Fantasy and Desire in the Construction of Sustainable Urban Development

A Discourse Theoretical Analysis of Sustainable Urban Development in Southern Norway

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Summary

This thesis details a discourse analysis of the discourse on sustainable urban development, amongst participants of a co-creative arena called Southern City Network. For over four years, participants of this arena have attempted to arrive at a joint commitment on how sustainable urban development should be understood and acted on within the arena. I propose that this inertia can be explored by investigating how sustainable urban development is enacted in discourse, while paying close attention to the affective dimension of language-use.

The overall research theme of the thesis targets meaning and conflict in discursive practices, while highlighting the affective dimension of language-use. The case-study and overall research themes are positioned within the post-foundational Discourse Theory of Ernesto Laclau and supplemented with readings of a Lacanian-orientation.

The aim of the research strategy is to identify points of sedimentation and contestation to the discursive practice on sustainable urban development, amongst the participants of the arena, and to explore how contestations are discursively navigated during arena activities. The goal is to reflect on the role of fantasy and desire in this navigation.

The research questions ask:

- How is sustainable urban development discursively constructed amongst planning agents in Southern City Network?
- What are the key areas of contestation to this construction?
- What is the role of fantasy and desire in this construction?

The analysis is conducted on qualitative interview data and observational data gathered in spring of 2019. I introduce an original research strategy for conducting discourse analysis, in which interview data is nuanced according to fantasmatic registers to generate a discourse formation matrix. This data matrix is then used to re-construct the discourse around the highlighted subject matter of affect in language-use.

The main argument of the discourse analysis is that the discourse on sustainable urban development is constructed around the empty signifier of the local development project, which reverts the inability of arriving at a consensus into a promise-to-come: The harmonious process of developing small towns and rural places attentive to the irreproachable experience of the local, while circumventing the value-laden political struggles necessary to arrive at such developments.

Further, the participants enunciative possibilities within the arena are restricted by a neoliberal consensus-rationale, which has transferred onto the practice of co-creation. Co-creation is here argued to be a contemporary participatory strategy of central institutions in the Southern Norwegian context. Through a series of arguments, I show how the participants cannot articulate a hegemonic project of sustainable urban development, nor contest the practices they contribute to, nor leave the initiative. I argue that the participants narratively mobilize this impossible stalemate as an obstacle in a fantasy in which they do not have to arrive at a consensus because they consider themselves to be fundamentally incompatible with one another.

I argue that this fantasy allows the participants to produce enjoyment in the very inertia of the arena, and that the participants may be invested in preventing any meaningful identifications of sustainable urban development from taking place.

Ultimately, this is a fantasy about not having to politicize the dialogical process taking place in Southern City Network, ironically in the pursuit of escaping the consensus-oriented dialogical process of the arena.

I finish the thesis by giving some final reflections on the implications of seeing antagonism as a condition of possibility, rather than as something to be avoided.

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Part 1

1 Introduction

Meaning is a fickle subject. It has no firm condition, nothing that is completely clear or unambiguous. It is not something that can be grasped if we just find the right tool or technique to distill its content. Instead, meaning is something that emerges through language-use, as we interact with the world and people in it. When we speak to one another, we negotiate the meaningfulness of all manner of things in the world. Yet, the character of meaning is illusive and slippery, prone to our own affections and the influences of others. It continues to slip out of our grasp, appearing as an irresistible fata morgana on the horizon of language, there but never there. It finds its expression in language, yet somehow language-use always fails to signify its exact coordinates, thwarting our best attempts and teasing us to try again. As argued by Gunder (Gunder, 2005), the words that we use can never be precise enough, as signifiers endlessly slip from one meaning to the next. We cannot fully express what we mean, nor can we fully comprehend what another speaker means, as language and meaning can never be united once and for all.

When we try to express the meaning of something, we cast its specter against a myriad of reflective fragments of our own experience; memories, ideas, people, places, histories, and voices by which we have come to understand our own existence. We shift around these pieces, trying to get a reflection of meaning that somehow feels 'right'. We may shift them around according to beliefs and values we hold, to the professional knowledges associated with our discipline, to the cultural norms and behaviors expected of us in society, to the political affiliations we have, and to our relationships both good and bad. The reflection we see will appear as a kind of composite, an illusion of totality, which is experienced as meaningful.

There is an alliance between meaning and language, hellbent on keeping each and every one of us in an endless chase for this impossible union. We turn the unnerving presence of this impossibility into fantasies disarming- and harnessing it to power our assumptions and beliefs about the world and people in it. Our ability to make something meaning-full, revolves around the very ambiguity inherent in language: the lack of any final meaning necessitating the need for language and signification in the first place. Our desire to achieve the impossible union of language- and meaning, is at the very heart of this process. The unconscious become embedded into language-use via affects, casting all manner of experiences,

places, people, and processes into stories that promise the oasis to come. What we may experience as the erratic presence of others trying to change our story, is cast as the very reason for our quest towards the specter of the distance. And as we trudge on through the dunes of miscommunication, this everchanging landscape of language-use comes to motivate our very mode of being; the endless journey for meaning (cf. Daly, 1999). Meaning, as such, is entirely ambiguous. And this ongoing process of trying to lock down the meaning of something via identifications in language, only to fail and try again, is this beautiful messy thing we call *discourse*.

Whether it be the concept of sustainable urban development, the practice of co-creation, or the act of bringing your loved one coffee in the morning, the study of what these things *mean*, is really the study of how they are enacted in language-use.

1.1 Southern City Network – The Quest for Sustainable Urban Development

Questions of strategic urban planning in relation to a conscious and responsible transition towards cleaner and more socially just cities, might be one of the most pressing challenges facing Norwegian rural municipalities in today's planning climate. Socio-economic changes are motivating actors of small towns with limited resources to search for innovative ways of tackling persistent and impending social and environmental issues. These actors increasingly bond together in a variety of experimental partnerships, forums and networks, attempting to develop new knowledge and action in relation to sustainable urban developments (Nyseth, Ringholm, & Agger, 2019). Actors are included in these arenas, based on relevant assets such as "*(...) experience, knowledge, creativity, financial means, courage, organizational capacity, and so forth."* (cf. E. Sørensen & Torfing, 2018, p. 393).

An example of such an arena, can be found in Southern City Network, located in Southern Norway. Southern City Network was initiated by academic staff at the University of Agder in 2016, intended as a strategic project stimulating collaboration on sustainable urban development with public and private actors across the Agder region. The goal was to foster a joint commitment of support and knowledge-sharing across the region's towns and rural communities, and to

identify shared challenges and opportunities that could be utilized to turn local competition into regional cooperation.

Figure 1 - The Agder region (Wikipedia, 2020)

Top administrative officials, politicians, urban planners, researchers, foresight experts, entrepreneurs and local champions all worked together over several years attempting to mobilize the project in various ways. This took the shape of seminars, workshops, city-labs, partner dinners, inspiration-trips, strategy-sessions and a whole slew of smaller meetings held in municipalities across the region. There was a palpable 'buzz' at these events at first. An excitement to see where the arena could go, and how it could serve to solve a variety of challenges facing many of these small towns. Experiences, knowledges, and ideas were shared across sectors, disciplines, and organizations to envision what sustainability could look like in these places, and within long the members had developed a range of proposals for potential projects and activities which the network could facilitate. These ideas ranged from facilitating regeneration processes, developing participatory methods, creating urban living labs, collaborating on regional mobility to hosting political debates and influencing strategic decision making at the regional level. There were ideas of turning old historical buildings into new hot spots, developing mobility indicators for municipalities, collaborating on large-scale research-projects for multi-generational service buildings, for exploring sustainable materials, for testing out circular economic principles and for developing new flood monitoring technologies. There were ideas of exploring aquaponics as a viable business strategy, of using sustainability as a tourism-feature, of advancing sosio-ecological fellowships via guerilja gardening, and of writing a guidebook in participatory strategy.

But there was a problem. While the network was abuzz with activity, the participants were wary of committing financially to the initiative. In addition, they grew increasingly hesitant of moving ahead with any of the many ideas they had co-created. It proved challenging to combine local needs with expert knowledges, research interests and political ambitions in a way that was recognized by all members as meaningful and legitimate. As time passed, they grew weary, frustrated, and skeptical of the initiatives ability to produce results. And there was another issue, which became more evident as time passed: Ever since the inception of the initiative, the participants had attempted to arrive at a consensus for an agenda detailing how Sustainable Urban Development should be understood and acted on within the arena. The initiative had been introduced as a forum for the development of future visions and solutions for a knowledge-based sustainable urban development, but nobody seemed certain as to what exactly this entailed in terms of what they should be focusing on, how they could work towards these goals, who should be doing what or why it was important. And while the project management staged a series of strategy sessions to develop a comprehensive vision for the agenda, including its financial security, the steering group, who ultimately makes the final decisions, would not approve any of the proposals. Neither would the participants themselves.

Curiously, this did not deter them from continuing to engage in activities, on the contrary. In 2019, which was the year I gathered data from the dialogues in the arena, saw more activity than any other year combined. The network started three different city labs and held a total of eleven workshops in these labs. Ten partnership meetings were held in ten coastal towns of the region. There were four seminars, one in collaboration with Sciences Po Rennes in France, two strategy sessions, two partner-ship gatherings and four meetings in the steering group. And, the arena facilitated two research projects, one investigating the communication strategy of the area-and transport plan of a partnering town, and one involving urban gardening as a participatory method for place-identity.

But, as activities grew, so did the discontent. As of August 31st 2019, the arena had yet to deliver on an authoritative agenda backed by the steering board and its participants. And by the end of 2019 the flurry of activity that marked the period of 2018-2019 had died down. The project manager resigned in June 2020 and

the initiative now lies dormant with the university where a few researchers are looking for ways to re-boot it.

What I want to suggest here, is that we can explore what happened in this arena, by investigating how sustainable urban development was enacted in discourse. *Discourse*, refers to the ongoing institution and contestation of social imaginaries in language. It can be thought of as systems of social relations that give objects their meaningfulness, and form what we think of as social reality (Glynos & Howarth, 2007). It denotes processes of language-use which both institutes such objects and contests their being. I will be spending a considerable chunk of this thesis detailing this understanding, and therefore allow myself this most brief description.

1.2 Desire and Conflict

Gunder and Hillier (Gunder & Hillier, 2016) have suggested that planning debate can be investigated by looking at ways it is framed and focused in language. Through language, a variety of actors can arrive at joint commitments to complex societal issues, uniting diverse and often contradictory positions under signifiers such as 'sustainability' (Davidson, 2010b), 'the sustainable city' (Griggs, Hall, Howarth, & Seigneuret, 2017) or 'sustainable urban development' (Scheller & Thörn, 2018). Language as well as desire, is at the heart of these processes of identification, negotiation and storytelling. Signifiers such as 'sustainable urban development' are ideological tools of planning discourse, used to anchor individuals to the gravity well of particular discourses by staging signifiers as 'unassailable objects of desire' within that discourse (Davidson, 2010b, p. 391). When I use the term 'sustainable urban development', or its abbreviation SUD, in this thesis, I refer to this function in discourse as a master signifier; a type of ideological quilting point on a social and political landscape whose meaning-content is invested with the affects of individuals (Hugé, Waas, Dahdouh-Guebas, Koedam, & Block, 2012). Affect is here understood as a mediator between the subjective desires of individuals, and the structures of language attempting to signify meaning (Glynos & Stavrakakis, 2010).

Sustainable urban development is all about conjuring up imaginations of how the future can be made better than the current (Gressgård, 2015). In doing so we are 'projecting visions' (Davidson, 2012) of the future we desire, visions of how

something could or should be and how such ideals might be obtainable (Davidson, 2010a). This is especially true of co-creative arenas attempting to foster joint commitments to societal issues related to SUDs. The common foundation of these dialogical processes, is the ability to construct some shared visions of the future that are perceived as meaningful and relevant to actors (cf. T. Brown, 2016).

Sustainability in discourse and practice has been at the forefront of academia and practice ever since its inception in the 1987 Brundtland report (WCED, 1987), which officially defined and popularized the term 'sustainable development' (T. Brown, 2016; Hugé et al., 2012; Scheller & Thörn, 2018). While the term *sustainability* itself has been coined as the master signifier of urban planning (Davidson, 2010b; Gunder & Hillier, 2016; Hugé et al., 2012), the broad and ambitious agenda often associated with sustainability transitions for urban and rural areas, have proven difficult to translate into locally specific strategies and practices of development. Sustainability transitions are here understood as fundamental societal changes targeting an unsustainable economic system of growth, social inequalities and the escalating climate emergency (Hugé et al., 2012).

While sustainability has permeated cultural consciousness, and seem to have been embraced by all sectors of society (cf. Gressgård, 2015), its holistic appeal has proven to be a bit of a 'trojan horse' for processes of co-creation trying to construct shared visions intended to mobilize action on sustainability transitions (Gunder & Hillier, 2016, p. 141). While there appear to be broad agreement amongst scholars that the ambiguity of sustainability can unify stakeholders around the identification and distribution of some broader goals, while still facilitating the co-existence of a range of different interpretations, many have also pointed out that this same 'nebulousness' (Hugé et al., 2012, p. 188) threatens to de-politicize the dialogical process itself (Lund, 2018). The concern of these authors targets the specific ways that the signifier of sustainability is mobilized in dialogical and deliberative processes as a 'feel good' issue which is hard to refute, denying the legitimacy of more radical alternatives, and significantly narrowing the capability of such processes to explore alternative approaches to planning (Allmendinger & Haughton, 2010, p. 804). And while the ambiguity of sustainability provides the 'linguistic slippage, imprecision and even misrecognition' necessary for a society to function (Gunder, 2006, p. 213), it has also been criticized for concealing the

constitutional, imminent and unavoidable conflictual condition of the social (cf. Marchart, 2018).

It almost goes without saying, that these arenas for co-creation are hotbeds of political activity, whether this is publicly disclosed or expertly concealed and displaced (Allmendinger & Haughton, 2010; J. Brown & Tregidga, 2017; Lund, 2018; MacDonald, 2015; Swyngedouw, 2007). They set the stage for the negotiation of mutually exclusive ideals and values, of political and strategic ambitions, of institutionalized norms and practices, of cultural expectations, and of deeply personal hopes and dreams and disappointments. How such irrefutable differences are navigated and managed in discourse, could mean the difference between developing new and meaningful trajectories for sustainability transitions, or an endless displacement of differences in defense of business-as-usual.

Desire is a key component of these discursive processes of negotiation and conflict. Affects 'flow' through language (McMillan, 2017), and discourses flow as much on actors' affective investments into such imaginaries, as they do on the structural aspects that lock down certain ways of thinking and doing in regards to these processes. This also makes it particularly difficult to generalize features of such dialogical processes, as the conceptualization and implementation of these imaginaries in concrete processes relies heavily on local contextual factors (Voorberg, Bekkers, & Tummers, 2015).

Even so, the success of co-creative initiatives trying to mobilize a joint commitment to action on sustainability issues at the local level, relies on actors ability to understand and navigate these contextually dependent processes of deliberation and contestation (Healey, 2010). And, as Sheller and Thörn (Scheller & Thörn, 2018) have argued, case-specific studies are still needed to understand how the discourses on SUD ‘actually works in and varies between diverse local contexts’ (ibid p. 917).

What I propose in this thesis, is that we can understand the inability of the participants of Southern City Network (hereon SCN) to settle on an agenda for SUD, and the peculiar bustle of activity that attached itself to this inertia, by investigating the way sustainable urban development was enacted in discourse, while paying close attention to the affective investments made by the participants. By analyzing the discourse on SUD among participants of SCN, as it unfolded in the arena during spring of 2019 when their activities reached its peak, I should be

able to offer some perspectives on what might have happened to their quest for a consensus on an agenda for Sustainable Urban Development in the region.

1.3 Body of Literature

Glynos and Howarth (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 202) have argued that case studies can be used in the critical explanation of a constructed object of investigation, by allowing the researcher to expand on the empirical and theoretical understanding of a problematized phenomenon. A case study can be defined as a 'design of inquiry' (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 14) in which the researcher embarks on an in-depth analysis of a particular case such as an event, an activity, an organization, process or one or more individuals. The selection of a case study can provide useful context-specific knowledge that can be linked to a highlighted topic (jf. Ibid). It is, all the same, important to note that while the critical articulations made in regards to this particular case may shed light on discursive features that could apply to other similar contexts, the researcher should be wary of the temptation of overgeneralizing findings as a means of 'depicting, explaining and intervening in social reality' (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 204). Getting closer to the object of study and taking in the complexity and detail of the phenomenon, is one of the ways to highlight this danger whilst at the same time rooting any general theorization in a concrete case.

The constructed object of investigation in this thesis is the discourse on SUD among participants of SCN, in the period of 1.jan 2019 – 30.june 2019. I choose to focus exclusively on speech, and as such exclude other forms of signification such as texts, images and movements. The highlighted subject matter is the role of fantasy and desire in this construction. The problematized phenomenon is the 'active inertia' of SCN. By 'active inertia', I am referring to the high level of activity accompanying the lack of progress on reaching a joint agenda for SUD. The goal of the thesis is to tie the discourse on SUD to this phenomenon, in order to offer some novel insights on this case-specific phenomenon.

As such, I am not studying the co-creative process itself, nor its various institutional, political or plan-strategic implications. Rather, I am interested in the affective dimension of language, the way subjects become drawn to certain signifiers and the discourses that mobilize them. And in particular, I want to find out what SUD might transform into, within these discourses. Will the signifier of

sustainability dominate the discourse, or will there be others who have taken its place? And if so, how do these signifiers become meaningful? What are the key areas of contestation that may erupt, and how do the participants of SCN deal with such potential conflicts?

I am particularly interested in exploring the limits of language. I want to investigate the different ways in which the participants communicate in their efforts to reach some commonly desired goals pertaining to SUD, and I am curious to find how miscommunications are handled in the dialogical processes of the SCN arena.

I have distilled these interests into three research questions that broadly capture what I want to achieve by performing a discourse analysis.

Research Questions

: How is sustainable urban development discursively constructed amongst planning agents in Southern City Network?

: What are the key areas of contestation to this construction?

: What is the role of fantasy and desire in this construction?

I have positioned this object of research within the post-foundational Discourse Theory of Ernesto Laclau. When using the abbreviation PDA, which stands for 'post-foundational discourse analysis', I refer to discourse analysis adhering to Laclau's theoretical corpus. Laclau's conceptualization of articulation as a point of convergence for structural, dynamic and affective dimensions of language, is well suited to investigate the problem statements of this thesis. His theory of discourse and his conceptualization of the social ontology of radical contingency, lends itself well to the study of the ebb and flow of change and continuity in language, as well as to the study of affect as a mediator of subjective desire. It borrows primarily from three traditions of thought: a relational epistemology of meaning, a post-foundational ontology of being and a psychoanalytical conceptualization of the subject of affects. In addition, I draw some supplementary views from authors of

a Lacanian orientation, as well as critical urban scholars. These contributions are mostly used in the discourse analysis.

Since the early 00's there has been an increasing interest in the field of ideological fantasy, which combines perspectives of Ernesto Laclau's political logic of ideology and antagonism, to the Lacanian notions of desire and fantasy (Blanco, Griggs, & Sullivan, 2014; Cederström & Spicer, 2014; McMillan, 2017). Central to these works, is the focus on affect in language-use, as a key component to understanding ideological processes of institution and contestation. As Cederström and Spicer (Cederström & Spicer, 2014, p. 191) have argued, including affect in discourse analysis can enable the researcher to consider why subjects 'gravitate' towards particular signifiers in discourse. And this is my key argument for including some perspectives of a Lacanian-orientation consistent with this new strain of ideological fantasy. While Laclau's conceptualization of discourse is postulated on the notion that language cannot function without affect, I also explore the concepts of desire, fantasy, the Real and enjoyment. These concepts provide the discourse analysis of this thesis with some extra tools to consider how signifiers are capable of both unifying and trapping subjects in their vortex.

Original Contributions

Laclau's Discourse Theory has been criticized for having a methodological deficit. Wagenaar (Wagenaar, 2011) has argued that Discourse Theory is generally considered somewhat inaccessible, because it is hard to operationalize its philosophical and theoretical assumptions into applicable theoretical codes for doing discourse analysis. While the valuable contributions of Glynos and Howarth's Logics of Critical Explanation (Glynos & Howarth, 2007), and Martilla's Post-Foundational Discourse Analysis (Martilla, 2016), have begun to open up various ways of conducting discourse analysis, I contend that even more variation can only contribute to such a venture.

I have therefore chosen to construct a middle-range concept targeting the affective dimension of articulatory practice, operationalized as a fantasmatic narrative, as well as a circular method of articulation for conducting PDA. Together, the middle-range concept and the circular method enable an original research strategy in which qualitative interview data is combined to generate what I call a 'Discourse Formation Matrix': An empirical material consisting of thousands of codes that

represent aspects of a discursive structure. The Discourse Formation Matrix is particularly well suited to chart sedimentations and contestations within a discourse, and for locating key areas of potential conflict that may inflict upon a dialogical process.

These contributions are in no way meant to offer some radical new take on Laclau. Rather, they are deployed as an experimentation in Laclau's spirit: To emancipate myself from any expected ways of doing discourse analysis, and to simply try something else. If this is not the time in life to experiment, then when is?

Aims of the Thesis

The aims of this thesis are multiple.

- To provide novel insights on the problematized phenomenon, as presented in this chapter.
- To develop an original research strategy for conducting PDA.
- I am also generally interested in language-use as a gateway to exploring the potential productivity of conflict as a social ontological condition for all meaning-production. Experimentations with the ambiguity of meaning, and the productivity inherent in this ambiguity, has been a consistent driving force throughout this thesis. While this is not distilled into a specific aim, I consider it a key area for my own future reflections.

Structure of Chapters

In chapter two, I explore the post-foundational discourse theory of Ernesto Laclau, and connect his conceptualization of discourse to the chosen case-study.

In chapter three, I connect the philosophical and theoretical assumptions of Laclau's theory of Discourse, to their methodological coordinates within a broader social sciences field of interpretation. I outline two methodological premises for conducting PDA and present the research strategy for the research project.

In chapter four, I operationalize the theoretical and methodological assumptions outlined in chapters 1 and 2, around some of the key philosophical assumptions of Discourse Theory. I present a circular model for the process of articulation, as well as a middle-range concept intended to nuance data entries analyzed via the circular model, according to fantasmatic registers.

In chapter five, I conduct a re-construction of the discourse on SUD amongst participants of SCN, according to the research strategy outlined in chapter 4. This process takes shape in three steps; Identifying the discursive structure, identifying the discourse, and identifying the discursive regime.

In chapter six, I pull together the chosen case of the thesis, the philosophical and theoretical assumptions of PDA, and the findings of the re-construction of the discourse, to locate fantasy and desire in the construction of sustainable urban development, within the context of Southern City Network. The goal is to conduct a discussion which enables me to answer the research questions in the concluding chapter of the thesis.

In chapter seven, I answer the research questions and reflect on future potential research and experiences gained. I finish with a few closing remarks.

2 Laclau's Post-Foundational Discourse Theory

The aim of this chapter is to introduce the post-foundational discourse theory of Ernesto Laclau, by taking onset in some of the shared conceptions of his work by authors inspired by his approach to discourse. The goal is to connect some of the central tenets of his theory of discourse, to the articulatory practices of the participants of SCN, as they engage in the discursive construction of SUD within the SCN arena. The purpose is to establish the necessary philosophical and theoretical assumptions required to locate the theory's methodological coordinates within a broader social sciences field of interpretation.

In very broad terms, Laclau's conceptualization of discourse refers to a particular conception of the way processes of articulation relationally construct what we think of as social reality, signaling a centrality of meaning to both social formations and the actions of individuals (Glynos & Howarth, 2007). This conception is built on a series of key assumptions about the nature of meaning, being and agency. These assumptions are underpinned by a post-foundational ontological foundation which borrow from three traditions of thought (Marttila, 2016). The first is a conceptualization of a relational epistemology of meaning borrowed from the structuralist tradition, most notably associated with Ferdinand de Saussure. The second is a post-foundational condition conceived as a Heideggerian dialectic of differentiality, inspired by a break with dominant perspectives of ideology in Marxism. The third is the notion of the subject of affects, associated with Lacanian psychoanalysis.

When explored in literature, Discourse Theory is typically split in two or three segments along these lines, all depending on the aims and focus of the writer. Jorgensen and Phillips (Jorgensen & Phillips, 1999), for instance, draw primarily on the structuralist and Marxist tradition in order to give a general introduction to Laclau’s theory of discourse, whereas others such as Glynos and Howarth (Glynos & Howarth, 2007) or Marchart (Marchart, 2018) insist on the primacy of all three traditions in order to grapple with the concepts of change and continuity within a social of radical contingency. The different focus of PDA writers lie in the importance ascribed to different aspects of these traditions, and whether the aim is, for instance, a historically oriented introduction to the developments of Discourse Theory (cf. D. R. Howarth, 2000), the category of Hegemony as a political project (cf. Thomassen, 2016), Politics and democracy (cf. Stengel &

Nabers, 2019), Populism as a thematic (cf. Stavrakakis, 2004), overall engagement with Laclau's thinking (cf. Critchley & Marchart, 2012), critical engagement with specific terminology (Zicman de Barros, 2020), ontological considerations on the categories of the political (cf. Marchart, 2007), empirical case studies (Griggs & Howarth, 2016; Mert, 2015) methodological variations (cf. Glynos & Howarth, 2007; Jacobs, 2018; Remling, 2018) or methodological rigor in light of a relational epistemology (cf. Marttila, 2019).

This thesis mostly positions itself in the latter discussion concerning methodological variation and rigor. But regardless of this focus, there are some common conceptions of Laclau's approach to language and the social that we can use as a starting point to formulate a PDA-inspired method of discourse analysis highlighting affect in language-use.

It is customary to describe Laclau's *discourse* as a social and political construction that establishes a system of social relations between elements which provides an object's social meaningfulness, as well as subject positions that individuals can identify with (cf. D. Howarth & Stavrakakis, 2000). This construction takes place through the articulatory practice of individuals who string together elements in differential arrangements, so that the identity of the elements are modified as a result (Jorgensen & Phillips, 1999). These chains are called equivalential chains (ibid). Particular elements are strung together in particular ways to signify meaning, where signifiers work as focal points holding together the discursive structure that emerge through this activity. These systems of strings are described as relational structures which in various degrees of sedimentation organize social life by granting an illusory objectivity to the social, enabling the identification of objects, subjects and actions (ibid). The outcome of these articulatory practices is referred to as a meaningful totality, a totality often designated as identity or simply meaning (ibid).

Relating this to SUD, we could say that the meaning of SUD relies on the articulatory practices of the participants of SCN, if we consider them to be social subjects of the discourse on SUD. When the participants of SCN relate certain ideals, values, threats, strategies, positions and goals to SUD, they construct its meaning as a system of fixations of all these elements combined (cf. Laclau, 1990). The discourse on SUD is going to be a discursively constructed system of relations consisting of a myriad of such identifications, acting much like a roadmap by

which to stage activities and proposals, making some arguments and perspectives seem more relevant and meaningful than others.

According to Stavrakakis (Stavrakakis, 2000) we can think of the discursive in Laclau's work as a theoretical horizon which constitutes the being of objects, that is; their social meaningfulness. While physical objects exist in the world, their meaning is afforded by this horizon. In such a conception of meaning there is no separation between the discursive and non-discursive meaningfulness of any object, whether it is a rock, a policy, an organization, a practice, or the subject himself; all objects become objects of discourse, their meaning mediated through social practices that bring about their being (ibid). Laclau thus treats object and subject identity equally in this regard; and subjects depend on these systems of meaning in order to perform acts of identification for both their own subject identity and that of object identity vis-à-vis the relational structure (D. R. Howarth, 2000; Jorgensen & Phillips, 1999). In Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, Laclau and Mouffe employed an understanding of identification largely inspired by Althusser's theory of interpellation, in which subjects are cast into particular discursive positions through language-use (Jorgensen & Phillips, 1999). If the subject responds to the positions that others interpellate him into, he will become a subject of a discourse which entail a set of expectations attached to his behavior.

Relating this to the discourse on SUD, we could say that the perceived meaningfulness of certain activities and strategies, formal policies, professional disciplines or physical places are relationally constructed positions within the discourse on SUD. Perceptions of what individuals should be doing in the arena, and how the participants see their own role in these activities, will also depend on this structure. If participants follow the perceived expectations of the social group, which adheres to the characteristics of the discourse, they can be said to become subjects of that discourse.

