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Entering Discourses: A New Agenda for Qualitative Research and Sociology of Knowledge

Abstract   The article argues for a new agenda in qualitative research and sociology of knowledge. It starts with the assumption that meaning-making activities which lie at the heart of sociology's interpretative paradigm today are widely embedded in expert proceedings and organized or institutionalized work on symbolic ordering. This holds true for the sciences or other specialized discourse realms (like religion), but it also counts for public discourses/public arenas. While interpretative traditions in sociology have addressed issues of discourse research, they did not succeed in establishing a proper sociological approach to discourse. Therefore, the article proposes a sociology of knowledge approach to discourse (SKAD), located in the social constructivist tradition of Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann. Such an approach is able to account for discourses as processes of symbolic ordering and to take up questions of discourse research raised by French philosopher Michel Foucault. Foucault indeed insisted on discourses as "truth games" and activities which set up knowledge claims. But, this interest in politics of knowledge has not so far been taken up in today's arenas of discourse research. Therefore, SKAD proposes concepts and procedures for a new agenda of sociology of knowledge, deeply committed to qualitative and interpretative research traditions in sociology.

Keywords   Discourse; Knowledge; Dispositif; Foucault; Berger and Luckmann; Symbolic Interactionism; Interpretative Paradigm; Qualitative Research

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The following text argues for a new agenda in qualitative research and sociology of knowledge. Taking up the concept of discourse and embedding it in the social constructivist approach – itself largely anchored in the interpretative paradigm and sociological pragmatism – it presents theoretical groundings, methodological implications and some working devices for a sociology of knowledge approach to discourse (SKAD). This qualitative approach to discourse has been established in German soci-

ology since the late 1990s in several paradigmatic books (e.g., Keller 2010; 2011); since then, it has instructed research across the social sciences.[1] The article first sets up the arguments for entering discourses from sociology of knowledge sites; it then presents theoretical groundings and methodological reflections of SKAD, discusses some knowledge orientated devices for doing SKAD research and concludes with reflections on methods of discourse research.

Entering Discourses

For some decades now, sociology has broadly acknowledged the ascendancy of knowledge societies. According to Anthony Giddens' diagnosis of reflexive modernity these kinds of society are special in the way they rely on expert knowledge. Such knowledge, gained by organized procedures, shape every detail of everyday life as well as organizational proceedings and institutions, starting from the way we "do orgasm," passing by the daily practices of education, sports, food and drinking, our ways of working, organizing production and consumption, ending up in the higher spheres of political governance in national or global realms of

action in "world risk society" (within Ulrich Beck's meaning). As Birmingham Cultural Studies author Stuart Hall and his colleagues argued in the 1990s, we are living in times of "circuits of culture," indicating by this slogan that meaning making activities and social construction of realities have become effects of organized production, representation, marketing, regulation and adaption of meaning (Hall 1997a). In stating this, Birmingham Cultural Studies have been heavily influenced by the interpretative tradition in sociology, mostly by symbolic interactionist and Weberian theorizing and work. But, insisting on organized or structured ways of processing circuits of culture, the Birmingham School referred to rather different theoretical traditions too, including some of Michel Foucault's concepts:

> [r]ecent commentators have begun to recognize not only the real breaks and paradigm-shifts, but also some of the affinities and continuities, between older and newer traditions of work: for example between Weber's classical interpretive «sociology of meaning» and Foucault's emphasis of the role of the «discursive.» (Hall 1997b:224)

It is interesting to see here Stuart Hall, Mr. Cultural Studies himself, arguing for an integrated perspective on meaning-making, including both Weberian and Foucauldian thinking – bearing in mind that common sociological (and poststructuralist) debates seem to draw a sharp line between these two authors. But, if we look more closely, we can state indeed, that Max Weber's work on *The protestant ethic* (Weber 2002) is nothing less and nothing more than a discourse study *avant la lettre* of religious discourse, and its pow-

er effects in capitalist societies. In making his claim on the connection between *The protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism*, Weber analyzed several kinds of texts: religious books, advisory books, sermons. It was from such textual data that he developed his ideas on "innerworldly ascetics" and deeply structured ways of living everyday life, home or work. Although, Weber insisted on the subjects' part in meaning-making, this never meant individual or idiosyncratic activities. *The protestant ethic* delivered a deeply social "vocabulary of motives" (within Charles W. Mills' meaning), an institutionally preconfigured "definition of the situation" (within William I. Thomas' and Dorothy Thomas' meaning). Charles W. Mills (1940) was well aware of this implication of Weber's sociology, when he argued, with strong references to Weber and sociology of knowledge, for a sociological analysis of vocabularies of motives and situated actions. And Thomas and Thomas (1928) were – together with, for example, George Herbert Mead and others from the Chicago tradition – at least familiar with the German context of *verstehen* and meaning (making), to which Weber was deeply committed.

As far as I know, Weber never used the term "discourse," but the Chicago pragmatists did. They argued that social collectivities produced and lived in "universes of discourse," systems or horizons of meaning and processes of establishing and transforming such systems. George Herbert Mead stated in the 1930s: "[t]his universe of discourse is constituted by a group of individuals ... A universe of discourse is simply a system of common or social meanings" (1963:89).

Alfred Schütz, the main author of social phenomenology, referred to this notion too, for example when he considered in the 1940s the conditions of possibility of scientific work:

> [a]ll this, however, does not mean that the decision of the scientist in stating the problem is an arbitrary one or that he has the same «freedom of discretion» in choosing and solving his problems which the phantasying self has in filling out its anticipations. This is by no means the case. Of course, the theoretical thinker may choose at his discretion ... But, as soon as he has made up his mind in this respect, the scientist enters a pre-constituted world of scientific contemplation handed down to him by the historical tradition of his science. Henceforth, he will participate in a universe of discourse embracing the results obtained by others, methods worked out by others. This theoretical universe of the special science is itself a finite province of meaning, having its peculiar cognitive style with peculiar implications and horizons to be explicated. The regulative principle of constitution of such a province of meaning, called a special branch of science, can be formulated as follows: Any problem emerging within the scientific field has to partake of the universal style of this field and has to be compatible with the preconstituted problems and their solution by either accepting or refuting them. Thus, the latitude for the discretion of the scientist in stating the problem is in fact a very small one. (1973:250)

And later on: "[t]heorizing...is, first, possible only within a universe of discourse that is pregiven to the scientist as the outcome of other people's theorizing acts" (Schütz 1973:256).

Whilst later work in the Alfred Schütz, Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann tradition only

marginally took up this concept (if at all), the symbolic interactionist perspective indeed has seen several research agendas turning to discourse, implicit or explicit. Without being exhaustive, one could mention Joseph Gusfield's study on the *Culture of Public Problems* (1981), Anselm Strauss's attention to "ongoing negotiated orderings in social worlds/arenas" (1979; 1991; 1993) or the broad work on "social construction and careers of social problems." Essential assumptions of the latter have been presented by Hilgartner and Bosk (1988:56) as follows.

In its most schematic form, our model has six main elements:

1. a dynamic process of competition among the members of a very large "population" of social problem claims;

2. the institutional arenas that serve as "environments" where social problems compete for attention and grow;

3. the "carrying capacities" of these arenas, which limit the number of problems that can gain widespread attention at one time;

4. the "principles of selection" or institutional, political, and cultural factors that influence the probability of survival of competing problem formulations;

5. patterns of interaction among the different arenas, such as feedback and synergy, through which activities in each arena spread throughout the others; and

6. the networks of operatives who promote and attempt to control particular problems

and whose channels of communication criss-cross the different arenas.

In the context of symbolic interactionists' social movements research in the 1980s and 1990s such ideas were closely linked to a concept of public discourse, referring to issue framing activities of competing collective actors in public struggles for the collectivities' "definition of the situation" (e.g., Gamson 1988). But, despite these efforts and multiple studies it seems that the interpretative paradigm's analysis of discourses did not succeed in establishing an approach of its own to discourse integrating the different usages and elaborating on the proposed initial frameworks. Neither did cultural studies in the Birmingham tradition, where concrete research used social semiotics or argued for critical discourse analysis as established by Norman Fairclough and others (see Hall 1997a; Barker 2000; Barker and Galasinski 2001).

