the research process, the course of the interview and the evaluation of data is standardized, the less measurement error is here expected.

Within Human Geography these issues have been debated extensively from the 1980s Humanistic turn onwards. Today the so-called qualitative/quantitative debate has lost much of its enthusiasm. The relationship between the different methodological camps remains sometimes competitive and sometimes complementary. In methodology handbooks chapters on qualitative and quantitative research methods follow each other peacefully one after the other without substantial links in between them. From the point of view of actor-network theory one might say that quantitative *and* qualitative methods have become *black boxes* existing and persisting within the safe context of each camp's allies (Latour, 1999).

Common arguments about a descriptively simple field method such as, what I will call in the following, *standardised street interviewing* miss the complexity and subtlety of the ways geographical knowledge is produced. My purpose therefore is to contribute to the better understanding of standardisation through an ethnomethodological respecification of this research practice. I will do so by asking the following question: How does the empirical observation of the delivery of a questionnaire in the largely uncontrolled and also uncontrollable setting of the street contribute to the better understanding of standardisation in geographical research?

In doing so I follow the advice that scientific observations, theorems and experiments have to be understood through the concrete practices by which scientific concepts or ideas are 'made' (Latour, 1987; Pickering, 1992). Therefore, I will refer to those persons and things who inhabit and, through their practices, 'produce' and 'reproduce' the well-known street scenes of standardised interviewing. In short and to paraphrase Latour: The article will contribute to an understanding of *standardisation* and *geography in the making,* and will not consider standardisation as a *ready made* social scientific or geographical technique.

On behalf of an episode taken from a video corpus of filmed street interviews I am arguing in this article that geography and the social sciences must be more aware of what someone like Goffman (1963) would define as the management of a frame of participation, or according to de Certeau (1990) can be named the work of producing an appropriate place of knowledge production. The aim here is a modest one. I will look at one chosen episode from the corpus, which shows an interviewer getting started questioning a passer-by. My interest is in the work to be done *before* the answer-response interaction can take place.

Indifference and coding practices

The delivery of a questionnaire has to be described as a specific social scientific and geographical practice, and not as the application of an ideal rooted in a theoretical framework. This window on the issue helps to sidestep and hopefully to respecify the field of tension between quantitative and qualitative interviewing. Ethnomethodology is considered as a possible route for giving an answer to questions about what geographer and social scientists *do* when they standardise, quantify and measure geographical phenomena. I will first argue why I understand ethnomethodology as *not* occupying a place on the qualitative/quantitative spectrum.

In a programmatic text Hester and Francis (1994) show that the location of ethnomethodology and its concern with the local character of language and interaction at the interpretative pole and qualitative end of the spectrum is not appropriate. They emphasise a classical misunderstanding, based on ethnomethodology's argument that every interaction is locally managed and practically accomplished. Hester and Francis reject the claim that ethnomethodology is opposed to conventional social scientific practices:

"To say that ethnomethodology is interested in criticizing, and thereby disapproving of, what conventional sociology does or the methods it employs is a basic misconception of its analytical interests. Ethnomethodology is interested in practical action and practical reasoning, and what sociologists do (whatever their practical actions and reasonings are) simply constitutes further instances of such phenomena, no more, nor no less interesting than others". (1994, page 677)

In this sense, ethnomethodology takes an *indifferent* posture towards all everyday and scientific practices in general, included scientific practices such as, for example, interviewing, measuring, sampling, mapping. It is not judging their worth or lack of worth – ethnomethodology is not comparing them, setting them in a hierarchy and does not judge if they are effective, reliable and valid, it is simply asking about how they work *in practice*. Investigation of professional social scientific activities happens "while abstaining from all judgements of their adequacy, value, importance, necessity, practicality, success, or consequentiality" (Garfinkel and Sacks (1986) quoted in Hester and Francis, 1994, page 677). *Indifference* in this sense means also

"that ethnomethodology is interested in examining interviewing not with some agenda or scheme of good interview practice in mind, nor with regard to assessing the validity of interviewing in general or in its specifies, not to find fault, mock, or use as a device for making claims about intellectual status, but rather with a view to considering it as a practical matter like any other". (Hester and Francis, 1994, page 678)

According to this, ethnomethodology does not ask if social, natural scientists or geographers are able to make appropriate standardisations of phenomena. Indifference is not rejection, but the basis for understanding different cultures of standardisation. Talking about practices of measurement in the social sciences Lynch emphasises:

"Ethnomethodology is neither a Lebensphilosphie denying the very possibility of measurement in the social sciences […] nor a source of positive methodological advice of social scientists. Instead, it topicalises measurement and respecifies its methodological significance for studies on the production of social order". (1991, page 79)

It is not the common sense of measurement or standardisation in physical sciences, social investigation or geography that is questioned here; it is instead proposed that differences between, for instance, sociological and geographical practices of standardisation, remain to be discovered as different cultures of accomplishing orders of the social and material world.