Meaning, as such, is grounded in its 'discourse-generating and discourse-defining meaningfulness' (Marttila, 2016, p. 22). Furthermore, an objects meaningfulness can only originate from the social practices that generate and justify such meaningfulness (ibid). The meaning of SUD can only originate from the practices of social subjects as they re-produce it via language-use.

Being able to both perceive and act on issues in relation to SUD therefore requires that the participants of SCN actively partake in constructing its meaningfulness

through activities taking place in the arena. In other words, there can be no 'objective' meaning transcending these social structures, as objectivity is given by the very same structures it generates through articulatory practice. Arguments of neutrality and objectivity on SUD, will find their reason and rationality in the very same discourse they are influenced by and produce. Any claim to neutrality, any spirited argument for what is morally just or ethically sound, any exasperated explanation for the primacy of economic viability, must be understood to get its discursive capacity from the ongoing articulatory practices of the subjects who identify with the discourse. What the participants, either individually or collectively, claim to be realistic, reasonable, probable, or feasible, will be a result of the discursive practice that enables both perceptions and actions on issues related to SUD, through the participants active participation in constructing its meaningfulness.

In Laclau's conceptualization of discourse, such meaningfulness is, however, never fully constituted. The social structures generated by social practices are considered incomplete as the practices of language-use can never fully capture meaning but only represent it (Stavrakakis, 2007b). Therefore, subjects will be perpetually driven to attempt to re-establish a fullness of meaning through the articulatory practice simultaneously thwarting and enabling their chase. But as they engage in language-use, the elusive fullness of meaning will slip through the cracks as they fail to fully signify that which is signified by the sign (Laclau, 2005).

Participants of the SCN arena will be motivated to continue to try to lock down the meaning of SUD, via the very same process of language-use that ultimately makes such an act impossible. There will always be an excess of meaning denying the very objectivity of any given structural system. This implies that ultimate suture of meaning is impossible (ibid). The very articulatory process of meaning-making, which bring objects into being and simultaneously keeps them from being fully constituted, is what is referred to with Laclau's term *discourse*.

Most PDA-inspired authors introduce Laclau's Lacanian-inspired concept of the split subject at this point, with diligent reference to the Lacanian influence in Laclau's theory. I will not cover all the affinities between the two theories presented in this work, but rather focus on a few of the key crossover concepts derived from Lacan's original oeuvre, such as the subject of affects and fantasy as a mediator of subjective desire. Several PDA authors have used this connection of

the Lacanian subject of affects in Laclau's work, to combine a Lacanian reading of fantasy with Laclau's political logic of ideology (Blanco et al., 2014; Daly, 1999; Glynos, 2008; Glynos & Howarth, 2007; Gressgård, 2015; Marttila, 2016; McMillan, 2017; Zicman de Barros, 2020). They tend to draw their Lacanian inspirations primarily from authors associated with the Lacanian left (cf. Stavrakakis, 2007a), such as Zizek (Žižek, 2007, 2012) Badiou (Badiou, 2019) and Stavrakakis (Stavrakakis, 1999, 2007b). In these writings, fantasies are often described as a type of narrative, or logic, that provides the subject with a sense of consistency to the experience of social reality, structuring the subjects enjoyment (cf. Glynos & Howarth, 2007). The connection to Laclau's theory of discourse is made primarily by arguing that fantasy can attest for the way ideology grips subjects (cf. Glynos, 2001; cf. McMillan, 2017).

When I use some of the Lacanian concepts derived from these Lacanian-inspired PDA materials, I do not intend to trace the Lacanian concepts back to the source 'unmediated'. Admittedly, that is a work of several years or decades of reading and training in the clinical setting. If we take a step back from the framework of PDA, there are also, at least, three commonly identified approaches to Lacan (Eyers, 2012): Clinical Lacan (cf. Fink, 1995; cf. Neill, 2011), Philosophical Lacan (cf. Eyers, 2012) and works of a Lacanian orientation (cf. Davidson, 2012; cf. Glynos, 2008; cf. Glynos, 2011; Gunder & Hillier, 2016; cf. Swyngedouw, 2018). The approach to fantasy and desire in this thesis is situated within the latter. Occasionally I draw on key interpreters of Lacan from the other approaches, strictly to contextualize or clarify some perspectives, where doing so seems fruitful to the goals and purpose of this thesis.

Zicman de Barros (Zicman de Barros, 2020) have argued that the Lacanian subject, as presented in Laclau's work, is understood to be marked by a fundamental lack, his own subject identity always-already split as his identity can only be perceived through the incomplete structures of meaning available to him. The Lacanian concept of the subject starts with an idea of the way an individual's conscious ego emerges in the separation from his mother in infancy (Zicman de Barros, 2020). At first, the infant child lives in a symbiosis with his mother, ‘independent of language and consciousness’ (ibid, p.6). All his needs are met, and he lives in a sense of completeness, of full enjoyment. As the mother inevitably begins to withdraw from this symbiosis, he is traumatized by the experience. He is forced to begin to express his needs through language, and language transforms his needs

into articulated demands. This transformation is a process of ‘symbolic castration’ in which "*(...) the demands of the body are separated from the means of fulfilling them*" (McMillan, 2017, p. 215). As the child attempts to express his bodily desires in symbolic form, desire becomes tethered to language-use.

There is, however, nothing in language that can fulfill the bodily desire and restore the wholeness lost in infancy, because this wholeness is something beyond language (ibid). Ultimately, it is the individuals need to be loved, which is transformed into demands of its likeness (McMillan, 2017). But language-use can only provide a restorative promise, it can never return the subject to that state of pre-language. While the sensation of wholeness is severed, the subject will retrospectively idolize the memory of that experience of full enjoyment, and continue to chase it (Zicman de Barros, 2020). This chase involves the identification with symbolic images of who and what he is, offering him prospective constructs that promises this desired return to fullness.

It is within this symbolic castration that the child realizes he is something else than the Other. While the child will internalize the images of identity provided to him by discourse, he will never be able to fully realize that original wholeness lost. Every identity available to him will, through its realization in language, ultimately be experienced as ‘not-quite-enough' (McMillan, 2017, p. 215). This experience of lack and the memory of wholeness, resides in the individual's unconscious which is inaccessible in language, and the subject's conscious ego therefore becomes a self-construct created in language. At this point, the subject as a ‘thinking and acting social agent’ (Marttila, 2019, p. 29) comes to exist in the identification with these particular images of his beingness. As he continues to fail in signifying the signified of his own identity, he remains split and in chase of his illusive self (Glynos & Stavrakakis, 2004). In Laclau's conceptualization, discourses offer this promise of fullness by letting the subject mediate his desire for wholeness through identifications with discursive structure. By participating in discourses, the subject gets a sense of what the world is 'truly' like and a sense of who he is, a sense of meaning and purpose.

Relating this to the chosen case-study of this thesis, we could say that the discourse on SUD will always be marked by this aspect of the subject's lack, driving participants to perform acts of identifications according to its characteristics, which can offer that almost-there wholeness. They will attempt to give the social

group of the arena what they think is wanted and required of them, speaking the right language, supporting the right things, behaving according to the unspoken norms and rules of the co-creative practice. And through such identifications they will gain a sense of affirmation of their belonging in the group, a sense of purpose in what they are doing. Engaging in these articulatory practices will thus provide a certain relief for the participants, even if the discourse ultimately cannot provide them with the closure they seek. In replacement, the discourse allows them a sense of being in the right place, doing the right thing, a sense that something 'fits', even if they experience that some aspects of the dialogue taking place during activities are uncomfortable, frustrating or unnerving. If, for instance, participants continue to show up to arena activities despite open verbal conflicts, it may suggest that the discourse, on some level, is offering means of identification that incorporate these very same conflicts into the production of their enjoyment. Such an adherence to the expectations associated with the discourse, could suggest that such contestation in itself also plays into the promise of fullness in what they are doing, a meaning in the lack of meaning, making the activities worthwhile doing. In responding to the characteristics of the discourse, the participants become subjects of that discourse, and with it their enjoyment becomes tied to the practices afforded by the discourse and other participants adhering to it.

The Lacanian-inspired subject of affects in Laclau's work, indicates that there is a separation in his theory between subject identity as brought into being through the signifying chain of language-use, and *the* subject as something beyond the discursive structure, ever barred from language (cf. Glynos & Stavrakakis, 2004). We can borrow a complimentary perspective here from a more clinically oriented Lacanian; Bruce Fink (Fink, 1995). Fink (ibid) argues that there is an ongoing tension[1] between that of the ego, the exposed conscious side, seeking identification amongst other social subjects via language-use, and that which is referred to as the unconscious subject which only really manifests itself as an ephemeral interruption of something alien which is immediately extinguished upon being signified[2] (cf. Fink, 1995). Biglieri and Perelló (Biglieri & Perelló, 2016) has similarly argued that *the* subject is *"(...) imaginarily alienated in the ego thanks to the symbolic support provided by significant others."* (Biglieri & Perelló, 2016, p. 2). When using the term 'the subject' in this thesis, I primarily refer to that of the conscious ego.

The subject mediates his desire for fullness through language-use, by constructing the impossible tension, between unconscious desire and the conscious ego structured in language, into a type of fantasy that can make this impossible tension bearable (McMillan, 2017). Fantasy can here be understood as a symbolic expression which mediate subjective desire to produce enjoyment in the lack of wholeness. Glynos and Stavrakakis (Glynos & Stavrakakis, 2010) have argued that, from a Laclauian point of view, chains of signification become imbued with the affective dimension of the unconscious, in such a way that articulatory practice is invested with a type of cathectic force. This force stabilizes discursive structures and motivates the subject's mode of being, his enjoyment, in these operations. This affective investment into the perpetually differentiated construction of the incompleteness of meaning, is what is understood as *affect* in Laclau's work. By positioning affect as a mediating operation between *the* subject and constructions of identity, Laclau argues that language does not function without affect, or rather; that all language-use becomes imbued with affect (cf. Laclau, 2004). Fantasies are as much part of structuring what we think of as social reality as they are illusions glossing over the impossibility of such an object (Giovanni et al.).

Relating this to the discourse on SUD, we could say that any argument or proposal put forth by participants of the arena, is going to be invested with subjective affects. There can be no identifications of how certain processes, concepts or plans should be understood, without the individual and collective construction of fantasies embedded into these very same identifications. These fantasies are going to rely on the discursive structure, making some acts seem more suited to deal with any potential interruptions that could threaten the participants access to this forecourt of the space of identifications, and thus threaten their enjoyment. Fantasies, with their restorative promise of wholeness, are what protects participants from being traumatized by the inherent instability of the discourse (Zicman de Barros, 2020).

Fantasies thus not only aid in the mediation of the subjects desire, but become involved with the mobilization, naturalization and stabilization of contested discourse formations (Glynos & Howarth, 2007). When elements are articulated to multiple equivalential chains that offer different and at times contradictory meanings, it may result in rivaling hegemonic frontiers within the discourse (Thomassen, 2005). Rivaling hegemonic frontiers can be understood as equivalential chains sharing one or more floating signifiers whose meaning has

become suspended (ibid). The ongoing attempts of restoring the meaning of these floating signifiers is what is typically referred to in writings inspired by PDA as a 'battle of meaning' (cf. Laclau & Mouffe, 1985) in which individuals attempt to discursively reinstate the meaning of something within a contingent discursive terrain. Discourse formations may contain several rivaling hegemonic frontiers, duking it out under the surface of a dominant hegemonic regime (Jorgensen & Phillips, 1999). But these impossible tensions can be temporarily smoothed over via collective fantasies, driven by the subject's experience of lack and enabled by the structures of collective discursive practice (Zicman de Barros, 2020).

Some writers3 introduce a separation at this point, between the actions of the individual and that of collective practices or collective mobilization, designating slightly different theoretical terms and analytical codes to the two. Regardless of this separation, meaning in both cases is tied to discursive practice, rather than to the material or artificial objects they inscribe or the systems they institute. While the discursive practice may lead to a type of discursive materialization which restricts the enunciative possibilities of the subject (cf. Marttila, 2019) most authors seem to agree that the meaning-making process is tied to the actual practice, or action, of the subject.

Relating this to the discourse on SUD, we could argue that while the discourse on SUD may transfer onto some collectively established rules and practices associated with the arena in time, the characteristic of this practice is still discursively constructed and enabled by the ongoing articulations of the participants during activities. In other words, the discourse on SUD, and the identifications it enables, temporarily emerges as affectively mediated moments of closure, whose perceived clarity depends on both structural, dynamic and affective aspects of language-use (cf. Griggs et al., 2017).

Following this, meaning itself can be said to hold an actionable quality4 when viewed in Laclau's work, as any act of signification can be considered an articulation which brings objects into being (cf. Marchart, 2014; cf. Stengel & Nabers, 2019; Wagenaar, 2011). It is given, from this, that articulatory practices give both discourses and meaning an inherently unstable character, and this instability leads to a conceptualization of the social as undecidable and contingent (Marchart, 2014). Contingency here refers to the previous argument that no meaning can be entirely fixed, as structures of meaning are in a constant state of

sliding as individuals perpetually signify objects in new ways to restore meaning. Therefore, Laclau argues that all identity formation, all meaning, is ultimately impossible (cf. Laclau, 2005), it is the 'basic possibility for not-being' (Hansen, 2014 p. 286).

Relating this to the discourse on SUD, the participants of SCN will never be able to reach a unanimous agreement on the meaning of SUD, as this perceived totality is going to be in constant evolution through their discursive practices. No ultimate, once and for all, closure can be achieved, and this impossibility, in itself, is what enables the temporary closure through which SUD can still be experienced as a meaningful totality (cf. Marchart, 2018).

Because discourse in Laclau's work appear as the modus operandi of the social (cf. Marchart, 2014), many PDA-inspired writers tend to designate the social as discursive, followed by a definition of the political as relating either to the contestation and institution of political identities within the social (cf. Hansen, 2013), or as the political as a more fundamental power at play in meaning-making (Marchart, 2018). These disagreements apart, all the presented authors here embrace Laclau's idea of a heterogeneity of the social, in which the absence of a common space of representation introduces the idea of a multiple social that at any time can inflict upon a sedimented discursive structure, dislocating its parts (Marchart, 2014).

In Laclau's conceptualization, this understanding of meaning-making as a dynamic process brings about two dilemmas of representation. Firstly, while a written text can be studied for its culturally and historically specific meaning, it is the act of reading in itself that brings a text into being as meaningful according to the relational structures creatively applied by the reader (cf. Neill, 2013; cf. Wagenaar, 2011). Representations, such as text, can never represent the actual meanings of the writer since language cannot fully capture the meanings intended by the author, nor can it be fully grasped by the reader. While subjects cannot hope to understand one another completely, they are left with the option to try anyway.

Relating this to the discourse on SUD, the participants will not be able to fully express the meaning of SUD, nor fully perceive other's attempts at locking down this meaning. This implies that different topics, places, people, plans and processes may be constructed into entirely different meanings as different people articulate them. They are going to constantly miscommunicate and misunderstand each

other. Even so, the illusion of meaning is realized in the very failure to lock down meaning, and therefore these moments of attempted closure are all they got to work with.

The second dilemma, refers to what Laclau considered a more fundamental and serious issue of representation; An individual can only perform an act of identification vis-à-vis a collectively constructed structure of meaning, if they have access to the discourse (Laclau, 2005). Some PDA-inspired writers interested in the democratic legitimacy of development processes, focus on marginalized groups in society, typically showing how the lack of representation and possibilities of identification with dominant discourses both exclude these groups from decision making processes, but also how such groups can subvert the structures of meaning through the articulation of counter-hegemonic projects (cf. Jorgensen & Phillips, 1999). A counter-hegemonic project can be understood as a social project, in which a group of individuals with different demands shift the space of representation in their favor by formulating a hegemonic intervention that can transcend the differences in their demands (Hansen & Sonnichsen, 2014). Such is the risk of experimental arenas, they may attempt to be inclusive, but a selection of participants must necessarily be made, excluding potentially rightful stakeholders from the process. There is no way to avoid such an exterior that may one day mobilize to disrupt the discourse.

Relating this to the discourse on SUD, the participants may intend for the arena to be open to stakeholders from all sectors and disciplines, but in practical terms this may become difficult once decisions are made in transferring visions of SUD onto actual local processes. Here, the participants will inevitably foreclose alternative meanings as particular projects or processes move along, and thus risk foregrounding the constitutive failure of SUD to ever reach a full identity (cf. Gressgård, 2015), leaving it open to criticism, protests and pushbacks from the periphery.

In conclusion, Laclau's conceptualization of discourse, is one always involved in the active institution and contestation of systems of relations through the articulatory practices of individuals, in a radically contingent social terrain (D. Howarth & Stavrakakis, 2000; Jorgensen & Phillips, 1999). Conflict is here considered a permanent condition of the social, due to the always present aspect of

affect in language-use. The subject does not say what he means, he does what he means.

Within this framework, all acts of signification become a representation of the individual's horizon of intelligibility; a representation which will always be different from the meaning-structures of the individual who creatively interprets these acts and in turn acts on them. And so, the wheel of meaning-making turns. The subject, or social group, can never fully succeed, and it is precisely these failing attempts of closing down the meaning of SUD via language-use that provide a viable point of entry for doing discourse analysis.

Now, there is some dispute within these external accounts as to how this navigation of the social takes place, and without going in depth here it can be summarized as two diverging perspectives on the position of antagonism and the political in Laclau's theory of the ontology of the social (M. Devenney, 2016; cf. Hansen, 2013; Roskamm, 2014; cf. Thomassen, 2005). I will not turn to the discussion here, save to say that I follow the position of Marchart (Marchart, 2018) who identify Laclau's take on the political to be coterminous with that of a Heideggerian difference as différance. Antagonism is here returned5 to an ontological position of antagonism-as-being, its ontic counterpart of an antagonism used to describe particular discursive inscriptions of political struggle and confrontation.

There are also some discrepancies in the use of psychoanalytical terminology and Lacanian inspirations. Most authors apply the Lacanian influence sparingly, save for those who have engaged with the notion of ideological fantasy. It also varies where Lacan is injected into the treatise's, as if the philosophy on desire and the unconscious represents some kind of radioactive matter that must be carefully isolated to minimize risk of contamination to the adjoined content. This is mostly done by a selective use of the concept of the decentered or split subject and that of affect.

For now, let us contend that discourse is not an entirely unambiguous term within PDA, as specifications of the nature of antagonism, the political as well as the role of the affective dimension influences how the researcher finetunes terminology vis-à-vis the operationalization of theoretical assumptions into an applicable method for doing discourse analysis.

In this chapter I have introduced the post-foundational discourse theory of Ernesto Laclau, by taking onset in some of the shared conceptions of his work by authors inspired by his approach to discourse and meaning. I have argued that the meaning of SUD can never be fully sutured, due to the always presence of affect mediating subjective desire in language-use. Therefore, the participants of SCN will endlessly miscommunicate with one another, as they respond to this constitutive lack of any ultimate final meaning. Further, I argued that participants stage this sliding of meaning into fantasies which promise of a fullness of meaning to come.

This impossibility in itself enables the temporary closures through which SUD can be experienced as a meaningful totality (cf. Marchart, 2018). In these temporary closures, the participants will inevitably select some criteria over others, foreclosing alternative meanings and potentially foregrounding the constitutive failure of SUD to reach a full identity (cf. Gressgård, 2015). The discourse on SUD, is therefore going to temporarily emerge as affectively mediated moments of closure, whose perceived clarity depends on both structural, dynamic and affective aspects of language-use (cf. Griggs et al., 2017).

I will now move on to establish a research framework towards answering the thesis research questions, by connecting the philosophical and theoretical assumptions of PDA to their methodological coordinates within a broader social sciences field of interpretation.

3 Research Framework

The aim of this chapter is to connect the philosophical and theoretical assumptions of PDA, as elaborated on in the chapter 2, to their methodological coordinates within a broader social sciences field of interpretation. The goal is to develop a research strategy that connects PDA-inspired discourse analysis to the criteria and conditions of the specified case of SUD within the context of SCN. The purpose is to lay a foundation from which to design a method of analysis for the empirical data gathered via methods specified in this chapter.

In chapter 2 I introduced the core theoretical tenets of Discourse Theory as elaborated by other PDA authors. I start this chapter by locating PDA within the broader field of qualitative science approaches to doing interpretive analysis, and outline two methodological premises for doing discourse analysis within a PDA-inspired approach. Following this I chose a set of data collection methods and establish a tentative context for the analysis. I then present the data collection methods and finish the chapter by covering some formalities tied to project.

3.1 Qualitative Science and Discourse Theory

Wagenaar (Wagenaar, 2011) has argued on the importance of being philosophically informed about the key assumptions underpinning any theory of meaning and interpretation, as it is of crucial importance vis-à-vis the critical- and ethical capacity of any interpretive approach.

Theories of discourse and scientific approaches to doing discourse analysis are interpretive approaches that belong under the umbrella of qualitative methods in scientific inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Qualitative methods are typically engaged with the analysis of texts, words, pictures, videos, observations or conversations, in the pursuit of describing and questioning social phenomenon (ibid). Within these methods, discourse, like meaning, is open to several interpretations. While many interpretive approaches to discourse share some philosophical cornerstones, they separate in their epistemological and methodological approaches to the interpretation of meaning.

Laclau's Discourse Theory should therefore be positioned within this vast field of discourse theoretical approaches to interpretation, before a research framework can be constructed.

Torfing (Torfing, 2005), and Howarth (D. R. Howarth, 2000) have both argued that theories of discourse have gone through three significant shifts or generations. From a linguistic bias focusing primarily on the semantic aspects of texts against context, to the reciprocal relational dependences between linguistic practices and their wider sociohistorical conditions, to the notion that all social phenomena are discursively inscribed and discourse refers to the social as such (ibid). Martilla (Marttila, 2016) argues, in reading the field on these developments, that Laclau's discourse theory *"(...) constitutes a distinctive developmental stage in the general "genealogy" of (post-) structuralist social theory"* (ibid p. 21). By following the examples of Culler (cf. Culler, 1982) and Frank (cf. Frank, 1985) he distinguishes the two first shifts as 'weak' types of structuralist thought, in that they only *partially* conceive of social meaningful reality as originating from the relations between meaning-conveying objects. They focus on non-discursive cultural codes, social norms, and rules which inflict on these relations, and therefore assume that they ultimately grant objects with meaning. Martilla looks to Frank (ibid) and Said (Said, 1983) when he places both Foucault's discourse theory as well as Geertz' theory of culture in this category.

In contrast, the third shift, what is commonly referred to as post-structuralist, can be characterized as 'strong' in that proponents of this field refer solely to the relational structure of discourse to produce the meaningfulness of objects. Martilla references and positions Lacan's psychoanalytical theory of social identity (Lacan, 1977a, 1977b), Derrida's theory of deconstruction (Derrida, 1967), Luhmann's theory of social systems (Luhmann, 1995) and Laclau's Discourse Theory within this category. We can nuance this third shift even further. Marchart (Marchart, 2007) has argued that despite the common association between Discourse Theory and post-structuralism, Laclau's theory cannot be said to be post-structural, as Laclau has not abandoned the notion of a relational ontology of meaning. On the contrary, Laclau rejects the idea that there can be some kind of foundational principle of being whose meaning is not determined by discourse, as discourse constitutes the condition of possibility for the creation of such principles in the first place (Marchart, 2007). Therefore, he argues, Laclau's contributions should be

considered a post-foundational theory of discourse analysis, rather than a post-structural discourse theory (ibid).

This positioning of Laclau's conceptualization of a post-foundational theory of discourse analysis gives us a starting point for considering some methodological premises for constructing a research strategy. To this end, Martilla (Marttila, 2016) has argued that we can conceptualize two methodological premises for doing PDA research: Second-order hermeneutics and methodological holism. Both of these are relevant to this project.

3.1.1 Second-Order Hermeneutics

Martilla (Marttila, 2016) has argued that the post-foundational relational philosophy of PDA is comparable to the methodological position of second-order hermeneutics. Hermeneutics, as a word, refers to theories and methods of interpretation of texts (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018). Hermeneutics deals with how we go about determining the meaning of something. Originally developed for the interpretation of biblical texts, hermeneutics has over time evolved to cover the interpretation of all forms of communication, including semiotics and the non-verbal (ibid).

Second-order hermeneutics was a development in hermeneutics that primarily sprung out of Heidegger's critique of the phenomenological methodological position of Husserl (Wagenaar, 2011). Briefly told, the first order hermeneutics, or 'traditional' hermeneutics, was postulated on the idea that an individual's own experience determined the meaning of any given object, and that the meanings of any object therefore could be found with the originator of texts and actions (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018; Wagenaar, 2011). The interpreter's foremost job was the attempt of putting herself in the original author or agents place, in order to rediscover the original intents of the text. This could be done by rendering visibility to the contexts and experiences of the original author, and the interpretive process was based on the assumption that the original authors intensions were completely irrefutable and therefore possible to discover by a process of deep description (ibid). Second order hermeneutics puts this idea of full clarity into question, arguing that the subject himself cannot fully understand his own enunciative possibilities, and therefore there is no original intent that can be uncovered through

interpretive analysis. The job of the interpreter becomes the uncovering of different aspects of a text, as there is no original truthful interpretation to be found (ibid).

The meaning of SUD doesn't lie with the participants of SCN, nor the researcher attempting to discover these meanings, but rather emerges out of the ongoing practices of individuals as they engage with the world and other people in it. Meaning, as it were, emerges in the supra-subjective; in the constant back and forth interactions with the world as the subject acts upon its many features, interprets its responses, and re-acts, deepening his understanding of something (Marttila, 2015; Wagenaar, 2011). This is not to say that PDA inspired interpretive approaches should consider the subjective dimension to come second to the collective, but rather that the subjective is *in* the collective, as the collective is perceived and acted upon through the subjective enactment of its characteristics (Marchart, 2014)[6]. There is no one subjective truth about SUD that can be extracted from the participants of SCN, and nonetheless the researcher must take onset in the participants articulations, in this project their spoken words, in order to identify aspects of this collective meaning-making.

As Marttila (Marttila, 2015) discusses, via his reading of Heidegger, the subject is 'thrown' into the world, and the epistemological therefore consists of analyzing what this thrownness, the reciprocal relation between the discursive and the articulatory, consists off. This reciprocal relationship of preunderstanding and understanding, as illustrated by the hermeneutic circle[7], constitutes the first methodological premise of PDA:

> *"This distinction between the objective – i.e., "discursive"-constitution of the social meaningfulness of objects, and the subjective- i.e. "articulatory"-self-appropriation of the discursively defined meanings of objects-opens up the methodological condition of possibility to start searching for context-specific forms and processes of the world's discursive structuration (p.58). [17]"*
>
> (Marttila, 2015, p. 13).

In this project, the analytical method will be tailored to illuminate aspects of this reciprocity as it unfolds between participants, via the subject's self-understandings, acknowledging that the same process is what occurs when the researcher engages with empirical data. The method takes aim at identifying collective patterns of articulatory practice, by studying the individual articulatory practices of the

participants. The meaning of the collective practices cannot be understood without careful attention to the way individual perspectives are articulated.

Wagenaar (Wagenaar, 2011) has argued that we can conceptualize two distinctive logics of social inquiry within the second order hermeneutic approaches to the interpretation of meaning: Discursive approaches and dialogical approaches. These two approaches rely on two different perceptions of how meaning come about through social configurations[8]. The core distinction between them, is their conceptualization of how to go beyond the self-understandings of the individuals under study. In the dialogical approaches, the interpreter goes on a journey together with the study-object, asking questions of the text and listening to it in a dialogical form (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018). In the discursive approaches, the interpreter attempts to break off from the subjects self-conceptions, viewing them as contingent outcomes of the discourses and non-linguistic materialities produced by discursive regimes such as the practices, institutions and subject roles that guide and restrict the subjects enunciative possibilities, but are more or less unconscious to the social subject himself (Marttila, 2015). To achieve such an epistemological break, the interpreter must acknowledge that she will always be biased, as she too is trapped in her own conception of the world, and the enunciative possibilities afforded to her by her own horizon of intelligibility.

3.1.2 Methodological Holism

Methodological holism constitutes the second methodological premise for doing PDA research, and concerns ways of thinking about methodology that deal with the researcher's epistemic bias when conducting empirical research from within a PDA-inspired framework.

As we saw in chapter 3.1.1, PDA-inspired research strategies to interpretation are postulated on the idea that the researcher is unable to transcend her own horizon of intelligibility. This has led to a critique of PDA as suffering from a descriptive deficit (cf. Wagenaar, 2011); for how can a researcher make any kind of claims about the world from within a theoretical framework that argues that such claims in themselves are subjective, incomplete and temporary? And what does this mean for the critical and normative capacity of such an approach?