Discourse research in today's social sciences is mostly attributed to the work of the French philosopher Michel Foucault. Such a diagnosis might be sustained by Norman Denzin's ongoing insistence on the importance of poststructuralist or postmodernist thinking for interpretative sociology (e.g., Denzin 1992). But, it is clearly indicated by the impressive book of Adele Clarke on *Situational Analysis* (2005). In her manifesto for a "grounded theory after the postmodern turn," Clarke argues very convincingly how grounded theory's focus on situation and interaction can be inspired and complexified not only by Anselm Strauss's social worlds/arenas model, but by introducing discourses as important elements of

the situation under analysis. Clarke then refers to Michel Foucault as her major "modest witness" for qualitative sociology's discursive turn. She proposes various devices, such as situational maps, positional maps and social world/arena maps in order to account for the "discursive elements" of situations. *Situational Analysis* was developed at almost the very same time as the present author's plea for an original sociology of knowledge approach to discourse (1999-2003), using many of the same references in interpretative sociology and discourse research although several thousand miles away, and without knowing of each other. But, while Clarke sets a strong focus on situations, my own work (Keller 2011) takes discourse(s) as central. Therefore, I would refer to Clarke's approach as rather complementary to SKAD.

Having shown so far the interpretative paradigms basic arguments of social actors meaning-making in universes of discourse, and before entering more deeply into the theoretical groundings and methodology of the sociology of knowledge approach to discourse, let us now turn to discourse and discourse analysis as these terms are widely used in today's social sciences. Here, too, no exhaustive account is possible (see Keller 2010). At present, various notions of discourse are used in the humanities. In Germany, Jürgen Habermas (1985) contributed extensively to the dissemination of the term discourse. But, in the Habermasian tradition, discourse is hardly an object of inquiry, to be empirically analyzed. Instead, it is regarded as an organized and ordered deliberative process to which a normative ethics of discourse is applied. A case in point concerns

conflicts emerging around environmental issues or technological risk, where round tables are set up, bringing together concerned and committed actors in order to discuss what should be done. This usage, which is current today primarily in the political sciences, has created – and still creates – some confusion in debates on discourse research. The traditional political science approach to discourse is mainly interested in the relationship between arguments (ideas) and interests: in short, discourse matters if the better argument wins over the material interests of (the most) powerful actors. However, this argumentative approach to discourse so far rarely analyses the politics of knowledge.[2] More common to sociological perspectives is discourse analysis as a label for the micro-orientated analysis of language in use, which is based in pragmatic linguistics and, closer to sociology, in conversation analysis inspired by ethnomethodology. Here the focus is on concrete "text and talk in (inter)action" (within Teun van Dijk's meaning), with more or less attention either to linguistic issues or "sociological" questions, including for example turn taking in group discussion or the interactional construction of references to larger social or mental entities. Today's linguistics use concepts of discourse in order to address linguistic questions of language change and usage in larger social contexts. In order to do this corpus, linguistics builds up enormous corpuses of textual data around selected items (such as political issues) in order to look for statistical correlations between words. Somewhere between linguistics and social sci-

ences is *Critical Discourse Analysis* (by Norman Fairclough), its British-Austrian version *Wiener Kritische Diskursanalyse* (by Ruth Wodak and others) and its German counterpart *Kritische Diskursanalyse* (by Siegfried Jäger). These approaches are all based in linguistics, but with slightly different discourse-theoretical elaborations; they direct discourse research mainly to "unmask" the ideological functions of language in use or to discover and "heal" situations of "asymmetrically biased communication" and "disorders of discourse."

If considered more closely, we can state that none of the approaches to discourse research mentioned so far is interested in larger societal and historical meaning-making or questions of power/knowledge, which are central to Foucault's arguments on discourse (see below). These approaches cannot (and, to be honest, do not aim to) account for the sociohistorical processings of knowledge and symbolic orderings in larger institutional fields and social arenas. It is evident that discourse research anchored in linguistics addresses linguistic questions – and Foucault's main purpose was to give discourse a twist away from such issues. The "no interest in knowledge analysis" is also particularly clear in research done by critical discourse analysis, which implies that the researcher knows and unmasks the illegitimate, ideological and strategic use of language by "those in power" in order to "manipulate the people." This often results in a rather reductionist "proof" of the presence of ideological notions and functions in a concrete set of spoken or written language (discourse). There is no place for any surprising results or insights to be derived from such em-

pirical research, because the discourse theorist always already knows how ideology works. The ethnomethodologically inspired tradition of discourse analysis looks for the situational producing of ordered verbal interaction and communication. This is very useful for in-depth analysis of singular discursive events, but it does not (and does not seek to) grasp larger historical processes of knowledge circulation.

As far as I can see, there are two further candidates to address questions of meaning-making via the concept of discourse. I suggest calling them, for want of a better expression, *discourse theories* – including the philosopher Michel Foucault or the political scientists Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe. Discourse theories are designed to analyze the social formation of circuits of culture, power/knowledge relationships or political struggles for hegemony and the articulation of collective identities on more global levels of social orderings. The Laclau and Mouffe tradition combines a rather extensive definition of discourse – the discursive and the social are but one[3] – with a reductionist analysis of "hegemonic functions" of texts and articulations, mainly focused on political identity building around a particular issue. The attention here is drawn to political claim-making in the name of the "common good" (Laclau and Mouffe 2001).

The main point I want to make against the Laclau and Mouffe approach to discourse refers back to

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[2] It should be noted that there are some other approaches to discourse in political sciences, closer to interpretative thinking, which can't be discussed here.

[3] It seems that what in sociology has been called (for a hundred) "symbolic ordering" and "meaning-making" or "social signification systems," etc., is here referred to as "the discursive."

Foucault's interests in the discursive constitution of knowledges – which they either do not or cannot draw our attention to. So why could and should this part of Foucault's thinking be of interest for interpretative sociology? How did he refer discourse to knowledge and meaning making? This merits a closer examination.

As a philosopher turning to empirical and historical studies, Foucault developed his approach to discourse and the complexities of power/knowledge quite apart from sociological positions (which where rather marginal in the French context of the early 1960s). Nevertheless, he invented his own "historical sociology of knowledge" (see Keller 2008).

> Foucault explores the domain of the sociology of knowledge: ideas in their social context and the explanation for their continuity and change, as seen against the changing significance of history, politics, and economics. ... Foucault attempts to construct a history not of ideas, but of events, and these events are critical insofar as they serve to show the disruption of previous modes of discourse. ... He is interested in the ways discourse is represented in documents in his historical guise and how these, in turn, become important or significant, or statements of entire sets of conflicting times, durations and spatial forces. ... The document provides an anchor with which Foucault grounds his work on the classification of the world ... Language does not guide Foucault to a consideration of the distinctions between the sign and the signifier, or between language as a system of rules and speech as competence or performance. Rather Foucault distinguishes rules and practices ... The sociology of knowledge in Foucault is represented in the search for the concept that will show how

certain practices within a field of regulation or control vary, revealing the effect of power and of invisible forces on the practices. ... [H]e introduces the material and political forces that shape and are sedimented in structures of knowledge. (Manning 1982:65)

In a certain way, Foucault can definitely be understood as a representative of the Durkheim tradition, which advances a genuine sociology of knowledge analysis of social "systems of thought." But, he did so in somehow abductive ways close to qualitative research in sociology. By this, I mean that he worked "bottom up," starting with certain methodical devices and sensitizing concepts in order to analyze in detail historical (textual) data representing past institutions, practices, actors and knowledges – what Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow called an "interpretive analytics" (1982). Foucault's fundamental achievement was first to look at discourses as socio-historically situated "practices," manifest as textual data, and not as the development of ideas or lines of argumentation, and second to "liberate" discourse analysis from linguistic issues. In so doing, he laid important foundations for a sociological analysis of discourses. When he argued that his main concern was the "analysis of problematizations" (Foucault 1984), that is, the appearance of central breaking or turning points in the history of social constitutions of subjectivities or particular orders of practice, he came quite close to the interests of the symbolic interactionists.