It is at this point where the ethnomethodological respecification of measuring and coding takes place. Ethnomethodology

> "does not focus on the individual, as has often been claimed. The individual persons who inhabit social situations are of interest only insofar as their personal characteristics reveal something about the competencies required to achieve the recognizable production of local order that is the object of the study". (Warfield Rawls, 2002, page 7)

It asks how coders and interviewers follow instructions, and how they produce stability in interaction *with* other members.

Garfinkel (1967) investigates in one of his programmatic studies, how coders follow instructions to fulfil their standardised task in a sociological study on a large number of clinical records. Garfinkel asked coders how they codified clinical folders on their sheets: "Via what practices had actual folder contents been assigned the status of answers to the researchers question?" (1967, page 20). Garfinkel discovers that coders make "ad hoc considerations" like "etc.", "unless", "let it pass". He does not see these considerations as problems for taking instructions seriously, or to be minimised, but rather as essential features of coding procedures. They show in the first instance, that instructions are made relevant by treating single and actual cases.

Interviewers using questionnaires have to follow instructions like coders in Garfinkel's study. The questionnaire interviewers have at hand includes, for example, a logic of sequences (the order of the questions) as to how the interview has to be carried out from beginning to end. It further includes a "network of possibilities" (Lynch, 2002, page 129) in the form of, for example, listed possible answers read by the interviewer. The questionnaire offers *no* written guidelines, however, as how in certain situations the interviewer is to conduct the interview. Instructions in survey interviews, like the one in the clinical study, regulate procedures to produce supposedly stable links to standardise practices of different interviewers, but also between each 'case' respectively accomplished interviews. One of these instructions is that the interviewer has to read the questions as they are written on the questionnaire sheet. A fundamental common feature of coding practices in both the clinical study and in surveys using street interviews is the common knowledge about the environment in which a study takes place. Knowledge about the organisation of the clinic, on the one hand, and knowledge about how open urban spaces 'work', on the other, must be available to do respectively 'coders work' or to deliver a questionnaire.

Different from Garfinkel's clinical study standardised interviewing involves answer-response interaction and it is on 'ad hoc considerations' made in the encounter between interviewer and interviewee that instructions are made relevant. Therefore the question is how 'coding' is investigated by the interview participants as an essential feature of standardisation. In this article I do not want to understand how the questionnaire determines interaction but, rather, how in street interviews the partners take street interviewing as serious task to receive their analytical object.

The measuring practices discussed were part of an European research project called RUROS (**R**ediscovering the **U**rban **R**ealm and **O**pen **S**paces) ((2003)[1]. This project has an interest in the microclimates of open urban spaces and their thermal, visual and acoustic conditions. RUROS establishes complex methods of measuring the 'comfort' of open urban spaces for human users and occupants. On the one hand, RUROS researchers use scientific instruments to measure the microclimatic conditions of urban spaces. On the other hand, RUROS carries out street interviews in which passers-by are questioned about their perceptions about the physical conditions of these urban spaces. RUROS claims to measure and calculate *urban comfort* through collected data of both a "physical" and a "perceptual" order. To understand the relationship between "meteorological parameters" and "people's feelings and perceptions", RUROS provides an integrated study carried out in ten different cities across Europe (Goyette-Pernot and Compagnon, 2003). In this article I will deal only with the interviews carried out in this research project.

The corpus used for analysis in this paper consists of a series of successful street interviews and refusals in the RUROS winter and spring campaign in the city of Fribourg (Switzerland) from February to April 2002. Given the bilingual status of the city, interviews were held in French and German. Video recordings of the interviews were done in collaboration and with permission of the research group, and translation of transcripts undertaken by myself.

Following Garfinkel's example in his clinical records study, I will focus here on one specific instruction of standardised interviewing, the work of 'reading questions from the clipboard'. My interest is in how interviewers follow this seriously as an essential and preliminary instruction in standardised interviewing. I highlight some of the features and problems of this initial task in the completion of the *front end* of an interview of the corpus.

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[1] RUROS is a research project of the EU fp5 Keyaction 4 „City of Tomorrow and Cultural Heritage" from the research programme „Energy, Environment and Sustainable Development"

From unfocused to focused interaction

Whilst the analysis of the sequential order of answer-response interaction holds a prominent position in research on the survey interview considerably less has been done on the *front end* of standardised interviews. One exception on this behalf is Maynard's und Schaeffer's work where the *front end* is assigned status as a specific moment "where interviewers call potential respondents, introduce themselves, select a member […] to question, and request participation from that member" (2002a, page 219). In survey research the *front end* is crucial, it is here where potential participants accept or refuse to answer questions. The results and success of a survey are dependent on the *front end,* but also 'objectivity' and 'representativness'. Last, but not least, the *front end* of the interview can include a basic economic imperative. If many inquiries are refused survey interviewing gets more and more expensive.