There are two ways of thinking about this problematic. The first is to dispel the idea that a research framework can, in any way, make a claim to objectivity. Marttila (Marttila, 2015) has argued that when viewed through a PDA lens, any critique of the biased character of second-order hermeneutics can be seen as yet another equally biased conception of the nature of knowledge. From within a PDA theoretical framework, the interpretative method applied is considered to be the researchers 'creative process' (cf. Neill, 2013) its framework entirely self-referential. Alternative approaches to the meaning of SUD would equally have to rely on a series of assumptions about the world and how to extract knowledge from it, framing and guiding the perceptions and articulations of the researcher.

The answer to this problematic, Martilla (Marttila, 2016) suggests, is not to fight the bias but instead to embrace the notion that we all have a skewed perception. The researcher can analyze her own bias by adopting a holistic approach to designing a research strategy and method of analysis, in which she is conscious of the choices, definitions and interpretations of the empirical objects she constructs. The researcher should, in this process, make explicit the way theoretical propositions are translated into corresponding analytical concepts and categories (Ryen, 2002). As we saw in chapter 3.1.1, the hermeneutic circle of second-order hermeneutics, implies that the interpretation of meaning is something more than just the sum of its parts. It is a whole that emerges through the inferral between smaller and larger units of meaning, in which meaning is the unique and contingent composition of the whole. If you change some of these parts, the meaning of the whole will also change. Meaning is holistic, in a sense.

This idea of methodological holism and transparency should also apply to the design of a method. The method of interpretation should strive to show not only the parts of a phenomenon but the particular wholes these parts help to establish in order to infer meaning from this whole. In addition to this idea of meaning as derived from a whole of parts, comes the social ontological conception of Laclau in which meaning is a temporary construction within a radically contingent terrain. The meaning of SUD is going to be constructed through a myriad of smaller units entering into equivalence and becoming sedimented, within a contingent terrain that could at any time inflict upon the structure, potentially changing the meaning of SUD. Without studying these sedimentations, as they emerge against an unstable discursive terrain, we cannot hope to understand any aspect of what SUD, as an attempted whole, is to the participants of SCN. And even when we do, this

too will be nothing more but a distorted proposition at the behest of the researcher, temporary at best.

Through such a holistic approach, the researcher can achieve an epistemological break from social subjects' conscious self-conceptions, as the goal becomes not the uncovering of an underlying truth but the uncovering of different aspects of a text (Østbye, Helland, Knapskog, & Larsen, 2013). Rather than thinking of how the researcher illuminates some hidden truth about the meaning of SUD within the discourse that takes place among participants in SCN, the researcher constructs a particular field of view to highlight something that she wants you, the reader, to consider. In this case, the reader's attention is directed to the mediating role of affect in language-use, stabilizing and naturalizing the discourse on SUD within the chosen context of SCN.

And to this end, the consistency between theoretical and empirical codes become crucial. Empirical codes are developed through the analytical process, reflecting the characteristics of the phenomenon under investigation, whereas theoretical codes are derived from the philosophical and theoretical framework, and introduced to reflect on the empirical features of a phenomenon (Marttila, 2016). Empirical codes could be things like 'economic growth', 'climate and environment' and 'multistakeholder dialogue', whereas theoretical codes could be things like 'element', 'moment' and 'signifier'. This is, however, not enough. There must be a correspondence between the theoretical codes deployed in analysis and the observable characteristics of the empirical phenomenon under investigation, because even though theory exists independently of observable phenomenon's, it must somehow be operationalized to make some kind of knowledge claim in relation to the empirical observations. This brings us to the second way of thinking about the epistemic bias.

The second way of thinking about the critique, apart from dispelling the claim to objectivity, concerns concrete ways to move beyond the epistemic bias of the researcher. Glynos and Howarth (Glynos & Howarth, 2007) have suggested that the epistemological break can be approached by introducing a set of middle-range concepts to connect theoretical and empirical codes around a highlighted subject matter. This is done via a re-description of ontological categories into ontic entities which can take up a middle position of moving between the empirical phenomena and the underlying ontological premises of PDA (ibid p. 164). This allows the

researcher to make explicit her theoretical and methodological assumptions as well as expanding on the theoretical grammar of a phenomenal framework.

In this project, I will introduce a middle-range concept called the Fantasmatic Narrative, consisting of 15 ontic units meant to take up such a middle position. These units can be applied to empirical data to connect an empirical code like 'economic growth' to a theoretical code like 'element', through one of these units, for instance one called 'threat'. 'Economic growth' may then figure as one of many elements articulated into an equivalential chain, while at the same time being identified as part of an overarching narrative invested into this chain. In this way, the mediating role of affect in language-use is allowed to take center stage in the discourse analysis. The middle-range concept will be elaborated on in chapter 4.

In this way, the empirical *being* of analyzed objects may reflect their *a priori* assumed ontological *beingness.* It is a way to establish a framework consisting of theory, philosophy and methodology by which the researcher can deem something to be a factual proposition, and the methods deployed should reflect this to make clear that this is the researcher's framework, not to be mistaken with some kind of *a priori* objective truth that lies outside of the researchers own biased self-observation (Marttila, 2015). A research framework takes aim at securing the validity and reliability of a project and its findings. Philosophical and theoretical validity is about the translation of assumptions into empirical codes that can be applied to units of data, while reliability is about the quality of the data collection, treatment- and analysis of the data (Østbye et al., 2013). By creating a research framework, the researcher stipulates the conditions and requirements from which to articulate a concrete approach to the research question[9].

I have now shown how the two methodological premises of second order hermeneutics and methodological holism, forms a starting point for considering how to interpret meaning within a PDA framework, as well as how to operationalize theory around a highlighted subject matter such as affect mediating subjective desire in language-use.

Together, they have informed the research strategy that I will now present.

3.2 Research Strategy

The research questions of this thesis targets three interrelated aspects of the discursive practice on SUD:

: How is sustainable urban development discursively constructed amongst planning agents in Southern City Network?

: What are the key areas of contestation to this construction?

: What is the role of fantasy and desire in this construction?

The common denominator of these three, is the discursive structure informing identifications of SUD amongst the participants of SCN. The key assumption driving the discourse analysis of this research project, is that the researcher can identify points of sedimentation and contestation to the discursive structure, by tracing subjects mutually coherent practices of articulation (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 140; Marttila, 2015, p. 16). As argued in theory, discourse will always consist of systems of relations in various degrees of sedimentation, but it will also be marked by moments of active institution and contestation of these same systems of relations through the articulatory practices of individuals.

According to Martilla (Martilla, 2016), we can argue for the presence of a discourse, if the articulatory practice of subjects, assumed to identify with subject roles within the discourse, exhibit a relative regularity. In this research project, this regularity is conceptualized as reoccurring patterns of linguistic relations comprising discursive structure according to fantasmatic registers. Mutually coherent practices are thus defined according to a regularity of fantasmatic investments.

The task at hand, then, is to determine what type of data to collect, and how to treat this data, to make visible this discursive structure that comprises both sedimentations and moments of contestations, while nuancing such regularities according to fantasmatic registers

The discourse analysis will therefore be built on two types of empirical data:

- Qualitative interview data from interviews with participants of the arena
- Observational data from arena activities

I have chosen to construct a research strategy for locating reoccurring patterns of linguistic relations comprising discursive structure, according to fantasmatic registers, via three steps.

Step 1 Constructing a context for the discourse under investigation and collecting data. This is done by first reflecting on the implications of PDA when determining a context, and then constructing an interview guide based on these reflections. I then conduct twenty-one qualitative interviews with participants of SCN, and collect observational data from arena activities in the period Jan 1st, 2019 – June 30th, 2019. I detail this process in chapters 3.3. – 3.6.

Step 2 Operationalizing the philosophical, theoretical, and methodological assumptions of PDA. This is done by reflecting on the philosophical implications of PDA, as well as the two methodological premises outlined in this chapter, to design a circular model for conducting analysis of qualitative interviews, as well as a middle-range concept intended to nuance interview data according to fantasmatic registers in language-use.

This has led to the development of two original contributions of this thesis:

- ❖ A circular model representing the social production of meaning through articulatory practice.

- ❖ A middle-range concept called the Fantasmatic Narrative, consisting of four overall categories of WHAT, HOW, WHO and WHY, and further divided into fifteen ontic units to be applied to units of data. The concept is used to nuance data-entries from the qualitative interviews, in order to generate an empirical material out of the initial analysis. This material takes the form of a discourse formation matrix intended to represent aspects of the discursive structure on SUD among participants of SCN.

  Via the circular model and the Fantasmatic Narrative, the researcher can, among other, identify sedimentations and points of contestation within a discourse, and foreshadow potential points of conflict in processes enacting such signifiers, at an early stage. This is particularly useful in case-specific studies seeking to understand how the ambiguity of master signifiers, such as SUD, actually works and varies in specific local contexts (Scheller & Thörn, 2018, p. 917).

  Together, these two materials are used in step 3 of the research strategy to trace the relative regularity of articulatory practice on SUD amongst the participants of SCN, while highlighting the affective dimension of language-use. I will detail these contributions in chapter 4.

Step 3 Re-constructing the discourse in three steps:

a. Identifying the discursive structure of the discourse on SUD. This is done by analyzing twenty-one qualitative interviews via the circle model and the fantasmatic narrative, and subsequently combining the analyzed data into one discourse formation matrix representing aspects of this structure. I also turn each interview into its own interview matrix, to be able to reflect on findings by moving between

the overarching discourse formation matrix and the individual interview matrixes.

b. Identifying the discourse on SUD. This is done by identifying reoccurring patterns in the discursive structure. Specifically, I start by locating empty and floating signifiers. I then locate four key areas of contestation that emerge out of the discourse formation matrix and explore how ontic manifestations of antagonism that erupt during arena activities, i.e., verbal disagreements and arguments, are discursively navigated via the empty and floating signifiers.

c. Identifying the discursive regime believed, in part, to guide and restrict the participants perceptions and actions during arena activities. This is done by connecting the way participants navigate points of contestation to the discourse on SUD, to literature on discursive materialization. I make some assumptions as to the regime that may have materialized into particular practices of the arena and validate my assumptions via the articulatory practices of the participants as witnessed in the discourse formation matrix as well as the individual interview matrixes.

The re-construction of the discourse takes place in part 2 of the thesis, chapter 5.

Based on this re-construction, I then locate fantasy and desire in the construction of sustainable urban development within the context of Southern City Network.

This research strategy is not intended to explore the vast meaning(s) invested into the discourse on SUD, nor the many different narratives that might be wrapped into both the individual and collective enactments of SUD. Rather, I am looking for ways to 1) bring out the discursive structure, 2) illuminate points of sedimentation and contestation to this structure, and 3) explore how the participants collectively navigate moments of contingency during arena activities, via findings in this structure as well as observations from arena activities.

To this candidate's knowledge, this is an original research strategy to conducting PDA-inspired discourse analysis.

The original contributions are deployed mainly as an experimentation; to nuance the patterns of linguistic relations comprising discursive structure according to fantasmatic registers, to see whether sedimentations and potential points of contestation in dialogical processes can be identified via interview data from individuals engaged in these processes. If this is possible, then perhaps it is also possible to conduct interviews with actors of co-creative or dialogical processes at an early stage, to foreshadow potential conflicts but also possibilities related to how actors can go about navigating these conflicts. I will return to this point in the conclusion of the thesis. With the circle model and the middle-range concept I am thus not seeking to articulate some new comprehensive approach to PDA-analysis, but rather to explore ways of expanding on the analytical vocabulary and variety of conducting PDA. The fantasmatic narrative, in particularly, may offer the researcher some additional tools to navigate the multifaceted collage of individual perspectives that at any time make up a discourse.

I will now move on to establish a preliminary context for conducting data collection.

3.3 Constructing the Context

All discourse analysis has a context. The context is chosen by the researcher, a distinction meant to provide a departure- and reference point for the interpretation of the meanings produced by the discursive practices of the participants (Ryen, 2002). This is, however, not unproblematic within a PDA framework.

The social ontology of radical contingency implies that the meaning and relevance of any object in relation to a problematized social phenomenon is internal to discourse. Whatever the physical world of the participants or the endeavor may be, the social ‘superimposes’ on that physical reality (cf. Jorgensen & Phillips, 1999, p. 10). An interpretative discourse analysis aiming to uncover aspects of meaning regarding SUD, via the articulatory practices of social subjects, can therefore only hope to find fragments of this context against which the meaning of SUD emerges,

from within the very discourse under investigation. This could quickly become a hopeless circular chase for something which is impossible to fully capture.

The only viable approach, then, is to embrace methodological holisms acknowledgement that whatever this preliminary entry point may be, it will be partial and flawed, admitting that this is but one of many entry points that could have been constructed. By acknowledging this, the researcher can articulate a preliminary context to be explored via the articulatory practices of the subjects of the discourse, and then she can device a systematic approach to the task of collecting data and the operationalizing theory. As discussed in theory, the specific composition of elements drawn on in articulatory practice is going to bear witness to the discursive structures that subjects navigate by.

I will now present a tentative context to the discourse on SUD, constructed out of source material on the profile of SCN as well as documented activities within the arena. I utilize source material from publicly available websites, newspaper archives, informal documents authored by the project management of the arena, as well as my own personal field notes from early participation in arena activities.

Website: A publicly available website for SCN (webredaksjonen@uia, 2020) is available under the umbrella of the website of the University of Agder (UiA). The website offers information on what the network is, a tentative agenda, who the participants are, and a presentation of five City Labs orchestrated by SCN. A City Lab is here a type of permanent workshop space for the co-creation of projects on concrete themes such as City Life and Social Sustainability or Water in Cities. The website has only received minor updates since it was published fall 2017.

Facebook Page: A publicly available Facebook page for SCN (Bynett-Sør, 2020) showcase activities fronted by the participants of the arena. Here we find information on network gatherings, seminars, articles regarding activities within the network, projects initiated- or aided by the network, and other articles deemed relevant or interesting for the participants.

Informal Documents: A series of non-publicly available documents have been sent to the participants of the arena over the span of four years. Approximately

hundred documents from late 2017 to mid-2020 have been made available to the researcher. The documents, which have typically been attached by email, consist of invitations to meetings, seminars, workshops, and other activities. They detail meeting- agendas and minutes, strategy- and vision proposals, progress-plans, tentative partnership invitations and more generalized invitations to activities. The documents and emails are, for the most part, produced by the project manager of SCN at the time, who held the position from August 2016 to June 2020. These informal documents serve as source material only[10], and have been used to establish an overview of activities and topics within the arena.

Field Notes: Private minutes developed by the researcher upon participation in approximately thirty arena activities equally distributed between seminars, workshops, city labs, partnership meetings, board of advisor meetings and arena gatherings in the period of August 2018 to January 2020. Most of these activities have been audio recorded for research purposes with verbal consent of participants present.

3.3.1 Southern City Network as Context

The website, Facebook page, informal documents and field notes have all been utilized to form this description of SCN, along with a timeline of events in the network from 2016-2020, and an overview of activities focusing on the thematic. It seems reasonable to assume that the current active participants of the network have, at the very least, some knowledge of the existence of some of this source material or the conducted activities. This gives us a place to begin our search for contextual aspects that may influence the discursive practice, from which we can then design some kind of entry point for data collection.

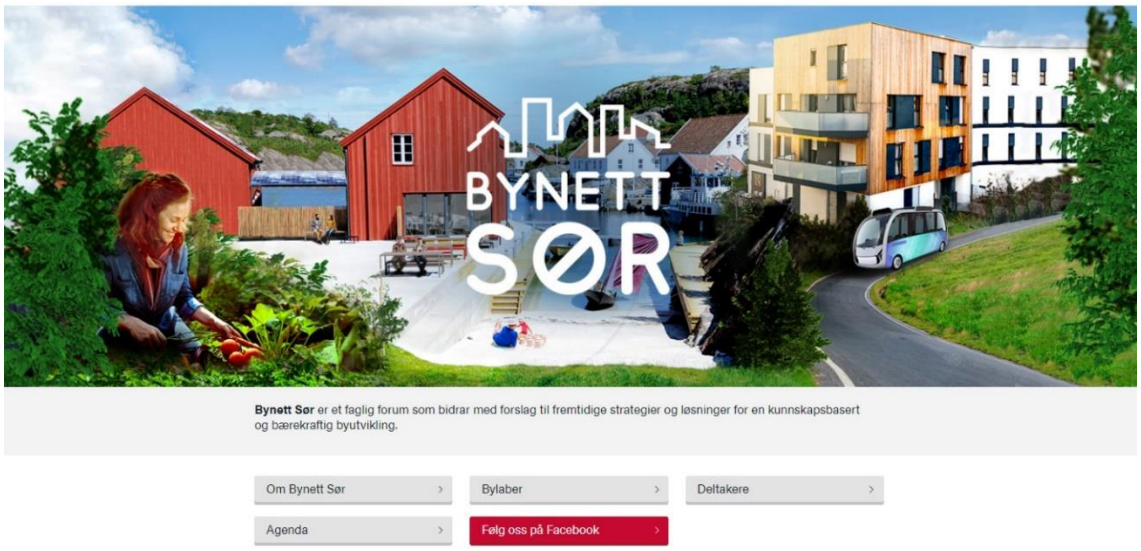

Figure 2 - The SCN Website (webredaksjonen@uia, 2020). The website is only available in Norwegian.

On the official website of SCN (webredaksjonen@uia, 2018), the arena is described as a professional forum whose intention is to creatively contribute to future strategies and solutions for a knowledge-based and sustainable urban development for small- to medium sized cities in Southern Norway. The arenas' primary role is to contribute to dialogue, learning and knowledge sharing on the topic of SUD, and to facilitate for the use of cities and rural places as innovation- and research labs for experimental modes of co-creation contributing to urban development.

As of October 1st, 2020, the promise for an agenda to come fall 2017 can still be found on the same website (here loosely translated from Norwegian):

> *"The cities of Southern Norway have common challenges, and through cooperation they can achieve more. Our goal is to develop an agenda for addressing important challenges facing these cities. This work will take place sometime fall 2017."* (webredaksjonen@uia, 2017)

The agenda-to-come promises to target local challenges related to urban sustainability transitions and development, as well as facilitating for the development of research questions that can offer novel insights on SUDS for small- to medium sized cities in Southern Norway.

This information is publicly available and has not changed since the website was initiated in fall of 2017. From the authorship of the website we get the first hint of where this idea originated from; the regional university. In 2016, Professor Hans Kjetil Lysgård at the University of Agder (hereon UiA) initiated the idea of a knowledge- and innovation network for cities in the Agder region. Lysgård was at the time employed at the department of Global Development and Planning at the Faculty of Social Sciences, but as of August 1st 2019 has been serving as Vice Rector for Research and Interdisciplinary Projects at the University (UiA.no, 2019). Looking to Lysgård's published research (UiA.no, 2020b), it seems clear that his academic interests at the time revolved around the question of rural development and in particular the role of cultural policy in place developments. While it is hard to find information on informal meetings that might have taken place in this early period between Lysgård and other potential future members of SCN, we do have evidence of the first organized meeting; A multidisciplinary and multisectoral workshop hosted by the university and held over two days, from 31.09 – 01.10.2017, officially launching the initiative in which thirty-nine participants contributed with suggestions for the agenda (see attachment 1: Activity Data 2016 – 2020).

SCN is currently organized as a project at UiA, and officially hosted by the Faculty of Engineering and Science who pays the salary of the project management. A steering group was established on October 15th, 2017, providing input and advice on strategic decisions for the arena. The group consist of eighteen individuals representing different partners of the arena, and there have been some minor changes to this cohort over time as some members have stepped down or otherwise been replaced. The steering group has met two to three times a year and has functioned as an advisory organ to the project management. All financial and strategic matters are discussed here. As of February1st 2020, a representative partner group was established in addition to the steering group to offer additional input on strategies and development for the arena.

As of mid-June 2020, the project management has stepped down and members of the university are currently negotiating whether to continue the arena, and if so how to organize the initiative. Matters of ongoing financial and disciplinary responsibility, the still tentative agenda of the arena, as well as the somewhat established expectations of the partners, are all being discussed through internal meetings. The project may get transferred to CoLAB (UiA.no, 2020a), the

university's learning center for co-creation, knowledge sharing and social innovation, sometime in 2021.

The reader is referred to the activity data (see attachment 1: Activity Data 2016 – 2020) for a list of activities from Winter 2016 to December 2020. This list is based on the source material and modified by the researcher to focus on the thematic content of actual events that have taken place in the period of 2016-2020. The researcher only participated in events from fall 2018 to fall 2019.

Up until the end of 2020, the arena had 17 official partners. We can identify three types of actors who have been invited into these partnerships: Municipalities, Regional Actors and Research actors.

Type 1: Municipalities

Figure 3 - The Town of Flekkefjord (Shutterstuck, 2018)

Ten coastal municipalities in the Agder region have joined SCN as partners. Most of these municipalities are small town centers organized around estuaries which create opportunities for both industry and tourism, as well as environmental challenges such as extensive flooding. A common trait of these cities is their relatively low population numbers, save for the region capitol of Kristiansand and the city of Arendal who both are considerably higher in population numbers and urban mass when viewed in a Norwegian context. The smaller coastal towns are

locally known as ‘sleepers’ during winter months, with little to no street-side activity, while summer months see an influx of second-homeowners and tourists, local music- and arts festivals and generally high levels of events and street-side activity.

Figure 4 - The annual Wood Boat Festival in Risør (VisitSørlandet, 2018)

A commonly perceived challenge to these towns, is the struggle to attract new residents, particularly young families (Field Notes). Acquiring resources to make necessary investments into public infrastructure, creating jobs and improving local cultural life towards this goal are all familiar topics amongst the participants of the network (Field Notes). Local politics marked by perfidy, absent regional- and national authorities and poor experiences with previous co-creative networks are all cited as challenges these places must overcome in order to achieve the kind of liveability, attractivity and robustness needed to thrive (Field Notes). Access to essential goods and services, recreational activities, green spaces, and local historical and cultural qualities are all key ingredients in perceptions of 'the good life' in these towns (Field Notes). With demographic trends shifting towards an aging population and revenues

Figure 51- The 'Iron Board House' in Tvedestrand (VisitSørlandet, 2020)

steadily declining, there are increasing concerns about the liveability of these places (Field Notes). Early work aiming to secure municipal partnerships for SCN, specifically wanted to target these coastal towns, due to their shared challenges but also similarities related to their blue-green topographies, their shared maritime history, social and cultural similarities[11] and common heritage protected architectural features[12].

Many of the coastal municipalities are recognized as architectural cultural landmarks protected by the Norwegian Directorate for Cultural Heritage. The white wooden houses that make up these town centers, as well as the shoreline, have become synonymous with Southern Norway to tourists and locals alike. But they also pose significant challenges to the mounting regeneration and renovation needs of aging town centers, as processes seeking approval for changes or renovations often stagnate due to time- and resource constraints.

By arguing for the uniqueness of these shared features, inland town and districts were excluded from the SCN partnership invitations. While there was talk of inviting these at a later stage, nothing came of it.

The partnering municipalities, from the west to the east, are: Flekkefjord, Farsund, Lyngdal, Mandal, Kristiansand, Lillesand, Grimstad, Arendal, Tvedestrand, Risør.

Type 2: Regional Actors

Four regional actors have partnered with SCN. These are: Agder County Municipality (Vest-Agder-Fylkeskommune, 2020), the County Governor (County-Governor-Of-Agder, 2020), the Norwegian State Housing Bank (NSHB, 2020) and the Norwegian Public Roads Administration (NPRA, 2020).

Type 3: Research Actors

Three Research Institutions have partnered with SCN. These are: The University of Agder (UiA.no, 2020c), the Norwegian Institute for Water Research (NIVA, 2020) and the Norwegian Institute of Bioeconomy Research (NIBIO, 2020).

These partners have all been involved in arena activities in various ways, represented by an ever-changing cohort of different individuals. In addition,

private-sector and non-profit actors have been sporadically invited to give seminars on concrete topics, to participate in workshops in the Labs, or to contribute to strategy sessions for the network (Field Notes). Property developers, engineering and architectural firms, private entrepreneurs, voluntary organizations, artists and local champions have all come and gone, but they have not been offered the opportunity to enter into partnerships like this primary group of actors have (Field Notes).

Finding an Entry Point

This is where the researcher can take a step back and offer her version of what is seen in the source material, between published information in publicly available channels, organizational routines, partnership lists, and information about activities.

The initiative goes by a variety of designations amongst the participants, ranging from a 'network for the sharing of knowledge and experience', to an 'innovation arena for urban transformation' to a 'partnership for urban development in the region' and a 'forum for professional dialogue' . Like its agenda, there is no commonly accepted designation for what the initiative *is*. Complicating matters further, the network is not governed by any national or regional plans and the actors are not part of the initiative due to any professional mandate but rather participate of their own volition because they are personally interested in aspects of co-creation for sustainable development. Emma et al. (Puerari et al., 2018) has described this kind of multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary co-creative initiative as a type of experimental multi-stakeholder arena attempting to stimulate innovative solutions to urban development through socio-spatial experimentation. These initiatives are often informal in nature, emerging out of a shared goal for tackling perceived common challenges, and are characterized by a 'non-selected' participation scheme (ibid p.5), as well as possessing emergent and unintentional qualities that result in unplanned actions from its members. There is, however, a timeline of events which, if nothing else, indicates the strategic ambitions of the arena, as articulated by the project management (see attachment 1: Activity Data 2016 – 2020).

This initial description provides some sense of who the actors are and what they have sought to do, and while there is no consensus on exactly *how* to conduct

experimentation around the subject matter of sustainable development, or what might be considered a desirable outcome of such a process, the source material proves that there is steady activity between the partners. Many of the participants have consistently participated across activities over the course of four years, and it seems reasonable to suggest that these participants may have become somewhat familiar with one another during this time. Such a regularity of activity between a core group of social subjects coming together over an extended period, provide the building blocks of the discursive production of sedimented practices in relation to SUD.

These activities, and the individuals consistently participating in them, therefore provide a viable entry point for data collection.

3.4 Qualitative Interviews

Central to qualitative research is the qualitative interview, understood as a conversation with a specific intent (Ryen, 2002). Østbye et Al. (Østbye et al., 2013) claims that the interview is what makes it possible for the researcher to map social processes and relations, as it grants the researcher access to a subjects understanding of the social. This is not unproblematic in a PDA-inspired approach. Discourse Theory is postulated on the notion that each individual is trapped in his own perception of the world, which means that the researcher herself is not exempt to a neutral position from which she can judge the statements of others objectively (Agger, 1991; Wagenaar, 2011). Wagenaar (cf. Wagenaar, 2011) has turned this problematic on its head, claiming that the qualitative interview is key in exploring any social reality. When the researcher intervenes into the perceived reality of the subject, he will be spurred to respond in order to restore meaning via articulations according to his own perceptions. As we have seen, meaning emerges supra-subjectively. By verbalizing his perspectives, he includes and excludes elements from the discursive field of possibility and thus produces something existing in the world regardless of its meaning in a discursive context; in this case an audio recording that can be analyzed as a representation.

According to the premise of second-order hermeneutics, the researcher must now recognize and accept her own bias and attempt to account for it openly and honestly with the reader (cf. Becker, 2006). This is done in terms of openly discussing the design of the interview guide and the specification of the perceived

relevant context, as this guides the kind of questions asked and the perception of the answers given.

I have followed the activities of the network over the course of one year, spanning from January 2019 to January 2020. By participating as an observer, and occasionally being called to the floor to speak, I too have had an active part in the construction of the discursive practice. It would not have been feasible to observe activities to this extent without occasionally contributing in some way or another. This has affected my perception of what the context of the discourse is, who the most influential and active participants are and my choice of constructing three overall themes for the qualitative interview.

Looking to the timeline and Facebook page, most of the network's activities involving larger groups of participants have taken place between 2017 and 2019. These activities can be separated into the following topics: Network Gatherings, strategic meetings, board of advisor meetings, thematic seminars and conferences, and workshops. Shifting between the timeline, Facebook page and fieldnotes I have chosen to construct three thematic topics intended to capture the overall focus of the conversations during these activities:

1. The city and sustainability
2. Processes of urban development in Southern Norway
3. Southern city network as an experimental multistakeholder arena for co-creation

Sometimes one of these topics may be the sole focus of an activity, for instance during a board meeting where the purpose is to discuss the strategy of SCN. In this instance, the activity would fall under category 1. Other times the lines may be more blurred, for instance during a CityLab workshop aiming to co-create new strategies on residential planning for an aging society, where the thematic outlined by the seminar agenda may fall under category 2 but the conversation continuously slips into category 1. Another example could be a workshop aiming to generate new ideas for how to collaboratively work on social sustainability together with a wider civil society, but the topic keeps slipping into questions of what constitutes sustainability in the city. These three topics have often become intertwined in one another during activities, despite attempts to keep them separate in activity agendas.

