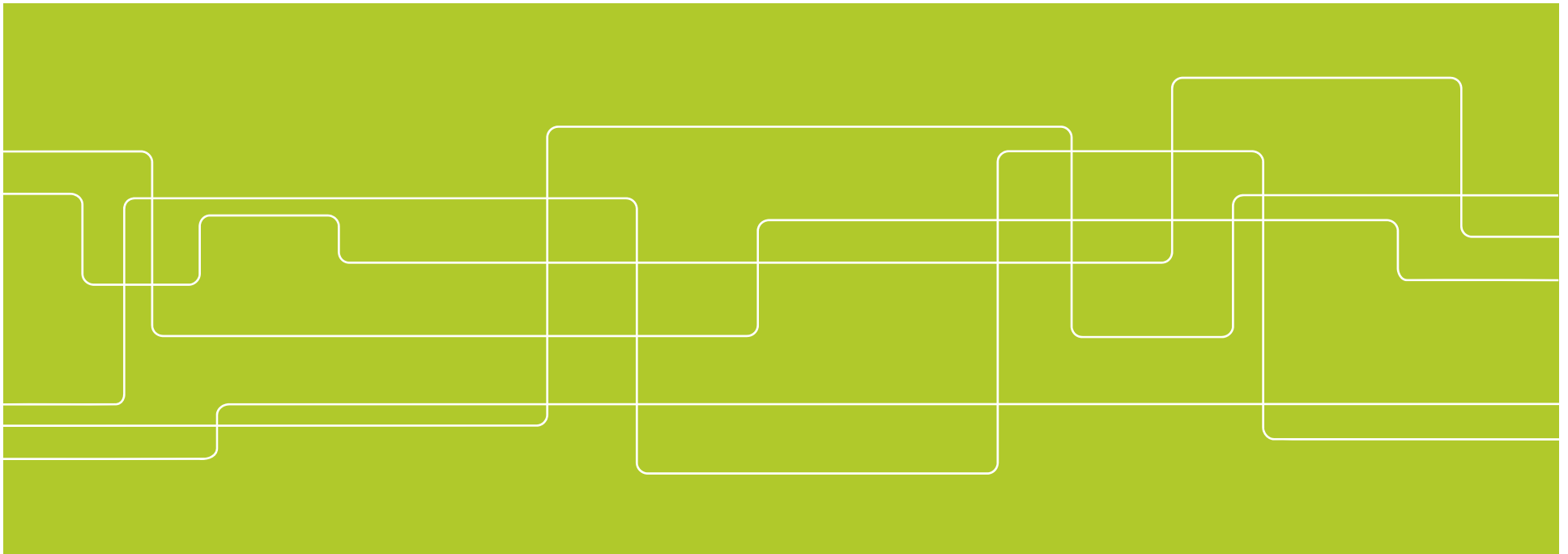




Discourse analysis - WPR

AG2805/HT17

Ulrika Gunnarsson-Östling





Social constructivism

Two starting points:

1. Reality cannot be perceived objectively
2. Reality cannot be perceived subjectively, if so they would be without meaning.

1+2 = (Our perception of) reality is socially constructed



Facts

- Social facts (equality, sustainability...)
- Natural facts (levels of dioxin, dust on the floor, water levels, number or percentage of female professors...)
- Social facts about natural facts – making meaning out of natural facts

Discourse

“Shared, structured ways of talking, thinking, interpreting, and representing phenomenon, such as sustainable development.
(Dryzec 1997/2005)





Sustainable development

Four approaches to the concept:

1. As unproblematic in principle, even though hard to achieve in practice
2. As ambiguous, thus in need of definition (through choosing one interpretation, and backing this up)
3. As ambiguous, and thus in need of a multi-dimensional representation through e.g. axes or circles
4. As essentially contested, and thus it is how it is put to practice that matters

(adopted from Connelly, 2007)



Sustainable development

“[r]ather than focus on searching for a definitive meaning of ‘sustainable development’ ... it is necessary to recognise the multiplicity of sustainabilities and to analyse the ways in which these are shaped and mobilised in political discourse”

(Haughton & Counsell 2004, cit. Connelly 2007).



Sustainable development

- Horizontal or hierarchal?
- Human or nature?
- Needs or rights?
- Consensus or conflicts?
- Pollution, resources or life-styles?
- Changing technology/'lifestyles'/economy?
- Market/people/experts/politician-driven?



What is the problem represented to be?

A specific approach to discourse analysis (Bacchi 2009)



What is the problem represented to be?