In telephone and mail surveys, sampling of people can be done according to predefined and chosen social categories. Categorisation in street interviews happens *ad hoc.* It is bound to gestural activities and the visual appearance of researcher and respondent. Also, different from telephone survey in which the *front end* is structured through well known conversational topics such as 'ringing', 'greeting', 'answering', the front end of the street interview is mainly visually ordered and involves a stream of embodied actions.

I argue here that the *front end* comes successfully to a close when an initial agreement is achieved and the first question can be read aloud and a first answer can be written on the questionnaire sheet. It is not successful if passers-by manage to refuse to begin answering the questionnaire. In what follows, then, I pay special attention to how the interviewer-respondent pair in their interaction accomplish this introduction practically i.e. how they get to and produce 'reading questions from the sheet' as a situated activity.
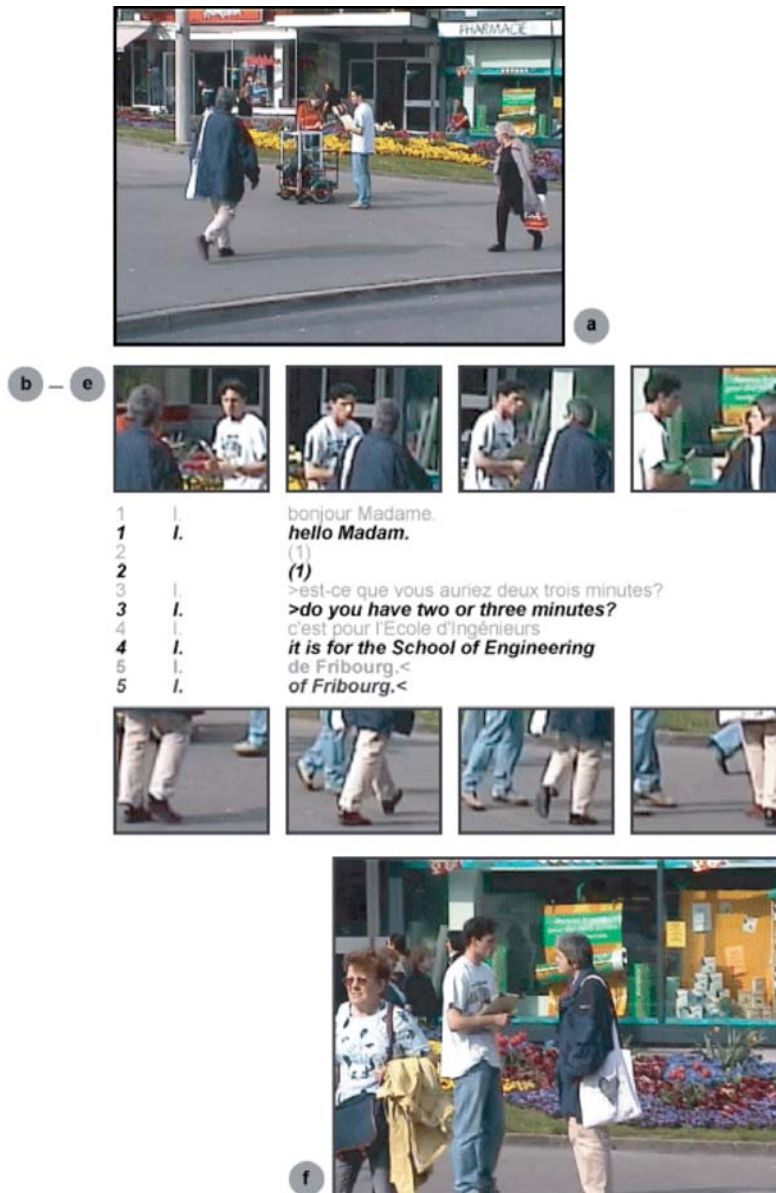
Figure 1 RUROS Fribourg (item 10, 0:49 – 0:53)

The first part of the *front end* under investigation is represented in Figure 1. As the episode begins (detail a) the interviewer stands close-by one of his colleagues who is occupied with the measuring instruments that are collecting parallel microclimatic data. Some of the passers-by find their attention drawn to the scene. They turn their heads in direction of the group. We can observe here what Goffman calls *unfocused interaction*. He describes this as "the kind of communication which occurs when one gleans information about another person present by glancing at him, if only momentarily, as he passes into and then out of one's view. Unfocused interaction has to do largely with the management of sheer and mere copresence". Our first interest here is in the work of how the interviewer produces *focused interaction*, that is "the kind of interaction that occurs when persons gather close together and openly

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cooperate to sustain a single focus of attention [which is the questionnaire], typically by taking turns at talking" (Goffman, 1963, page 24).

