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Comparing Discourse between Cultures: A Discursive Approach to Movement Knowledge

Peter Ullrich and Reiner Keller

Introduction[1]

A discourse analysis of German left-wing media coverage of the Middle East conflict brought to light a phenomenon also seen in other political fields, but much stronger in quantity and quality: Much of the discourse was related to Germany's National Socialist past. Vocabulary from that era was used and comparisons drawn. In one newspaper, Palestinian violence was reported on as the actions "of a mob", aimed not at "taking back illegally expropriated soil" but at "exterminating Jewish existence" (Bartel and Ullrich 2008). Earlier statements by pro-Israeli autonomist activists had described the Palestinians as the "biggest anti-Semitic collective" and stated that the "Popular belief in Palestine" is "völkisch" (literally "folkish", extremely nationalistic, an essential part of German Nazis' self-description) and aims at a "pure-blood Palestine free of Jews" (Ullrich 2008). In a similar fashion, the well-known and at times politically active German poet Günter Grass wrote a poem ("What has to be said") about his fears of an Israeli attack on Iran, which in his view may "exterminate the Iranian people" – an allusion to the Nazi extermination of Jews. Some pro-Palestinian activists hailed this political statement as an act of bravery. The question arises as to why, despite having different political aims, politically active Germans – especially radical activists – debate the Middle East conflict in a discursive framework so strongly shaped by terms and patterns from the discourse of or about Germany's National Socialist past. Or more generally, what shapes the discursive patterns of these movements?

In this chapter, we intend to propose a research programme for analysing such phenomena of social movements, with the aim of

literally solving the mystery of the introductory story. By focusing for this purpose on knowledge and its discursive embeddedness, we thus react to a deficit in line with the general assumptions that underpin this book. This deficit is the predominance of an instrumentalist perspective or strategic self-restriction in current social movement theory, especially in resource mobilization theory, framing, and the political opportunity structures approach. Against the backdrop of these rationalist and instrumentalist restrictions of the potential scope of movement research, we suggest a different perspective. Instead of analysing successful and unsuccessful strategic framing efforts, we take on older ideational approaches (such as Eyerman and Jamison 1991) and shift our attention towards the conditions of the knowledge and the world views of social movements (thus towards inherently cultural phenomena), thereby largely drawing on the *Sociology of Knowledge Approach to Discourse* (SKAD) (Keller 2011). This research approach combines the questions of the social constructionist sociology of knowledge – How is the objectivity and facticity of reality established through social processes of institutionalization and legitimization? How does this become the reality of the world for social actors? What can social actors know? How is knowledge attained, stabilized, communicated, and changed? – with the Foucauldian perspective on discourse and power-knowledge regimes, providing us with insights into the enabling and restricting social (discursive) structures of the sayable, thinkable, and legitimately utterable, or the *ideational and institutional context structures* of social movement ideas.

Firstly, we start with a brief overview of the shortcomings of general and also cultural analysis in social movement research and propose basic ideas about how to solve these problems. *Secondly*, we introduce SKAD and its key heuristic concepts, including discourse, frames, phenomenon structures, and narrative. *Thirdly*, this approach is applied to social movement and protest research by highlighting the conceptual links to key concepts of current social movement theory, which are manifold – especially in the framing approach and the culturalist derivates of the political opportunity structure approach [frames, cultural resonance, and cultural or discursive opportunity structures (COS/DOS)]. Empirical examples, many of them from Ullrich's research into historical reminiscences in German movements, shall illustrate the necessity and fruition of our perspective. *The fourth and last part* outlines methodological implications of the SKAD research programme's theoretical framework. Most important therein is a non-deductive, hermeneutic analysis of discourse, which draws on research methods established in

qualitative (interpretative) social research. Through cross-cultural comparison it reveals the relevant discursive contexts of a specific movement discourse.

Our aim (for now) is not to present a new cultural theory of social movements but to present a theoretical framework for analysing movement specificities across cultures. Such cultures are considered here as *discursive fields* – as social arenas where discourses unfold in a never-ending struggle for meaning. Such discursive fields are largely produced and reproduced by discursive practices and are constituted as internally connected sets of statements and rules for their production.[2]

Bringing discourse and culture back to protest research

Our starting point is what Johnston (2009:5) called the "instrumentalist-structuralist lens" that characterizes huge parts of current social movement theory.[3] This dominant perspective, historically rooted in the North American type of social movements as well as in the respective current of movement theorizing (Eyerman and Jamison 1991:27), is explicitly or implicitly interested in questions of movement success (Pettenkofer 2010). While this question is fruitful and absolutely central in the analysis of actors, who aim to achieve social change (and there is no doubt about this strategic aspect being a major quality of social movements), it leaves certain questions unanswered (Teune 2008:541). Among these questions, often neglected by movement researchers in the last three decades under the truism "grievances are everywhere, movements not" (Japp 1984), were those concerned with the reasons and causes of mobilization. Much of the development of social movement theory can be understood as a pendulum swinging between the poles *causes for protest* (grievances, deprivation, modernization pressure) and *conditions of protest success* (resources, political opportunities, successful framing efforts). Yet, if we assume that there is no lack of grievances, and that sometimes there are even (successful or unsuccessful) protest movements, and if we analyse both aspects, there are still more issues left unanswered. One would be *what* concerns people and why things are perceived as a problem in the first place or not. The other would be *how* problems or concerns are interpreted and understood. *Why* are they constructed, viewed, interpreted, or de-constructed by social movements in a specific way and not in another? And, *how* do movement activities shape the construction of realities in social worlds, both in cases of success and also when they seem to fail?