Although Foucault's work is often presented in a rather monolithic way, I would like to insist on (and point to) his varied uses of the term discourse. In his seminal book for discourse research, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault (1972a), reflecting his own previous studies (especially the *Order of Things* [1970], a historical analysis of the sciences, published in 1966), proposes a theoretical framework which takes discourse as its central concept. Discourses are considered as historically situated real social practices, not representing external objects, but constituting them. This implies looking at concrete data – oral and written texts, articles, books, discussions, institutions, disciplines – in order to analyze "bottom up" how discourses are structured and how they are structuring knowledge domains and claims. Foucault speaks of "discursive formations" (1972a:34-78), for example, the "formation of concepts" (what concepts are used and how they relate to each other) or the "formation of enunciative modalities" (as the "places for speakers" and the established criteria – for example, academic careers and titles – to access them). His notion of the statement (Foucault 1972a:79-117) refers to the typified core elements of discursive events and concrete utterances, that is: what makes them part of a particular discourse and sets up a particular knowledge claim. The analysis of discursive formations leads us, via empirical data, to the rules and regularities which operate – and are operated by socialized actors – in a given or emerging disciplinary field, including rules instructing (rather than determining) who is allowed to speak, how a particular discourse is to be performed and what could be said. This idea can easily be shown in the present text where the author is following social sciences discursive formation, excludes, for example, gossip about his adventures of yesterday evening or changes of language settings towards *der deutschen Sprache*, in which he could pursue his arguments (if allowed to).

Foucault, in his later works, never realized the kind of analysis he projected (or stated retrospectively) in the *Archaeology*. But, he returned to discourse several times: *L'ordre du discours* [The order of discourse], presented as oral communication in 1970 and strangely translated as *The Discourse on Language* (included as an appendix in the American translation of *Archaeology* [1972b:215-238]), in fact pursues the framework of discourse research by introducing more explicitly ideas of power and mechanisms of the "inner structuration" of discourses (as the "commentary" which, for example, differentiates between important statements and the rest). But, most interesting for interpretative social research: in the *Rivière case* Foucault (1982) addresses discourses as *battle fields*, as *power struggles* around the *legitimate definition of phenomena*. This lesser known work comes very close to symbolic interactionist positions. Here, Foucault and his team are dealing with a case of parricide in the early 19th century in French Normandy: Pierre Rivière killed his mother, sister and brother, in an act of revenge, in order to regain the "lost honor" of his father. The interesting point is, that this person presents a large written account of his motivation – and he really seeks to be punished. But, there are some other accounts, too: the police, the doctors, different psychological schools – they all produce their own and often contradictory version of "what is

the Rivière case." This all is highly consequential: Is he responsible for this act? Should Rivière be accused and killed for murder, or labeled as "insane" and sent to some psychiatric hospital? We thus can observe a classical struggle for the common institutionally acceptable definition of the situation and the actions to be taken.

Foucault's implicit affinities to pragmatist and interpretative sociology are very clear here. Indeed, his relation to pragmatist philosophy was stated very early on by Richard Rorty (1982:XVIII) or Nancy Fraser (1997), referring to pragmatist notions of discourse. "Foucault and Pragmatism" is taken up in detail in a current special issue of *Foucault Studies* (Koopman 2011) with contributions discussing Foucault and Dewey, and so on. In symbolic interactionism and interpretative sociology, Lindsay Prior (1989), Brian Castellani (1999), Stevi Jackson and Sue Scott (2007) or Adele Clarke (2005) and others have drawn attention to the interest of Foucault's work for interpretative sociology. We can hear an echo of Herbert Blumer's, Anselm Strauss's and many others writings on symbolic interactionism when Prior states:

> [i]ndeed, for Foucault the familiar objects of the social world (whether they be death, disease, madness, sexuality, sin or even mankind itself) are not «things» set apart from and independent of discourse, but are realized only in and through the discursive elements which surround the objects in question. Things, then, are made visible and palpable through the existence of discursive practices, and so disease or death are not referents about which there are discourses, but objects constructed by discourse. As the discourse changes, so too do the objects of attention. A dis-

course moreover, is not merely a narrow set of linguistic practices which reports on the world, but is composed of a whole assemblage of activities, events, objects, settings and epistemological precepts. The discourse of pathology, for example, is constructed not merely out of statements about diseases, cells and tissues, but out of the whole network of activities and events in which pathologists become involved, together with the laboratory and other settings within which they work and in which they analyze the objects of their attention. (Prior 1989:3)

Despite these engagements, discourse research, whether situating itself in "Foucault's footsteps" or more generally in poststructuralism, commonly does not refer to the pragmatist traditions in sociology; and interpretive sociology and qualitative research so far has not invested very much in elaborating a discourse research agenda on its own. But, as Adele Clarke has convincingly stated: discourses are not contexts of situations, but constituting parts of situations. Qualitative research has to take care of them if it aims better to address the complexities of today's social phenomena:

> [t]oday the qualitative research enterprise is moving beyond field notes and interview transcripts to include discourses of all kinds. We dwell ... [in] explosions of images, representations, and narrative discourses that constitute cultures of consumption as well as production, of politics writ a million ways, of diverse individual and collective social and cultural identities, including racial, ethnic, gendered, religious, and subcultural identities, of dense histories, of old and new technologies and media from television to the Internet, and so on. Because *we and the people and things we choose to study* are all routinely both producing and awash in seas of discourses, ana-

lyzing only individual and collective human actors no longer suffices for many qualitative projects. Increasingly, historical, visual, narrative, and other discourse materials and non-human material cultural objects of all kinds must be included as elements of our research and subjected to analysis because they are increasingly understood/interpreted as both constitutive of and consequential for the phenomena we study. (Clarke 2005:145)

The following section presents the sociology of knowledge approach to discourse, which aims to deepen such proposals.

The Sociology of Knowledge Approach to Discourse

Again it was Stuart Hall (amongst others) who prominently argued in favor of a knowledge-oriented concept of discourse in the 1990s:

> [d]iscourses are ways of referring to or constructing knowledge about a particular topic of practice: a cluster (or *formation*) of ideas, images and practices, which provide ways of talking about, forms of knowledge and conduct associated with, a particular topic, social activity or institutional site in society. (Hall 1997a:4)

The hypothesis I want to pursue here is as follows: Berger's and Luckmann's sociology of knowledge provides a theoretical framework, which makes it possible to integrate (or elaborate within) a sociology of knowledge approach to discourse.[4] In the 1960s, Peter L. Berger and

Thomas Luckmann brought together sociology of knowledge traditions, the interpretative paradigm (including symbolic interactionists' thinking and social phenomenology) and neighboring fields in their influential book, *The Social Construction of Reality* (1966). In their work, the authors differentiated between, on the one hand, society as an objective reality which is sedimented within institutions and stocks of knowledge, and on the other, the way in which the acting subjects appropriate this reality in the diverse socialization processes. It should be noted here that the term "knowledge" refers to all kind of symbolic orderings and institutionalized symbolic orders (including common sense knowledge, religion, theory, ideology and scientific knowledges, and so on). Above all, Berger and Luckmann emphasize the role of language and the daily "conversation machinery" for the construction of a shared social reality. They discussed how knowledge is typified and realized through interactions and socially objectified in differing processes of institutionalization. It is also reified and becomes the foundation of social worlds differentiated by their symbolic horizons. Next, they talked about the legitimization of these knowledge/institutional complexes and also about forms or steps of legitimization, which extend from the simple usage of particular vocabularies through theoretical postulates and explicit legitimization theories to elaborate symbolic sub-universes. These legitimizations are supported by various forms of social organization. Together with the analysis regarding the structure of knowledge comes the question about the individuals, groups, actors, organiza-

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[4] Despite some minor differences, I consider this sociology of knowledge approach as going hand-in-hand with symbolic interactionist thought. The whole argument on SKAD is presented in Keller (2011); methods are discussed in Keller (2010).

tions, practices, artefacts and institutional structures which fix (or transform) such orders. The historically situated knowledge order within a society is internalized by the actors via socialization processes, and is then reproduced (and occasionally transformed) through the permanent use of language or other systems of signs and through nonverbal practices.