The interviewer holds the clipboard in both hands. While the lower part of the clipboard rests on his stomach the upper part tilts away, some twenty centimetres from the chest. Turning his head he sees a woman coming from the left, by some short steps he turns in the same direction. The interviewer starts to walk towards the woman (detail b). While approaching he greets her by saying "Hello Madame" (line 1), then asking her if she would have time to answer the questionnaire, and he then explains what institution he is linked to (lines 3 and 4). The woman does not stop immediately (details c and d). The interviewer moves towards the woman then he turns round and accompanies her on her right side for a short while before she turns first her head and upper part of her body, followed then by the lower part of her body (detail e). The series of pictures (details b to e) include four interactional features: *greeting*, *walking with*, *stopping* and *turning around*. The final result this is a position in which the partners stand in front of each other maintaining eye contact (detail f). We can observe, that this is not only done through speaking, but includes coordination and mutual orientation of talk, the movements of bodies, the orientation of glances and objects like, for example, clipboard and pen in the hands of the interviewer. It is also 'organised' by the sidewalk 'orienting' people's paths as part of the urban environment.

In the course of interaction the partners mutually engage with each other according to the given situation. We say 'mutually engaged' because a greeting demands another greeting, but it can also be refused. When the researcher walks with the woman and stops at a certain point, she can walk away from him, or stop. To find the partners in a face-to-face position at the end of this first part (detail f) is not just the result of what the researcher does. The researcher proposes only "a local here-and-now 'definition of the situation' " (Heritage, 1984, page 245) to which passers-by then will orient their own actions or not.

Conversation analysis describes *recipient design* as a fundamental feature of ordinary conversation. It is described as a "co-operative principle" which means "that speakers are expected to design their talk to satisfy the accepted and immediate requirements of the current interaction" (Houtkoop-Steenstra, 2000, page 63). To look at this another way it is also the 'design' of a recipient, that is the transformation of a passer-by into an actor as an appropriate research subject. Recipient design amounts to more than the talk necessary to convince someone to participate in the interview and to get their verbal consent to provide answers to questions. It is an ongoing task throughout the whole interview. Interruptions from outside of the scene (a man was interviewed at a bus station, when his bus arrived the interview came to a halt) or from inside (respondents' doubts about the content of the questions causing them to leave the scene before finishing the interview) are likely and respondents must be 'held' until the end of the interview. It can be seen that recipient design is not an affair of the interviewer only, but has to be understood as a common, accounted for, practical, ongoing and acknowledged 'agreement' between the partners to do an interview.

Keeping the above said in mind we will pursue the ongoing interaction and ask what specific recipient design street interviewing requires. Therefore, our next interest is in the role of the questionnaire. As figure 2 shows, we have slightly zoomed in to get a

good understanding of how pen and clipboard become central features in the interaction.
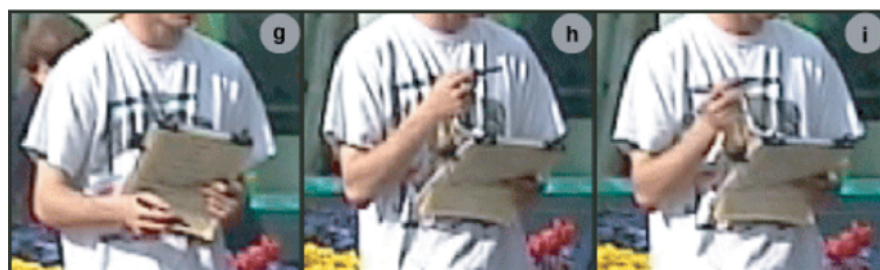
6   I.   c'est juste un: p'tit questionnaire. concernant les: (1) mesures
6   I.   *it is just a: short questionnaire. concerning (1) meteorological*
7   I.   météorologiques, >comment est-ce que vous vous sentez<,
7   I.   *measuring, >how you feel<,*
8   I.   >le temps qu'il fait<, >la: la place de la Gare<, ici.
8   I.   *>the actual weather<, >the: the "Place de la Gare"<, here.*

Figure 2 RUROS Fribourg (item 10, 0:53 – 1:00)