The following example illustrates this. The conflict between Israel and the Palestinians is generally perceived as an enormous political problem. And all over the world there are solidarity movements concerned with the issue. Yet, we see that there are pro-Palestinian activists and pro-Israeli activists. Even in established political camps like "the left" there are huge differences in how the Middle East conflict is perceived. While in many countries there is strong, dominant support among communists for the Palestinian cause, in some, such as Germany, communists are strongly divided on the question of which side to support. And comparing different countries, such as Germany and Britain, it can be seen that supporters of the Palestinians differ considerably in the way they communicate about the problem, even if they belong to the same international organization. Regardless of their actual identification with the Palestinians or Israel, the arguments used stem in part from and relate to different, in this case mainly national, contexts (Ullrich 2008). Since they represent what the world is like and what is considered normal, it is above all these discursive contexts which are the cause for the different "implicit meanings" which "activists tend to take for granted" (Lichtermann 1998) and which thus heavily shape social movements and protest.

New Social Movement theory has partly addressed such ideational questions. It was interested in the subjects' concerns, which were analysed in a macro-sociological framework that considered the impact of post-industrial capitalist society (Brand, Büsser, and Rucht 1986). But this approach's scope of attention does not cover all sorts of movements that seem to react to a complex heterogeneity of problems. And, as Jasper (2007:69) argued, Tourraine, the most prominent analyst of culture in "New Social Movements", sometimes had to force the macro-structural interpretation on data without convincing his research objects of being understood properly in their wanting and thinking. The framing approach set off from there, aiming to provide us with a more detailed idea of the ideational processes in protest activity, and an analysis of what concerns movements and activists (see, e.g., Snow et al. 1986; Gamson and Modigliani 1989). Yet it stayed well within the narrow instrumentalist perspective of mainstream US movement research by viewing framing processes primarily as movement *tasks* that can be fulfilled more or less successfully (Gerhards 1992; Klandermans 1988; Snow and Benford 1988). So framing an international trade agreement as unjust would be *belief amplification*, that is the attempt to legitimize one's own position by appealing to common values. Surprisingly, the obvious is not done: The injustice frame is not considered

as an expression of the movement's world view. As scholars of social movements (should) know, much that is said and done in the everyday existence of movements does not follow any strategic imperative. Things are sometimes done in a certain way because they have always been done like that, so we find customs, routines, and habits. Some protest is carried out with no strategic end (at least in this world), such as some self-immolation. There may be a rationale behind it, but definitely not the one a professional US-American human rights campaigner may follow when trying to formulate statements that would most likely appeal to the American public. There are even activists who, in terms of their own self-perception at least, despise politics and restrict themselves to uttering *negative* criticism, considering that they have hardly anybody to appeal to. Other rather neglected aspects in the analysis of movements are the knowledge stocks and argumentative claim-making resources available to them (like external scientific expertise or own knowledge production).

Taking the object of social movement studies seriously implies the need to investigate their "ways of worldmaking" (Nelson Goodman), their "vocabularies of motive" (Charles W. Mills), their world views, beliefs, practices, and their communication as an expression of what they *are*, and not to subsume all ideational aspects under strategic efforts. Humankind is a narrating species, for which the use of symbolic systems is elementary. So every time we tell other people about something, we have to draw upon culturally organized prerequisites: Whether consciously or not, we use frames, stories, and narrative elements of all kinds to make sense of something, to account for it. Such symbolic expressions of movements are objectified in texts and images, practices, identities, and organizational forms. It is a question of high interest for the study of society where these ideas come from, what shapes them, enables them, and sets their boundaries. Approaches to that question have often stopped halfway. There has not been sufficient elaboration on the concepts and research strategies necessary for analysing where movement knowledge actually comes from. Johnston (2009:21), for example, writes that by "examining the snapshots of texts at different points in time, the analyst can plumb how the meaning systems of movement groups evolve". While this is surely not incorrect, it absolutely leaves open the question of where the ideas actually come from and how this can be researched.

Scholars of movements can get helpful support in the endeavour to overcome these theoretical weaknesses from approaches that have not yet had much influence on current social movement theory, namely the

social constructionist sociology of knowledge (cf. Berger and Luckmann 1966) and Foucauldian discourse theory and analysis. The former offers movement research the following new question: How is knowledge[4] created and sustained, contested and fixed in a movement which in itself should be considered as a context of interaction, communication, and agency? Yet, to this day this stream of sociology of knowledge has only rarely considered the social meso- and macro-conditions of knowledge production, circulation, and effects. In the wake of Michel Foucault and others, discourse theory is perfectly qualified to fill this gap.[5] Since his early writings Foucault was concerned with what is considered "normal" in society and, when developing the discourse approach, with the social regulation of what can be legitimately stated in a specific (scientific) arena at a certain point in time.

The SKAD has been developed since the late 1990s by Keller (2001) to combine the analytical focus of sociology of knowledge on actors, interaction, everyday negotiation, and socialization with the Foucauldian discourse perspective, which stands in a Durkheimian tradition, focusing on emergent social facts as a reality of their own. It should be noted at this point that SKAD resulted from empirical research performed by Keller during the 1990s, which originally started with comparative framing studies on ecological communication of waste issues and policies in the German and French mass media and political spheres (Keller 2009 [1998]). This research was, in the beginning, close to social movement theory and studies carried out by Snow, Benford, Gamson, Gerhards, and others. It used mass media texts as well as documents from political actors and interviews. But the restricted vocabulary as well as the strategic, cognitivist, and instrumentalist orientation of frame research quickly proved too limited for addressing analytical questions of broader cultural, institutional, and discursive contexts. Like other social scientists – especially Maarten Hajer (1995) – Keller decided that a more Foucauldian notion of discourse and a closer look at social constructionism would be helpful to elaborate a more comprehensive approach to what he called later on in more general terms the *social politics of knowledge* (in Foucauldian terms, "power-knowledge regimes").