Berger and Luckmann indeed integrated a more Durkheimian view on society as institutionalized facticity with a more Weberian interest in social actors meaning making activities and Meadian perspectives on socialization processes and (wo)man's use of significant symbols. They temporalized and neutralized the older antagonisms between structure and action in replacing it by a more dialectical perspective, arguing for structures (institutions) as being the historical situated, emerging (side) effects of social actors' practices, "doings," negotiations, and social actors' agency and creativity as being constituted by a socio-historical *a priori*, that is, existing social contexts (in particular "symbolic worlds or provinces of meaning").

Although Berger and Luckmann highlighted the role of "theoretical conceptions" (ideas, theories, and others) in social processes, they emphasized much more that their main interest (and therefore also that of the sociology of knowledge inspired by these two authors) applied to "common sense" since in the end this seemed to them the most relevant level of social knowledge (1966:14-15). The Berger and Luckmann legacy in Germany at present uses the label of *Hermeneutische Wissenssoziologie* (hermeneutical sociology of knowledge;

Hitzler, Reichertz and Schröer 1999)[5] to mark its difference to other social science approaches to knowledge. Since it has always accorded great attention to the connection between language and knowledge, it has been presented recently by some of its proponents as the "communicative paradigm" in knowledge research (Knoblauch 1995). In taking up the foundational work on social construction, including its tenet that everyday knowledge should be the central point of reference for research, the *Hermeneutische Wissenssoziologie* has unfortunately concentrated mostly on micro-levels of knowledge analysis. It directed its interests towards ethnographies of "small life worlds of modern man" (within Benita Luckmann's meaning) or laymen and professional actors' interpretations of their everyday activities, to common sense knowledge and individuals as the knowledge actors of daily life. But, as we can see regarding the original argument on institutionalization and legitimization, this is a rather contingent and by no way necessary elaboration of their work. SKAD, although situated in this paradigm of knowledge research, is both an extension and a correction, elaborating on the "objective reality" side of Berger's and Luckmann's theory, that is on the (institutional) processes and structures in social relations of knowledge, in taking the *discursive* construction of highly consequential objective realities into consideration. But, as we have seen, the original work of Berger and Luckmann offers a rather comprehensive view on society as symbolic order and ordering,

[5] This approach indeed is very close to symbolic interactionist perspectives, but it insists on phenomenological groundings (the work of Alfred Schütz) and on strong reflection of the researcher's interpretation activities.

including both institutional levels and actors' agencies, and the interplay between both. Their insistence on Mead and Schütz explains the "priority" assumed here over Foucault's argument for discourses, which only addresses institutional settings and practices. Foucault's perspective has to be grounded in a general pragmatist theory of the possibility conditions of human usage of symbols, of the "animal symbolicum" (within Ernst Cassirer's meaning). Without such an argument, the notion of discourse itself, as used by Foucault in the different ways we have seen, would lose its sense.

I cannot elaborate on the relations between Mead and Schütz here; I shall only note the strong argument presented by Ilja Srubar (1988) on the close connection between Schütz and Chicago pragmatist thinking. Along with Alfred Schütz, SKAD assumes that meaning is constituted in the human consciousness, in the transformation of sensual experience into conceptual experience. The process by which we ascribe meaning to our actions and interactions, social situations and/or the world, is necessarily located in human consciousness. Without a process such as the layering of meaning, or the constitution of meaning, there is no separation between I and the world, no perception of space, time, the social, and so on. But, this capacity of the consciousness is not a genuine, extra-worldly "production capacity," as if consciousness creates the existence and the meaning of the world out of nothing in an act of solitary, productive creativity. Consciousnesses do indeed, as social phenomenology and symbolic interactionist thinking have largely shown, draw on social interpretation schemata

in a fundamental typification process in order to perform their orientation capacity. This occurs by means of signs, that is, significant symbols or knowledge schemata, which are taken from the socio-historically generated and established collective stocks of knowledge/universes of discourse, for the most part primarily within socialization processes. The specific, subjective stocks of knowledge of particular individuals are inconsistent, heterogeneous, complex sedimentations and actualizations of knowledge triggered from the outside, which always exist in a situational, pragmatically motivated relation between focalization and blurry horizons, actualized by "external" stimulations.

George Herbert Mead and the tradition of symbolic interactionism considered in more depth how individual competence in the use of signs/knowledge or of significant symbols develops within socialization processes. Above all, Mead emphasized the primacy of communication and of the universe(s) of discourse that always historically "comes before" the individual. The existence of social-symbolic orders – never ultimately achieved, but always being in the "process of ordering" – and the corresponding communication processes are a necessary prerequisite for the development of individual consciousnesses that are capable of intellectual reflection. Thought is therefore a form of communication turned inwards. Research into the social phenomenon of discourses is obsolete without such a theory of sign-processing consciousnesses (which does

not mean that everything is already said here).[6] Significant symbols as well as the "legitimate ways to use them" are processed discursively, and the corresponding social rules are working as instructions in discursively embedded utterances. Historically, they make up the more or less solidly fixed pre-existing "supply" to be used by particular individuals and consciousnesses. The language system of meaning is a pre-condition of the inevitable, necessary "desubjectification" of the individual's interpretation practice; in other words, the historical-social assignation of the possibilities for a "subjective" orientation of individuals in the life-world. Its usage always presupposes the participating actors' capacity for interpretation. Every long-term use of significant symbols is a social practice regulated by social conventions. These conventions form the basis of discourse practices as a set of more or less powerful, more or less institutionalized instructing rules. They are actualized in practical usage, thus simultaneously reproduced and altered, or changed, as needed. So individual or collective actors' complex involvement in discourses is socially regulated, but not determined. There is therefore, in principal, a certain amount of freedom in interpretation and action in concrete situations as well as a surplus of forms of communication and models for the attribution of meaning. Societies differ in the available spectrum and in their ways of producing such choices.

I identify discourses, following Foucault, as regulated, structured practices of sign usage

in social arenas, which constitute smaller or larger symbolic universes. Discourses are simultaneously both an expression and a constitutional prerequisite of the (modern) social; they become real through the actions of social actors, supply specific knowledge claims, and contribute to the liquefaction and dissolution of the institutionalized interpretations and apparent unavailabilities. Discourses crystallize and constitute themes in a particular form as social interpretation and action issues. Discursive formations are discourse groupings, which follow the same formation rules. For example, a scientific discourse is manifest in texts, conferences, papers, talks, associations, and so on, which can all be studied as data. It emerged historically out of actions and interactions committed to "tell the empirical truth" about phenomena "in the world" – both in its form or formal appearance as well as in its contents: what could – and should – be told about these phenomena. Once institutionalized and given general legitimation, it pre-structures (as Alfred Schütz indicated in the citation above) what could be said and done in this particular discourse arena. Michel Foucault, in his seminal works already mentioned, identified the ways in which dimensions of discourse can be analyzed as emergent discourse formations without recourse to the unmasking of "real" or "covert" reasons and intentions of particular social interest groups or actors. He then proposed corresponding dimensions of analysis of discursive formations which, when combined with historically situated institutionalization processes and the interwoven actions of social