In the following exchanges we can observe the interviewer subtlety leaving this first position while saying "concerning meteorological measuring" (lines 6 and 7). He has now turned the upper part of his body towards the camera. This happened simultaneously with the opening of his pen beneath the clipboard (detail g). Holding the pen in its right hand, now, he opens a space in between his body and the clipboard (the latter being moved into a more horizontal position) (detail h). The questionnaire, says the interviewer, is about "how you feel", "the actual weather" and the "Place de la Gare". For each of these topics the interviewer moves his hand, holding the pen, to emphasise each of these references without pointing at a specific object (lines 7 and 8; details i and j). Literally spoken: he fits the action to the word. Through this the interviewer produces a list of references, the pencil is helping to link the references to a rhythm and making the list a coherent entity. This list is routinely built up, and is closed by using the word "here" (line 8), which attributes a special location to all the references mentioned in the list, and to do so the intonation of the interviewer's voice falls. Part of this list closing is also indicated by the hand of the researcher returning back to the clipboard (detail k). During the interactional production of the list the interviewer continues to look in the woman's direction.

The relationship between pen/clipboard and conversation is an excellent example of what the ethnomethodological understanding of reflexivity is. On the one hand clipboard and pen are involved in gestures, and they sustain conversation. They

'help' to list and emphasise three things, and to finish the list as full coherent entity. In this sense the interviewer 'holds' his speaking turn until the list comes to an end. Once he shows that the list is finished, he 'gives' the turn to the woman. On the other hand the production of the list sustains the enrolling of clipboard and pen as 'scientific instruments' and brings them in as central tools of the ongoing interaction.

Let us stop for a short moment. In the first part of this analysis we could observe how the partners have mutually engaged in a focused face-to-face situation and how by enrolling clipboard and pen they adjusted to a more rectangular position. Until now only the interviewer has spoken. During the ongoing interaction, the passer-by has witnessed the changing category of the interviewer from a man 'standing next to a indefinable object' and 'holding a clipboard in his hands' into someone 'approaching people', 'explaining the cause of his research' and so on. In a mutually elaborative pairing the passer-by has undergone a transformation of categorisation from a 'walking person in the street' to a woman 'showing interest' and 'listening actively'.

Taking the 'reading' position

What happens next? As the part represented in Figure 2 comes to an end, and the interviewer's hand has gone back to the right border of the clipboard. In the next transcription segment in Figure 3, which follows Figure 2 and in which background information of visual data is turned off, we can observe the interviewer turning his eyes to the clipboard and starting to browse the sheet (detail l). He searches for the first question written on the questionnaire. In the English version of the questionnaire the question is as follows "At the moment, do you find it: very cold; cool; neither cool nor warm; warm; very hot" (RUROS, 2003).

Figure 3 RUROS Fribourg (item 10, 1:00 – 1:14)

While the interviewer is listening to the woman's reaction (line 9) he holds his eyes on the clipboard and browses the sheet (detail l). The respondent does not agree directly to answer the question posed. She looks straight ahead and expresses herself through laughter and a vague question "or is it?" (line 10). She shows that she is not convinced about what is going on here. The interviewer, at this point, makes a routine intervention. He interrupts her (line 11) and shows that he hears her questioning as an expression of doubt about her own 'expertise' and ability to answer the questionnaire while she is tuning her eyes to the clipboard. He convinces her by reassuring her that "it is very easy" and that "these are precise questions" (line 11 and 12). While the interviewer is saying this he takes his eyes from the clipboard and looks towards the woman (detail m). Then the pen turns back to the clipboard by him making a pointing movement to the questionnaire. The interviewer's gaze turns also in this direction. Both partners' eyes are now oriented towards the clipboard (detail n). I would describe this moment as the first potential situation that would permit the first question to be read. The interviewer does not start reading the first question at this point, but I will anticipate events and call this rectangular orientation of partners – with their eyes looking on the clipboard – the 'reading' position. Let us see how this position is fully accomplished in the following exchange through a confirmation that the respondent is of the correct category of person to answer the questions.

After the respondent's positive answer (line 13) the interviewer repeats and reassures her that "it is easy to answer" (line 14) by looking in the direction of the respondent (detail o) and by assuring her that the questions are about ordinary things "it is about how you feel things" (line 17 and 18). Here, the interviewer turns away from his partner (detail p). The partners have turned back to ordinary talk, and the clipboard is not the centre of the encounter anymore. The respondent gives her okay (line 19). She takes her hands out of the pockets of her jacket, folds her arms and turns her gaze to the clipboard (detail q). The interviewer brings his gaze back to the clipboard, while he is adding that there is no specialist knowledge needed (line 20). It is with the second "okay" (line 21) that they have both definitively fixed their eyes on the clipboard (detail r). Now the interviewer, for the first time, starts to read the first question from the questionnaire aloud: "At this moment now" (line 22).