The approach addresses five central points of concern: First, it takes seriously the notion of discourse, which was of course used in the social movement research tradition but in a rather narrow sense; second, it looks for discursive battles, conflicts, and contexts, and not for isolated movement actors and strategies; third, it accounts for the practices and materialities of discourse or statement production, including

the usage and production of knowledge of all kind; fourth, it considers "problematizations" (Foucault 1984) as social actors' attempts to establish a particular "definition of the situation" (Thomas and Thomas 1928), which means to fix the reality of the world in a particular way; and fifth, it makes use, for purposes of concrete research, of the rich traditions of qualitative research in sociology. The application of this approach to social movement research (see also Ullrich 2012), which we are proposing in the following, will not account for all of the theoretical and methodological implications, but it does highlight certain aspects of SKAD.

First, it is a cultural approach, in the sense that it brings to the fore the importance (not exclusiveness!) of *symbolic processes* for the development and existence of social movements. Where "social" usually refers to a collective set of human actors, actions, constellations, and (certain kinds of) structures, acknowledging "culture" accentuates the role of meaning and symbolic systems. The production of symbols and interaction in a symbolic form (thus referring to and relying on supra-individual cultural patterns and rules) is not seen as a mere layer of social reality next to structures. It does not support the idea of society versus culture, but sees culture as a necessary *perspective* for looking at society, because everything that is social is also cultural (and vice versa). This means, to put it literally, not a disregard for factors such as hunger, social inequality, or structural unemployment as reasons for protest, but instead the insistence that even hunger and poverty first need to be interpreted within the realm of the respective societies' horizons of meaning; only then can protest become a possible reaction. Additionally, this approach has been supplemented by additional insights from a variety of other cultural approaches, such as political culture and framing theory. The main focus of research is movements' involvement and embeddedness in discursive structurings, contexts, and practices. If we consider movements as being embedded in social relationships of knowledge and as actors in social politics of knowledge, then we can address these discursive struggles in order to analyse what kind of knowledge movements and their members produce, express, or (pre-)suppose in their practical engagements and in all kinds of documents. Thus, their symbolic expression and interaction are primarily analysed based on their primarily textual, but also (secondarily) oral or visual practices.

Second, the conditions of this knowledge are primarily located in a discursive context, which is a reality *sui generis*, a pre-existent condition from the actors' point of view. This also implies the negation of the cognitively or emotionally straitened concepts of culture (where

culture has the tendency to be viewed basically as a sharing of cognitions and/or emotions[6]) and rather strengthening a perspective on *cultural "structurations"* (Anthony Giddens), which are objectified in artefacts, ways of saying, writing, and doing, that is in (discursive) rules for their enactment in the concrete production of statements.

Third, this goes along with stressing the important influences on movements of discursive contexts, which can be manifold (such as issue fields, arenas, ideological currents/movement sectors, or local/regional/border crossing cultures). In particular, we argue that besides the growing relevance of transnationalisation, national contexts still matter immensely in the formation of movements and movement knowledge (Buechler 2000:88 ff.), which underlines SKAD's affinity with comparative research designs. So, though being careful not to fall into the trap of "the reproduction of holistic nationalist clichés" (Koopmans and Statham 2000:31), we disagree with Jasper (2007:61), who sees cultural approaches as basically micro-oriented in contrast to the big metaphors like "states, structures, networks, even movements". On the contrary, the contribution of SKAD to movement research lies in the specification of relevant discursive contexts of movement knowledge with considerable formative power.

Yet, *fourth*, movements themselves are also of importance as a discursive context, although this will not be elaborated thoroughly here. Movements represent a lifeworld, too, an everyday communicative and interactive practice, with sedimented norms, roles, and practices, whose meanings cannot be reduced to their strategic relation to society. Without this level – the agency of actors and the complexity of the interactional contexts/situations – no change in the general discourse could be imaginable.

Sociology of Knowledge Approach to Discourse: Foundations and key concepts[7]

As Stuart Hall and his Birmingham Cultural Studies colleagues argued, we are living in "circuits of culture", indicating that meaning-making activities and social construction of realities have become effects of organized production, representation, marketing, regulation, and adaption (Hall 1997). This was a concern of interpretative sociology from the outset: Max Weber's work on "The Protestant Ethic" (Weber [1904/1905] 2002) is nothing less and nothing more than a discourse study *avant la lettre* of a social movement's religious discourse and its power effects in capitalist societies. To make his claim about the connection between