actors therein, can be a benefit for interpretative sociology. In discourses, the use of language or symbols by social actors constitutes the sociocultural facticity of physical and social realities. The meaning of signs, symbols, images, gestures, actions or things is more or less fixed in socially, spatially, and temporally or historically situated (and therefore transformable) orders of signs. It is affirmed, conserved or changed in the concrete usage of the signs. In this respect, every fixed meaning is a snapshot within a social process that is capable of generating an endless variety of possible readings and interpretations. Discourses can be understood as attempts to freeze meanings or, more generally speaking, to freeze more or less broad symbolic orders, that is, fix them in time and by so doing, institutionalize a binding context of meaning, values and actions/agency within social collectives. SKAD is concerned with this correlation between the sign usage as a social practice and the (re) production/transformation of social orders of knowledge. It is called the sociology of knowledge approach to discourse (analysis) because the perspective towards discourses implied in SKAD can be situated in the sociology of knowledge tradition founded by Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann. This is mainly due to SKAD's research focus on knowledge and symbolic orderings and because it benefits from its connection to this tradition, close to qualitative research. More specifically, this approach proposes a perspective on discourse that bridges the gap between either agency or structure oriented traditions in sociology of knowledge. In-

deed, just as Berger and Luckmann addressed the manifestation of institutions out of processes of institutionalization, we can consider the processing of discourses through society as a dialectical interplay between actors producing statements, and the pre-given, as well as emerging structurations and sociohistorical means they have to draw upon.

SKAD is not a method, but a research program embedded in the sociology of knowledge tradition in order to examine the discursive construction of symbolic orders, which occurs in the form of competing politics of knowledge. Social relationships of knowledge are complex sociohistorical constellations of production, stabilization, structuration and transformation of knowledge within a variety of social arenas. SKAD examines discourses as performative statement practices and symbolic orderings, which constitute reality orders and also produce power effects in a conflict-ridden network of social actors, institutional dispositifs, and knowledge stocks. It is emphasized that discourse is concrete and material, it is not an abstract idea or free-floating line of arguments. This means that discourse appears as speech, text, discussion, visual image, use of symbols, which have to be performed by actors following social instructions, and therefore discourses are a real social practice. SKAD research is concerned with reconstructing the processes which occur in social construction, objectivization, communication, and the legitimization of meaning structures in institutional spheres and issue arenas. It is also concerned with the analysis of the social effects of these

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[6] Consider, for example, the (widely forgotten?) work of Florian Znaniecki on *Cultural Reality* (1919).

processes. This includes various dimensions of reconstruction: sense making as well as subject formation, ways of acting, institutional/structural contexts, and social consequences; how, for example, they become apparent in the form of a dispositif. That means: an installed infrastructure designed to "solve a problem" (for instance, consisting of a law, administrative regulations, staff, things like cars, computers, and so on; all kinds of disposals) or in the adoption or rejection by social actors in their everyday life, for example actors refusing to "behave in an environmentally-friendly way," as "enterprising selves" (within Nicolas Rose's meaning), "flexible man" (within Richard Sennett's meaning) or "a true African-America." This perspective assumes the normality of symbolic battles, contested problematizations, and controversies, of competitive discourses, whose manifestations and effects can be traced back only in the rarest cases to the dominance and intentions of individual actors (although, one can perhaps not dismiss them upfront). The (more or less institutionalized) speaker positions which are available within discursive battles and the corresponding discourse or issue arenas, as well as the social actors who are involved within them, are not "masters of the discourse universe," but are rather (co-)constituted by the existing structuring of discursive orders or formations. Nevertheless, they in no way act as "cultural dopes" (as Garfinkel put it some time ago), but rather as lively, interested producers of statements, as articulators with more or less strong resource and creativity potentials. The symbolic orders that are produced

and transformed in this process constitute the aggregated effects of their actions; unambiguous temporary forms of dominance or hegemony are probably rare, but they are non-standard configurations that should not be excluded from an empirical point of view.

I describe discursive fields as being social arenas, constituting themselves around contested issues, controversies, problematizations, and truth claims in which discourses are in reciprocal competition with one another. The topics of SKAD's analysis are both *public discourses*, as well as *special discourses* performed in close arenas for special publics. They are analyzed with regard to their bearer, to matching or differing formation rules and content positionings, as well as to their effects. In the processing of discourses, specific *discourse coalitions* and statement bearers can "win out" over others, by a wide range of means. As Thomas Kuhn demonstrated a long time ago for scientific revolutions: paradigm shifts do not have to emerge out of arguments; there are many kinds of other reasons. This holds true for discourses, too. However, the then occurring discursive formation cannot be understood as an intended and controlled effect of individual actors. What is at stake in these discourses is the fixing of collective symbolic orders through a more or less accurate repetition and stabilization of the same statements in singular utterances. Argumentative consensus-building processes as projected in Habermas' normative discourse ethics, where all participants are equal, and the best argument wins, may appear as a very particular and rather seldom occurring case in discourse processing. SKAD, therefore, addresses discourses as complexes of power/knowledge, which are to be the object not of normative judgment, but of empirical inquiry.

SKAD proposes some more terms in order to analyze utterances that are assumed to be part of the same discursive formation. The term discourse itself indicates a structuration context, which is the basis of disseminated discursive events. The unity of the structuring context, that is, of the discourse in question, should be considered as a necessary hypothetical construct for sociological observation, an essential research hypothesis. This means that discourses indeed exist as/in performances: if we, the observers, state that there is such a thing as a scientific or religious discourse, or an issue driven discourse in public or special arenas, we indeed assume that very different usages of signs and things belong to the same phenomenon – and then we try to give accounts for that phenomenon. This is much the same thing as in every field of sociology. For example, research on families is rather similar: it assumes that assemblages of individual persons can be regrouped, researched, compared, analyzed if considered as "families" (and not, for instance, as a company of friends or biological organisms).

As concrete families are performances of "doing family," discursive orders are the results of a continuous communicative production within individual language and action events, which are, however, not understood as spontaneous or chaotic, but rather as interwoven, structured practices, which refer back to one

another. A pamphlet, a newspaper article or a speech within the context of a demonstration, actualizes, for instance, an environmental policy discourse in differing concrete forms and with differing empirical scope. Discourses are subject to the conditions of institutional inertia: individual discursive events never actualize and reproduce a discourse's structure in a completely identical way, but rather always in a more or less varied form. "Actualization" can therefore be understood in two ways: as the transfer of discourse-structuring patterns into a real event and as the accompanying modification or adaptation to the current conditions of a situational context. Consequential discourse transformations can rarely be related to such an individual event. Rather, they originate out of the sum of variations, in a kind of switch from the quantitative to the qualitative effect. The materiality of discourses (as discursive or non-discursive practices, "real speakers," texts, speeches, discussions, things) simply means: the way discourses exist in societies.

For producing/articulating interpretations, *social actors* use the rules and resources that are available as discourses in their discursive practice, not as deterministic regulation, but as *instruction*, or they react to them as *addressees*. Only if discourse research accounts for this agency of actors can it be understood how the more or less creative implementation of such practices happens. SKAD does not hastily mistake the discourse level as being a condition of possibilities or limitations of utterances with the factual interpretation and practices of social actors. Social actors are not only the empty addressees of

knowledge supplies and the value assessments embedded therein, but are also socially configured incarnations of agency, according to the sociohistorical and situational conditions, who more or less obstinately interpret social knowledge supplies as "offered rules" in their everyday interpretation activities (Hitzler et al. 1999), standing in the crossfire of multiple and heterogeneous, maybe even contradicting discourses, trying to handle the situations they meet.

Subject positions

In what follows, I will give short illustrations – inspired by my own research on waste issue discourses in Germany and France (Keller 2009) – of some further concepts of SKAD, be-

fore finally turning to questions of method. Firstly, social actors are related to discourse in two ways: on the one hand, as the holders of the *speaker position*, or *statement producers*, who speak within a discourse; and on the other hand, as *addressees of the statement practice*. The sociological vocabulary of institutions, organizations, roles, and strategies of the individual or the collective – but always of social actors – can be used for a corresponding analysis of the structuration of speaker positions in discourses. But, actors generally appear on the discursive level, too: *Subject positions/Identity offerings* depict positioning processes and "patterns of subjectivization," which are generated in discourses and which refer to (fields of) addressees. Consider the following cartoon:

Figure 1.
Source: Website Bergischer Abfallwirtschaftsverband. Retrieved February 5, 2010 (www.bavweb.de/).