We have been observing in this third part of our analysis that interaction between interviewee and interviewer ought *not* to be seen as face-to-face interaction – but as faces-to-clipboard interaction that is oriented towards the process of reading questions and starting to fill in the questionnaire. While reading, interviewers are in fact speaking for someone else – let us call it a third agent – who is the designer of the questionnaire. The question therefore is not addressed to the present specific and individual respondent in the given situation but designed for the general public. Conversation analysts have been describing this as a central, in the written text of the questionnaire, embedded aspect of practicing standardised interviewing, which influences recipient design (Houtkoop-Steenstra, 2000). The practice of 'bringing in' virtually a third person and reading on behalf of this non-present third agent is embodied in the reading position and especially in the orientation of the partners towards the clipboard.

We can observe similar problems in more detail in the fourth part of our *front end* immediately. The last line of Figure 3 is reproduced in Figure 4. We can see that the

reading of the first question (line 22) is interrupted by the respondent's question about the use of the survey (line 23).

```
22   I.     à l'i nstant même-
22   I.     at    this precise moment-
23   R.           et ça sert à quoi?
23   R.           what's the use of this?
24   I.     ça sert en fait à:: (0.5) on: va comparer après
24   I.     in fact the use of this is:: ( 0.5 ) we will compare afterwards
25         les réponses que vous allez donner: aux paramètres: qui sont mesuré ici (0.8)
25         your answers: with the parameters: measured here. (0.8) with
26         donc aux:. mesures qu'on obtient: et en suite on (va essayer) soit de développer
26         the results we get:: in the following. we will (try) either to develop
27         des: des instruments: qui tiennent compte aussi de: l'avis des gens. ( . )
27         instruments: which take also in account also the: view of individual
28         et aussi de:: (peut-être) éventuellement améliorer un peu les espaces urbains
28         people. ( . )  and also to:: (eventually) possibly improve urban spaces.
29         ( 1 )
29         ( 1 )
```


Figure 4 RUROS Fribourg (item 10, 1:14 – 1:36)

The first failure to start the questionnaire is produced through the respondent's question about the use of the research project (line 23). The new turn is introduced by overlapping talk. Immediately the interviewer interrupts his first question "at this precise moment now". The question of the respondent (line 23) can be seen as what

Schegloff (1998, page 576) calls a projection, and thereby an extension of the answer-response sequence that otherwise appeared on the point of closure. The whole front end can be understood as structured in two pairs. The first pair consists of the interviewer's request addressing the passer-by, to respond his questions, and the engage in focused interaction. The second pair part then consists of the answer-response interaction. It is with the accomplishment of this second pair we are concerned with at the moment. I want briefly look at two further extensions, which, in this episode, are resolved in a routine and in a non-routine way.

Firstly, as the interviewer begins responding to this next extension (line 24) he leaves the 'reading' position (detail s). His explications now are not only oriented towards the woman but may be understood as a collection of different references to be brought into talk. If we take a look at the irregularities (pauses and sound extensions) in his explanations, every irregularity may be seen, with a new orientation of his hands, glances and the produced talk (detail t to x). By so doing, he produces again a list, which is not inscribed on the sheet of the questionnaire but is routinely built up and shows the seriousness of the ongoing research. At the end of this list a pause of one second is produced (line 29). The interviewer, while waiting for response looks in the eyes of the respondent (detail w). This might be of interest when we, once again, ask how the respondent is 'hearing' and 'analyzing' this explication. To avoid undermining the delivery of the questionnaire the interviewer needs his account to be heard as a real-time account of the scientific enterprise inscribed in the project. It is exactly this seriousness of the ongoing research the respondent is raising with her next question, which leads to an extension of the front end.

```
30    R.      vous allez changer le temps alors?
30    R.      are you going to change the weather then?
31    R.     ⌈( . ) (hh)::
31    R.     |( . ) (hh)::
32    I.      |eh:: non:, ça::
32    I.     ⌊uh:: no:, this::
33            on a pas cette prétention: mais(hh): ( . ) on va essayer de faire avec
33            we don't make these demands: but:(hh)  ( . )  we will try to do with
34    R.      (          )
34    R.      (          )
35            (hh): oui, parce que je me suis dis: ( . ) de toute façon vous pouvez (ni)
35            (hh): yes, because I said ( . ) to myself: ( . ) in every case you can't
36    R.      changer, hein? ⌈(hhh)
36    R.      change, hhi    |(hhh)
37    I.                     |ah non ça (hh::) non alors. ( . ) en effet
37    I.                    ⌊uh no this hh::  ( . ) no then ( . ) in fact
38            ( 1 )
38            ( 1 )
39    I.      alors.
39    I.      so.
40            ( . )
40            ( . )
41    I.      >en ce moment même, est-ce que vous trouvez qu'il fait très froid,
41    I.      >at this moment now. do you feel very cold?
42    I.      froid, ni ff:chaud ni froid, chaud, très chaud.<
42    I.      not cold? not warm? warm? very warm?<
43    R.      il fait chaud.
43    R.      it is warm.
```