"The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism", Weber analysed several kinds of texts: religious prayers, advisory books, and sermons. It was from such textual data that he developed his ideas on "innerworldly ascetics" and deeply structured ways of shaping everyday life, home, and work. The "Protestant Ethic" delivered a deeply social vocabulary of motives, an institutionally preconfigured "definition of the situation" (William I. Thomas and Dorothy Thomas 1928). Weber never used the term "discourse", but the Chicago pragmatists did. They argued that social groups produce and live in "universes of discourse", systems, or horizons of meaning and processes of establishing and transforming such systems (Mead 1963:89–90). Without being exhaustive, one could mention Joseph Gusfield's (1981) study on the "Culture of Public Problems", Anselm Strauss's attention to ongoing negotiated orderings in social worlds/arenas (Strauss 1979, 1991, 1993), or the broad work on social construction and careers of social problems as exemplars of such a perspective. Social movement research in the symbolic-interactionist and resource mobilization traditions was interested in public discourses, but it did not elaborate a more comprehensive theory and methodology of discourse research. Neither did studies which used the term "discursive opportunity structure" (see next section). In recent political science, Vivien Schmidt (2010) elaborated "discursive institutionalism" in order to give a richer account of the role of discourse in political actions and decisions. But she reduced discourse to the rhetorical power of individual actors, in trying to draw a line between constellations when discourse matters and others when discourse does not matter – that is, between a situation where an argument or a speech makes a difference and others, where bargaining and established structures of interest and power determine the outcomes. Seen through a Foucauldian lens, this is a rather narrow vision of discourse – for discourses matter in both cases, as structured and structuring practices of the discursive construction of reality.

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. Nevertheless, he invented his own historical sociology of knowledge and problematizations (Manning 1982:65, 76). 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 doing so, 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 "critical events" in the history of social constitutions of subjectivities or particular orders of practice, he came quite close to the interests of the symbolic interactionists or social movement research.

According to Foucault, discourses are situated social practices, not representing external objects, but constituting them. This implies a research focus on concrete data – oral and written texts, articles, books, discussions, institutions, disciplines – in order to analyse bottom-up how discourses are structured and how they structure knowledge domains and claims. Foucault speaks of "discursive formations" (Foucault [1969] 2010:34–78), 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, see Baumgarten and Ullrich 2012). In the "Rivière case" Foucault (1982) addresses discourses as *battlefields*, as *power struggles* over the *legitimate definition of phenomena*.

Despite its enormous achievements in setting up a discourse research agenda, there were some remaining deficits in the Foucauldian toolbox which led to the elaboration of SKAD. First, Foucault's theory of discourse as established in the "Archaeology of Knowledge" largely neglected the agency of social actors making discursive statements. Second, he was not interested in a theory of human consciousness and sign/symbol usage, which has to be assumed in order to allow discourses to exist and to exert power effects on people. And third, he did not put much effort into research methods.

SKAD's Concepts

Social relationships of knowledge are complex socio-historical constellations of the production, stabilization, structuration, and transformation of knowledge within a variety of social arenas. Following Foucault, SKAD identifies discourses as regulated, structured practices of sign usage in social arenas which constitute smaller or larger realities, symbolic universes. Discourses are at once 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 realities that are taken for granted. Discourses crystallize and constitute themes in a particular form as social interpretation and action issues. *Discursive formations* are assemblies

of statements which follow the same formation rules. For example, a scientific discourse is manifest in texts, conferences, papers, talks, associations, and so on, all of which can be studied as data. It emerged historically out of actions and interactions that were committed in order to tell the empirical truth about phenomena in the world. 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 through the concrete usage of the signs. 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 doing so institutionalize a binding context of meaning, values, and actions/agency within social collectives. SKAD is concerned with this correlation between sign usage as a social practice and the (re)-production/transformation of social orders of knowledge.

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. There are people on the streets, gestures of resistance, papers are written, speeches held: The German anti-waste movement during the early 1990s occupied territories, published books, organized knowledge on the risks and hazardous effects of waste, and so on. This means that discourse appears as speech, text, discussion, images, and use of symbols, which have to be performed by actors following discursive instructions, and discourses are, therefore, a *real social practice* in which agency and symbolic orders are bound together. SKAD research is concerned with reconstructing the processes which occur in social construction, communication, and the legitimization of meaning structures in institutional spheres and (public) issue arenas. Several heuristic concepts from the sociology of knowledge tradition are useful for analysing the discursive construction of reality: *interpretative schemes*, *classifications, phenomenal structures (Phänomenstrukturen)*, and *narrative structures*. Together, these elements create the *interpretative repertoire* (cf. Potter and Wetherell 1998) of a discourse. We shall now consider these concepts more closely.

The term *interpretative scheme or frame (Deutungsmuster)* covers meaning and action-generating schemes, which are combined in and

circulated through discourses. Interpretative schemes are structuring patterns of societies' stocks of knowledge. They are used to assemble signs and symbols and to create *definitions of the situation* (which happens all the time, not only in strategic action). Discourses differ in the way they combine such frames in specific interpretative frameworks. If complex technology is considered risky, nature seen as the endangered mother earth, and society as the supreme instance of politics, then waste appears as a quite different problem than in other possible or established combinations of interpretative schemes. Discourses are able to generate new interpretative schemes and ways of positioning them within the social agenda – which is exactly what characterizes them. Differing from social movement framing research, SKAD argues that such framings are of interest far beyond the singular question of their strategic use, because they – whether intentionally or not – always configure reality.

Classifications are a more or less elaborate, formalized, and institutionally fixed social typification or categorization process. They have specific impacts for action. As an example, consider affirmative action or similar politics which draws on classifications of populations. Movements often classify opponents and their own *we* as well as those whose interests that *we* is (striving to be) working for.

Alongside interpretative schemes and classifications, the concept of *phenomenal structure* offers a complementary third form of access to the levels of content-related structuring of discourse. Constructing an issue as a problem on the public agenda, for instance, requires that the protagonists deal with the issue in several dimensions, and refer to argumentative, dramatizing, and evaluative statements; it requires 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, actors, and identities involved, and others. Social actors are not pre-given or pre-fixed entities with clear interests, strategies, and resources. SKAD 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. The comparative study on waste politics in Germany and France (Keller 2009) showed that the critique of established waste treatment and waste production existed in Germany well before the anti-waste movement came into being. One could even regard it as a precondition of the movement's existence.