We do not have to enter here into details of interpretation and meaning-making. I just want to show how a subject position might appear in a given discourse. This cartoon makes a statement on what could be called the "bad guy" in today's environmental and citizenship discourses. He is the one who pollutes, the bad wild waste-maker, the "simple man from the street as big pig" who destroys nature, whilst others are trying to enjoy it. He is the one to be "disciplined," punished, corrected.

The following example is showing up his counterpart, the eco-citizen who has appeared in public discourses all around the western world since the late 1960s:
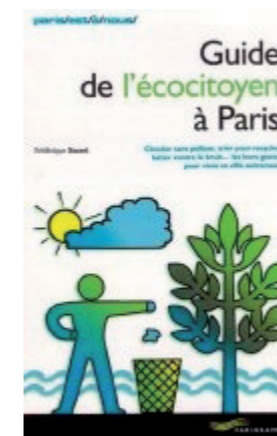

Figure 2.
Source: Website. Retrieved February 1, 2010 (www.greenrepublic.fr).

Practices

The term practice(s) depicts very generally conventionalized action patterns, which are made available in collective stocks of knowledge as a repertoire for action, that is, in other words, a more or less explicitly known, often incorporated recipe or knowledge script about the "proper" way of acting. This knowledge can

originate, establish, and develop itself (further) in fields of social practice through experimenting and testing actions in relation to specific issues. SKAD considers several forms of practice: discursive practices are communication patterns, which are bound to a discourse context. They are not only interesting for discourse research as far as their formal process structure is concerned, as in genre theory and conversation analysis, but rather equally so in consideration of what was called by Foucault the (sociohistorical emergence of) rules of formation, their adoption by social actors and their function in discourse production. Discursive practices are observable and describable, typical ways of acting out statement production whose implementation requires interpretative competence and active shaping by social actors. SKAD differentiates between the latter and between model practices generated in discourses, that is, exemplary patterns (or templates) for actions, which are constituted in discourses, fixed to subject positions and addressed to the discourse's public or to some "counterdiscourse." To continue with the above-mentioned example of environmental discourse, this includes recommendations for eco-friendly behavior (as for example: turning the shower off while you shampoo your hair, using your bike, preparing slow food). Similar to the subject positions discussed earlier, one should not think that the model practice will actually be implemented simply in the way it was imagined in discourse. Its "realization" has to be considered in its own right. The idea of "model practices" can be illustrated like this:

Figure 3.
Source: Mülltrennung im Wohnheim; Website Studentenwohnheim, Bonn. Retrieved February 1, 2012 (www.ende17. stw-bonn.de/?page_id=22) [Waste separation in the student hostel; student hostel, Bonn.]

Readers do not have to understand all the German words used in here. Let me only explain that this diagram shows us a rather complicated system of waste classification in order to guideline students' behavior concerning waste in a German students' hostel: there is the blue color for paper (which has to be flattened before thrown away) – but only for some kinds of paper (such as newspapers, cartons, etc.), not for others (as tissues, dirty papers, women's tampons). There is yellow for all things marked with a green dot (the German recycling label in waste disposals) – except paper and glass. There is green for all organic waste (except meat, fish, cheese, etc.). There is grey for all the rest (meat, fish, condoms, etc.). And there are four further differentiated kinds of waste (as glass, bulk garbage, electric appliances, special or hazardous waste). The text gives a large number of instructions, not only in classifying different kinds of waste, but also in indicating the correct actions to be performed. And it introduces a third kind of actor in the little blue field at the right bottom side: *Umweltmentor.* A sideline note: "[t]he environmental coaches take care in keeping the students' hostel environmentally friendly and supervise regular waste separation. Your environmental coaches are S. and M." This is the soft police of disciplining the "bad guys."

Dispositifs

The social actors who mobilize a discourse and who are mobilized by discourse establish a corresponding infrastructure of discourse production and problem solving, which can be identified as a dispositif. Michel Foucault (1980:194-228) introduced different notions of dispositifs. SKAD takes up that one which is most common in everyday French (and in a certain way may be linked to the Anglo-Saxon word "disposal"). Dispositif then refers to what could be called an infrastructure established by social actors or collectivities in order to solve a particular situation with its inherent problems of action. Consider the state's need to get some "money of its own:" financial laws, administrative regulation, tax authorities, tax assessment, tax investigators all together, mixed up with texts, objects, actions and persons, constitute the dispositif in question – an ensemble of heterogeneous elements, drawn together, arranged in order to manage a situation, to respond to a kind of "urgency" (within Michel Foucault's meaning). SKAD distinguishes between *dispositifs of discourse production* and *dispositifs* or infrastructures emerging out of a discourse (or out of several discourses) in order to deal with the real world phenomena addressed by the discourse in question. A dispositif is both: the institutional foundation, the total of all material, practical, personal, cognitive, and normative infrastructure of discourse production, and also the *infrastructures of implementation* emerging out of discursively

configured problematizations of fields of practice. Consider the issue arena of "household waste," recycling, and so on, important issues of public debate and policy decisions in recent decades: with reference to the discourse (re)production level, the discursive interventions of the various management, spokespersons, and press committees and also the research centers who diffuse and legitimize a specific construction of waste issues through their statements, brochures, and so on, should be mentioned. With regard to implementation one could include among these the legal regulation of responsibilities, formalized proceedings, specific objects, technologies, sanctions, courses of studies, personal and other phenomena. For instance, waste separation systems are part of the dispositif and effects of discourses on waste. This includes the corresponding legal regulations, the waste removal company's staff and, finally, also the waste separation and waste cleaning practices to which people submit (or refuse). Dispositifs mediate between discourses and fields of practice. SKAD is therefore not just textual analysis of signs in use, communication, text or image research. It is simultaneously case study, observation, and even a dense ethnographic description, which considers the link between statement events, practices, actors, organizational arrangements, and objects as more or less historical and far-reaching socio-spatial processes. The following pictures illustrate this idea of the dispositif by picking up very arbitrarily some elements:

Figure 4.
Source: German Journal for sustainable waste treatment. Retrieved February 5, 2010 (www.rhombos.de).

Figure 5. Some elements of waste disposal systems.
Source: Website Bergischer Abfallwirtschaftsverband. Retrieved February 5, 2010 (www.bavweb.de/).

Symbolic Orderings

We have so far discussed some core conceptual elements of SKAD. We shall now focus on the "knowledge side of discourse," that is of the symbolic orderings proposed and performed in singular discursive events and series of such events. Discourse includes both: form and content. Discourse research may concentrate on the sociohistorical genealogy, variation and transformation of such forms, following questions like: In what way does a speech or a text have to be formally constructed to count as being part of political, religious, scientific discourse at a given historical moment and context? Second,

at least in sociology, there is a remaining interest in what is being said and by whom, with what effects – that is: in contents, actors and power. Please remember Max Weber and his analysis of *The protestant ethic* – a study not about formal aspects of sermons, prayers, religious books, but about their content – and its effects. Naturally, all like forms, contents, actors and powers will change over time. Nevertheless, discourse oriented research tries to account for the processes by which different, often conflicting ways of symbolic ordering, compete – and this is what content is all about – and why some of them will be more consequential than oth-

ers. This means, roughly, that there is no longer a need to show that all is social construction or contingency, but to illuminate, interpret and thereby understand (make understandable) how and with what effects such a contingency is reduced in social engagements. This holds for scientific discourses, as well as for discourses in the public realm or in special issue arenas. Therefore, SKAD does not address singular, isolated, individualized discursive events for their own sake, but always as being part of a series of such events. Foucault proposed a very useful idea here, close to qualitative research agendas. In his *Archaeology*, he stated that discourse research is about statements, not about singular utterances. This idea of "statement" refers to what could be called the typical core element of knowledge configuration processed by a given discourse. To give, but one example from interpretative sociology: William Gamson (1988) speaks of "discursive frames" (for example: a certain way to consider nature, be it as a sophisticated "clockwork" or as "our great mother"), argumentative reasoning and rhetorical framing devices in order to identify and analyze such statements. SKAD proposes a slightly different framework of sensitizing concepts, closer to sociology of knowledge, in order to analyze the content part of discourses, distinguishing between *interpretative schemes*, *classifications*, *phenomenal structures* [*Phänomenstrukturen*], and *narrative structures*. Together, these elements create the *interpretative repertoire* of a discourse.[7] I shall now consider these concepts more closely.