Because the source material, in particular the field notes, highlight a continuous slippage between the three thematic topics as participants engage in conversations, I chose to utilize these three as a template for designing an interview guide.

3.4.1 Interview Guide

The interview guide (see attachment 2: Interview Guide) consists of three structured questions targeting the three thematic topics established above. Each topic is further divided into a series of follow-up questions aiming to encourage the respondent to verbalize their perception of the topic according to the fifteen fantasmatic registers of the middle-range concept, which will be detailed in chapter 4. In this way I seek to gently nuance the respondents replies according to the fantasmatic registers. The three primary questions have been formulated as ‘tell me about x’ questions, whereas follow-up questions have been formulated as 'what' 'how' and 'who' questions. Here I have been asking questions such as ‘what is the benefit of <the thing the respondent spoke of>’ and ‘what make it difficult to achieve the implementation of <the thing the respondent spoke off>’ and ‘how do you work with <the thing the respondent spoke off>’.

This way of combining some structured questions with a more unstructured phase is known as a semi-structured interview approach (cf. Ryen, 2002). In this strategy, the conversation is largely controlled by the respondent, and the interviewer uses follow-up questions along with prompts to encourage the flow of conversation in a desired direction. Prompts can be specific questions such as “can you give me an example of what you just said?” or small culturally recognized cues such a nod or a “mhm”, indicating the researcher understands the respondent and wishes to hear more (cf. Wagenaar, 2011). Wagenaar sees prompts as a way of encouraging the respondent to offer specific examples of past or present events, ongoing activities or even emotions related to a thematic subject, that can help us understand how a discourse is tied together.

As argued in theory, the object of ‘sustainable urban development’ in itself holds no particular meaning content, its meaning will be a relational configuration of elements that are more or less sedimented within a radically contingent discursive terrain. The interview guide, and the interviewer, is trying to motivate the subject to articulate in ways that might bring out the relative regularity of these sedimented

relational configurations. For this reason, there are no direct questions about what sustainable urban development *is*, but rather a series of questions targeting the respondent's practices in relation to SUD.

I will now present the respondents and my selection criteria.

3.4.2 The Respondents

During the course of 2019 I interviewed twenty-seven of the participants that I perceived to be most active and influential in the arena at the time. While this may be a high number of interviews, I wanted to make sure that I gathered enough data to make a representative cut at a later stage.

These twenty-seven respondents were selected on the following criteria:

- The respondent's activity level in SCN. All respondents have participated three or more times in activities in the network.
- The respondent's home or working city. I have intended to interview at least two respondents working or living in each of the ten member cities.
- The respondent's professional discipline. A variety of disciplines are represented within the network. Respondents have been selected in an attempt to represent at least one of each of these disciplines, ranging from politicians, public planners and advisors, researchers, freelancers, and private development consultants. In addition, municipal planners and advisors have been overrepresented in the data, and the selection tries to replicate this imbalance to an extent.
- The sector represented by professional discipline of the respondent. A mix of public and private sectors have been represented in the arena by the participants. Respondents have been selected with the intent of representing all sectors.
- The respondent's age-group and gender. Participants of SCN have been an equal share of men and women, ranging from 30+ to 60+. Respondents have been selected across this range, covering both genders as evenly as possible.

- Availability of the respondent. Not all the invited respondents were able to participate in the research project, and some had repeated scheduling issues. Regrettably, I was not able to interview any local champions.

I began scheduling interviews in January 2019. I quickly understood that despite making early contact, the booking and seeing through of interviews was going to be spread out over the entire year of 2019. Physical distance, a municipal- and regional reform demanding the time of the participants, and general workload fatigue among participants were the primary reasons for some of the later scheduling dates for interviews. The qualitative interview relies on trust between the researcher and the respondent (Silverman, 2016). I made a conscious decision to let each participant set the time and date, and to always perform the interview at their preferred location. Not only did it seem respectful to their time, but it allowed the participant to be in a physical space comfortable to them. Being situated in their work setting was also a benefit for me, allowing me to ask questions about their work life, nick-nacks in the office, the views outside, and a number of other non-project related questions to put them at ease. Trust between the researcher and the respondent also relies on the confidentiality of data that may be sensitive, as well as open and clear communication about how the interview data will be used and what the aims and purposes of the project are (Miller & Glassner, 2011) All respondents have received and signed an information letter about this project before their respective interview took place (see attachment 3: NSD Information Letter, see attachment 6: Participant Signatures).

Out of the twenty-seven interviews, twenty-one made it into the analysis. The remaining six interviews were cut from the analysis on the grounds of not fulfilling the above criteria, for issues with the sound quality of the recording, or when I have had too many respondents representing the same discipline or city. This selection is an attempt at generating a representative data sample. While municipal planners are overrepresented in the data, this imbalance reflects the same overrepresentation during most arena activities.

The following are the twenty-one respondents, whose interviews were selected for data analysis. The presentation is in order of the interview date:

Name	Position	Date
Arnt Abrahamsen	Mayor of Farsund Municipality and head of SCN Board of Advisors	20190412
Michael Fuller-Gee	Urban Planner at Arendal Municipality	20190522
Anne Halvorsen	Dean at the Faculty of Sociel Sciences at University of Agder	20190527
Birger Loftesnes Bakken	Community Planner at Arendal Municipality	20190613
Heidi Johansen	Civil Architect at Asplan Viak	20190617
Håkon Håversen	Urban Developer at Grimstad Municipality	20190619
Janne Karin Nesheim	Advisor at Technical Sector at Lillesand Municipality	20190704
Frode Amundsen	Advisor at West-Agder County Authority	20190704
Geir Sjæveland	Head of Municipal Affairs on Culture, Infrastructure and Development at Arendal Municipality	20190813
Torhild Hessevik Eikeland	Head of the Planning Unit at Lyngdal Municipality	20190819
Elisabeth Skuggevik	Senior Advisor at the Norwegian Public Roads Administration	20190902
Knut Felberg	Head of the Urban Planning and Development Department at Kristiansand Municipality	20190904
Jonas Høgli Major	Assistant Professor at Department of Engineering Sciences at University of Agder	20190905
Helge Liltvedt	Professor at the Department of Engineering Sciences at University of Agder	20190905
Hans-Egil Berven	Business Manager of Flekkefjord Municipality	20190906
Per Kristian Lunden	Mayor of Risør Municipality	20191022
Anette Pedersen	Adviser on Culture at Tvedestrand Municipality	20191105
Sigrid Hellerdal Garthe	Urban Planner at Risør Municipality	20191105
William Fagerheim	Scenario- and Foresight Strategist at Mind the Gap	20191113
Tom Viggo Nilsen	Professor at the Department of Engineering Sciences and Disciplinary Representative of SCN	20191119
Anne Skjævestad	Advisor at the Norwegian State Housing Bank and Public PhD Candidate at University of Agder	20191217

Figure 6 – Interview Respondents

Quotes and excerpts from interviews and activities

All quotes and excerpts presented in the analysis are translated from Norwegian to English directly from audio recordings and have further been paraphrased by the researcher. Paraphrasing has been performed in order to protect anonymity, highlight the area of analytical focus for the reader, and for general clarity.

When paraphrasing I have considered the following:

a) I have attempted to stay as close to the original statements as possible when translating, and to convey the context these statements were uttered in.
b) Some quotes are hard to grasp without the dialogical context within which they were uttered. To highlight the area of analytical focus within such an

excerpt, I have written out contextual segments in my own words to shorten the transcript but keep important information in the text.

c) In order to preserve the anonymity of the participants, I have replaced identifiable statements with replacement-symbols that look like this: < > The single angle quotation marks generalize the statement made.

d) On a few occasions I present anonymized statements made by SCN participants who were not interviewed for this project. This happens in the second part of the analysis, where I write out parts of conversations that have taken place during arena activities. This is mostly done to contextualize statements made by interviewed participants who partake in the discussion, and to better flesh out the conversations taking place so that the reader can follow. Recordings of activities for research purposes were verbally approved by all participants in the room prior to the recording taking place.

e) In most cases, the articulations of participants are full of pauses, repetitions, stuttering and other linguistic markers that are not considered in this project. These have, for the most part, not been included in the transcripts. This is to enhance readability.

3.5 Observations of Arena Activities

Cresswell and Cresswell (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) have argued that observation of social subjects' behaviors can provide a useful source of data for qualitative research. The collection procedures here involve the recording of activities in a structured or semi-structured manner, at the site of the identified phenomenon.

As we know from the introduction, the participants of SCN are trying to establish an agenda in relation to SUD, by engaging in dialogue with one another. This dialogue takes place both in- and out of official activities in SCN, but I solely focus my observations on official activities in the arena. This is where the broad dialogue encompassing so many different perspectives takes place. It therefore seems reasonable to limit the observations to arena activities, and to record these conversations for a limited period of time.

During the course of January 2019 - June 2019, I observed and audio recorded eighteen sessions in SCN. I chose this period, because it promised to be packed with a variety of activities according to plans made by the project management during fall 2018.

I have chosen to engage as an observing participant (ibid, p. 188), which entails that the participants are aware of the researchers presence and have been informed about the project as well as intentions for the data collected.

In this project, all activities have been audio-recorded at the express verbal permission of the participants present for each session. The participants were informed about the project and the purpose of the recordings each time, and that permission would be obtained to publish any citations by which they could be identified. They were also informed of a follow-up seminar to discuss results upon project completion. The advantage of such an approach is that the researcher can engage with the natural setting and record and take notes of information as it occurs (ibid), without too many disruptions. The downside is that the researcher may be asked to share her views and thoughts on occasion. In these sessions I participated mostly as a silent observer, but on a few occasions were asked to speak or provide input. I attempted to limit such encounters as much as possible by only participating if specifically asked to do so.

3.6 Formalities

The following is a brief overview of formalities associated with the project.

Approval of project by the Norwegian Center for Research Data

This project has been approved by the Norwegian Center for Research Data (see attachment 4: NSD Approval of Project 12.02.19)

File Treatment

All files have been transferred immediately following recording, and stored on a secure server hosted by the University of Agder, and approved by the Norwegian Cente for Research (see attachment 4: NSD Approval of Project 12.02.19). Files will be stored for a period of up to ten years for further research purposes, as per agreement with the respondents.

Hardware

The audio data has been collected with a ZOOM H6 Handy Recorder.

Software

For this project I have used the following software programs:

- NVIVO 12 Pro
- Microsoft Excel
- Microsoft Word
- Endnote
- Adobe Illustrator
- Adobe Photoshop

In this chapter, I have connected the philosophical and theoretical assumptions of PDA to their methodological coordinates within a broader social sciences field of interpretation. I have positioned Discourse Theory within the 'third shift' of theories of discourse, and have presented two methodological principles: second-order hermeneutics and methodological holism. I have constructed a three-step research strategy that connects PDA-inspired discourse analysis to the criteria and conditions of the specified case of SUD in the context of SCN, and have discussed the procedures of data collection via qualitative interviews and observational data.

I will now move on to operationalize the theoretical and methodological assumptions of PDA.

4. Operationalizing Theory

The aim of this chapter is to operationalize the theoretical and methodological assumptions of PDA, as presented in chapter 2 and 3, by engaging with the philosophical assumptions underpinning Laclau's Discourse Theory. The goal is to develop a model for the analysis of qualitative interview data, giving centrality to Laclau's notion of articulation as a convergence of the structural, dynamic, and affective dimensions of the social ontology of radical contingency. The purpose is to inspire alternative ways of thinking and doing PDA-inspired analysis of qualitative interviews.

Operationalization targets the transition process from theoretical and philosophical terminology and assumptions to the actual method of analysis deployed by a researcher in an empirical investigation (Østbye et al., 2013).

Theory is operationalized in two ways in this project:

1) A circular model for analysis which targets the social production of meaning through articulatory practice. This model functions as a methodological device for the analysis of qualitative data and is used generate the discourse formation matrix out of twenty-one qualitative interviews and observational data from activities in the SCN arena.

2) A middle-range concept called Fantasmatic Narrative which attests for the way language-use mediates subjective affects through the construction of fantasy. This concept is used to further nuance and organize the analyzed data generated via the circular model, as well as providing an entry point for deploying some Lacanian Left inspired perspectives in reflecting on the findings of the analysis. The Fantasmatic Narrative reflects the premise of methodological holism, in that it allows the researcher to analyze and structure empirical data around a particular field of view, in this case; highlighting the subject matter of fantasy and desire in the discursive construction of SUD.

To this candidate's knowledge, the circle model and the Fantasmatic Narrative together provide an original analytical approach to conducting PDA-inspired analysis. All illustrations are originals developed by the candidate. In keeping with the premise of methodological holism, the purpose of creating these illustrations is to make explicit the way theoretical propositions are translated into corresponding analytical concepts and categories, and how they interact during analysis in this project.

This chapter is split in two parts. The first deals with the circle model, and the second with the Fantasmatic Narrative. In both instances I cover first the theoretical consistency of transitions made from theoretical assumptions to method, and then their analytical applicability.

4.1 The Circle Model

The circle model denotes the social production of meaning through articulatory practice. I have chosen to illustrate the model like this:

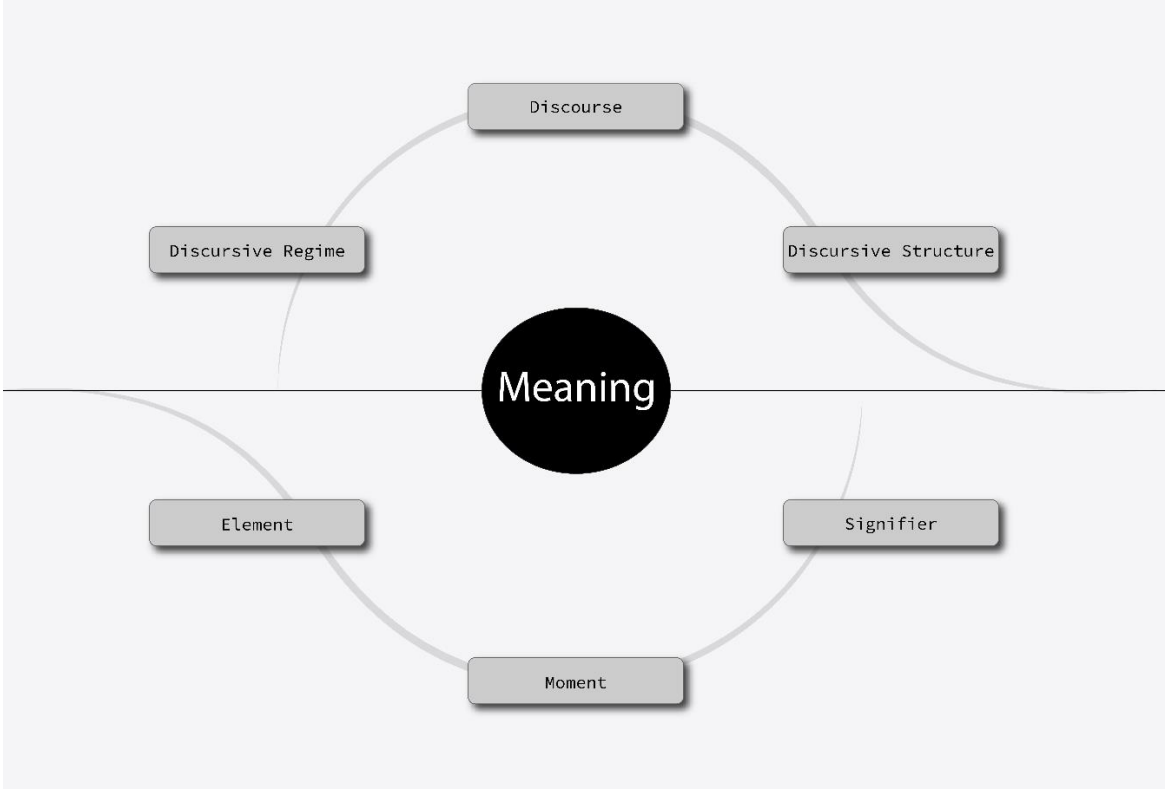

Figure 7 - The Social Production of Meaning through Articulatory Practice – Illustration made by the candidate

The model reflects three key aspects of discourse theory:

1. The radical contingency of the social in all meaning production, here visually represented by the lack of a full circle.
2. The role of language-use in the production of meaning, here visually represented by the curved lines attempting to form the circle.
3. The affectively mediated desire of the subject as embedded into processes of signification, here visually represented by the horizontal line both disrupting and enabling the illusion of meaning.

Meaning is positioned in the center as an illusion of totality; an impossibility whose being unfolds as a fantasmatic reversal of the absence of any ultimate foundation of meaning. Meaning is therefore grounded in its own discourse-generating and discourse-defining meaningfulness (Marttila, 2016).

The six boxes contain the theoretical codes of the analytical process and denote their relationship to one another. I will explain how to operate the model in chapter 4.1.2.

I will now cover the theoretical consistency of the model, connecting it to the philosophical implications that underpin the central concept of articulation in Laclau's work. Following this, I will explain how the different phenomenal categories of the model are understood and applied in the analytical process of this project.

4.1.1 Theoretical Consistency

The circle model was developed via an engagement with the philosophical assumptions underpinning Laclau's conceptualization of the ontology of the social, and in particular his notion of radical contingency as an infliction upon, and result of, language-use. It started as a reflection over some of the key assumptions of his theory, which I chose to illustrate like this:

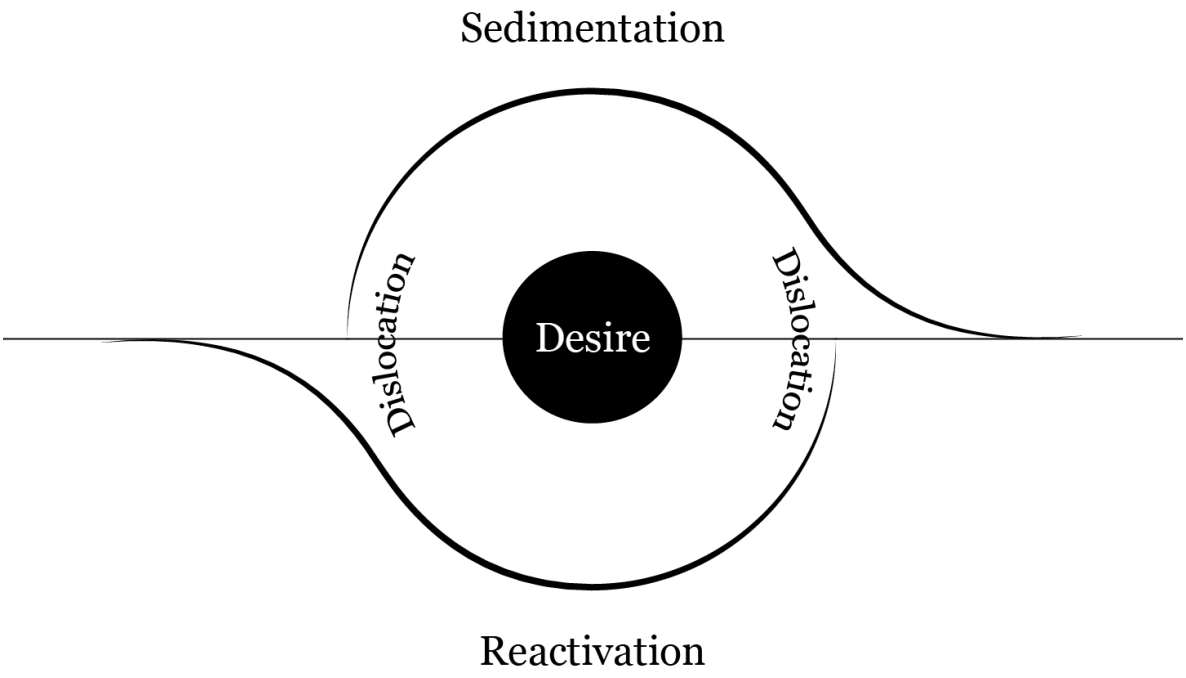

Figure 8 - The Social Ontology of Radical Contingency– Illustration made by the candidate.

The reason for making this illustration is threefold. First, in reflecting on the concept of the ontology of the social in Laclau's work, I found it helpful to think in terms of movement or rhythm, rather than in terms of static opposing forces. It is the constant motion of formation and destruction that form the common-sense understanding of the individual as he navigates the social. Laclau conceptualizes this motion along two axis; sedimentation and reactivation, a distinction inspired by Husserl (cf. Laclau, 1993). But unlike Husserl he defines sedimentation as belonging to the social realm, and reactivation as a political moment, that is; an actionable moment in which an agent chooses to act in a certain way according to the social as he perceives it (Marchart, 2014). The curved lines are trying to capture this rhythm, where the moment of reactivation is always going to introduce something new, making it impossible to ever close the circle completely. Second, finding a way to illustrate how the absence of any foundational principle of being inflicts upon language-use, made it easier to envision some sequential connections between the phenomenal categories of PDA. This is illustrated here via the dynamic effect such an absence has on the structures of meaning, as that of the experience of dislocation. Dislocation is here visualized as a

double infliction upon the social which both disrupts and enables its production, via the affectively mediated desire of the subject. Dislocation and affective mediation are thus going to walk hand in hand in the analysis of any discursive practice. Third, I thought such illustration might aid new readers to PDA in grasping Laclau's approach to language-use as an ongoing affectively mediated response to such a permeating absence. As a communicative tool, the illustration can perhaps be used to make Laclau's somewhat inaccessible theory of discourse and meaning accessible to a broader audience.

It all comes down to language-use; why we talk the way we do. We know from the theoretical discussion that the subjects process of articulation, in this case; the respondents speech, is always going to be a secondary representation of something more fundamental that cannot be represented in language: a constitutive void simultaneously disruptive and productive to the social (Marchart, 2018). Including this absence into the model as a type of double-negativity that acts as a precondition for language-use, enables the researcher to engage with empirical data, such as recorded speech, as a type of representation that has emerged through the researchers interruption into the social reality of the interview respondent (cf. Wagenaar, 2011). The respondent's articulation can then be seen as an attempt to restore a perceived totality of meaning according to identifications with particular discursive positions.

According to Marchart (Marchart, 2018) the idea of a double-negativity in Laclaus work has its roots in the transcendental turn of modern philosophy, and was inspired by Hegels engagement with Kants critique of Pure Reason. This engagement resulted in a conceptualization of a social totality sustained by the very negation of its possibility as both thesis and antithesis (ibid p.50). Many PDA-inspired authors have pointed out that this simultaneously disruptive and productive void introduces a double infliction of contingency onto that of the social, leaving a trace of negativity which will be present in two instances of the production of the social; both through our perception and our actions (Mark Devenney et al., 2016; Marchart, 2014; Marttila, 2016). This double negativity has a profound effect on the subject's experience of social reality. What he hears when others speak is not what was meant by them, and what he says in turn is not what he himself means.

This position is, according to Marchart (Marchart, 2018) coterminous with a Heideggerian difference as différance in which 'being' unfolds in the interplay between the ontological, the void, and the ontic, the language-use. But where Heidegger's difference as différance is modelled as a nothingness which haunts the subject, Laclau's partly Hegelian inspired nothingness takes on a positive presence which, through language-use, reverts the absence of ground into a discursively inscribed illusion of fullness (ibid. p. 55).

In Laclau's conceptualization of the production of the social, the nothingness of this void functions as a passage we must move through in order to conceptualize 'being' (Marchart, 2014). We can equate this passage to Laclau and Mouffes conceptualization of antagonism, as a radical 'nothingness' which is always in a process of subverting the ontic and simultaneously granting its possibility (cf. Laclau & Zac, 1994). Antagonism refers to something beyond the border of discourse, to a constitutive outside that cannot be mastered in or by language, but instead affords the possibility of constructing positive identifications of fullness against this constitutive outside (ibid).

So how do we illustrate this function of antagonism, without resorting to metaphysical claims of some ultimate ground of social reality? Well, we can't. Any conceptualization of it would in the same instance negate it, as the symbolic resources of language itself cannot represent that which lies outside the realm of signification (Glynos and Stavrakakis, 2004). The white gaps in the illustration are not *it* either, just a result of its infliction.

There is a strong affinity here, between that of Laclau's antagonism as a condition of possibility, and the Lacanian Real, conceived of as a dynamic effect, as a limit to objectivity (cf. Daly, 1999; Roskamm, 2014; Stavrakakis, 2007a). Zizek and Daly (Žižek & Daly, 2004) describe the Real as something which resides "*(...) as an external dimension of lack and every symbolic-imaginary construct exists as a certain historical answer to that basic lack*" (ibid p.7) The Real exists in our encounters with the world. It resides in the dislocatory experience in which the subject engages with something or someone and realizes that something is amiss, has been left out, is incomplete or lacking (ibid). In a Lacanian inspired perspective, this Lack is the resulting encounter of failing to reach the Real; that promised wholeness to come. But

the experience of something being amiss, is simultaneously the moment in which the subject becomes aware of the presence of the Real. And so the encounter of the Real is a disturbing one which drives the individual to endlessly attempt to express it in Language, in order to escape the discomfort (Glynos & Stavrakakis, 2004).

Just like dislocation and antagonism go together in Laclau's work, like two sides of the same coin, so the Lacanian Lack and the Real go together; the subject wrestles with his experience of something being 'off', endlessly attempting to signify that which promises to restore fullness yet keeps slipping beyond signification. Both Laclau's antagonism and the Lacanian Real can only show itself through such ontic manifestations of its presence (Glynos & Stavrakakis, 2004). It may manifest to the subject as merely a difference of perspective, a quirky surprise in his day-to-day business, or as a graver threat to his mode of being.

These interruptions are there all the time, but the subject may not notice them. This experience of antagonism, as it makes its presence felt, is what Laclau and Zac (Laclau & Zac, 1994) describe as dislocation to the structures of meaning:

> "*The dislocatory event is thus accompanied by an effect of unconcealment: the ontological dimension, which cannot show itself directly, presents itself as Lack in the ontic level: 'It is this effect of unconcealment that splits the opposing forces between their "ontic" contents and the character of mere possibility – that is, inception, pure Being – of those contents'" (Laclau and Zac 1994: 30).*

Dislocation is thus the experience of the contingency of the social, the experience of the absence of a positive presence, and antagonism is conceived of as the condition of possibility of the social, in which the subject can revert this negativity into a positive presence through language-use and the signifier.

Laclau (Laclau, 2005) makes a comparison of dislocations to the social, to that of a game of chess. It may appear as if the board is fixed and there are two players battling it out, but at any moment a spectator could come up and kick the board, destabilizing the terrain which would displace the pieces as well as the rules for how to play the game. The players would be distraught; for how can you now tell who is winning and losing? They would attempt to restore the board to its original state, so as to restore the rules and conditions of the game so that they could keep playing. In the same way,

dislocations might be experienced to the subject as a disruption which must be grasped in some meaningful way to legitimize the return to the game.

These moments of dislocation which de-stabilize the discursive, are handled via fantasy. Fantasy glosses over the gaps and misunderstandings that occur when we talk to each other. It misdirects the jarring experience accompanied by encounters with the Real into tangible somethings that has a presence: There is nothing wrong with the game, or why we are playing it, the other guy is just a jerk! Such illusion of truth liberates the subject from the anxiety associated with the encounter of the absence any ultimate truth (Daly, 1999).

As seen in theory, these encounters with the Real can be a traumatizing experience. As Blanco et al. (Blanco et al., 2014) describes it, drawing on Lacan and Zizek, a fantasy is not some type of ideological illusion that conceals this radical contingency, but rather 'constitute in part subjects' perceptions' of these encounters (ibid p.3138), to protect them from being traumatized by the encounter with the Real. The alarming dislocatory experience thus remains but is structured into a narrative which allows for business-as-usual.

Seen in this way, the process of articulation becomes a point of convergence for the structural, dynamic and affective dimensions in Laclau's conceptualization of the social ontology of radical contingency (Glynos & Howarth, 2007). The circle model was developed through several iterations over these reflections. I tested out numerous different categories and layouts until arriving at the current illustrations, which are intended to complement each other. While these illustrations surely cannot capture the depth and magnitude of Laclau's theoretical and philosophical intervention, they seemed, at the time, adequate to serve the purpose of this thesis, allowing me to move ahead with the analysis of qualitative data.

I am now going to argue for the model's analytical applicability.