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 (e.g. actors, problem definitions) are placed in relation to one another in a specific way, are *narrative structures*. Establishing narrative structures is not simply a use of techniques to combine linguistic elements but a configurative act which links disparate signs and statements to tell a story. Narrative structures link the various elements of a discourse to render them in 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.

But SKAD is not only interested in the symbolic ordering of reality. It is also concerned with the analysis of the material world and its effects. This includes various dimensions of reconstruction: sense making as well as subject formation, ways of acting, institutional/structural contexts, and social as well as material consequences (e.g. installed infrastructure designed to solve a problem, such as laws, staff, and computers).

SKAD further describes *discursive fields* as social arenas, constituting themselves around contested issues, controversies, problematizations, and truth claims in which discourses compete with each other. In the processing of discourses, specific *discourse coalitions* and statement bearers can win out over others, by a wide range of means. Discursive orders, accordingly, 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 or a speech within the context of a demonstration, for instance, actualizes an environmental policy discourse in differing concrete forms. The *materiality* of discourses (as discursive or non-discursive practices, real speakers, texts, speeches, discussions, things) simply means the way discourses exist in societies.

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, as *addressees of the statement practice*. But actors generally appear on the discursive level too: *subject positions/identity offerings* depict positioning processes and patterns of subjectification which are generated in discourses and which refer to (fields of) addressees.

The term *practice(s)* covers 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. 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 *model practices* generated in discourses, that is, exemplary patterns (or templates) for action which are constituted in discourses, fixed to subject positions, and addressed to the discourse's public or to some opposite counter-discourse. To continue with the above-mentioned example of environmental discourse, this includes recommendations for eco-friendly behaviour (such as turning the shower off while you shampoo your hair, using your bike, preparing slow food).

SKAD and social movement research

Essentially, it should not be too controversial an approach to apply SKAD to social movement research. It is quite compatible with current social movement theory as it does not in the first place aim at explaining the latter's claims better, but at asking new questions and bringing into focus new research interests. Yet, SKAD in social movement research is linked to previous efforts in the field, albeit – to quote Marx – by standing them from their head onto their feet.

A prominent role for connecting SKAD and current social movement theory has to be reserved for the framing concept, as it has been outlined for social movement research and distinguished from ideology, for example by Oliver and Johnston (2000:39) and Ferree et al. (2002). The latter consider frames as a concept covering two structuring aspects of signification, which are related to the meaning of the term "frame". First, a frame (like a picture frame) sets boundaries, explaining *what* is being thematized and what is not (thematic relevance). Secondly, they pick up on the meaning of structure, which leads our attention to the inner structure of the phenomenon, to *how* something is thematized. This conceptualization has some advantages over other ideational concepts like ideology. One aspect is this concept's economic connotation or the implicit connection of the superstructure phenomenon of ideology with its objective basis in social relations of production (which is the power *and* a restriction of this concept) (Oliver and Johnston 2000). The frame concept is – if not conceived of only as a "shallow conception

of the transmission of political ideas as marketing" (Oliver and Johnston 2000:37) – simply more open to cultural complexities and ties in with basic insights of research into political culture. Karl Rohe (1990:335) once wrote that political cultures (and political cultures are among the central contextual discursive conditions of movement discourse) do not differ so much in their problem solutions but in what would become a problem for them at all and how (for Foucault, problematizations). If we lay aside the classical view of movements as actors who are opposed to society (or power or actors/institutions in it) and perceive them more as a part and expression of society,[8] we can grasp the embeddedness of movement ideas. In the social repertoire of movement action the use of frames is not chosen for exclusively strategic reasons, since they belong to the basic ideational prerequisites which shape given movements in culturally specific ways. As already mentioned, much of this is due to national discursive contexts.

The most striking example of this is the influence of historical memory and dealing with the national past in German movements, including in political fields that are thematically not *necessarily* connected to the past. Ferree et al. (2002) showed that in debates between the women's movement and the so-called pro-life camp, anti-abortion positions differed between Germany and the United States. The moral anti-abortion positions in Germany are, the authors argue, grounded in the experiences of Nazi euthanasia. This eminent politico-cultural issue for Germany gives the abortion debate a layer of meaning that is unique for the respective discursive context (besides other meanings with contexts greater than the German nation state). It is thus an illuminating example of how a discursive context shapes modes of sense-making by offering specific frames and not others. Other research has shown these kinds of reminiscences in the visual production of German protest movements against surveillance (Ullrich and Lê 2011; Daphi, Ullrich, and Lê 2013). The most commonplace depictions of surveillance worked with allusions to Germany's past. Very prominent in the images was the Nazi regime, with many statements implicitly or ironically equating today's surveillance with that in Nazi Germany or alluding to the latter as the ultimate threat if today's development of the surveillance state is not stopped or reversed. The most common symbols of the protests worked with allusions to the German Democratic Republic (which in the decade after the fall of the Iron Curtain replaced the Nazi period as the ultimate *other* of German national narratives, cf. Zuckermann 1999:8). Probably the most widely circulated picture showed the then German minister of the interior, Wolfgang Schäuble, who was responsible for many post-9/11 security laws, with

the slogan "Stasi 2.0" ("Stasi" being the colloquial abbreviation for the political secret police of the GDR). While the anti-surveillance movement is a wide coalition with a fundamentally liberal orientation, della Porta (1999:76–78) showed similar historical references to the Nazi regime for left-libertarian (or "autonomist") movements in Germany (as well as in Italy, with references to its fascist experiences) in the 1960s–1980s.