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[7] The term "interpretive repertoire" was coined by Margaret Wetherell and Jonathan Potter, before Potter turned to a "purer" ethnomethodological perspective. See Wetherell and Potter (1988), Keller (2009:36).

The term "interpretative scheme or frame" (*Deutungsmuster*), close to Gamson's idea of frame, but situated in the German traditions of *Deutungsmusteranalyse*, depicts meaning and action-generating schemata, which are combined in and circulated through discourses. Such interpretative schemes can be applied to different kinds of phenomena or events, and indeed, they do undergo historical and social transformations. Interpretative schemes are part of society's "stocks of knowledge." Discourses differentiate in the way they combine such frames in specific interpretative frameworks. They are able to generate new interpretative schemes and ways of positioning them within the social agenda – which is exactly what characterizes discourses. An example of this is the interpretative scheme of the "irreducible risk" of complex technologies, which has found its way into social stocks of knowledge over the last few decades within, and because of, the various environmental discourses (and disasters). This frame can be applied to nuclear plants (which is evidenced by the Japanese events earlier this year), as well as to waste disposal infrastructures or nanotechnologies and many others. It might be opposed by a framing in terms of "deficit of political system" (this was the Chernobyl case) or "singular human error." Differing from Gamson and some social movement research, SKAD argues that such framings are of interest far beyond the singular question of their strategic use just because they always aspire to configure reality. And against Gamson's and others' empirical research strategy, I would argue that such interpretative schemes may appear in very different ways, and analytical strategies have to take care of this: they need careful reconstruction,

which cannot be reduced to a quantified "measure" of key words or key expressions (a strategy adapted by William Gamson and his colleagues in their analysis of media discourses), and which has to expand beyond media platforms in order to reach for the complexities of arenas of discourse.

A second element for the content-focused analysis of discourses is the exploration of the classifications (and therefore qualifications) of phenomena, which are performed within them and by them. Classifications are a more or less elaborate, formalized, and institutionally fixed form of social typification processes. Like every form of symbolizing, sign usage within discourses classifies the world, separates it into particular categories, which creates the basis for its experience, interpretation and way of being dealt with. Competition for such classifications occurs, for example, between discourses about how (potential) technical catastrophes should be interpreted, which identity offerings can be considered legitimate, what the differences between correct and condemnable behavior may look like, and if perpetrators are certifiably sane or not (one could consider Foucault's Rivière case here, see Foucault [1982] or his book on the *Order of things*). Classifications have specific impacts for action. Although, in the interpretative paradigm, this was shown in the seminal work of Bowker and Star (2000), discourse research has so far rather seldomly addressed the issue of classification work.

Alongside interpretative schemes and classifications, the concept of phenomenal structure [*Phänomenstruktur*], corresponding somehow to Karl Mannheim's classical notion of *Aspektstruktur*, offers a complementary third access to the levels of content-related structuring of discourse (see Table 1).

For instance, constructing a theme as a problem on the public agenda, requires that the protagonists deal with the issue in several dimensions, and refer to argumentative, dramatizing, and evaluative statements; the determination of the kind of problem or theme of a statement unit, the definition of characteristics, causal relations (cause-effect), and their link to responsibilities, identities of involved actors and non-humans, problem dimensions, values, moral and aesthetic judgments, consequences, possible courses of action, and others. The phenomena which are constituted by phenomenal structures do not necessarily appear as a "problem to be solved," even if they are always in a very general way about "meaning-making and problems of action." The existing state of discourse research provides insight into some of the elements mentioned above of such phenomenal structures. For example, the subject positions constituted by a discourse can be differentiated in a variety of ways. Discourses carry out social actors' positionings as heroes, rescuers, problem cases, sensibly, responsibly acting individuals, villains, and so on. Social actors are not pre-given or pre-fixed entities with clear interests, strategies and resources. SKAD discourse research is very much about the discursive processes in which actors emerge, engage themselves or are engaged by others, claim or perform reciprocal positionings, and are involved in multiple ways in discursive structurations. This also includes discourse-generated model practices, which provide templates for how one should act concerning issues that have been defined by the discourse. The concept of phenomenal structure takes on these kinds of consideration and links them to the fact that discourses, in the constitution of their referential rela-

tion (and so their "theme"), designate different elements or dimensions of their topic and link them to a specific form or phenomenal constellation. This does not describe any essential qualities of a discourse topic, but rather the corresponding discursive attributions. Both the structural dimensions of such a phenomenal structure and their concrete implementation have to be depicted out of empirical data; this constitutes a major difference towards the concept of "conditional matrix" as established by Anselm Strauss and Juliette Corbin in their grounded theory approach.

Table 1. Phenomenal structure: administrative discourse on waste issues, France.

Dimensions	Concrete Implementation
Causes	Waste as "sanitary issue;" discrepancy between amount produced and disposal or recycling infrastructure: • Wealth growth, economic and technical advances, consumption needs of the consumers → rise in waste produced • Waste as a problem of deficient waste disposal at landfills • Waste as a problem of a lack of citizen responsibility and discipline • Waste as a problem of national payments balance/usage of raw materials • Waste as a problem of international competitive conditions
Responsibilities	• Politics/Government/National administration (must develop and enforce a waste politics framework program in coordination with the economy) • Regional corporations, Economy (individual responsibility for the implementation of the political specifications) • Citizens/Society (giving up irrational fears and selfish denials; taking over responsibility for waste, acceptance of the technologies)
Need for action/ Problem-solving	Low problem level; technical mastery of the waste issue is possible through recycling and elimination; guidelines: • Large-scale technological expansion and optimization of the disposal and recycling infrastructure • Obtaining acceptance of removal infrastructure through the use of communication und participation • Comprehensive mobilization of citizens' responsibility (local authorities, economy, consumers)
Self-positioning	• Representatives of the scientific-technical, economic, and pragmatic reason, of civil (socio-cultural/socio-technical) progress • Government as the administrator of the collective interest
Other-positioning	• Civil actors (regional corporations, economy, citizens) show a lack of consciousness for their responsibility, irrational fears, and suppression • Irrationalism and fundamentalism of German waste politics, disguise for economic protectionism
Culture of things/wealth model	Not a topic of the waste discussion; follows seemingly "sacrosanct" modernization dynamics and market rationalities; material model of affluence; freedom of needs (production and consumption)
Values	• Government secures collective interests (affluence, progress, modernity) • (Actual and moral) cleanliness of the public space • Nature as (scarce national) resource, whose usage can be optimized • "Society as it is right here and now" as realization of "good life"

Source: Keller (2009:232).

A final element that is part of the content-related shaping of discourses should be discussed here. The structuring moments of statements and discourses, through which various interpretation schemes, classifications, and dimensions of the phenomenal structure (for example, actors, problem definitions) are placed in relation to one another in a specific way, can be described as narrative structures. Narrative structures are not simply techniques used to link linguistic elements together, but as *mise en intrigue* (employment; within Paul Ricœur's meaning), as a configurative act, which links disparate signs and statements in the form of narratives, they are rather basic modality of humans' ordering of the experience of the world (cf. Ricœur 1984:5). In the seriality of discursive events constituting a discourse, the above mentioned elements of knowledge configuration are tied together in a particular "narration," and are integrated via a common thread, a story line. Narrative structures link the various interpretation elements of a discourse into a coherent, portrayable, and communicable form. They provide the acting scheme for the narration with which the discourse can address an audience in the first place and with which it can construct its own coherence over the course of time.