- Policy has a cultural dimension – takes shape within a certain context.
- A policy/plan implies something needs to change – there are implied problems. But what are the problems represented to be?
- Bacchi suggests asking six questions to make the problem explicit instead of implicit.
- The idea is to help us think deeply about assumptions and presuppositions that lie behind and shape certain policies.
- Thus, the idea is not to say that things aren't good enough, but to show what type of assumptions the policies are based on.



What is the problem represented to be?

- Problem representation mirrors discourse
- Interrogating problem representations reveals discourse



The WPR-approach in short

I. What's the 'problem' represented to be?





Problem representation: an example

Congestion of cars

Too few roads

Too narrow roads

→ More roads

Congestion of cars

Too many cars

Too little space for bikes

→ Congestion tax, more space for bikes...

Solutions are representations



Solutions are responses to problems, and thus represents the way problems are represented to be.



The WPR-approach in short

1. What's the 'problem' represented to be?
2. What presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation?



The WPR-approach in short

1. What's the 'problem' represented to be?
2. What presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation?
3. How has this representation of the 'problem' come about?



The WPR-approach in short

1. What's the 'problem' represented to be?
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3. How has this representation of the 'problem' come about?
4. What's left unproblematic in this 'problem' representation?
Where are the silences? Can the 'problem' be thought of differently?



The WPR-approach in short

1. What's the 'problem' represented to be?
2. What presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation?
3. How has this representation of the 'problem' come about?
4. What's left unproblematic in this 'problem' representation? Where are the silences? Can the 'problem' be thought of differently?
5. What effects are produced by this representation of the 'problem'?



Problem representations have effects

- Discursive effects
 - *What can be said and thought*
- Subjectification effects
 - *How subjects are constituted within problem representations*
- Lived effects
 - *Material impact of problem representations on bodies and lives*

End extreme poverty



End extreme wealth



"End extreme wealth" by Liv Strömqvist for the Knife album "Shaking the Habitual"

Who is the environmental subject?



- Who and whose lifestyles are seen as sustainable and desirable?
- Who should change whose behavior?



(See e.g. Bradley 2009)



Material effects

Who can afford to live sustainably?

NYHETER

De kräver mer ekologisk mat

● Handlare i Hökarängen sätts på prov – och belönas med kundinvasion

Ta in mer ekologiska varor – och stjäla kunder från din konkurrent.

Den uppmaningen riktar miljömedvetna Hökarängsbor till butikerna Matdax och Ica Bomben. Vinnaren belönas med en invasion av kunder nästa lördag.

Tidigt i torsdags morse fick Ica-handlaren Lars-Göran Aversstedt besök i sin butik på Tobaksvägen. Utanför dörren stod Jenny Cederholm, Therese Embrandt och Tuija Hartikainen med en önskelista. Deras krav: Ta in fler ekologiska varor. Annars säger vi till alla vi känner att handla på Matdax i stället.

Jenny Cederholm förklarar: – Jag tänker på mina barn och på andras barn på andra sidan jordkloset där en del av vårt livsmedel produceras. De ska inte behöva växa upp bland gifter. Och personligen vill jag slippa åka till Farsa eller Gubbängen och handla på Coop bara för att de har bättre ekologiskt utbud.

NÅGRA DAGAR tidigare levererades en liknande kravlista till Magnus Norinder som driver Matdax. Listan bygger på önskemål som samlats in från Hökarängsbor de senaste veckorna. Tanken är att den



Jenny Cederholm, Tuija Hartikainen och Therese Embrandt är lokala hållbarhetsambassadörer i Hökarängen. Här kollar de in utbudet av ekologisk frukt hos Lars-Göran Aversstedt på Ica Bomben.

FOTO: SARA FLODIN





The WPR-approach in short

1. What's the 'problem' represented to be?
2. What presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation?
3. How has this representation of the 'problem' come about?
4. What's left unproblematic in this 'problem' representation? Where are the silences? Can the 'problem' be thought of differently?
5. What effects are produced by this representation of the 'problem'?
6. How/where has this representation of the 'problem' been produced, disseminated and defended? How could it be questioned, disrupted and replaced?

Questioning, disrupting, replacing





The WPR-approach in short

1. What's the 'problem' represented to be?
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The exercise

In groups of three, analyze altogether 2 documents using the WPR-approach:

- 1) Järva Vision
- 2) SRS Vision

Write down your answers (bullet-points are perfectly fine).

Write the 'lab report'.

Participate in the seminar (peer-review + Q&A)



Seminar

- Find one person you did not work with
- Interview each other about the assignment (i.e. “paperless peer-review”) (30 minutes in total)
 - What problem representation did you identify in document X and Y?
 - How did you come to this conclusion?
 - What silences did you find in text Z?
 - Etc.
- Joint Q&A to resolve remaining issues (15 minutes)



Questions?