These examples also clearly illustrate how useful the concept of frame resonance (Gamson and Modigliani 1989) is, and how strategic and expressive aspects of movement discourse go hand in hand. Frame resonance refers to the public's high or low response to a framing strategy. While the historical allusion may be grounded in strategic thinking, considering the Stasi link funny (and thus creating sympathy) and considering the Nazi allusion provocative and threatening (thus creating a sense of the necessity to mobilize), they also inform the scholar of the frames that were at hand or seemed plausible to the movements' imagineers – and which were not. This is the concept of frame resonance turned upside down: It is not only the movements' frames that gain resonance (more or less successfully) among bystanders, potential adherents, or the public – it is also the available frames of a discursive context that influence the movements' possibilities to grasp things. Foucault's influence guides us in the attitude not to consider movements as basically free actors who deliberately choose their frames, because he encourages us towards the position that what can legitimately be stated, or what makes sense, is structured by discourse. Whether the framing choice is more strategic or more expressive, the pool from which to choose is regulated and restricted. Still, discourses of movements remain battlegrounds, too. While the German discursive context fosters the use of the historical allusions described above, there are some actors who criticize these. A current has developed within the German left that centres on criticizing nationalism, the principle of nationality, and especially the unique character of German nationalism and anti-Semitism. They see the Nazi allusions as a relativization of German guilt. The mainstream and critics do not agree, yet in different ways relate to the same discursive context. We see here that discourse does not determine positions, but by offering classifications and interpretative frames it defines what makes sense at all. National socialism and its consequences are the prime example of this in Germany.

Highly illustrative is the analysis of left-wing discourse on the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians (Ullrich 2008). As far as the discursive field, "Jews/anti-Semitism/the Holocaust etc.", is concerned

(which evokes a substantial connection), it is not surprising that in the German variant of this discourse German history is omnipresent. Interestingly, the Nazi allusion in this discourse has become a one-size-fits-all allegation, with similarities being drawn between Israel and the Nazis as well as between the Palestinians and the Nazis. A discourse analysis of movement media (Bartel and Ullrich 2008) revealed that parts of the discourse indiscriminately transfer frames and terminology from the Nazi era and the politics of remembering that era into the Middle Eastern context. Many position papers, programmatic statements, or parliamentary motions about the conflict start with ritually acknowledging "German responsibility" (Ullrich 2011). The interesting effect of the discursive formation is that even people who adhere to the same political ideology and fight for the same ends can differ considerably in their framing of the conflict when from different countries. Ullrich (2008:281 ff.) compared – among others – Trotskyists of the same international tendency in Great Britain and Germany and found immense differences in their frames of the conflict, though not in their policy positions or intended solutions. Anti-Semitism, Jewish/Israeli interests, and the ethic imperatives of Germany's National Socialist past occupy a considerable proportion of German discourse compared to Britain, where the frames "anti-Semitism" and "historical responsibility" are virtually absent in movement discourse. The reason, of course, is the very relevance of the respective sensitivities in the two national discursive contexts. All other heuristic concepts of SKAD can be applied to that discourse, too. One can identify certain – conflicting – narratives of the conflict. There are fixed subject positions, for example the "Israel-sympathetic lefty" or the "critic of Israel". The German metadiscourse binarily classifies camps (pro-Israeli "Antideutsche" vs pro-Palestinian Anti-Zionists/Anti-imperialists – a common classification scheme that ignores intermediary positions). Such sub-discourses also construct different phenomenal structures: One discourse sees the issue primarily as a problem of anti-Semitism in the Muslim populations and their left-wing supporters, which evokes the need for reconnaissance and awareness measures. Others construct it as a problem of imperialism, which in turn evokes the need for international solidarity campaigns or, for example, boycotts against Israeli goods. Model practices and blueprints for acting subjects are set up too, for instance when appropriate or politically correct behaviour is proclaimed. And this all is done through a whole set of discursive practices, including the writing of pamphlets, books, the organization of discourses and discussions, or the invitation of "real" testimonies.

It should be noted that new interpretative schemes may always emerge if social action encounters problems – this indeed is an old pragmatist argument. SKAD considers such constellations as *events*. Catastrophic events like the Fukushima disaster (catastrophic for the environment) or wars in the Middle East (considered catastrophic for the Palestinians) may evolve as generators of evidence for new interpretative schemata. Discourses are therefore also open to new frames, which can eventually become established as factual.

It is not new to social movement research to consider cultural or discursive contexts' relevance for movements. Eyerman and Jamison's (1991:36) "cognitive approach" was an early variant of this, considering itself a sociology of knowledge approach, taking "long term traditions in political culture" into consideration to analyse social movements. One of the striking examples they give is Britain, where "the conflict between capital and labour has continued to define the political culture, and thus the way social movements are conceived" (Eyerman and Jamison 1991:37). This impression is still vivid for researchers with a knowledge of the British movement landscape.