It should be noted here that these elements for analyzing the "knowledge side of discourse" presented so far can each be used separately or all together in empirical research. They indicate what to look for, and how to "order" results of analysis. SKAD proposes further kinds of ordering devices, such as maps of engaged actors, maps relating actors and competing discourses or more general maps trying to account for the processing of discourses in the public sphere. Consider the following example in Table 2 (taken from Keller 2009:287).[8]

This table shows a snapshot of two competing subdiscourses on waste issues in Germany in the late 1980s. The "structural-conservative" subdiscourse mainly insists on technological problem-solving and keeping the economy running as it is. His opponent (culture-critical discourse) argues for a cultural turn towards another way of life with less consumption and waste. The two (sub)discourses were reconstructed and typified out of empirical data. They are articulated by different discourse coalitions (which means: actors who use the same interpretative repertoires, whether they may acknowledge this or not). Some actors are located at the centre; this indicates that they are articulating mixes of both discourses. The more actors are located to the right or left side of the table, the more profiled are their articulations towards a "purified version" of each discourse. Of course, this indicates only tendencies.

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[8] Keller (2009) uses several tables or "maps" in order to account for the discursive arena of waste politics in Germany and France, which can't be included here. These mappings refer to relations between opponent discourses and economic, political, administrative and civil societies actors/entities and the public sphere, as well as to the arena of actors involved in this processes, according to their "statement producing activity," which might be central or at the margins of a given discursive field. Close to this are Clarke's ideas of "mapping," as well as Michel Foucault's, Gilles Deleuze's and Bruno Latour's arguments on "cartography."

Table 2. The public discursive field of legitimate statements and articulators in (West) Germany (discourse on waste) in the 1980s (some examples).

Actors (Articulators)	Structural-conservative discourse on waste (technological-ecological modernization): better technology will solve all problems	Culture-critical discourse on waste (political-ecological restructuration): change of cultural and economical model (way of life) necessary
Politics/ administration	Discourse coalitions * German Federal Government (ministry of economics) * (ministry of environmental issues) * federal states governments (Baden-Württemberg, Nordrhein-Westfalen) * parties: * FDP * CDU/CSU * SPD * communities	Discourse coalitions * federal states governments (Nieder- sachsen, Hessen) * parties: *SPD *Greens * communities
Economy/ environmental associations	* interest associations of economic actors (BDI, DIHT, VCI) * important business companies * companies working in the waste business	*environmental associations *trade unions
Experts	* scientific and administrative experts *federal environ- *federal expert council	* scientific and administrative experts mental office for environmental issues * parliamentary office for technology assessment * NGO based research centers for environmental issues
Media	* some newspapers (i.e., *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*)	* some newspapers (*Süddeutsche Zeitung*) * some newspapers and journals (i.e., *DER SPIEGEL, Die ZEIT*)

Source: Keller (2009:287).

On Methods

SKAD aims to direct qualitative research's attention in sociology, sociology of knowledge and interpretative traditions towards the field of discourses. As Adele Clarke (2005) argued very convincingly in *Situational Analysis*, discourses are not external to situations, but should be considered as internal components. That means: whenever qualitative sociological research deals with concrete phenomena and empirical questions, it can take care of this discursive dimension in order to give more complex accounts of "what is going on." SKAD research even takes the discourses under consideration as the "situation to address." Strategies of qualitative research are highly interesting here, as discourses are ways of meaning-making, manifest in concrete textual data. If sociology seeks to be an empirical science, that is, a specifically accountable form of reality-related analysis rather than being a writer's novel or journalist's report, then certain claims of general disclosure and transparency of the steps of research and interpretation must be maintained. This requires

a systematic procedure of analysis and applies independently of whether or not subjective or collective stocks of knowledge (or the forms of externalization/articulation, which document them or are indicative of such: books, speeches, newspaper articles, films) are being analyzed.

Like certain other qualitative approaches, SKAD, therefore, favors sequential analysis of textual data directed towards its own research questions, to give an account of discursive claims and statements beyond the single utterance or discursive event: line-by-line, step-by-step development, debate and choice of interpretations, in order to build up an accountable analysis of frames (*Deutungsmuster*), phenomenal structure, classifications and story lines. The open coding procedure elaborated by Grounded Theory is helpful in indicating this procedure as it demands careful checking of interpretation and categories against the data at hand. In this sense, SKAD is part of the newer hermeneutical tradition in sociology of knowledge, which takes care of the fragile relation between "questions towards" and "answers given" by empirical data. For example, in my own research on waste issues, a "risk" frame was elaborated out of newspaper data. This interpretative scheme entered German discourses on waste in the early 1980s, and appeared in many different ways: as textual utterance, as newspaper title illustration, as scientific analysis of waste incineration; in French discourse on waste the main organizing frame to be found was the importance of the French engineers mastering of all kinds of technological procedures, including types of waste disposal.

I speak of interpretative analytics in order to emphasize that discourse research places various data types and interpretation steps in relation to one another, for example, more classical sociological strategies of individual case analysis or case studies combined with detailed close analyses of textual data. I also speak of interpretative analytics because, in contrast to other qualitative approaches in sociology, SKAD is not *per se* interested in the "consistency of meaning" inherent to one particular document of discourse, but rather assumes that such data is articulating some (not all) heterogeneous elements of discourse or that maybe they appear as crossing points of several discourses (as in many books or newspaper articles). So, discourse research has to break up the material surface unity of utterances. The mosaic of the analyzed discourse or discourses develops incrementally out of this process – this is certainly one of the most important modifications of traditional qualitative approaches in the social sciences, which very often take one interview, for example, as a "coherent" and "sufficient" case of its own.

In order to work through complex fields of discursive data, SKAD uses ideas of theoretical sampling and concepts of minimal and maximal contrasting (see Strauss 1987:22-40; Strauss and Corbin 1998:201-216). Theoretical sampling means the step-by-step building up of data, in starting analysis early and in following argued criteria for continuing data collection, aiming to explore the whole range of the discourse or the discursive field of interest, of positions taken and actors appearing (or, surprisingly, not appearing). Minimal and maximal contrasting is a systematic strategy to cross the field of inquiry in order to establish the range of important findings and to achieve detailed accounts of particular elements of analysis. To be clear: SKAD, unlike classical Grounded Theory, does not aim to explore particular "situations and (inter)actions" and their basic social processes, but ongoing discourses in social arenas. Besides these strategies from Grounded Theory, the rich tradition of qualitative data analysis, of case studies and fieldwork methods as developed in symbolic interactionism and interpretative sociology, can be usefully referred to in order to grasp the materialities and dispositifs of discourse, as sociological discourse research deals, to a great extent, with current issues (this is one major difference from the historical orientation chosen by Foucault).

SKAD is, like all discourse-focused approaches, itself a discourse about discourses, which follows its own discourse production rules, ways of enabling and disciplining. Statements about individual data, as well as generalizing hypotheses, formulations and conclusions, must be argued and explained. However, the criteria for the evaluation of evidence and inconsistencies are themselves a part of discourses, and in this way there is no escape from the network of meanings. It cannot be ignored that the SKAD reconstruction work is also irreducibly construction work. The interpretation can be called reconstructive because it refers to data, and its goal is to reveal something about the data's interrelation and peculiarities. In this general sense, all discourse research necessarily proceeds in a reconstructive way. Such analyses proceed constructively because they generate interpretations, conceptual schemata, and observations out of the data, and in so doing they generate types of statements that were not in the actual data as such and could not have been. Since the construction process is determined first of all by the relevancies – the questions, analysis concepts and strategies – of sociological discourse research, these are geared towards giving the "field's own relevancies" a chance.

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