Figure 5 RUROS Fribourg (item 10, 1:36 – 1:56)

Secondly, during her joke "are you going to change the weather" (line 30) the interviewer is about to turn his eyes to the clipboard (detail y). The routinely introduced linearity of the 'scientific enterprise' and its 'direct' outcomes are rendered ironic through the exaggerating 'direct' and 'funny' outcome of "are you going to change weather". If in the previous sequence the interviewer was producing routinely an explanatory list, we could observe a kind of stable co-orientation of the

partners. Now, we can observe unstable co-orientation and a repair of the situation (details y to ac). The respondent makes a kind of joke, which shows at once that not producing the standardised responses but also that she does not take the purpose of the interviewe seriously yet.

Jokes are a serious problem for social sciences as they question the self-serious discourse of science profoundly. We can see in this next part how this self-seriousness can be repaired. A joking recipient is not considered to be a proper respondent in survey research. Because of the joke the reading position is dissolved again, the partners turn back to ordinary talk and have to re-design the reading position before the interview really and properly starts (details z to aa). Taking the joke as a serious question he answers in the negative. Talk here is not as coherent as before. Showing to surprise (line 31 and 32), through hesitation (line 33), interruption through laugher (line 36 and 37) and a first pause at the end of this episode (line 38) are part of the work of getting back to the activity 'doing being serious'. The 'bringing back' of the pen marks the end of the 'funny' question (details ab and ac). In a change to his former attempts the interviewer uses a transition word "so" to pass from the informal discussion to the reading position (line 39). Here it looks like he is performing an analysis of the sequential articulation of the two activities. The interviewer ventures his transition with this connector, and with the turn *not* taken by the respondent (line 40), the interviewer opens again with his first interview question. This time, the interviewer reads the first question from the sheet to its completion. He displays that he is reading aloud by following the text with the pen (detail ac), and happily and finally gets a first answer, which he will note on the questionnaire (line 43).

Conclusion

The *front end* of the street interview can be understood as what Schegloff (1980) calls *preliminaries to preliminaries*. We could observe how 'asking a question' (the one written on the questionnaire sheet) necessitates the preliminary production of a material and social order, which allows the interviewer to start reading aloud. Schegloff argues that paradox utterances such like "Can I ask you a question?" are used to coordinate talk, to organise interaction between two participants, and to project the *real* question. We could observe in the discussed episode how in a first part of the encounter re-categorisation of passers-by into interviewer and respondent is produced, and how in the second part of the front end 'reading from the interview sheet' as an instructed action of standardisation is accomplished. It is in this opening part of the interview where the main task of standardised interviewing – the answer-response interaction and the filling in of the boxes on the questionnaire sheet – is initiated and projected.

At the beginning of this article I asked what we can learn about standardisation in geographical research from a detailed analysis of the *front end* of the delivery of a questionnaire in an urban space? Following Maynard and Schaeffer (2000; 2002b) I suggested a practical reorientation of how we understand standardised interviewing. The aim of this exercise was "to become concerned with the interviewer as tinkerer and bricoleur and with the mangle of practice, it brings us to a different understanding of the great quantitative/qualitative division in social science. Rather than a relationship of conditional complementary or critical remediation survey-based sociology [as] one form of abstract inquiry" (2000, page 336).

In the last decade in the sociology of scientific knowledge the debate about standardised interviewing has turned from a critical and rejecting attitude to an interest in the understanding of the survey interview as scientific instrument and cultural artefact. A first point I would like to make here is that the description of qualitative and quantitative interviews suffers from an epistemologically favoured idealisation of what these interviews *should* be like. Hester and Francis emphasise that both defenders and critics of the survey interview share a concern "with the methodological adequacy of the data produced by interviews and, by implication, with the nature of the interview itself as a research technique" (1994, page 676). The debate about this opposition includes epistemological and theoretical arguments on how reliability on the one hand and validity on the other can be achieved. Each of the qualitative and quantitative arguments arrives at different advice for the improvement of respective research strategies. Hester and Francis insist: " 'Positivists' idealize *objectivity*, and formulate principles to attain this goal, involving notions of standardisation and generalization, whereas 'interpretativists' idealize meaning and assert the need for interviewing practice to conform to principles such as quality and empowerment" (1994, page 690). Both positivists and interpretativists thereby introduce rules and principles and describe the interview from an idealistic viewpoint. In consequence, descriptions of the practice of interviewing in quantitative and qualitative research, may draw upon experience of interviews, but are always oriented towards the perfection of a given model. Interview evaluation is based on these models and looks at how interviewers respect the given framework when they carry out their research. On a more practical level we can observe that standardisation