There have been a number of attempts to widen the scope of the political opportunity structures approach by introducing cultural factors, and several of these point in this direction. The terms *cultural/discursive context or cultural/discursive opportunity structures* (COS/DOS) overlap heavily and comprise a lot of different aspects and lookouts. Like the framing approach, most of them were not intended to complete the cultural turn, because they often restrict themselves to analysing the influence of cultural or discursive structures on mobilizing success and policy outcomes (McAdam 1994; Koopmans and Kriesi 1997; Koopmans and Statham 2000). The term "opportunity" implies this strategic bias; this is why we prefer the more open concept *discursive context*, which is in fact the discourse of the wider society in which the movement is embedded. Others have used the terms rather *en passant* without further theoretical elaboration (for instance, Winkler 2001; Benthin 2004; Laubenthal 2006; Linards 2009). Yet there have also been theoretical advances – whether in the strategic corset or not. Goldberg (2001), for example, subscribing to the Durkheimian tradition of culture-as-structure as opposed to the cognitive concept of culture, explains the perceived legitimacy to protest through deeply rooted cultural systems, like basic binary codes. Ferree et al. (2002), in their seminal study on discourses about abortion, and Ullrich (2008), in his book on left-wing discourses on Israel/Palestine (both comparative research designs), have not defined general layers or dimensions of the DOS (see Baumgarten

and Ullrich 2012:4 ff. instead), but make their interpretations plausible by referring to several specific cultural schemes, which they grasp from historical analyses as well as from different types of political culture approaches. The possibility of leaving behind the strategic corset is quite obvious when movement framing efforts are seen as a key to the culture of a country in the study on abortion (Gerhards and Rucht 2000:181). Completing this cultural turn means considering discursive contexts as relevant for the formation of world views and positions of engagements well before strategic action starts. Discursive contexts in this sense are the structures that enable and restrict the circuits of culture, of meaning making, and of social action. Research carried out by Hajer (1995), Keller (2009), Lamont and Thévenot (2000), Ferree et al. (2002), Ullrich (2008), and many others accounts for the continuing relevance of national contexts – seen, at least in certain regards, as cultural spheres with discursive fields of their own – distinguished by collective memory, language, historical traditions, and so on (see e.g. Baumgarten, this volume).

Using SKAD in movement research: Methodological implications and challenges

The concepts introduced and the perspective taken do not make a research project. To carve out the relevant discursive contexts for a given movement or thematic discourse, one must start with the discursive material. While other approaches remain quite silent on the criteria for the selection of influential macro-phenomena (Pettenkofer 2010:71–74), we suggest looking for it in the data. Especially helpful for this is comparative analysis.

The approach, as we suggest it, has a very strong affinity with qualitative methodology, in general, and with *certain aspects* of Grounded Theory in particular. One of the main tasks for the researcher is to identify which relevant discursive contexts the analysed movement knowledge relates to. This is *hermeneutic* and *theoretical* work in a circular process. Depending on the issues concerned, there will be knowledge more or less readily available from existing research. This knowledge is a source of hypotheses or questions put to the data that influence analysis by offering foci of awareness. On the other hand, the in-depth analysis of the data will reveal different content and thus other relevant discursive contexts. However, pure data means little to us. First, all data need questions – and the same text may give different answers to different questions. Second, every interpretation and analysis of data are

influenced by pre-existing knowledge of the person doing the interpreting. This means that any aspects that are unknown to the researcher may stay hidden, and pieces of meaning that do not resonate with the researcher may get lost despite thorough hermeneutic work. This is where comparison comes into play. The constant comparison of cases – similar ones and highly different ones – allows us to see the invisible, since its non-existence is visible in the contrasting case.

Let us explain this using the example of left-wing Middle East discourse in Germany and Britain. It was surely not surprising that Germany's past was the number one reference point (Hafez 2002:162 ff.), and thus the politics of remembrance, the prime discursive context, for German perceptions of the Middle East. This insight could be taken with some elaborations on aspects, dimensions, positions, and causes from existing literature, but manifested itself richly in the textual production of the movements and their members, yet in a specific way (which had similarities with and differences from the general German discourse). So the theoretically already available knowledge offered hypotheses that were confirmed by the data. Analysis of the data revealed a particularity of the left-wing variant of this discourse, in that people relate not only to the Middle East conflict itself and Germany's past but also to historical struggles and debates involving left-wing political and workers' movements, or specific left-wing ideological schemata of interpretation and many other factors. The interplay of these contexts was at the centre of the interpretative work. It was somewhat more surprising to discover that the historical British involvement in the conflict (e.g. as the colonial power holding the League of Nations mandate for Palestine before the foundation of Israel) and other explicit historical references do not play an important role in the British left-wing discourse on the conflict. Another aspect the comparison revealed is that in the British interviews (the study was based on interviews) Israel appears *only* as the oppressing nation, a military player, and regional power. In the case of Germany, on the other hand, even those who were very critical of or even hostile towards Israeli policy spent more time and elaboration on other aspects of Israel (e.g. they contemplated the rights and fears of the Israeli population) and stressed the important role of anti-Semitism in the conflict or in Germany, which is a relevant frame only in the German context. The incompatibility of certain frames in the German discourse (the anti-Semitism frame and the occupation frame sometimes suggest different identifications from a left-wing point of view) and their constant clashes eventually also led to the start of learning processes towards more complex

positions than 100% identification with one of the conflict parties and thus also to new narratives with changed phenomenal structures, for example to combinations of the Palestinian and the Zionist master narratives.

The basic research design was the comparison of two sets of discursive contexts – the movement-specific or political camp context and the national context. The former was kept constant (both cases are left wingers), while the latter was modified through cross-national case selection and comparison. This allowed for a deep insight into the respective national characteristics of discourse on Israel, Palestine, (Anti-)Zionism, and anti-Semitism. Philo-Semitic and militant pro-Israeli positions that constrain themselves to the politics of memory frames (historic responsibility and anti-Semitism) are virtually non-existent in Britain (neither the discursive context "the left" nor the national discursive context pointed in that direction), while they are prominent in Germany. The discursive context "the left" and the national discursive context in Germany were partly contradictory, which led to the arguments, extremely antagonistic positions, and much metatalk. But left-wing *and* pro-Israeli positions could only be established there. In the British left-wing discourse they would not make any sense.