4.1.2 Analytical Applicability

As seen in theory, as well as chapter 4.1.1, Discourse Theory is postulated on the notion that all articulation is an attempt of temporarily locking down floating meaning structures via chains of signification, within a structural system of totality that cannot

be fully stabilized (Hansen, 2005; D. R. Howarth, 2000; Jorgensen & Phillips, 1999; Torfing, 2016). Jorgensen and Phillips (Jorgensen & Phillips, 1999) have argued that this process is the philosophical foundation of the theory, but also its analytical engine. Articulation not only applies to the acts of signification of social subjects, but to the same acts of signification as performed by the researcher when conducting analysis.

The circle model can therefore be understood in two ways:

1) As the researchers process of articulation when conducting analysis
2) As a general reference to the social production of meaning through discursive practice.

As an analytical device, the model is inspired by the reflections of chapter 4.1.1 and conceptualized as a circular process that can be applied to any type of qualitative data from within a PDA-inspired research strategy to the interpretation- and production of meaning. Its analytical capacity is rooted in Laclau's conceptualization of the social ontology of radical contingency, in which the lack of any ultimate foundation of meaning enables the articulation of signifiers that reverts this absence into a positive presence which mediates the desire of the subject.

The analytical process can be started at any point in the circle, so long as the researcher walks the whole circle. I prefer, however, to start at the moment of articulation, as it produces something that exists in the world regardless of its meaningfulness within a particular discourse.

Moment

The moment of articulation refers to any signifying act that has resulted in something with a physical presence in the world. It exists either as sound that can be heard, ink on paper that can be seen, a building that can be entered and so on. Regardless of the meaning of these objects within a discourse, they exist in the world to be interacted with by the interpreter. Moments consist of elements that have been locked down via articulation into relational and differential positions that modifies their identity (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). A moment emerges out of the researcher's engagement with the data and is coded according to the research strategy established by the researcher.

In this project, the act of speaking during interviews will be coded for multiple moments perceived to belong to one or more equivalential chains that support some overarching signifier of the discourse. A moment could be a single sentence, multiple sentences, or a whole paragraph. Each moment will consist of any number of elements perceived to have gone into that moment. I will explain the role of elements at the end of this walkthrough.

Signifier

The signifier is another name for the nodal point; a kind of knot holding together discursive structure, by preserving the internal tension of equivalential chains. We can separate between empty and floating signifiers (Laclau, 2005). The floating signifier is an element that can be articulated to several rivaling hegemonic projects at the same time, its meaning indeterminate or suspended, depending on the context in which it is articulated (ibid). The empty signifier is a differential element which is emptied of its particularistic content so that it can step in and represent the entire equivalential chain (ibid). Laclau (ibid p. 133) has argued that the empty and floating signifiers appear at different structural levels, and that we can separate between them based on the function they serve in the discursive practice under investigation. The empty signifier appears where the hegemonic frontiers are more or less stable and taken for granted and will appear as an identity that is highly popular. The floating signifier, on the other hand, refers to the logic of displacement of these frontiers (ibid). It is in the undecidability between the floating and the empty that we find the political battlefield, the displacement of political frontiers, Gramsci's 'war of position' (Laclau, 2005, p. 153). The construction of a hegemonic frontier requires not only an equivalential chain and at least one empty signifier to stand in for the identity of the hegemonic project, but the construction of an antagonistic frontier against which a new identity can be constructed. In other words, the floating signifier refers to the heterogenous Real that language cannot master (ibid p.141), and the empty signifier to the constant attempts of homogeneity, of unity, in these encounters. The empty signifier is thus not 'empty', but rather its meaning isn't fixed (cf. Scheller & Thörn, 2018, p. 929) as it takes up this position of the lack in the discursive structure, allowing for the naming, or discursive presence, of something which is both absolutely full and absolutely

empty at the same time. The subject does not understand its meaning according to what it represents, but rather according to what it has reversed.

In this project, signifiers are identified via an overwhelming presence of particular elements across interviews. Whether a signifier is designated as empty or floating, will depend on its function to the discourse. As a consequence, any empty signifier identified via elements overwhelming presence in the interview data, will be validated by identifying its unifying function in the observational data. If a signifier can be identified as a reversal to the experience of lack caused by the articulatory practices of the arena, IE; if ontic manifestations of the contingency of the social can be observed to be glossed over by the articulation of such an empty signifier, it will strengthen the reliability of the findings.

Discursive Structure

Discursive structure makes up the particular characteristics of the discourse under investigation. Comprised of moments, elements, equivalential chains and signifiers, it informs a behavior-specific pattern that has evolved over time, by which it becomes meaningful to navigate human action by (cf. Marchart, 2014). These patterns make some perceptions and arguments seem more logical, reasonable, and appropriate to the subject than others. You could think of discursive structure as detailing collectively practiced clusters of rules or logics if you will (cf. Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 135). When certain articulatory practices have been repeated time and time again, they begin to grant the illusion of objectivity, in such a way that those operating within them can start to anticipate the outcome of certain actions. It could, playfully, be compared to the way different combinations of words and sentences form genres to text, letting the reader know what's coming. In the same vein, so genres are formed in the social; Certain acts, combined with certain conditions, objects and people, grant certain expectations which help us navigate the social on a daily basis. I want to stress here, that discursive structure does not denote *agreement* as such, but rather the characteristics of a discourse. Just like a crime novel may contain many different components, the genre is what ties I together as a meaningful story.

In this project, the discursive structure of SUD is identified by analyzing the moments, elements, equivalential chains and signifiers of multiple subjects via qualitative

interviews. The data is further nuanced according to fantasmatic registers, a concept I will elaborate on in the chapter 4.1. The data is then combined into one material which I call a discourse formation matrix. This matrix is considered to represent the discursive structure of SUD during SCN activities. The goal is to use this material to find such clusters of repetitive articulatory practice.

Discourse

Discourse denotes the infinite play of differences conceived as an ongoing articulatory practice in which social subjects attempt, but fail, to lock down meaning via acts of signification (Laclau, 1990). While discourse can be understood as systems of relations in various degrees of sedimentation, it is always going to be involved with the active institution and contestation of these same systems of relations through the articulatory practices of individuals, in a radically contingent social terrain (D. Howarth & Stavrakakis, 2000). Discourse can therefore be explored by locating sedimentations and moments of contestation in the discursive structure.

In this project, discourse is identified by looking for clusters of repetitive articulatory practice within the discursive structure. This is done by locating empty and floating signifiers in the discourse formation matrix, which may denote sedimentations and contestation to the discourse. These findings are further explored in the observational data, by locating moments of ontic manifestations of antagonism during arena activities, i.e., verbal disagreements or arguments, and tying them to the empty and floating signifiers. An argument may erupt in SCN, but it is by the persistent ways by which the participants articulate and subsequently navigate such arguments, that we can describe aspects of the discourse

Discursive Regime

Discursive regimes here denote deeply sedimented patterns to the social, such as cultural perspectives, gender norms or organizational practices that have become naturalized and objectivized over a significant period of time (Torfing, 1999). Discourses are involved in the production, sedimentation and contestation of such dominant hegemonic regimes and are likewise guided by them. According to Torfing (ibid), the term sedimentation appears in two different ways in Laclau's work. Firstly,

sedimentation appears as a socially taken-for-granted horizon of intelligibility in which the historical and contingent origins of the discourse has been forgotten, naturalizing the views, subject positions, values and practices of certain discourses. Secondly, sedimentation appears as discursive materialization, referring to the way a discourse specific horizon of intelligibility transfers to non-linguistic objects such as artifacts, practices, subject roles and institutions, giving them an objective presence to the subject. These non-linguistic objects mimicking objectivity are maintained by discourses but are rarely addressed directly in the conversation of subjects adhering to them, yet they influence the enunciative possibilities of subjects and groups by their persistent presence (Martilla, 2015). In this instance, objects become motivated and even generated by the discursive horizon of a social group, and such sedimentation may be harder to disrupt as the researcher needs to highlight the discourse specific conditions that enable the objects objective presence.

In this project, discursive regimes are identified in part by investigating articulations that define and motivate discursive materialities such as subject roles, institutions, and practices, and in part by investigating the fantasies involved in stabilizing moments of contestation to the discourse. Such stabilizing practices may indicate certain materialities that have transferred from these regimes, guiding and restricting the participants enunciative possibilities (ibid).

Element

Elements are all the possible resources available for the subject to draw on in signifying something. Elements are not just drawn from the discourse in question, but also from a vast field of discursive possibilities made up of all of the individuals experiences in life. Because the subject desires to belong, and language-use mediates this desire through discourse, the subject is more likely to draw on- and structure elements according to the discursive regimes that offers such a wholeness through identification with its structural and material characteristics. This does not mean, however, that the moment of articulation is closed off to elements drawn from other discourses, regimes and materialities. On the contrary, all events and experiences in an individual's life has been absorbed into this field as a potential resource that the

subject can draw on to make sense of the world. And the choice of elements, as well as how they are strung together to form equivalential chains in the discursive structure, is as much a combination of discourses, regimes and materialities, as it is an affective mediation of the subject's desire.

In this project, elements are identified and named in the data *ad hoc* at the researcher's prerogative in reflecting on what has been said. This is a creative, yet fully necessary, part of the analytical process.

In this chapter I have argued for the theoretical consistency of the circle model, by illustrating how it pays attention to both the structural, dynamic and affective aspects of discourse, a notion echoed by other PDA authors who are inspired by Laclau's work (cf. Glynos & Howarth, 2007; Glynos, Klimecki, & Willmott, 2012; Griggs & Howarth, 2016; Marttila, 2016; Zicman de Barros, 2020). I have zoned in on the central concept of articulation, as a point of convergence for all three of these aspects and argued for the centrality of language-use in the social production of meaning. I then presented the analytical tools of the circle model and explained how they would be applied during analysis in this project.

I will now introduce the middle-range concept of the fantasmatic narrative.

4.2 The Fantasmatic Narrative

In chapter 3.2 I argued that discourse can be identified via the relative regularity of articulatory practice amongst social subjects believed to be subjects of the discourse. To this end, I have decided to add a middle-range concept to my analytical strategy.

Middle-range concepts can be understood as a methodological tool for translating a theoretical framework into ontic units that can be applied to units of data. These ontic units allow for the observing and coding of reoccurring patterns and themes throughout the empirical data according to some ontological assumptions re-described by the researcher. The Fantasmatic Narrative is conceptualized as fifteen ontic units that can bring out these reoccurring patterns and themes throughout the empirical data

presumed to be consistent with the phenomenon under investigation. These units are further categorized into four overarching categories of 'What', 'How', 'Who' and 'Why'.

The aim of this concept is two-fold:

1) To nuance the search for a relative regularity of articulatory practice as well as potential points of contestation in the discursive structure, via the notion of fantasy in language-use.

2) To open a critical and ethical dimension from which to reflect on the role of fantasy and desire in the construction of the discourse on SUD within the context of the SCN arena.

The introduction, implementation and operationalization of a middle-range concept in this project, is largely inspired by the works of other PDA theorists who have operationalized new approaches to PDA via mid-range theorizing, in particular Martilla's Post-Foundational Discourse Analysis (Marttila, 2016) and Glynos and Howarth's Logics of Critical Explanation (Glynos & Howarth, 2007). Readers familiar with their works will recognize this way of approaching a research framework via the articulation of middle-range concepts.

The conceptualization of a middle-range concept all depends on what the highlighted subject matter of the research project is. For the Logics of Critical explanation (Glynos & Howarth, 2007), the focus is on the investigation of social change occurring via practices and regimes, and their middle-range concept of social, political and fantasmatic logics targets the way articulatory practice can curb or motivate such changes. As for Marttilas Post-Foundational Discourse Analysis (Marttila, 2016), the focus is on expanding the grammar on discursive materialization, and his middle-range concept of discursive relations and identities targets the way subject roles and institutions restrict social subjects enunciative possibilities.

In this project, the focus is on the way affect mediates subjective desire via language-use. The middle-range concept targets the way language-use always contains this trace of affect in the form of fantasies. In my approach to fantasy, I concentrate on developing a series of theoretically applicable codes that have emerged partly out of engagement with the empirical data, and partly out of the literature on ideological

fantasy. In doing so I deploy a certain amount of crosspollinated terminology that share some fluidity between the fields of PDA and works of a Lacanian orientation. I will try to distinguish them from each other, where doing so brings clarity to the analytical application of the fantasmatic narrative. I also want to reiterate that in making references to Lacanian inspired authors from this broader Lacanian orientation, such contributions are expressly meant as complimentary views to the approach articulated in this thesis, which is firmly rooted in the theoretical and philosophical assumptions of PDA. I also do not intend to draw on any alternative fields represented by such authors.

4.2.1 Theoretical Consistency

In his reading on the literature of structuralist inspired narrative analysis, Marttila (Marttila, 2016) argues that strategies of narrative analysis to identify mutually consistent practices of narration, are consistent with the relational epistemology of meaning within PDA. These strategies typically involve the identification of a narrative pattern by "*(…) conceptualizing phenomenal characteristics of the narrative elements, which practices of narration put together*." (ibid p.129)[13]. I have been greatly inspired by this idea in my conceptualization of fifteen such characteristics that can be applied to units of empirical data. I have also taken inspiration from his discursive identities and phenomenal categories, in which my categories of WHO and HOW are mostly identical to his categories of subjectivity and activity. Where our approaches separate, is in the analytical application, the highlighted subject matter, representation of data, as well as key assumptions about relations and identities. In addition, I contribute with the category of WHY, which targets the beatific and horrific dimension of fantasy, as well as the guarantor. These concepts will be explained in chapter 4.2.2.

The idea of the Fantasmatic, is to trace the relative regularity of articulatory practice amongst the participants of SCN, via the identification of mutually reoccurring and consistent narrative patterns in the discursive structure.

As discussed in the theoretical chapter, a fantasy can be conceived of as a type of narrative register to the signifying chain. While PDA operates with the concept of

equivalential and differential chains, the fantasmatic register is situated within the process of atomization and subordination which supports the equivalential chain (cf, Laclau, 2005, p. 129).

As argued by Laclau (Laclau, 2004), the process of signification would not at all be possible without the dimension of affect becoming embedded into the very structuring process of the moment of articulation. We can therefore think of the moment of articulation as a point of convergence in which the dimension of affect become intimately linked to the process of signification (Laclau, 2005, p. 111) via the fantasmatic register. Further, we can think of the fantasmatic register as multiple registers enabling the construction of a narrative (Glynos & Howarth, 2007). During the moment of closure, elements in the signifying chain are distributed according to different fantasmatic registers to conceal the incompleteness of the social and thus protect the subject from the dislocatory experiences encountered in discourse (ibid). This fantastical glue not only stabilizes the discourse against dislocations threatening its internal cohesion but stages these events into a storyline that can make sense of them. This staging, or role-playing, allows the subject to continue to enjoy himself. The concept of the Fantasmatic Narrative targets this cover-up role-playing of the elements in the signifying process, by conceptualizing fifteen ontic units representing such fantasmatic registers that elements can be coded to.

As argued in theory, the concept of fantasy is not limited to the notion of individual language-use, but rather targets both individual and collective discursive practice (cf. Zicman de Barros, 2020). By investigating this role-playing in interview data, the researcher may draw some lines between the subjectively mediated desires of actors involved in a dialogical process, to the collective fantasies produced over time by a social group engaging with complex societal issues such as sustainability transitions. How ontic manifestations of antagonism are discursively handled in such a group, may indicate individual or collective fantasmatic investments in some shared empty signifier of the discourse (cf. Cederström & Spicer, 2014; cf. Gressgård, 2015).

I am now going to argue for the analytical applicability of the Fantasmatic Narrative.

4.2.2 Analytical Applicability

I have chosen to conceptualize four overarching categories of the fantasmatic registers, called 'WHAT', 'HOW', 'WHO', and 'WHY'. These categories contain a total of fifteen ontic units that can be applied to units of data. These categories together form a fantasmatic narrative which attest for the stabilizing of discursive structure, as well as the production of the subject's mode of being. The units be applied to any type of qualitative data that hold signifying properties.

I will now expand on the distinctive features of each of these registers.

WHAT

As argued in the theoretical chapter, fantasies stage a set of ideals, values, obstacles and threats which support the construction of signifiers by articulating the in- and outsides of the discourse (cf. Glynos et al., 2012). All discourse necessarily has an outside, a border, which constitutes its presence as a discourse. This border is discursively defined through the signifying process which includes and excludes possibilities in the articulatory moments of closure. And since relational ontology takes aim at expressing the signified through the subverting function of the signifier, there is always going to be this binary relationship between positive and negative values which makes up the dynamic fabric of meaning (Marttila, 2015). In other words; there can be no expression of values or ideals without the counterpart to these which allow them to take up such a position within an equivalential chain. When a respondent articulates an ideal, for instance that of ‘green lungs’ in an urban environment, it means there is an alternative counterpart which is simultaneously rejected. The respondent cannot articulate the ideal of ‘green lungs’ without knowing of urban environments dominated by 'concrete', 'cars' and 'noise'. During the interview, these counterparts can be drawn out by the researcher through follow-up questions targeting the values, obstacles and threats tied to such ideals. For instance, the respondent may, upon such questioning, emphasize his ideal by pointing to the value of being 'environmentally conscious', the obstacle of 'local politics', and the threat of 'neo-liberal

market logics'. This category therefore takes aim at exploring ideals, values, obstacles, and threats.

Ideals and values are conceptualized as ethical, paramount, conditions required to obtain a beatific promise. Ideals point to a set of criteria perceived to be required for the obtainment of the beatific promise, whereas values point to the perceived behavioral expectations of self and others tied to these ideals.

Obstacles and threats are conceptualized as conditions that prevent the obtainment of the ethical ideals and values. Obstacles point to ongoing challenges perceived to obstruct or hinder the obtainment of the ethical ideals and values unless they are managed, whereas threats are perceived as more imminent, looming, problems which must be overcome and dealt with in order to prevent a horrific outcome.

HOW

As argued in the theoretical chapter, the subject positions that an individual invests in, will inadvertently restrict perceptions and actions according to some discursive guidelines. As discussed in the operationalization of theory, sedimented discursive patterns institute discursive regimes in which a specific horizon of intelligibility may transfer to non-linguistic objects such as artifacts, practices and institutions, giving them an objective presence to the subject. Through such sedimentations, discourses afford the objectivity and reason of certain strategies and activities over others, typically pulling on a range of resources and objects in staking out viable, appropriate, meaningful and authorized ways of responding to various issues. A respondent may have articulated the ideal of ‘green lungs’ in an urban environment, but his subject position as a public planner within a small municipality will influence how he deems it possible to obtain this ideal. He may point to the strategy of 'multistakeholder governance', including activities such as 'dialogue' and 'urban development. Or perhaps he points to the strategy of 'acquiring national development funds', and the activities of 'project initiation- and financing'. As for objects, he might articulate

'parks', 'playgrounds', and 'social meeting spaces' as objectively meaningful in such a process, perhaps not aware that other participants might associate different objects with ‘green lungs’ such as 'biodiversity' and 'edible gardens'. Further, these strategies, activities and objects are going to be mobilized by reference to resources that support these perspectives ways forward as reasonable and logical. The respondent may, for instance, reference a 'local climate-plan' approved by the city council, in which social sustainability is linked to parks and recreational areas. Together, these categories allow the researcher to investigate the influence of particular discursive regimes and materialities that might guide and restrict the respondents enunciative possibilities. What the subject chooses to say, can be an indication of the discourses he has invested himself into, which makes some strategies, activities, objects and resources more sensible and appropriate than others. This category therefore takes aim at exploring strategies, activities, objects, and resources.

Strategies and activities are conceptualized as viable paths towards the ideal conditions required to obtain a beatific promise. Strategies are methods perceived to be applicable in some form to attain the ideal conditions. Activities are the actions and exercises associated with the strategies.

Objects and resources are conceptualized as units that mobilize the objectivity of the narrative. Objects are units that have been naturalized by strategies and activities, they are not the focus of the articulation yet make up the building blocks of the assumptions and as such support the overall reasoning of the choice of strategy and perceived associated activities. Resources mobilize the narrative by framing it in a way that gives it an assumed objectivity.

WHO

As argued in theory, subject positions are interpellated through identifications with subject positions offered in discourse. This

interpellation happens in two ways; as the individual identifies with the subject positions offered in discourse, and when he in turn interpellates others via discourse. Some individuals will be interpellated as protagonists of the narrative, heroes who strive to do the right thing, and some will be considered opponents, typically associated with obstacles or threats. This process of identification within a particular discourse can tell the researcher something about the subject roles made available to participants of such dialogical processes. To give an example: If the municipal planner who articulated the ideal of ‘green lungs’ and the strategy of ‘multistakeholder governance’ articulates 'municipal planner' to be a protagonist in the narrative, we can assume that the discourse on SUD in some manner or the other has made that subject position available to him. This may happen through a set of criteria involving both the formal expectations and privileges of municipal planners, or perhaps through locally embedded cultural and social norms focusing on the environmental responsibilities associated with representatives of planning authority. If this municipal planner articulates someone else, for instance the ‘private sector’, as the protagonist of the narrative, the researcher may find other kinds of criteria enabling such an interpellation. These interpellations are perhaps particularly interesting, from a research point-of-view, in narratives where there are no interpellations of a protagonist, only opponents. The threat of the ‘neo-liberal market logic’ may, for instance, allow for the interpellation of opponents such as ‘property developers’ or ‘politicians’ perceived to be enabling this logic to thrive. The lack of any clear protagonist thus becomes an obstacle in itself, preventing the threat from being dealt with. The planner is also likely to interpellate some type of receiver who will benefit from the ideal conditions in some way. The municipal planner may, for instance, articulate ‘local residents’ as the beneficiary of ‘green lungs’, or perhaps 'local businesses' such as cafes and niche shops are the ones who will thrive from the incorporation of 'social meeting places'. Finally, the subject may interpellate helpers who are perceived to aid the protagonist. The municipal planner may

interpellate ‘local champions’ as helpers in a strategy of 'multi-stakeholder governance', or he may interpellate the 'local university' as a helper who can aid the strategy of 'initiation of project applications' for national research funds. This category therefore takes aim at exploring protagonists, opponents, receivers, and helpers.

Protagonists, opponents, receivers, and helpers are all conceptualized as subject roles of the narrative. Protagonists are individuals or groups who are perceived to be defenders of the ideal conditions and values. Opponents are individuals or groups who are perceived to block or threaten the obtainment of the ideals. Receivers are individuals or groups perceived to be the beneficiaries of the ideals and strategies. Helpers are individuals or groups perceived to be able to assist the protagonist in carrying out strategies and activities.

WHY

As argued in theory, the radical contingency of social reality makes the social inherently unstable. An encounter with this instability threatens the subject’s mode of being, and fantasies story these inexplicable encounters into meaningful narratives allowing the subject to retain his enjoyment. The beatific promise targets the part of this operation that stabilize discursive regimes by promising the subject a fullness to come as soon as these obstacles and threats have been dealt with (cf. Glynos et al., 2012). While these encounters may be experienced as alarming for the subject, he is reassured to stay steadfast on his course by this chimerical promise ahead. Horrific promises, on the other hand, entail the disastrous outcome assured to occur unless obstacles and threats are dealt with (Glynos et al., 2012). As an example: The Municipal planner may consider the poor reception of his ‘green lungs’ proposal in the city council meeting to be a result of ‘neo-liberal market logics’ which were defended by 'deceitful' ‘politicians’ who were elected on a 'green agenda'. Surely this is why his incredible idea did not take hold? If only his 'multistakeholder approach' of 'cooperation towards a common good' could gain traction. Then he could counter and conquer the nefarious

‘neo-liberal market logic’ that continues to sway the 'city council', and then the ‘local residents’ would receive this 'green addition' to their 'locality', which would 'improve their lives'! The improvement of lives, or the notion of ‘the good life’ is, in this instance, a beatific promise that continues to stabilize the fantasy and legitimize the narrative. Conversely, the municipal planner is also driven by a horrific promise: if the 'neo-liberal market logic' is allowed to thrive, it will surely ‘impoverish the lives of residents’, and may even lead to a further ‘depopulation’ of the already 'struggling' 'small municipality'. By staging both beatific and horrific promises in this way, a subject can hold on to his narrative and the enjoyment it produces. Whilst he may not get his way, the restorative promise of a fullness to come, and the threat of it being taken from him, will fuel his conviction. These ways of legitimizing events and statements that temporarily threaten to disrupt the subject’s mode of being, are naturalized by the way of the guarantor. The guarantor is a type of ideological anchor which reassures the subject of why things are as they are (Glynos et al., 2012). The guarantor is the host of the masquerade ball, shrouding the subject's encounters in a plausible reality; the host of the rules of social reality who is perceived to hold the blame for the way things are. If the subject fails in his endeavors; the rules are to blame, if the subject succeeds; the rules are why. A typical example would be the religious individual praying for the healing of a broken leg; if the leg is healed it is the will of God, if the leg remains broken, God remains all-knowing and all-good and therefore the fault must lie with the individuals flawed faith in the mysterious ways of God. It could, perhaps, be compared to the way a game-master of a roleplaying event sets the rules of the game, and the player accept unquestioningly that ‘this is just how things are’, even if the rules are experienced as trite and confusing. The player might even verbally acknowledge the rules as bewildering and frustrating, but his trust in the game-master overrides his itch to cause a fuss. To give an example: The municipal planner might be thrown by the supposedly green politician who suddenly did a 180 because it is re-election year

and time to earn some voters in the wider margins. While momentarily distraught and angry, he is not surprised; this is the ‘nature of politics’ after all. The ‘nature of politics’ becomes a guarantor, a placing of responsibility where it is perceived to reside. The municipal planner would likely not acknowledge that other actors might have perceived his ‘green lungs’ proposal to be hopelessly unachievable and naïve. These actors might see the central lot on which he proposed to establish a large park, as an excellent opportunity to turn a dime desperately needed for a small town operating on a skeleton budget. The municipal planner, in turn, constructs their lack of support into a narrative in which this obstacle of the 'hubris' and 'selfishness' of politicians, merely confirms the 'nature of politics'. This category therefore takes aim at exploring Beatific and horrific promises, as well as the guarantor.

Beatific and horrific promises are conceptualized as enigmatic promises which legitimizes the overall narrative. The beatific promise is tied to the perception of a fullness-to-come, once the paramount ideals have been obtained, while the horrific promise is tied to a perceived immanent disruption of the subject's enjoyment, unless the obstacles and threats are dealt with.

The guarantor is conceptualized as an overriding reason which naturalizes the narrative. The guarantor is typically tied to a code of conduct or guideline which absolves the subject of any blame associated with a particular narrative.

In this chapter, I have argued for the theoretical consistency of the Fantasmatic Narrative, by situating the production of fantasy within the moment of articulation; as a distribution of elements in the process of signification across different fantasmatic registers. I have introduced four fantasmatic registers and fifteen ontic units to be applied to units of data during analysis of empirical data.

I will now finish part one of this thesis, with a few critical reflections on the relationship between theoretical codes and empirical data and discuss their implications for the analytical process.

4.3 Critical Reflections

As argued in the introduction of this thesis, PDA has been criticized for having a methodological deficit. Because there are still few comprehensive contributions to solving this deficit, I choose to draw critical reflections from the two most comprehensive works that I am aware of: Glynos and Howarth's Logics of Critical Explanation (Glynos & Howarth, 2007), and Martilla's Post-Foundational Discourse Analysis (Martilla, 2016).

As argued by Glynos and Howarth (Glynos & Howarth, 2007), the key question of any social science explanation, will always be how the researcher conceptualizes the relationship between theoretical codes and empirical data. How does she identify particular empirical features as features of fantasy, and on what grounds can she distinguish between different theoretical categories when applying them to empirical phenomenons? As discussed earlier, it is not a given that one subject's identification of an empty signifier, is not another subject's floating signifier, so on what grounds does the researcher's name these?

Glynos and Howarth (Glynos & Howarth, 2007) have argued that this question of explanation within the social sciences can be conceived of as a 'problem of subsumption.' (ibid p.164). As they argue, in exploring alternative approaches to social science explanations, the spectrum of approaches to the process of subsumption within the social science tradition are typically defined with reference to the causal law paradigm. They make a break with this reference, and instead conceptualize an approach around the organizing principle of articulation, which opens for a 'particular understanding of judging and naming' (ibid p. 166). Judging refers to the situated ability of the researcher in connecting theoretical categories and empirical data from within a discourse-specific horizon of intelligibility, and naming refers to the ability of the researcher to creatively characterize and name elements presumed to make up a discourse.