is not only limited to quantitative approaches' achievement of scientific data. Indeed, in their evaluation of a series of 31 qualitative studies Baxter and Eyles (1997) show in a table "Strategies for establishing qualitative 'rigour' in geographic work" what the *standard* of qualitative research is. They verify how qualitative research projects respond to principles such as laying out the rationale for methodology, the application of multiple methods, if respondents are given the possibility to verify writings, or if investigated social groups have been revisited several times during research. Standardisation in qualitative interviewing can be investigated in a similar manner to what I have done here for a quantifying and measuring research technique. This is a research domain geographers, and especially those interested in field practices, have not examined in this way yet (see for an exception: Söderström and Mondada, 1993; 1994). Qualitative interviews and ethnographic research do have their front ends too. How do interviewers manage access to private spaces they want to investigate (Lomax and Casey, 1998)? How does a focus group arrange around a table? Who speaks first? Who speaks second? How and when do interviewers manage switching on their tape recorder? Once more, these are questions, which have to be resolved *in situ*, i.e. in interaction with participants and the spatial setting of research situation itself, and are not guaranteed by advice given in methodology handbooks.

In this article I have contrasted the usual critique of interviewing by looking at what interviewers *do* rather than by evaluating what they *do not*. The developed approach may be illustrated with a quote from Jazz musician Miles Davis, which is reproduced at the very beginning of this paper. Interviewers have to apply their 'instruments' (for example, the questionnaire) *in situ,* like musicians playing jazz standards have to learn not to play what is 'there' and written in the score, but to play what is 'not there*'* and to response to the sound produced by other musicians *on stage*.

Standardisation is a precarious accomplishment, negotiated between human and non-human agents: it cannot ever approximate either the quantifiers' ideal, or, indeed, the qualitative researcher's 'evil', but will give insight in geographers work and how geographical knowledge is produced. For this analysis I have chosen to look at an *episode* of a standardised street interview. It should be clear now that this street scene is not used as a model of an ideal way how a street interview should be opened neither as example of typical conflicts interviewers using questionnaires are facing in the street. It not an example, and typical for a group of things, but an episode, a group of related events, happening in an *ad hoc* situation, and my analysis is conjoint with how interviewers analyse the setting of the street and how they perform a scientific text in an urban environment. I have argued that survey interviewing must be understood as part of a culture of standardising in social scientific and geographic research and understood as a central step towards the production of accountable data. The article alludes also to this practice of questioning being itself part of urban spaces and culture of the street.

I have investigated one stage of a geographical research using survey techniques, to fully understand the measuring practices of surveying on behalf of questionnaires we would have to follow not only what happens in the 'field' encounter; but also work on the reception, transportation and translation respectively on what Crang calls 'filed work' (2001). The study of the entire "chain of translation" (Latour, 1993, page 216) accomplished in quantitative research would have to deal with the unglamorous,

unacknowledged business of creating 'order' in data through practices such as, for example, the transportation of collected data, the combination of the questionnaires into manageable forms like tables, lists, databases; and the writing up of reports, respectively the inscription of mathematical forms or graphs (see also Murdoch, 1997, page 327).

Recent work in conversation analysis on standardised interviewing has emphasised the tension between standardised 'interview talk' and ordinary 'conversational talk' contained in survey interviews. Jordan and Suchman (Suchman and Jordan, 1990; 1999), for example, have emphasised the interactional character of the interview and showed that standardisation is *imposed on* ordinary conversation. Contrasting this understanding Houtkoop-Steenstra (2000) has shown that the tension between standardisation and ordinary conversation is not a mechanism of repression but that the simultaneous presence of two forms of talk "may well confuse respondents as to what is going on in the interview" (page 74) and that such confusing situations have to be resolved by the partners if they want to finish their interview. The analysis presented here focuses less on conflicts and problems between two 'forms' of talk, and more on investigating the practices of passing from a walking into a talking and from a talking into a reading/writing setting as scientific achievements.

Acknowledgements

Appendix: Transcription conventions

I.	Interviewer
R.	Respondent
(0.8)	Numbers in parentheses indicate elapsed time in silence
(.)	Short pause
?	Raising intonation
!	Failing intonation
.	steady intonation
eas -	Word or phrase is cut-off
(hhh)	laugher
::	extended sound
> <	accelerated speaking
< >	slow downed speaking
( )	Transcriber's inability to understand what was said
((writes))	Transcriber's descriptions

⎡ ⎤   Speech overlap
⎣ ⎦

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