Although we consider the national context as relevant for many issues, there is no rule for this. The symbolic production of movements has to be analysed in a comparative perspective. Depending on the interest of research and the actual character of the movements analysed, the dimensions of comparison can be different. It seems especially fruitful to compare diachronically[9] or across movement sectors. There is no general rule governing which discursive context is relevant, but one may speculate about hierarchies. General political contexts (like nations) will be important for more issues, especially those that are articulated and debated nationwide. In many countries with national media, for a national public this is of the highest importance. Other issues may relate more to transnational or local publics. Yet they, too, will be structured historically, or based on place and time.

Conclusion

The SKAD offers social movement and protest research as a powerful tool for the analysis of movement knowledge. Movement knowledge is analysed in its concrete socio-historical circumstances, which we construe as the *discursive context*. SKAD offers a conceptual framework for combining

the interactional processes of reiterating and shaping knowledge on the micro-level with the level of emergent social structures of knowledge. In this chapter we concentrated our efforts on highlighting the significance of the latter for giving movements time-spatial specificity.

So, what is the benefit of using SKAD in comparative social movement research? *First*, considering movement activities as part of discursive struggles in social arenas leads us to the discursive structuration of such processes. This means that there are established (and changing) ways of saying and interacting, role positions and resources for speakers, taboos, stocks of knowledge, symbols, values, norms at hand (or not), accepted expertise, scientific, and other knowledge production – all of this enters into the movements' discursive accounts of how the world really is, and how it should be. To approach movements via discourse means to analyse them as being embedded in whole discursive fields, where their action resonates with that of other collective actors and vice versa – we can account for what they do and say only if we try to get the whole picture. *Second*, it allows for comparative studies of movements simply because the toolbox of discourse research is able to account for the different discursive contexts which shape movement activities and are shaped by them in an empirically sound way. There is no need to refer to mysterious national mentalities or cultural preferences as ideational forces. As Keller shows in his comparative research, a discourse-orientated perspective can clarify how such cultural differences are to be understood as permanent and performative productions, processed in and through discourses as well as through the instutionalizations which already exist, and how they are transformed or brought into being by discursive engagements of social actors. The interplay of the relevant discursive contexts (e.g. the national and the issue-specific ones, see Daphi, Ullrich, and Lê 2013) is decisive for giving movements their shape.

Is it necessary to say that this is all about power/knowledge? Discursive structuration is both enabling and limiting discursive activities. The power to speak and make discursive statements as well as the power to find resonance, create, stabilize, transform, or abandon all kinds of worldly effects – this all is not just the result of some determining force (like well-established and known capitalist or class interests)[10] which could be identified by theorization ad hoc, but which has to be analysed in its empirical appearance – it might differ rather widely according to the issues and time periods considered. As for other social sciences research, SKAD's approach to social movements has to reflect on and account for its objects' boundaries for the relevant elements, dimensions, discursive fields, and data to be included. This is a question of

convincing arguments as well as of (wo)manpower, time, and financial resources.

Notes

1. We are indebted to the participants of the "Protest | Culture" workshops and Sebastian Scheele for their helpful comments on earlier versions of the chapter.
2. See, for example, Keller (2009, 2013), Lamont and Thévenot (2000), and Eder (2000).
3. We borrow this term from Marion Hamm to gather what we perceive as dominant trends in theorizing movements.
4. The term "knowledge", according to this sociological tradition, refers not only to factual assets of history, mathematics, hard sciences, and so on but to all kinds of competences for interpretation and action. Indeed, it even considers religion, ideologies, and institutions as knowledge. Every society or culture establishes its own realities, its stocks of knowledge. The given reality is a socio-historical a priori, mediated by such stocks of knowledge.
5. Interestingly, a search in relevant journals and handbooks revealed that Foucauldian thinking has had almost no impact on current social movement theory, even in works dealing with discourse. For some of the exceptions, see Sandberg (2006); Ullrich (2008, 2010, 2012); Baumgarten (2010); Death (2010); Heßdörfer, Pabst, and Ullrich (2010); and Baumgarten and Ullrich (2012).
6. This seems to be connected with a strong influence of psychology and social cognition (Gamson and Modigliani 1989; Eyerman and Jamison 1991; Jasper 2007 and his contribution in this volume), which gives the concept of culture a cognitive (and hence individualistic) bias (Goldberg 2001:190 f.).
7. For a condensed presentation of SKAD, see Keller (2011); theoretical foundations and the whole case for SKAD are elaborated in Keller ([2005] 2010) and will be available in English soon (Keller forthcoming). The methodological toolbox of SKAD is elaborated in Keller (2013). Keller and Truschkat (2012) present a whole range of SKAD studies.
8. This view is also fundamentally supported by Foucault-inspired government ality approaches to social movements (see contributions in Heßdörfer et al. 2010; Death 2010; Baumgarten and Ullrich 2012).
9. Jasper (1997:152 ff., 322 f.) gives us a striking temporal example. He argues that it was unimaginable to campaign for animal rights as long as animals were ubiquitous as working livestock. Animal rights campaigns reflect a situation in which we usually only ever come into contact with animals as pets.
10. An old idea of symbolic interactionist Edward Hughes says that interests should rather be considered as the outcomes of situations and negotiations between actors than as pre-established forces.

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