The implication here, is that the process of articulation itself not only constructs the object of investigation and the meaningfulness of the empirical phenomenon under investigation, but that the explanatory capacity of this approach lies in the 'situated ability' (Glynos and Howarth, 2007, p. 184) of the researcher, as she connects theoretical categories and empirical data. To avoid being trapped in either pure empiricism or abstract theoreticism[14], the researcher must immerse herself in the process of continuously articulating connections between theoretical propositions and empirical data, to identify particular features of a phenomenon as features of the constructed phenomenon under investigation, and subsequently name them.

This implies that the researcher, as a subject of discourse, faces the same multitude of contingent and contested understandings of the philosophical, theoretical and methodological assumptions underpinning PDA. As argued in the methodological premises, the researcher is as much trapped in her own self-conceptions of social reality as any other social subject, but via a transparent judging and naming of objects as part of her own construction over the character and meaning of the phenomenon, she can achieve this epistemological break. She is creating her own narrative, nothing more, nothing less.

With their concept of articulation as a social science approach, Glynos and Howarth (ibid) rely on Laclau's conceptualization of articulation as an activity of structuring elements with no necessary connection, into a defined configuration that *"(...) if warranted, makes possible a critical explanation of the phenomenon under investigation.*" (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 183). But how, then, is this configuration, warranted? Martilla (Marttila, 2016) has argued that methodological holism implies that theory, methodology and methods form an internally coherent context in empirical research. As a consequence of methodological holism he argues, with reference to Diaz-Bone (Diaz-Bone, 2006), that we must accept the way a theoretical framework not only instructs the way reality manifests itself, but also how it can and cannot be investigated (ibid p.146). A researcher must choose, or develop, a method against the backdrop of philosophical, theoretical, and methodological assumptions that provide the phenomenal characteristics of the research object.

I will now discuss a few implications of these assumptions vis-à-vis the research strategy and methods.

4.3.1 Implications for Research Strategy and Methods

I have chosen to discuss a few implications following from the research strategy and methods presented in chapters 2 and 3.

The challenging thing about drawing out information from the discourse formation matrix, is to figure out how to specifically highlight the correlation between the individual interviews, and the discourse formation matrix. Underlying this analysis are the three-fold ontological foundations of PDA which implicates the interpretation of the analytical results.

1) The relational ontology of meaning, with its Sausserian legacy, implies that all elements presented in the individual interview matrixes, were articulated into particular relational composition within that interview. As a consequence, meaning cannot be interpreted entirely out of the discourse formation matrix alone, without continuously relaying any assumptions about its characteristics to that of the individual interviews in which these elements have been articulated. Further, I acknowledge that my interpretations will ultimately be yet another relationally constructed, creative, representation which emerges through my engagement with the data.

2) The post-foundational condition, with its ongoing impossibility of achieving social totality, implies that there is no underlying intelligible object which can ground the meaning of an object. The meaning of SUD can only be approached as an impossible totality whose meaning components are entirely internal to discourse, and further that the discourse attempting to lock down these sliding structures, will continuously fail to do so. This has several consequences.

   First, neither the discourse formation matrix, nor the individual interview matrixes, can cover the full specter of meaning-making involved in the discourse on SUD. To uncover such a fullness, would be to uncover its ultimate meaning, an end-goal entirely impossible when positioned within the post-foundational conception of the ontology of the social. The matrixes can only

represent aspects of language use, the meaning of which are entirely dependent upon the ways in which I read these matrixes, and further, how others read my work.

Second, in keeping with the post-foundational condition, the discourse formation matrix can only be studied as a snapshot of the ever-sliding meaning structures attempting to lock down the identity of SUD. While discursive practice is an ongoing activity, the research strategy works more like a photographic processing, in which the data is treated to photographic exposure. The theoretical and empirical codes work much like the chemical techniques applied to a photo negative. While the world keeps turning, the photo remains locked in its image. What this image may be interpreted as, remains dynamic, but the physical qualities of the photo are static. The discourse formation matrix is nothing more, or less, than a static representation of the analyzed data units, at the point in time in which the matrix was rendered by the researcher.

Third, and as a consequence of the post-foundational condition, each individual interview matrix must be understood as a formation with its own internally dependent autonomy, and therefore with its own signifiers, equivalential chains and narrative. The way that SUD is enacted by individuals in language, is both what makes it possible as a meaning-making project, and simultaneously impossible as an identity. When viewing the discourse formation matrix, we are really looking at a summary of all of these internally dependent meaning-making attempts put together. As a consequence, signifiers from the interviews depend on the equivalential chains sustaining them in those very interviews, and therefore the individual interview matrix signifiers do not necessarily become signifiers of the discourse formation, and this is absolutely key to understand. The individual interview matrixes show attempts at locking down the identity of SUD, attempts instigated by the dislocated identity of the term SUD. The discourse formation matrix highlights this very play of differences, of failure, the way an element may gain lots of traction in the discourse formation, and yet its meaning can be anchored in mutually exclusive individual equivalential chains and narratives, supporting different signifiers in the individual matrixes. Furthermore, elements that gain a lot of overall

attention in the discourse formation matrix, are at times not even a signifier to any of the twenty-one interviews. When I present these transitions from the discourse formation matrix to the individual interview matrixes and back, it is a way of attempting to highlight the potential consequences of this very play of differences. This play is, after all, the very entry point for my research strategy.

3) The Lacanian Psychoanalysis, with its subject of affects, implies that the individual interview matrixes will reflect aspects of the fantasies a respondent mobilize to manage the ongoing failure to signify the identity of SUD. Because each interview has its own internally dependent autonomy, we can view all elements in the discourse formation matrix as belonging to narratives in the individual interview matrixes where the elements are busy sustaining the desire of the subject. However, as argued in theory, fantasies also operate on a collective level, relaying to the discursive regimes and materialities that respondents use for identifications in their day-to-day life. And since respondents must enact SUD in language, the coding of elements to fantasmatic registers are likely to bear witness to these overarching influences of the discursive regime and materialities. This implies that the discourse formation matrix should still bear a trace of the collective fantasy that is mobilized on the individual level, when respondents try to deal with ontic manifestations of antagonism that may erupt from moments of reactivation to the discourse.

In this chapter I have operationalized the theoretical, methodological, and philosophical assumptions of PDA into a model for the analysis of qualitative interview data. The model is developed via an engagement with the philosophical assumptions underpinning Laclau's Discourse Theory, which gives centrality to the notion of articulation as a convergence of the structural, dynamic and affective dimensions of the social ontology of radical contingency. I then argued for the useful role of middle-range concepts in translating a theoretical framework into ontic units that can be applied to units of data. I conceptualized four narrative registers of the Fantasmatic Narrative, and 15 ontic units to be deployed in line with the research

strategy of identifying and coding reoccurring patterns and themes throughout the empirical data.

I then offered some critical reflections on the relationship between theoretical codes and empirical data. Here, I argued for the situated ability of the researcher in judging from within a discourse-specific horizon of intelligibility, and for the creative process of characterizing and naming elements. Ultimately, the researcher is creating her own narrative, from within her own self-conception. The structuring of elements with no necessary connection into a defined configuration, can be justified via the methodological premises of methodological holism, which implies that we accept the way a theoretical framework instructs the way reality manifests itself, and how it can and cannot be investigated. Based on this, I discussed a few implications following from the philosophical, theoretical, and methodological assumptions that provide the phenomenal characteristics of the research object, and what implications this had for the research strategy and methods presented in chapters 2 and 3.

I will now move on to part 2 of the thesis, where I re-construct the discourse on SUD, among the participants of SCN, around the mediating role of affect in language-use.

Part 2

5 Re-Constructing the Discourse

The aim of this second part of the thesis, is to re-construct the discourse on SUD according to the research strategy presented in chapter 3.2. The goal is to conduct the analytical groundwork required to answer the three research questions in the final chapter of the thesis. The purpose is to re-construct the discourse around the highlighted subject matter affect mediating subjective desire in language-use in the construction of SUD, from which to open a critical and ethical dimension to reflect on the fantasy and desire in the construction of the discourse on SUD.

As argued in the research strategy, the re-construction of the discourse is centered on identifying reoccurring patterns of articulatory practice, where mutually coherent practices are defined according to a regularity of fantasmatic investments.

This process will take occur in three steps:

1. Identifying discursive structure
2. Identifying discourse
3. Identifying discursive regime

5.1 Identifying Discursive Structure

As argued in the operationalization of theory, the discursive structure of SUD is identified by analyzing the moments, elements, equivalential chains and signifiers of multiple subjects via qualitative interviews. The data is further nuanced according to fantasmatic registers, and then combined into one material called the discourse formation matrix. This matrix is considered to represent the discursive structure of SUD during SCN activities.

I choose to present this first step of the re-construction in an Excel format. The discourse formation matrix contains 3636 elements distributed over 1065 variations. These elements come from the individual interview matrixes, where they have been individually identified, named, and connected to moments and fantasmatic registers. It is important to present this data in a concise manner, due to the sheer number of entries. The choice of presenting this re-construction in Excel is merely my personal preference.

The reader is referred to the attachment 'Discourse Formation on SUD_MATRIX' for the following guide on how these matrixes were created. The attachment details a representation of the discursive structure of SUD, as informed by the research approach of this thesis and analyzed according to the circular model. At the bottom of the main window of the excel file, the reader will find twenty-two tabs. The first tab is the discourse formation matrix, and the following twenty-one tabs detail the analysis of each individual interview.

Generating this material was done in two steps:

Step 1: Each interview recording was analyzed for moments, elements, fantasmatic registers and signifiers, and turned into an individual interview matrix. Here, analyzed units of data have been sorted according to the different topics of the interview guide. This was done to strengthen the reliability of the interview guide, in the sense that it was capable of representing aspects of the discursive practice as observed during arena activities. All the supporting data that went into analyzing the interviews and generating the matrixes was collected before the analysis of the interviews took place.

Step 2: All entries from the interview matrixes were then combined into one overarching discourse formation matrix detailing elements and fantasmatic registers. I wanted to present the discourse formation matrix as a discursive structure with focal points, rather than as moments and equivalential chains. This is done in part to give clarity to how this research strategy works.

For the sake of transparency in terms of how I identify, name, structure and represent units of data to generate both the individual interview matrixes and the discourse formation matrix, I will now provide a detailed explanation of how these datasets have been created. I consider this a creative process which would likely differ if another researcher were to be handed the same interview data. Therefore, this whole generative process is part of the analysis of this thesis and must not be construed as

some kind of factual proposition but rather as my own creative representation of the empirical data.

I will now explain how I have analyzed the interviews and structured the individual interview matrixes, followed by the discourse formation matrix.

5.1.1 The Interview Matrix

Each interview recording was first analyzed to identify moments and elements. This process was conducted by listening through the interview audio file and pulling out moments from the conversation where it appeared that the respondent was attempting to lock down elements into equivalential positions. I then attempted to capture the particular characteristics of that moment, by identifying and naming these elements as well as identifying their relation to one another via the fantasmatic registers. For example: A respondent from the town of Farsund was talking about what it means to have a good life in the town. He mentioned how the broad streets of Farsund was an obstacle to such a goal and contrasted this image with the historic narrow streets of another town in the Agder region, arguing that this other town had a soul. This moment was given several elements such as 'the good life', 'broad streets', ‘example.southern city’, 'history', 'narrow streets', and 'soul'. Following this, each element was then coded to a register-attribute vis-à-vis the other elements of the moment it figured in. In the above example, the 'good life' was coded to the register of the beatific promise, 'broad streets' was coded to the obstacle, 'example.southern city' to the resource, 'history' and 'narrow streets' to the ideal, and 'soul' to the register of the guarantor. This was very much a trial-and-error type of work, in which some elements were created, changed and deleted along the way.

Ten to fifteen moments were pulled out of each interview. Each element could only be coded once to a moment but may have been coded again to other moments. This allowed for elements to potentially be articulated to different roles in different articulations. Once this process was complete, the total list of elements was summarized, where the elements that figured the most throughout the interview were

designated as signifiers. The elements, moments and signifiers were then structured into the individual interview matrix.

The reader is now referred to the twenty-one tabs at the bottom of the main window of the excel file in the attachment 'Discourse Formation on SUD_MATRIX'.

Each tab contains two pieces of information:

1. To the right, column Y details a list of all elements that was identified and named *ad hoc* from engaging with the interview data, and column Z shows the total number of times each element was coded in the interview, here sorted from highest to lowest. Cells marked in yellow with white text indicate elements that have been coded most times in the interview.

ELEMENTS	TOTAL
1 : Incompatibility	4
2 : Project Development	4
3 : Economy	3
4 : Environmental Sustainability	3

These yellow elements are identified as signifiers within the respective interview. I made a conscious choice not to designate these as empty or floating, as my primary interest was to see how all these elements would behave in the discourse formation matrix, and from there identify some overarching signifiers and equivalential chains of the discourse on SUD in SCN.

2. To the left, column B to W detail the individual interview matrix that has been generated out of the interview data. Here, elements have been sorted according to the moments, fantasmatic narratives and interview topics they have been connected to. All participants have been given the letter 'P' and the order of presentation of the interview matrixes have been randomized. The number on top of the matrix is assigned arbitrarily but the tabs are presented in numerical order for ease of reading. The analyzed data has been sorted

according to the three thematic topics of the interview. These themes are presented on the vertical axis, and the fifteen fantasmatic categories are presented on the horizontal axis.

P5

		WHAT			
The Sustainable City		**Ideal**	**Value**	**Obstacle**	**Threat**
		Environmental Sustainability	Well-Being	Incompatibility	Growth Mechanism
	M1	Social meeting Places	Courage	Politics	
	M2	Pedestrian Streets		Cowardice	
M5		Green Lungs		Wait and See	
Urban Development		**Ideal**	**Value**	**Obstacle**	**Threat**
		Projects.Large	Taking Initiative	Incompatibility	Ownership.Lack
M6		Joint.Financing	Engagement	Politics	
	M9	Time	Drive	Time.Lack	
SCN		**Ideal**	**Value**	**Obstacle**	**Threat**
	M3	Multidisciplinary	Taking Initiative	Incompatibility	Activity.Forced
	M4	Joint Projects	Concreteness	Interests.Lack	Quality.Low
M5		Keep Momentum	Engagement	Diversity.Opinions	Ownership.Lack

The vertical axis

Each interview matrix details between ten to fifteen moments that have been sorted into the three thematic topics of the interview guide. The moments appear in column C and D. Column D details moments that have only been coded to one topic, whereas column C details moments that have been coded to two or more topics. The respondent may, for instance, have replied to a question regarding 'The Sustainable City', but his response could have slipped from this topic into the topic of 'SCN'. An element that has only been coded once in the interview may still figure in two or more thematic topics, if the moment it belongs to slips between topics.

The horizontal axis

All elements have been coded to a fantasmatic register, as well as to the moment(s) they are connected to. Column E to V detail the fifteen categories. The 'WHAT', 'HOW', 'WHO', 'WHY' bar has been added for ease of reading. There is no direct correlation between the horizontal row number of the moment and the horizontal row-number of the elements here. This visual presentation has been compressed to give a quicker overview.

The interview matrix represents the respondent's individual discursive practice on SUD, in the context of the interview setting. The way floating signifiers are often articulated to several interview topics indicate, however, that the participant both perceive and act on the interview questions in relation to a structure that lies above and beyond the interview context. How the signifiers slip between topics here, could reflect aspects of the discursive materiality associated with the context of SCN and further give some indication as to the fantasies wrapped up into this discursive practice. The signifiers of the interview can be understood as the respondents attempt to re-store meaning upon encountering the intrusion of the researchers' questions, which may illuminate aspects of the affective investment involved in these re-articulatory attempts of closure.

When re-constructing the discourse as informed by the discourse formation matrix, these individual matrixes are used for additional reflection on how the meaning of SUD is constructed as well as the role of fantasy and desire in this construction.

5.1.2 The Discourse Formation Matrix

The reader is referred to the first tab at the bottom of the main window of the excel file in the attachment ‘Discourse Formation on SUD_MATRIX’.

This is the discourse formation matrix. The matrix reflects the discursive structure of the discourse formation on SUD during SCN activities. The matrix combines all of the elements of the twenty-one interviews into one reading highlighting the fantasmatic registers that the elements have been coded to.

The discourse formation matrix is separated into three DATA OVERVIEWS, all containing the exact same data-input but sorted according to different premises. This is done purely to search for different characteristics, such as sedimentation, contestation and fantasmatic investment, within the discourse formation.

OVERVIEW 1 is sorted according to the elements that have been coded most times across the twenty-one interviews. This overview can tell the reader something about the sedimentations and contestations of the discourse. The elements appearing at the top of the list will likely be focal points of the conversation during arena activities.

OVERVIEW 2 is sorted according to the analyzed elements that have been coded to the highest variety of fantasmatic registers. This overview can tell the reader something about the instability of the discourse. The elements appearing at the top of the list will likely figure in articulations involved in establishing rivaling hegemonic frontiers during arena activities.

OVERVIEW 3 is sorted according to the analyzed elements that have been coded most times to the four different fantasmatic categories of 'WHAT', 'HOW', 'WHO' and 'WHY'. This overview can tell the reader something about the fantasies invested into the discourse. The elements appearing at the top of the lists will likely feature in articulations trying to re-store the stability of the discourse upon ontic manifestations of antagonism during arena activities.

I will now give a detailed explanation of the contents of all three overviews and their corresponding datasets.

OVERVIEW 1 - SET 1

Column A to the left contains all elements as coded across all interviews, totaling 1065 rows. For each element, the values for each of the twenty-one respondents is plotted into columns B to V. By tracing an element according to an interview respondent, the reader will find a number indicating how many times the element has been coded in the corresponding interview. The cells are color coded from green to dark red, where green represents a low value, and red represents a high value. This has been done to allow the reader to easily spot cells with a high value.

Element	P01	P02	P03	P4	P5	Total	Count
Public Transport	1	0	0	1	1	3	3
Reciprocal Relations	3	0	2	1	0	6	3

To the right, in column X and Y, the total amount of codings and the total number of respondents the corresponding element has been coded to, are summarized. SET 1 is sorted according to the count in column Y, from highest to lowest.

The aim of OVERVIEW 1 and SET 1 is to make visible a relative regularity of articulation across a group of actors. While column X presents some interesting data in terms of how many times certain elements are mentioned, the definition of discourse as elaborated in chapter 4.1.2 implies that we are looking for similarities and regularities across a group of actors.

OVERVIEW 1 – SET 2

Column AA to the left contains all elements as coded across all interviews, totaling 1065 rows. For each element, the values for each of the fantasmatic registers is plotted into columns AB to AP. By tracing an element according to one of these registers, the reader will find a number indicating how many times the element has been coded into the corresponding category. The cells are color coded from green to dark red, where

green represents a low value, and red represents a high value. This has been done to allow the reader to easily spot cells with a high value.

Element	_Ideal	_Value	_Threat	_Obstacle	_Strategy	Total	Count
Public Transport	7	0	0	0	1	8	2
Reciprocal Relations	7	9	0	0	1	17	3

To the right, in column AR, the total amount of codings and the total number of registers the corresponding element has been coded to, are summarized. SET 2 is sorted according to the count in column Y of SET 1, allowing the reader to follow a single element through SET 1 and into SET 2 on the same line without having to search through the material to see how the corresponding element figures in the fantasmatic registers.

The aim of OVERVIEW 1 and SET 2 is to enrich the reading of the relative regularity of articulation in SET 1.

OVERVIEW 2 - SET 1 and SET 2

OVERVIEW 2 – SET 1 and SET 2 is coded as OVERVIEW 1 – SET 1 and SET 2, and contains the exact same dataset. But in this OVERVIEW, SET 1 is sorted according to the count in column CO of SET 2, from highest to lowest. Once again, the reader can follow a single element through both sets without having to search through the material for the corresponding element.

The aim of OVERVIEW 2 is to make visible elements coded across both a high number of respondent interviews but also a high variety of fantasmatic registers. In other words, these are highly popular elements that play different fantasmatic roles in the articulations of different respondents. Such elements will indicate areas of instability within the discourse, as they are likely articulated into rivaling hegemonic frontiers during arena activities.

OVERVIEW 3 – WHAT, HOW, WHO, WHY

OVERVIEW 3 is coded as the two previous overviews and contains the exact same dataset. But in this overview, the data has been sorted according to the four fantasmatic categories. Columns CS, DA, DJ and DR all contain the entire dataset, but they have been further sorted according to the count in columns CV, DG, DP and DW.

The aim of OVERVIEW 3 is to make visible the intensity of investment into each of the categories as well as the fifteen sub-categories. Here, the reader can follow any of the fantasmatic registers from the top down to quickly identify elements that have been coded across a high number of interviews to said register.

5.1.3 Summary

In this part of the re-construction of the discourse on SUD, I have identified the discursive structure of the discourse by analyzing moments, elements, and signifiers of multiple subjects via qualitative interviews. This data was further nuanced according to the fantasmatic registers and then combined into one material considered to represent the discursive structure of SUD during SCN activities. This material denotes the characteristics of the discourse.

I will now move on to identify aspects of these characteristics, by locating empty and floating signifiers, as well as key areas of contestation.

5.2 Identifying Discourse

As argued in the operationalization of theory, discourse can be identified by locating consistent patters of sedimentation to the discursive structure, as well as moments of institution and contestation to these patterns.

As argued in the research strategy, I have chosen to further separate this task into three parts:

1) Locating empty signifiers

2) Locating floating signifiers

3) Locating key areas of contestation and exploring how ontic manifestations of antagonism that erupt during arena activities, i.e., verbal disagreements and arguments, are discursively navigated via the empty and floating signifiers.

5.2.1 Locating Empty Signifiers

I start this process by looking at the most prominent elements of the discourse formation matrix. The reader is once again referred to OVERVIEW 1 – SET 2 in the 'Discourse Formation on SUD_MATRIX' for the following extrapolation.

Here I present the top twenty unanimously articulated elements of the discourse formation matrix. These are elements that have been repeatedly locked down via moments across ten or more interviews. In addition, they appear to mostly be articulated to the same register across interviews. This means that some elements may in a few instances have been articulated once or twice into another register but have still been listed here if I find that there is an overwhelming evidence for their similar use across interviews. These elements may be supporting a range of different equivalential chains from the individual interview, but still appear more or less unambiguous in the discourse formation matrix.

These twenty elements appear to be important elements that the participants gravitate towards and agree upon.

Element	Fantasmatic Register	Participation Count	Element Count
Example.Local Development Project	Resource	17	58
Example.Occupation	Resource	17	27
City First	Ideal	14	18
Incompatibility	Obstacle	14	24
SCN	Helper	13	28
Time.Lack	Obstacle	13	15
Prioritize Different	Strategy	12	24
Cars.Less	Ideal	11	14
Example.Southern City	Resource	11	21
Interconnectivity	Guarantor	11	21
Projects	Object	11	14
Public Transport	Ideal	11	12
Reciprocal Relations	Value	11	18
Activity Overload	Threat	10	14
Conflict of Interest	Obstacle	10	15
Example.Named Participant	Resource	10	17
Participatory Planning	Strategy	10	20
Social Meeting Places	Ideal	10	14
Sustainability	Object	10	12
Taking Initiative	Value	10	14

Figure 9 - Top twenty unanimously articulated elements of the discourse formation matrix, as highlighted by the researcher.

While the discourse formation matrix indicate that the structure is certainly volatile, these twenty elements remain fairly sedimented via the closures of the articulatory moments of the participants during interviews. According to Marttila (cf. Marttila, 2016) this means that we can argue that the pattern exhibits a relative regularity of

articulation which appear somewhat stable. We thus have a certain amount of sedimentation.

Further, we can argue that since these elements appear relatively unambiguous within this particular discursive pattern, they must have been favored over other options that are perhaps also favorable and yet not *quite right* for the context in which they have been articulated. Of course, it seems reasonable to assume that professional individuals tasked with urban development, who gather regularly for the same activities, who work in the same region and who relate their work to the same regional policies, politics and developments, have some common perspectives. But it is also important to recognize that this commonality in itself is not enough to conclude that the actors partake in the same discourse during arena activities. From the discourse formation matrix, we can identify many elements that are shared by some but not all participants, such as 'social community', 'resilience', or 'city council'. This could be because some participants share the same professional discipline or home- and working city, perhaps they have worked together on the same processes, or perhaps they operate within discourses that are parallel to the topic of SUD.

While all these other perspectives in themselves offer interesting insights, the focus here remains solely on identifying mutual practices of articulation to confirm the presence of a discourse on SUD amongst participants of SCN. As such, these outliers offer us a different kind of insight; they are viable options of articulation that are clearly there yet do not gain as much traction as the twenty unanimously articulated elements. Which means that the twenty identified elements represent a kind of sedimentation that serve a discursive function. Their unambiguous appearance also suggest that they have been partially emptied of their particularistic content to stand in equivalence in support of an empty signifier. That is to say; when participants articulate on matters in relation to SUD, within the context of SCN, their statements are likely to, in some way, draw on these elements to reflect the meaning of SUD. That is not to say that participants mean the same when they use these elements, on the contrary; they may be articulated to support different arguments or ideas, but do so in a way that sow together, rather than disrupt, the dialogue during arena activities. They appear in the same registers, and therefore likely provide some discursive tools

that the participants intuitively use to make themselves understood and gain access to the social group.

This exclusion of the possibility of a myriad of other options, in favor of the top twenty unanimously included and articulated elements, not only strengthens the assumption of the presence of a relative sedimentation, but gives us an idea as to the meaning-contents of SUD within this particular discursive context. We could therefore argue that they provide the discourse with a more or less stable and taken for granted frontier. As argued in the operationalization of theory, the empty signifier is going to appear in relation to this frontier, as a means to preserve the internal tension of the equivalential chain.

The articulatory variations discussed above show not only that there are some differences between actor perspectives, but also that there are some common views that override these variations within the context of SCN. It tells us that there is likely also one or more empty signifiers playing a key role in stabilizing the discourse against all these variations. I am now going to consider whether any of the elements exhibit such an overwhelming presence within the discursive structure.

The Empty Signifier

The element of 'example.local Development project', has been coded a total of 58 times across 17 interviews, over twice as much as the second on the list.

Example.Local Development Project	Resource	17	58

Figure 10 - The Empty Signifier of 'Example.Local Development Project.

While other elements in the discourse formation matrix, such as the 'example.occupation', 'politicians' and 'UiA' have also been articulated in almost every interview, the 'example.local development project' has a significantly higher frequency than any other element. By *frequency* I refer to the total number of times the element has been coded. Unlike the other top elements, this element is also coded almost exclusively to the register of the resource, indicating there is little to no variation to its articulatory use. Because this element appears to hold a more

prominent and stable position than any other within the discourse formation matrix, I choose to designate this element as an empty signifier of the discourse.

The ‘example.local development project’ signifier has been coded from instances in which the participant choses to contextualize the conversation by referencing examples of local projects [15]. It typically looks something like this:

The following was a response by P14. I had asked the respondent what the main challenges to urban development might be, and the conversation quickly turned to issue of politicians backing out of projects. When prompted to tell me more about this, I got the following response:

> *“It’s a question of Economy. And then you have the whole process. And then it’s a common <pause> It’s a common project, because the detail-regulation <pause> For example, with the development of the main pedestrian street here, it was a question of (…)"* – P14 Interview

The respondent talks briefly about getting politicians evolved in the process of improving a pedestrian street in a small town.

> *"The building plot is so unique, that it would require a lot of funds to do it right (…) You have to actually prioritize it (…) But <these politicians> backed out (…) I feel like politicians should be bold enough to face being unpopular”*- P14 Interview

In another example, P8 responded to a question of how one works with urban development in the following way:

> *”It’s exciting when the pressure to develop comes from the politicians (…) What’s exciting about working in <this city>, is that our politicians are very willing to throw themselves into things. For example, it was about this time last year when we were going to be developing this area, that the youth gave us input to build an ice-*

skating rink (…) And then they developed this solution where (…)" - P8 Interview

The respondent talks briefly about how the ice rink is going to look and function.

But of course, some feel these processes happen a bit too quick. That we should spend more time planning in a more holistic fashion. But the benefit here is that things happen a bit quickly. And I don't think there are any hidden agendas behind it." – P8 Interview

In both examples, the local development project is used to contextualize arguments relating to the role of politicians in urban development. While there is a clear contestation between how politicians are viewed in these two excerpts, both articulations utilize locality as a way of framing their unique perspective on politicians. From the discourse formation matrix we can see that the 'example.local development project' has been articulated to the register of the resource. As argued in the operationalization of theory, the resource mobilizes a narrative by framing it in a way that gives it an assumed objectivity. In the examples above, the signifier is used to structure some incidents into narratives that makes sense of what the participants might have experienced as distressing, frustrating, or confusing at the time.

P14's frustration regarding politicians backing out, is turned into an argument for the threat posed by the cowardice and self-preservation of politicians, here understood as opponents. P14 then stages the municipality administration as a protagonist, who needs to adopt a strategy of prioritizing different in urban development processes, which requires the value of being bold.

For P8, the somewhat chaotic process by which the ice-rink was agreed upon and implemented, is turned into an argument for the strategy of keeping momentum. While the haste with which the politicians moved was hard to keep up with, P8 ties the resulting local development project to the benefits such haste has for receivers such as local business life and local organizations, the next generation, and the municipality. P8 then uses this local development project to stage an argument of the value of respecting the political system.

In both examples, the participants use the local development projects to give their arguments its objectivity.

The same occurs during arena activities in SCN, where participants often cast elements from the articulations of others into the context of their own locality, to utilize what overs have said to mobilize their own arguments. The following is an example of such an occurrence, from a strategy gathering in SCN dated 24. April 2019. Over the period of two days, the participants were tasked with the construction of an overall vision for SCN. On this particular morning, the project manager had asked the participants to share with the group what aspects of SCN they were passionate about:

P7: "*I came from a meeting in <this city>, and I was a little euphoric (…) I think SCN is about moving the city from 2.0 to 3.0, from consumer to producer, from passive to active (…). What's important is to help people retake ownership of the city core again, for them to participate again. I sold this in as a new strategy in <My city>. They know that if business life is to survive, there must be a lot of people downtown (…)*."

P19: "(…) *The question is, how bold do we (SCN) dare to be?*"

P10: "*Can I give an example of this from a development project in <my city>? We have been using <this strategy> to help people retake ownership of the city core again.*"

P10 talks briefly about methods utilized for citizen participation in connection to the development project, which lead to both successes and failures.

P10: "*So, I believe in this idea that we must try to think some new thoughts around the notion of neighborhood community*."

Here, P10 uses the exemplification of a local development project to argue that the statements of P7 appear relevant in regards to the sustainable city. P10 uses the example of a local development project in P10's own town, to mobilize a narrative

promoting a particular strategic method of participatory planning, involving the activity of citizen dialogues, in pursuit of the ideal of 'ownership.residents'. In this way, P10 uses the local development project to argue for the relevance and wisdom of the ideal of residents feeling ownership to the sustainable city. The empty signifier thus enable the ideal of ‘ownership.residents’ to travel between different equivalential chains with seeming ease, allowing several arguments to co-exist due to the unifying function of the empty signifier.

In the example above there is an unspoken agreement as to the overriding importance of local perspectives, experiences, and qualities, when it comes to discussions of the sustainable city. Regardless of what this locality is filled with, it serves as an overriding marker which guides their dialogue. The participants can agree on the ideal of citizen ownership to the city, regardless of the particular activities or strategies deployed to attain this ideal. Or rather; ‘ownership.residents’ can remain relevant and meaningful to the discussion, precisely because the concept is being cast via an overall shared narrative that the local has a unique quality that is best understood by locals. Different ideals, strategies and activities can therefore easily adapt to the local lens, without such adaptation causing a fuss during activities.

As the conversation shows, participant's reference to the local development project is not just an arbitrary reflection over what could be done in a specific case. Rather, the reference to local development projects indicates a locally embedded understanding of the topics being discussed. These outtakes touch on many other things, but the point here is to stress the centrality of the way this empty signifier, and its ambiguity, is used to give the conversation a certain kind of agency. As discussed in the introduction, this 'nebulousness' is not without its merits (Hugé et al., 2012, p. 188), as it allows for a diverse range of actors to come together around some broader goals.

As seen in theory, subjects use empty signifiers to communicate effectively and efficiently, by summarizing a multitude of elements with reference to signifiers that represent them in particular ways. It is a clever way of letting people know what they are talking about, and in what context, without having to elaborate on every possible contingency for the meaning of their sentences. Relating this to SCN, the meaning, relevance, and importance of that which is being said remains intact to each participant, even if these meanings are starkly different, because such articulations

relies on the empty signifier which keeps the discursive structure together. It is, of course, also within this hurdling that so much of the miscommunication happens, when participants think they understand the meaning of another's articulation, only to later discover that they were not even running on the same track and field. But, this 'slippage, imprecision and misrecognition' (Gunder, 2006, p. 213) is what makes the signifier serviceable in a variety of contexts. At least until the point where its content needs to be translated into applicable policies and actions in the network, where these unspoken variations may come to the forefront in new and unexpected ways.

The example above demonstrates how the empty signifier provides the discourse with productivity. Local development becomes a crucial component in piecing together all manner of concepts in relation to SUD. Since the empty signifier holds the capacity to keep actors in the same discursive terrain, it is likely that issues related to SUD are referenced via this signifier during arena activities, rather than other types of resources such as institutional- municipal or regional plans and policies, or even sustainability itself.

We find evidence of this in the lacking number of times that elements such as 'municipal plan' or 'regional plan' have been coded to the discourse formation matrix. For instance, it would have been reasonable to expect that the newly adopted, widely publicized and recognized, regional policy of 'Regionplan Agder 2030' (Agder-Fylkeskommune, 2019) would occur frequently in the data. The regional plan targets the local implementation of the UN sustainability goals in policy and practice, with five comprehensive topics: attractive and viable cities, equity and sustainability, education and competence, transport and communication, and culture. I expected that the participants would be articulating this plan when discussing SUDs in plenum. Instead, the policy only gets a mention in passing, in relation to a discussion on how to finance a local project. Rather, they kept reflecting topics back to their own locality, and via this gain the attention and listening-capacity of the other participants.

As discussed in theory, it is the researcher's prerogative to discern whether a signifier is floating or empty, based on its function in discourse. The 'example.local development project' signifier is designated as empty because it appears to support an array of diverging and at times contradictory equivalential chains, allowing for the actors to partially operate within the same discursive terrain. But the point of calling

it *empty*, is to stress this function of support that lets the subjects of the discourse come together around some shared meaning on SUD within the particular context of SCN, despite the clear meaning-variations on SUD on an individual level.

The designation of *empty* also emphasizes the notion of a powerful enigmatic promise attached to this particular signifier's reversing function. As discussed in the theoretical section, the empty signifier is a type of nodal point that stands in for the rest of an equivalential chain to stabilize the chain against some exterior that has been rejected. The empty signifier performs this function via not having a fixed meaning in and of itself; it reverts the absence, or lack, of the constitutive dislocations threatening its cohesion, by representing it through an idea of fullness (Marchart, 2018). It does this by naming the signifier in relation to the exterior, thus giving the exterior a presence in discourse, and through this it both closes the gap that threatens the delicate tension of the equivalential chain, and simultaneously gives the gap a presence that allows for the chain to be constructed (ibid). As long as the empty signifier exists, in this reversing form, it can be utilized as a point of convergence for the production of meaning within a contingent discursive terrain.

Calling the signifier *empty,* allows the researcher to ask: What is it that the centrality of the local development project is trying to fix, when it is being articulated in relation to SUD in the context of an informal co-creative arena in southern Norway? Where and how does the contingency of social reality inflict upon the processes in such a way that the gap needs a bridge in order for the discursive practice to make sense? What is the promise attached to this empty signifier?

I have now identified twenty unanimously articulated elements within the discourse formation matrix. I have argued that we could view these elements to stand in equivalence to one another in support of an empty signifier. I then argued that one of the elements of the equivalential chain has stepped up to take this central position; the local development project. I argued that this element appears to hold a unifying function in the discourse, and that this indicates that some powerful promise is attached to this element.

In order to understand and explain these findings, I now move on to locate floating signifiers.

5.2.2 Locating Floating Signifiers

I start this process by looking at the most prominent elements of the discourse formation matrix. The reader is referred to OVERVIEW 2 – SET 2 in the 'Discourse Formation on SUD_MATRIX' for the following extrapolation.

Here I present the top fourteen floating elements of the discourse formation matrix. These are elements that have been repeatedly locked down via moments across ten or more interviews. But unlike chapter 5.5.1, I am now charting elements that have been articulated to different fantasmatic registers across these interviews. This means that an element might be somewhat evenly split between two registers, but also articulated once or twice in some other register. In these instances, I include the outliers as they contribute to the potential contestation of the discourse formation.

Element	Fantasmatic Register	Participation Count	Element Count
UiA	Object Receiver Helper Opponent	16	40
Politicians	Obstacle Threat Object Protagonist Helper Opponent	16	31
Residents	Protagonist Receiver Helper	15	26
Research	Ideal Strategy Activity	14	18

	Object Resource Helper Beatific promise		
SCN	Object Resource Protagonist Receiver Helper Opponent	13	28
Mobility	Ideal Strategy Object Resource	13	21
Municipality	Object Protagonist Receiver Helper opponent	11	24
Small City	Obstacle Object Protagonist Receiver	11	23
Urban Development	Ideal Obstacle Threat Activity Object Beatific promise	11	25
Clover	Strategy Object	10	15

	Resource Beatific promise Guarantor		
Economy	Obstacle Object Guarantor	10	14
Multifaceted Term	Obstacle Threat Object Guarantor	10	14
Social Sustainability	Ideal Value Strategy Object Beatific Promise Guarantor		
The City	Object Protagonist Receiver Opponent	10	22

Figure 11 - Top fourteen floating signifiers of the discourse formation matrix, as highlighted by the researcher.

These fourteen elements appear to have been articulated to several different fantasmatic registers in the discourse formation matrix, indicating some areas of the discursive structure that are less stable. Initially, these elements will appear to the participants as offering effective communication, since they have gained a certain amount of traction and seem to frequently be articulated in the interviews. But because these signifiers appear in different registers, the participants are more likely to miscommunicate when articulating these signifiers during arena activities, in ways which could lead to verbal disagreements and conflicts. When a participant articulates one of these elements, others might intuitively sense that they are navigating

according to a different map and will be keen to get the conversation back on track according to their own map.

As discussed in theory, meaning is never fully sutured and therefore constantly attempted captured through the articulations of the subject (cf. D. R. Howarth, 2000). Potential battlegrounds may erupt in which different actors discursively negotiate over the meaning of something. These battlegrounds are marked by the displacement of signifiers, a process with threatens the hegemonic frontier of the discourse. In these instances, the floating signifiers become indeterminate or suspended, depending on the context in which they are articulated. This is what the fourteen floating signifiers indicate. The displacement of signifiers may lead to misunderstandings and general conflict and can result in the dissolving of the overarching equivalential chain of the discourse. When this happens, the empty signifier ceases to be experienced as meaningful and will lose its unifying potential. Conversely, it may lead to the re-articulation of the dominant hegemonic frontier of the discourse, a process made possible by the articulation of a fantasy that mobilizes the unifying promise of the empty signifier. I find it plausible that these fourteen elements could be articulated to rivaling hegemonic frontiers during arena activities, and that they therefore are floating signifiers in the discourse.

I have now identified fourteen floating signifiers which could be involved in moments of contestation to the discourse, in a sense they represent the borders where the discourse becomes more unstable. If the findings of the discourse formation matrix are accurate, I should now be able to trace both the floating and the empty signifiers via moments of contestation in the arena activities. The assumption here, is that the articulation of any of these floating signifiers opens up a space for potential ontic manifestations of antagonism during arena activities, i.e., disagreements. And these disagreements will likely be followed up on by an articulation of the empty signifier of the local development project, attempting to stabilize the discourse.

In the following I present my findings of four key areas of contestation in the discourse, emerging out of my engagement with the discourse formation matrix, the individual interview matrixes and the observational data.

5.2.3 Four Key Areas of Contestation

I start this process by presenting four key areas of contestation that emerge out of my engagement with the discourse formation matrix, the individual interview matrixes, and the observational data. These are named according to my own judgement of what the contestation centers on:

1. Projects vs. Exchange of Experience
2. Development vs. Degrowth
3. Theory vs. Practice
4. The Blame Game

I have made a simple table-overview (see attachment 'Rivaling Hegemonic Frontiers') indicating the number of times these areas of contestation clearly produced disagreements and arguments during arena activities in the period of spring, 2019.

I will now present each of these areas, tying them first to the individual interview matrixes and the floating signifiers of the discourse formation matrix, before giving examples drawn from the observational data, of what this contestation might look like. I then discuss how the participants discursively navigate these contestations.

I consider the examples I draw on to be representative of the many moments of contestation I witnessed during the six months of recording activities. All quotes have been loosely translated from the Norwegian original to English and have further been paraphrased by the researcher. In addition, I dramatize outtakes from observational data according to my own perception of the events that unfolded, such as the atmosphere in the room and displays of emotion from participants. On a few occasions I also pull on SCN participants who were not interviewed for this research project. This is mostly done to contextualize statements made in the same setting by interviewed participants, and to better flesh out the conversations for the readers sake. These participants are given random double letters such as PZZ and PYY to distinguish them from the interview participants.

Contestation: Projects vs. Exchange of Experience

Roughly half of the interviewed participants hope to develop multisectoral projects on SUDs under a joint financing scheme, where the purpose of SCN is the facilitation of initiation of projects. The other half want to use the arena for the exchange of experience in relation to local challenges and opportunities regarding SUDs, where the purpose of SCN is to learn and develop some utopian visions of the future. These fronts come to a clash over which ideals and strategies SCN should concern itself with.

Here is an example of how these frontiers looks, drawn from the individual interview matrixes:

The participants who are interested in project development, for instance P2, P5, P7 and P16, register ideals in relation to the thematic of SCN such as 'joint projects', 'joint financing', 'projects.large' and 'join existing projects'. These ideals are tied to strategies such as 'co-creation', 'multistakeholder governance', 'project development' and 'research'. They tie some key values to these chains, among them 'concreteness', 'keep momentum', 'drive' and 'realism'.

On the flipside, we have participants interested in the exchange of experience and learning, for instance P1, P4, P6 and P10, constructing an equivalential chain that almost flips the registers of the first group. An example of some ideals registered here are 'co-creation', 'multidisciplinary', 'collaboration' and 'learning', which are tied to strategies such as 'projects-sharpened', 'incentives', 'city first', and 'urban transition theme'. Here we find values such as 'time.slow down', 'refinement' and 'personal relations'.

While these frontiers share some of the same elements, the interviews reveal that they have been registered to different fantasmatic registers, performing different functions in the individual fantasies of the participants.

We can tie this frontier to the floating signifier of 'research' from step 5.2.2. 14 participants have articulated this signifier to no less than 7 different fantasmatic registers. Without the fantasmatic registers, we may not have been able to identify the

amount of different equivalential chains that this element plays to. It's also tied to the floating signifiers of 'residents' and 'clover'[1].

These frontiers have been observed 13 times over the course of 6 months activity in SCN (see attachment 'Rivaling Hegemonic Frontiers'). Here is an example drawn from observational data of what it looks like when it emerges as an ontic manifestation of antagonism during arena activities:

In a Steering Group meeting, 26.06.2019, the project manager was presenting a proposal for the way forward for SCN. He proposed three strategies that were to co-exist along each other within the arena: 1) The first strategy was for SCN to be an arena for learning where participants contributed to raising competencies. 2) The second strategy was for SCN to be an arena for co-creation where research was conducted with and on the cities. 3) The third strategy was for SCN to be a future-focused arena contributing to dialogue on challenges and possibilities for the region. In the meeting, he presented a proposal involving a budget of approximately 7 million NOK a year. The estimated costs were to cover three fulltime positions, facilitate three city labs, cover costs of initiating projects, and handling communications operations along the way. The participants did not agree that such a sum was necessary for the arena to succeed, but it quickly became apparent that they had different perspectives of what success was tied to. Some tied the strategy of SCN to the successful initiation of jointly financed research projects (cf. P2). Others tied the strategy to the opportunity to transfer competencies and knowledge from the university into local planning practices, stating that this had to be the purpose of the arena (cf. P4, P20). Some participants were concerned that the cities would end up serving the university or the arena, rather than the other way around, stating that the arena existed to serve the perspectives of the cities (cf. P3).

Shortly after, the following conversation ensued:

[1] Clover here refers to references to the three traditional aspects of sustainability; social, environmental and economic, as established by the Brundtland report (WCED, 1987).

P2: *"I understand that there are currently a lot of ideas on the table for projects that SCN could work on. As PLL has suggested, why not use the university Co-Lab to develop some of these? (...) I think that would be a great idea. And I think we should just get started. I don't think we should sit here and discuss how to get a good workflow going, we certainly shouldn't discuss how to get these processes to work well. Now I think we should just pick some ideas and push on to make them happen. These are the ideas we have available, let's see which we can use to create some projects, and then just move ahead."*

Project Manager: *"But that's exactly what we have been doing. I'm working myself to death here."*

P2: *"Evidently you haven't succeeded."*

PLL breaks into the conversation.

PLL: *"I agree that we should try to make something happen with Co-Lab, but we must not forget that research is more than just projects. It is the transfer of knowledge, it is teaching. And the university has an opportunity here to conduct research but also to transfer knowledge and to actually have an audience. And it's this process in itself that can produce learning in the region and in the world."*

PLL talks briefly about the value of the university to the region, and the purpose of the arena as a provider of knowledge and learning. Shortly after he excuses himself for another meeting.

P20: *"Regardless of the purpose, I agree with the project manager. The city labs need some dedicated staff. We need someone to just keep the working groups in the labs together, someone who can be in regular touch with the participants. We depend on this; the project manager cannot do more".*

P1: *"It's still important to discuss the purpose, to discuss what the municipalities are going to get for participating, to discuss what the university is going to get for participating. That is what we are talking about. (…) We don't need this network, if we don't know what we want to gain from it. There are more than enough networks out there."*

The conversation moves back to the use of Co-Lab for initiating research projects, but some participants state that they are concerned that the arenas role as a place for ongoing dialogue and learning may disappear:

PKK: *"It is challenging to find arenas where we can share both good and bad experiences, where we can share our knowledge with one another. That would be a meaningful purpose to an arena like this. This could potentially generate some projects along the way too. I am just a little concerned now that the purpose of this arena is simply to create projects independently of what is actually going on in the cities."*

P1: *"I agree, access to the exchange of knowledge and experiences with the other cities is what we gain from this."*

P20: *"This was always intended to be an arena for knowledge sharing, but that knowledge has to come from somewhere. That knowledge comes from research development and innovation projects. There is a grey zone between research and development projects which isn't always clear. But to me, it's obvious that we must have research and innovation projects in the arena. Of course we shouldn't just be doing research, but actually conduct and influence development. We want to conduct research and developments in partnership with the cities."*

P4: *"I perceive the project manager to be a little stuck in his thinking (…). I can share my own experience from participating in writing a research application for a development project in our home city. It*

was an eye opening experience, because I learned that research targets very concrete things. It's not magic. Conducting research is to investigate the things we are doing in the city, in a proper way, by someone who has the competence to conduct research and who can contribute with knowledge input. And let me give a concrete example from a development project in <participants hometown>."

The participant tells the story of how their municipality wanted to explore how they could increase social activity in a newly established urban area. They engaged a researcher who developed a method for mobilizing local residents to start up a host of local activities. When he finishes the story, the somewhat heated discussion has dissolved.

In this outtake, we can observe how the participants attempt to lock down the meaning of SUD, by re-articulating a few floating elements into rivaling hegemonic frontiers supporting the ideals of the project and the process respectively, which stake out very different strategies and purposes for the activities within the arena. Elements such as 'projects', 'process', 'knowledge' and 'reciprocal relations' are being cast into different narratives of SUD which entail very different kinds of activities, roles, and responsibilities for the participants. When PKK is expressing concerns about the purpose of the arena shifting, he is really constructing the immediate experience of dislocation to his own equivalential chain, the one he thought was representative of SCN up till this point, into a narrative that can make sense of the dislocation: The alternative perspectives, as articulated by P2 and P20, are constructed as a threat to the obtainment of the ideal of a meaningful knowledge-exchange of what is actually happening at the local level. He momentarily buckles down on his equivalential chain. The contestation is, however, resolved shortly after, as P4 articulates both the research project and the local development process as coexisting ideals within a narrative focusing on the local development project.

Here we see the unifying function of the empty signifier, which, once utilized, can allow for the co-existence of diverse and at times mutually exclusive perspectives, via the enigmatic promise that it brings: There is a way forward in which we can collaborate without having to solve this dilemma.

Contestation: Development vs. Degrowth

Roughly one third of the interviewed participants want to see a thematic shift in the dialogue on sustainability as conducted by SCN, where the goal is to re-define the terminology of sustainability in SCN away from economic growth and so-called green developments and onto the environment and degrowth. The other two thirds want less of a thematic focus on issues pertaining to climate and environment, and a stronger emphasis on social sustainability and multistakeholder forms of governance. These fronts come to a clash over which ideals SCN should strive towards in its strategy and activities.

Here is an example of how these frontiers looks, drawn from the individual interview matrixes:

The participants who are interested in re-defining terminology, for instance P6, P15, 18 and P20 register ideals in relation to the thematic of urban development such as "climate and environment', 'Zero Growth Target', 'buildings.gentle rehabilitation' and 'Take SDGs Seriously. These ideals are juxtaposed by threats such as 'contentment', 'focus.efficiency', 'economic interests' and 'growth mechanism'.

On the other side, participants embrace a market-led development, for instance P8, P9, P11 and P21. Here we find ideals such as 'focus.praxis', 'financial carrots', 'goal-orientation' and 'focus.economic benefits theme'. These ideals are staged against threats like 'competence.lack', 'hubris', 'conflict of interest' and 'institutional inertia'.

We can tie these frontiers to the floating signifiers of 'urban development' from step 5.2.2. 11 participants have articulated this signifier to 6 different fantasmatic registers, among them both as an ideal, a threat and a beatific promise. It's also tied to the floating signifiers of 'economy', 'the city' and 'social sustainability'.

These frontiers has been observed 5 times over the course of 6 months activity in SCN (see attachment 'Rivaling Hegemonic Frontiers'). Here is an example drawn from observational data of what it looks like when it emerges as an ontic manifestation of antagonism during arena activities:

At the strategy seminar, 24.04.2019, an advisor on sustainability from a larger city gave a presentation on how to reach the UN sustainability goals at the local level. By the end, one of the academic participants confronted the advisor on his local focus of the practical applicability of the sustainability goals:

P20: *"I have a question for you. Isn't there a small or rather large elephant in the room here? It seems obvious that we aren't talking about economic growth in SCN, but can we escape this topic? Is this even on the debate agenda? Is it even possible to achieve transformation within a system that demands economic growth?"*

The participant appears exasperated.

P6: *"A small comment on that; the architecture Trebienale this fall is on degrowth as a system."*

P20: *"Yes, I know a lot of people are on that. But is this topic a part of our debate (in SCN)? Or does economic growth just go without saying, in the sense that we are really just looking for different kinds of schemes that can naturally facilitate for it?"*

PZZ: *"If we are talking locally here, then my experience is that there isn't much talk about that no. If you are talking about challenging the growth-paradigm, then I think that's the wrong way to go (with SCN) in the current system of local politics. (…) But in goal 12 on responsible consumption, some of those problematics are addressed. If everyone has to consider how the goals are connected at all times, and how to accomplish them while also maintaining economic growth… <pause> it isn't entirely compatible with the sustainability goals."*

The discussion centers on the practice of shipping fish to China where they are filleted and then sent back to Norway, producing economic growth for the nation at a high cost to the global climate. A few participants join the

conversation to agree that there is a disconnect between economic advice geared towards growth and that of the sustainability goals.

PZZ: *"This disconnect is something you have to strategically sneak into the conversation, if you are going to get some good political discussions on the matter."*

P7: *"I think that we should discuss how to change our associations of growth instead. Is growth necessarily economic growth? Or could it be growth in welfare? Growth in nature and personal experiences? Growth in nature qualities? Or to reduce the social problems children experience? If you transform those kinds of goals into growth goals, it may push economic goals further back. If we, as a group, define other types of growth goals, like the improvement of the last years of life, is that growth? I'd say yes! That would offer the society more in return, in a holistic fashion, and economically too."*

The project manager cuts into the conversation before P20 can respond, and states that the participants will get to discuss more later as there is another presentation coming up. The discussion never surfaces properly again.

In this example, P20 introduces a dislocation to the discourse by articulating the 'lack of public debate' as an obstacle to reaching the ideal of 'transformation' which is currently under threat from 'economic growth'. While P20s attempt temporarily shifts the conversation, P7 re-articulates 'economic growth' into a narrative where the strategy of 're-defining terminology' towards the ideal of 'social sustainability', could see 'economic growth' as an inconsequential object. Something that is just there, in the background of things. Before P20 has an opportunity to respond, the project manager steps in to direct the dialogue to another matter entirely, displacing the discord to the great beyond. P20 seems to accept this, and the conversation moves on.

This sequence of events tells us something about the way P20's enunciative possibilities may be restricted by the particular practice taking place. According to the

circular model, the discourse on SUD within SCN is going to reflect a discursive regime that motivates subjects to behave in particular ways in order to retain their position within the social group perceived to be adhering to the discourse. This motivation can often be observed via the discursive materialities that have been motivated by such regimes. Discursive materialities is all about guiding and restricting the subject's perceptions and actions through socially organized practices. Perhaps P20s conformity to the planned schedule of the day, is really about retaining his access to identify with the group, by adhering to the established norms and expectations associated with co-creation as a practice? P20 could have chosen to cut into the conversation again, to verbally challenge P7 or the project manager, or to get up and leave. Instead, he chooses to conform to the expectations of the co-creative practice, even if it means modifying his own behavior. If this is the case, then the empty signifier of the local development project may be staged in some kind of overarching fantasy involved in producing the participants enjoyment in the midst of this self-modification.

Contestation: Theory vs. practice

Most of the interviewed participants agree that there is a general difficulty of translating institutionalized languages and practices across sectors and disciplines. Different frameworks, mandates, policies and strategies lead to different perspectives, and logics as well as tempo differences in the institutional and organizational workflows concerning who can do what, when and how, makes it difficult to commit to a joint process. One institution may need a series of meetings over the course of 6-9 months to agree to a project, whereas others can make one or two phone-calls to get the go ahead. Co-creation practices on SUD may entail getting to know and understand others professional language and practices before any commitment to a joint approach to SUD can even be considered.

While the participants agree to a general incompatibility among them, as seen by the element of 'incompatibility' in chapter 5.2.1, their agreements end where this incompatibility surfaces as vastly different perspectives during arena discussions. Not surprisingly, there are also multiple opinions on how to handle this seemingly

impassable gap in order to arrive at some kind of joint commitment to an agenda and a strategy for SCN. Although they mostly agree on values like 'compromise', being 'open minded', showing 'engagement' and 'reciprocal relations', they cannot agree on how to deal with differing perspectives on different issues.

To some participants, this issue is perceived to stem from the university employees lack of genuine interest in others' problems, and subsequently lack of support, resulting in a lack of commitment to the arena (cf. P13). Others see the inability to speak the same language and establish a joint strategy, as a result of the lacking formal delegation of roles and responsibilities within the network (cf. P2). Some consider the miscommunication to stem from a general lack of competencies on co-creation amongst the participants, in which more experience in collaborating across sectors and disciplines will lead to a consensus on strategy along the way (cf. P4). Others consider the strategic ambiguity of the project management to be at fault, as the lack of a clear thematic direction for activities, for instance whether thematic seminars should target research potential for an international audience or local problematics, lead to confusion on what the participants should be talking about (cf. P1). Some consider the miscommunication to be a result of conservatism and territorialism, in which participants understand each other but chose to fight for their own interests which lead to a buckling down on their preferred language and practice (cf. P7). Others consider the miscommunication to be a person-dependent matter, in which the lack of commitments to some thematic projects is the result of the wrong people representing different institutions (cf. P5).

Here is what some of these perspectives on the language- and practice differences look like when articulated during interviews:

> *"I think people at the university are more used to having multiple meetings, where in <this institution> we feel ashamed of having meetings."*
>
> - P7 Interview

"It's difficult to agree on goals, on what we should be doing and how it should be done, and it's partly because it's difficult to force different disciplines to actually talk to each other. You can see this at the university, where multidisciplinary projects between the social sciences, economy and technology faculties often end up in a… <pause> We don't quite understand each other's language or structure. They are a bit different, and then they may not agree about methods or which angle to frame something in. And in the municipalities it's the same; you find barriers there too. (…) This has also been a problem in SCN, because the municipalities are not represented by the right people, which makes it harder to achieve more concrete and subject-specific projects." - P5 Interview

"We need the university to tune in on the things we are concerned with in the cities, and we need to also be concerned with the research conducted at the university." – P4 Interview

"I'm thinking this (the miscommunication) is something that will work itself out with time, I'm not exactly sure how to think about it. (…) I think it's beneficial for the research field that they participate in real life." – P9 Interview

"I experience the participants of the university as a bit territorial when they come together, that they feel the need to mark their territory in front of others from their own institution. If four people had shown up from <my city> we would have spoken together beforehand about who said what, and then presented ourselves as a team. But the university doesn't seem to work that way. (…) We can't make the research field too important. The research field is not a practician, it's actually the municipalities and the capital forces who are practitioners. The research field needs to stand on the side and provide knowledge before and after a development process" – P21 Interview

It is tempting to draw up two rivaling hegemonic frontiers out of these outtakes, between that of the academic and municipal sectors. However, as the outtakes of P5

and P21 above indicate, there are also communicative gaps between participants of the academic sector, suggesting that the prevalence of the theory-practice gap as observed in SCN activities may just as well be motivated by the co-creative mode as practiced in the arena, in response to this highly unstable terrain. Regardless of the lack of two defined frontiers, we can connect this area to the floating signifiers of 'SCN' and 'multifaceted term' from step 5.2.2.

Incidents where this miscommunication has led to ontic manifestations of antagonism, has been observed 9 times over the course of 6 months activity in SCN (see attachment 'Rivaling Hegemonic Frontiers'). These are situations where the lack of a common language or practice leads to disagreements about the agenda and strategy for SCN. I am now going to draw an example from observational data of what it looks like when these disagreements emerge as an ontic manifestation of antagonism during arena activities. Here, I am including anonymized quotes from participants who were not interviewed for the thesis[2] to illustrate how the miscommunication looks in practice and to contextualize the final remarks of two of the interviewed participants:

At the strategy seminar, 24.04.2019, the project manager argued that it was important to share a common understanding of what a strategy is and proposed that a strategy is all about 'where the battle is fought'. He then pulled up a PowerPoint depicting a vertical and horizontal line crossing each other, illustrating different strategical positions SCN could take regarding activities on SUD. The vertical axis had two outer points; A mainly municipally orchestrated network at one end, and an academically run network at the other. The horizontal line, he explained, was a geographical alignment between either a mostly regional focus at one end, or a national and international focus at the other. He spoke briefly about other regional collaborative networks and arenas and suggested different positions on this axis that could provide unique strengths and benefits to SCN. Here is the conversation that followed when he opened the floor for feedback:

PXX: *"I don't quite agree to the premises for your proposals. First of all, I perceive your juxtaposition between the municipal-academic*

[2]

organization to be completely flawed. You set the municipal sector against the academic, but what we should discuss is the juxtaposition between the research-field versus the practice-field. The municipal angle is irrelevant in this discussion."

The participant moves gives some examples of why he perceives the premises as a flawed presentation of the choices for discussion.

PXX: *"The aim of the strategy must be to position ourselves somewhere between knowledge-production and politics, because politics and planning is one and the same thing (...)."*

The project manager informs the group that he will note this comment and gives the word to P6.

P6: *"I think it's quite obvious that we must have a regional focus, but perhaps the international curve could be a third dimension to our work. That we could aspire to produce relevant research for an international audience. I think if we're going to achieve something sensible and useful, we must position SCN in the middle between the academic field and the practice field like PWW was talking about."*

The project manager states that this might be something we can agree upon, and then gives the word on to PzZ.

PZZ: *"First of all, I don't think we can talk about a 'versus', but rather that there are some dimensions where some projects might be more research-oriented, for instance if a joint project initiated by some municipalities and the university applies for funding with the Research Council of Norway, then the premises for getting funds is that the project has a research dimension and that the project delivers a research product. But if the application for funds goes to the Norwegian Environment Agency or the Ministry of Local Government*

and Regional Development, then the project will have a more inherent development dimension, the same applies to the regional research funds. It all depends what you chose to co-create about, and you could see all these dimensions being activated in SCN. That would be my ambition, that we have projects across all these dimensions."

The participant gives some examples of SCN projects that could operate along these different dimensions.

PZZ: "And I think we need to discuss what kind of roles we all want to take in SCN (...)."

The project manager moves back to his axis' and tries to position SCN in accordance with PZZ's input. A discussion ensues on whether the strategy could be place- or competencies based, and the project manager here gives the word to P13 who appears frustrated.

P13: *"I got engaged with SCN in the hopes of being able to use some of the competences of the university, both academic and through students. We don't have access to the resources that the university has. What we have, is some collaborations with one of the campuses, and a few projects with <another South Norwegian city>. First of all, we need help! Second, we need a better network between the municipalities, because it is almost non-existent today. We can't get any help, we can't pull on any joint knowledge- and experience base. We don't get it from the county municipality, and we don't get it from anybody else."*

P13 talks about a current development project for a health house where they hope to get support but argues there is no joint understanding in the room for what that is.

P13 "We are talking about the wrong kinds of projects, and that's why we need the university. Because we have to try and do something that

nobody has done before (...) And our project is an example of what it is SCN needs to be working on, we need to solve the major societal challenges."

The project manager rhetorically asks if not P13 feels that SCN has brought competencies to his locality. P13 nods to this question and confirms that SCN has contributed to a local development project. The discussion dissolves at this point. Shortly after, P12 makes an astute observation:

P12: *"I have spoken a bit with some politicians who feel it's difficult to commit to SCN. I think it's because the issue of strategy is really about translating the academic language. And of course, also about politicians just being plain stubborn."*

The room bursts into laughter.

In this outtake, P13s request for help can be seen as a narratively mediated response to the experience of dislocation. In his perspective, the purpose of SCNs activities in regard to SUD, is to focus on solving very real issues in his locality. But the articulations of others who suggest a very different purpose, are experienced as alarming dislocations which threaten to destabilize the discourse. He therefore narratively constructs the diverging perspectives of other participants into something that makes more sense: They just don't want to help! The project manager then steps in to rearticulate P13s demands into a narrative that restores the meaning of what SCN is all about; the local development project. We see how this articulation almost instantly restores the stability of the discourse, by discursively recasting the discord from the realm of uncomfortable experience, into a narrative form in which such disagreements are but an activity on the path towards a common goal: coming together around the local development project.

Time and again, the empty signifier plays this bridge-building function across the many gaps in the discursive structure that has been left by the instability introduced

by the floating signifiers. It produces a certain amount of agency in that the participants can move along with the discussion as if the meaning of SUD was whole.

Contestation: The Blame Game

Roughly ninety percent of the participants consider some other discipline or sector, rather than their own, to be responsible for solving the inertia experienced in working with SUDs. Specifically, there is a disagreement as to where the responsibility resides for the lack of progress in regards to sustainability goals in the region (cf. Agder-Fylkeskommune, 2019), and participants appear to construct disagreements on actor roles in SCN as an extension of this disagreement. This perspective stretches far beyond the scope of SCN, but the participants experiences travel down to the dialogue taking place during activities in SCN.

This issue cannot be separated into two rivaling frontiers, but rather multiple. Here is a summary of these positions, drawing on the individual interview matrixes. This is not an argument for what this blame-game might look like in any other setting, but solely refers to the way interviewed participants interpellate other sectors in relation to SUD:

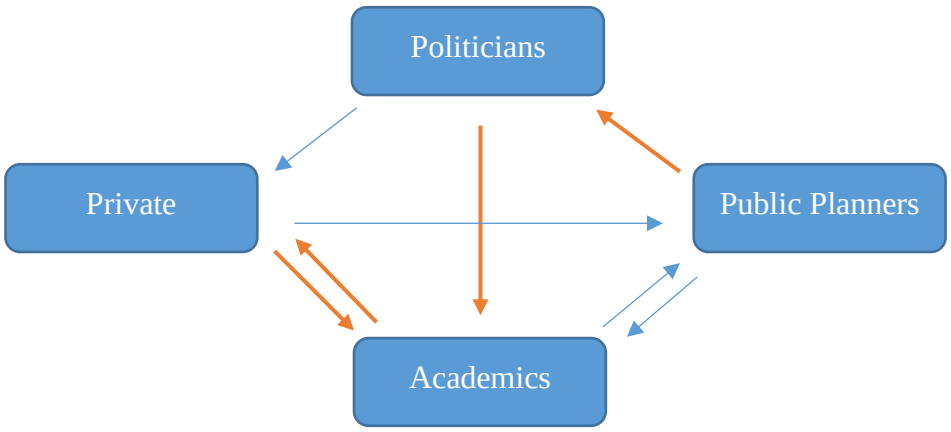

Figure 12 – The Blame Game. Made by the Candidate.

The blue lines indicate the interpellation of another to the fantasmatic register of the helper. The red line indicates the interpellation of another into the fantasmatic register of the opponent. To be reminded, the helper is another individual or group perceived to be able to assist the protagonist in carrying out strategies and activities within. The helper is tasked with the thankless job of making things happen, while not being considered the protagonist of the story. The helper is supposed to support the protagonist in dealing with the perceived opponents, so that some ideal can be accomplished and the receivers can reap the benefits. The opponent is an individual or group who is perceived to either threaten the obtainment of the ideals, or who is closely associated with the obstacles and threats in the subject's fantasy.

The interpellations from the interviews suggest two things: 1) most actors perceive someone else to be responsible for making change happen and 2) perceive someone else to be an opponent preventing such change from being possible.

Here is an example of what these interpellations look like when articulated during interviews:

> *"We must push politicians! They let themselves be pushed all over due to the need for re-election every four years, so they are always thinking in short-term perspectives. So, our job is to guide politicians, help them make decisions that will lead to a good, balanced and sustainable societal development in a long-term perspective."* – P4 Interview

> *"The municipality conducts horse trades with the private sector left and right. There are huge battles fought at the top when the municipal master plan comes under revision. So, the municipality has to be stronger."* - P17 Interview

> *"The deans at the university haven't played their role as regional developers, they haven't taken this role which they very well could have taken. SCN is here, in spite of the Deans."* - P19 Interview

We can tie this contestation to the top two floating signifiers of 'UiA' and 'politicians' from step 5.2.2. We can also tie the floating signifiers of 'municipality' and 'small city' to this area.

Incidents where this displacement of responsibility has led to ontic manifestations of antagonism, has been observed 11 times during arena activities over the course of 6 months (see attachment 'Rivaling Hegemonic Frontiers'). Here is an example drawn from observational data of what this typically looks like:

During a city-lab activity, 09.04.019, tackling the thematic of water in the city, the project manager suggested two concrete projects the participants could try to develop: The first related to the pollution of ground water originating from road constructions, and the second was to explore aquaponics technology based on recycled water on a larger industrial scale. After his presentation, the conversation began drifting between different ideas that potentially be developed into a jointly financed project. Some suggested that aquaponics could be tied to biogas- and computer plants, others wanted to explore how flooding in rural districts could be capitalized on as a tourist attraction. Some suggested that aqua labs could be developed to reduce the growth time of local shrimp which would secure a boost in local revenues. The discussion soon turned onto questions of finance, and a private-sector participant began to explain how their company already had researchers working on a system to predict local flood volumes. He directed his attention to participants present from the hosting municipality and argued that the municipality could save millions on this. At this stage, one of the municipal participants broke into the conversation, appearing agitated:

> P8: *"I need to react to what you are saying now, as I am starting to wonder what our (the municipality's) role really is in this city lab. What do you envision us actually doing? Do you want us to establish some points of contact between this project and the university? Or are you already involved with the university?"*

The project manager states that P8 has a point in questioning their role. He then states that the goal of the session is to establish already existing knowledge

regarding flooding in the region, and to see if this can benefit concrete projects in the municipalities where there may be need of it. P8 breaks in again.

P8: *"Those responsible for driving this process forward is not the municipality."*

The project manager explains that the idea of SCN orchestrated city lab, Is for the municipality to play on the same team as the private business sector and the research sector. He then ads a small, crucial, remark:

Project Manager: *"But these projects will of course be tied to concrete development cases in the cities."*

The brief disruption fizzles, and the conversation continues without returning to the question of who should be doing what.

In this outtake we see how P8 objects to the private sector participants interpellation of P8s municipality as the helper who can ensure that the flood-technology product is fully realized. The project manager then addresses P8s concerns by interpellating 'SCN' into the role of the helper and 'P8' into the role of the receiver, within a narrative that positions the 'flood-technology' project as nothing more than an object in a collaborative strategy towards the beatific promise of 'contributing to local development'. When P8 accepts this, the conversation can move on. This outtake illustrates the hegemonizing capacity of the equivalential chain, so long as it supports the empty signifier of the local development project. Several of the top twenty unanimously articulated elements are drawn on here in the project managers maneuver, such as 'SCN', 'City First', 'Prioritize Different' and Reciprocal Relations'.

5.2.4 Summary

In this part of the re-construction of the discourse on SUD, I have established that there is a relative regularity of articulatory practice on SUD amongst the participants of SCN. I have located twenty unanimously articulated elements that can be seen as

an overarching equivalential chain vis-à-vis the empty signifier of the local development project, and have suggested that this signifier is likely involved in the fantasmatic stabilization of any moments of contestation to the discourse.

I then located fourteen floating signifiers and connected them to four key areas of contestation in the discourse. I then explored how ontic manifestations of antagonism that erupt during arena activities are discursively navigated via the empty and floating signifiers. I discussed the individual and collective navigation of such manifestations and showed how the empty signifier was mobilized to stabilize the discourse in three out of four of these examples. The fourth, I suggested, was handled via expectations tied to the co-creation practice of the arena itself.

I will now move on to identify the discursive regime believed, in part, to guide and restrict the participants perceptions and actions during arena activities. Based on my findings I will finish the chapter by locating fantasy and desire in the construction of the discourse on SUD.

5.3 Identifying Discursive Regime

As argued in the operationalization of theory, the meaning of socially constructed objects, such as SUD, is going to be motivated and even generated by the socially taken-for-granted horizon of intelligibility of a social group. The particular content and rules of engagement of a discourse, is going to reflect wider and more deeply rooted sedimentations that transfer onto non-linguistic objects such as subject roles, institutions and practices that guide and restrict the enunciative possibilities of subjects of the discourse (cf. Torfing, 1999).

In this segment, I am going to tie the articulatory practices of the participants, as witnessed in the discourse formation matrix as well as the individual interview matrixes, to evidence of dynamics associated with the collaborative mode of planning known as *co-creation*. Co-creation is here understood as a contemporary mode of participation in urban governance processes for SUDs in the Nordics. I will then locate fantasy and desire in the construction of SUD, and its effects on discourse, understanding, and reasoning, in the particular case of Southern City Network.

5.3.1 Co-Creation as a Mode of Participation in the Nordics

Several authors have argued that there has been a shift in planning-practice in the Nordics in recent years, from that of participation to co-creation in urban governance processes (Lund, 2018; Polk, 2010; Siebers & Torfing, 2018). Where participation used to center on the rights and powers of citizens to be included in decision-making processes, it now seems to focus on generating innovative solutions to complex problems via diverse forms of knowledge in urban processes (Lund, 2018, p. 27).

The core argument these authors present, is that neoliberal narratives have trickled into participatory modes of planning (cf. Agusti et al., 2014), offering new opportunities for hybrid forums centered on co-creation which promises more inclusive and democratic planning processes (Siebers & Torfing, 2018; Voorberg et al., 2015), but also potentially de-politicizes the planning process through consensus-oriented communicative practices (Gressgård, 2015; Lund, 2018; MacDonald, 2015). The idea of these forums is not that they are serving the planning system as such, but rather that they become integrated into urban development as a form of planning in

itself (McFarlane, 2011, p. 179), effectively making actors in these processes a type of contemporary planners in their localities.

In these accounts, neoliberalism is understood along the lines of a 'political-economic governance ideology' (Allmendinger & Gunder, 2005) that influences the dialogical processes taking place in such forums, by conceptualizing the rights to participation via socio-technical arguments and scenarios seeking to do away with traditional divides between the sectors of science, politics, planning and the public (Metzger, 2016). In the Nordics, this has led to governance processes increasingly conceptualized as hybrid strategies promoting a combination of neoliberal growth-oriented rationales and approaches, with more traditional welfare state ideals of inclusion and citizen-engagement (Siebers & Torfing, 2018). These processes often materialize as public-private partnerships and networks where actors are included based on the assets they bring to the process, rather than what sector, discipline, or organization they represent (ibid). The legitimacy of these new network-based governance processes is not only judged on the ability of these forums to be inclusive, but rather on their innovativeness and ability to deliver new solutions to persistent societal problems (Lund, 2018, p. 28). Actors are included in these processes because they possess *"(...) relevant innovation assets such as experience, knowledge, creativity, financial means, courage, organizational capacity, and so forth."* (cf. E. Sørensen & Torfing, 2018, p. 393).

The general idea of these forums, is that the differences between a plurality of expectations, demands and perspectives can be navigated via a communicative deliberative approach to arrive at forms of collective learning that will stimulate social innovation and collective mobilization towards some shared common goals (Roskamm, 2014). The commitment to a consensus-rationale in such deliberative processes, promoting ideological closures on the grounds of wishing away constitutive difference, has been criticized by many urban planning scholars over the years (Gressgård, 2015; cf. Hillier, 2003; cf. Metzger, 2016; cf. Roskamm, 2014). Central to critiques of the deliberative processes of these new forums, is the argument that they promote a post-political era of planning governance (cf. MacDonald, 2015), in which processes of planning-decision making counter-intuitively becomes de-politicized in the pursuit of a more democratic and inclusive process. As MacDonald

(ibid) has suggested, with reference to Allmendinger and Haughton (Allmendinger & Haughton, 2012), there is an illusiveness to consensus-building efforts in these partnerships, as witnessed by actual multi-stakeholder co-creative processes. Rather than facilitating for a meaningful exchange of conflicting views, these processes carefully stage superficial encounters of difference within tightly controlled consensus-oriented schemes focused on minimizing conflict in order to deliver on the targets of innovation and growth. As she argues, with refence to Inch (Inch, 2012) and Swyngedouw (Swyngedouw, 2005), rather than diffusing conflicts, consensus-oriented practices seek to eliminate conflict via the fantasmatic promise of a consensus-to-come which can be obtained via the right kind of deliberative planning process. While individuals are kept at the cusp of such a promise, spurred on by fantasies convincing them it is just within their reach, business-as-usual can continue undisturbed. Whenever they get too close to discover that a consensus-to-come is a façade, when conflicts over values, strategies or positions rise to the surface, these same conflicts are strategically displaced onto other objects, such as the local, in order to restore the promise and keep individuals believing that it's just about finding the right method. Within these fantasies, the displacement of conflicts onto the local may merely represent a "(…) systemic correction within an evolving set of neoliberal strategies aimed at sustaining a 'market-enabling approach' (Allmendiger & Haughton, 2013, p.8) by maintaining legitimacy." (MacDonald, 2015, p. 118). As argued by several others, a shifting focus onto forms of localism or the local is nothing new to governance processes marked by neoliberal narratives (Allmendinger & Gunder, 2005; Granberg, 2008; Lund, 2018), it is merely another way of attempting to eliminate symptoms of ineradicable conflict long enough for individuals not to catch on to the emperors naked body.

Such displacement of conflict onto forms of localism, seem consistent with the findings in the observational data from chapter 5.2.3. In the four key aspects of contestation, we saw how the empty signifier of the local development project was articulated to restore the discourse on SUD, displacing the conflict and thus stabilizing the discourse against such moments of contingency.

The aim here is not to discuss the various impacts of neoliberalism on planning practices in the Southern Norwegian context, nor the literature on post-politics and re-

politization, but to argue that we can understand the local development project as an enabler of a fantasy protecting the participants of SCN from these encounters with the contingency of the social.

As discussed in theory, discourses introduce a type of objectivity to the practices of subjects, by laying out a map by which it becomes reasonable to navigate actions by. We must therefore assume that the articulatory practices upon engaging with contestations, bears witness to this map. As argued in the operationalization of theory, this map is both motivated by, and reinforces, dominant hegemonic regimes that have become sedimented over time and transferred onto materialities such as contemporary planning practices. The way actors deal with ontic manifestations of antagonism during arena activities, is going to relate to these materialities, as they offer logical, appropriate, and sensible ways of dealing with the experience of dislocation. Let us therefore assume that the fantasy invested into the empty signifier of the local development project, is going to rely on these practices which guides, restricts and potentially suppresses the enunciative possibilities of the participants in some way.

We saw in chapter 5 how ontic manifestations of antagonism were displaced via the re-articulations of the local development project, effectively closing down alternative articulations. In the development vs. degrowth example we saw a slightly different thing occur, where the participant who had an objection to the 'elephant in the room' seemed to accept that the discussion was simply moved along, without any resolution to his complaint offered. This is a typical example of the way discursive materializations afford expectations of a subjects' behavior, which he intuitively knows he must commit to in order for others to recognize him as a subject of the discourse. In other words; P20, who wanted to discuss whether it was even possible to achieve sustainable transformation within a system demanding economic growth, intuitively understands that if he makes a fuss he won't be recognized as a constructive, cooperative and rational member of the network who should be listened to or taken seriously. He understands that certain behaviors would exclude him from the group, which reversely means that certain acts are tied to certain expectations within the framework of the co-creative practice.

Based on both the displacement of conflict onto the local development project and the strategic modification of behavior, I propose that the participants enunciative

possibilities are restricted according to the consensus-rationale associated with deliberative approaches to SUD found within neoliberal strategies of urban governance. But the primary interest of this thesis is to explore how a nuanced attention to affects in language-use, allows us to identify traces of these materialities and the fantasies they are involved with, via an investigation into the articulations of subjects. I therefor want to confirm the above assumption by tracing these materialities in the articulations of the subjects.

As argued in the operationalization of theory, discursive regimes can be traced via the subjects mutually coherent practices of articulation, as they will 'bear witness' (Martilla, 2015, p.16) to the influence of the materialities instituted by such regimes. As argued in theory, when the subject responds to the restrictions of a discursive materiality, it is a way of identifying with the roles he is offered by the discourse, and in doing so he becomes a subject of that discourse. A subject is likely to draw from- and structure elements according to these regimes, not only because they offer a horizon of intelligibility in which some relational compositions will appear more sensible and reasonable, closing off uncertainties that may arise, but because it offers him the opportunity to identify with a social group. This group will be perceived to act in accordance with the regime, and by responding to the identifications offered by the discourse, he will become a subject of that discourse, and through this gain a sense of belonging in the group. The discursive practice among participants in SCN is therefore likely to exhibit a re-production of the features of the discursive regime, as we've seen in the above discussion. But we should also be able to find traces of this materiality in the individual articulatory practices of the respondents during interviews.

The question then, is whether we find evidence of this regime within the discourse formation matrix and the individual interview matrixes. If we do, we can argue with more certainty that they are subjects of the discourse, at least within the particular framework established in this thesis, and that the observations from the observational data is not some occasional fluke.

Tracing materiality

Puerari et al. (Puerari et al., 2018) defines five core aspects of the dynamics of co-creation that target particular characteristics which influence individual's perceptions and actions when engaging in co-creative processes. I am now going to identify the presence of all five via findings in the individual interview matrixes as well as the discourse formation matrix.

1

The first aspect of co-creation dynamics can be recognized as an ideal of learning or making something together. Learning is about collaboratively building knowledge via the exchange of experience and competence and building network-relations between participants. Making is about working collaboratively towards a goal such as projects or processes of innovation. Do the articulatory practices of the participants reflect this aspect?

If we look at the individual interview matrixes, we find elements articulated to the register of the ideal under the thematic of Urban Development and SCN, which could be related to this aspect:

Participants P11, P14 and P19 articulate ideals such as 'learning', 'Exchange of experience', 'competence.access', 'professional depth', 'new input' and 'come together'. Alternatively, participants P9, P15 and P18, articulate elements such as 'projects.large', 'projects.small', 'projects.student' and 'projects.public'.

If we look to the twenty unanimously articulated elements, we also find the shared guarantor of 'interconnectivity' and the object of 'projects'.

2

The second aspect of co-creation dynamics refers to some of the frequently articulated challenges associated with stimulating and motivating participants to contribute to informal forms of co-creation. Informal co-creation refers to collaborative processes "*(...)characterized by less official planning, non-selected participation, short-term engagement as well as practices and rules that unfold over time.*" (Puerari et al., 2018, p. 5). A common issue of these informal processes is a lack of commitment due to

questions of legitimacy, change-averse perspectives amongst participants, and a general sense of being overwhelmed by the internal complexity of the urban context. Do the articulatory practices of the participants reflect this aspect?

If we look at the individual interview matrixes, we find elements articulated to the registers of the obstacle and threat under the thematic of Urban Development and SCN, which could be related to this aspect:

Participants P7 P10, P11, P12, P13 and P18 articulate obstacles and threats such as 'interest.lack', 'commitment.lack', 'complexity', 'engagement.uneven', 'conservatism', 'willingness to change.lack', 'person-dependent', 'personal attitudes', 'close-minded', 'inertia' and 'fragmentation'.

If we look to the twenty unanimously articulated elements, we find the shared obstacle of 'conflict of interest' and 'incompatibility'.

3

The third aspect of co-creation dynamics relates to the way ownership in these processes typically shift according to who provides actor-roles within the arena at different points in time. If the original initiators of a collaborative arena decide to open up the arena to a more informal co-creation process, the collective practice may become marked by a need to discuss different perspectives as to how co-creation should be practiced as well as the distribution of roles and relations, conversely it might be marked by frustrations where these discussions don't take place. Do the articulatory practices of the participants reflect this aspect?

If we look at the individual interview matrixes, we find elements articulated to the registers of the obstacle and threat under the thematic of SCN, which could be related to this aspect:

Participants P3, P5, P6 and P15 articulate obstacles and threats such as 'ownership.unclear', 'communication.lack', 'unclear relations' and 'unclear role'.

We also find elements articulated to the register of the strategy under the thematic of SCN, which could be related to this aspect:

Participants P5, P7, P12 and P16 articulate strategies such as 'place responsibility', 'dedicated project management', 'communication internal', 'dialogue'.

If we look to the twenty unanimously articulated elements, we find the shared strategy of 'prioritize different'.

4

The fourth aspect of co-creation dynamics refers to intrinsic and extrinsic motivations for participating in a co-creative process. Co-creative processes are usually associated with some type of cost such as time or money, and participants will be careful to evaluate what they get in return for their investment into the process. Intrinsic motivations tend to focus on participation for 'people's own sake' (Puerari et al., 2018, p. 6), without external stimuli. Extrinsic motivations, on the other hand, are typically expressed as the desire for- or avoidance of certain outcomes. Do the articulatory practices of the participants reflect this aspect?

If we look at the individual interview matrixes, we find elements articulated to the register of the ideal under the thematic of SCN, which could reflect intrinsic motivations:

Participants P4, P8, P18 and P19 articulate ideals such as 'come together', 'community', 'collaboration', 'societal development'.

We also find elements articulated to the register of the beatific and horrific promises under the thematic of the sustainable city, which could be reflect extrinsic motivations for participating in the arena:

Participants P20, P16, P14 and P13 articulate beatific promises such as 'attractivity', 'financial gain', 'survival' and 'reputation'. Alternatively, participants P19, P11, P6 and P3 articulate horrific promises such as 'lifeless city', 'depopulation', 'climate and environment.sacrifice', 'climate catastrophe'.

If we look to the twenty unanimously articulated elements, we find the shared obstacle of 'time.lack' and 'activity overload', as well as the shared value of 'reciprocal relations'.

5

The fifth aspect of co-creation dynamics refer to a focus on the way spaces and places for co-creation can affect socio-spatial environments. Participants are likely to focus co-creative attentions on local processes that can enhance visibility for local sustainability issues through collaboration with stakeholders. Do the articulatory practices of the participants reflect this aspect?

If we look at the individual interview matrixes, we find elements articulated to the register of the strategy under the thematic of the sustainable city, which could reflect this aspect:

Participants P4, P10, P12 and P13 articulate strategies such as 'multistakeholder governance', 'participatory planning', 'power.redistribution' and 'focus.social sustainability'.

If we look to the twenty unanimously articulated elements, we find the shared ideal of 'social meeting places', as well as the strategy of 'participatory planning'.

By finding evidence of all five aspects of co-creation dynamics in the individual interview matrixes as well as the discourse formation matrix, I argue that the articulatory practices of the participants suggest that they identify as subjects of the discourse, and that their enunciative possibilities are therefore guided and restricted by the discursive materiality associated with the practice of co-creation as defined in this thesis, during arena activities. While participants may target different aspects of this regime at different times, we can argue that the total sum of articulations that reflect the characteristics of the regime, witness of a shared adherence to its discursive features. This is also reflected in the way participants deal with ontic manifestations of antagonism during arena activities, as presented in chapter 5.2.3.

Co-creation, as a contemporary mode of participation, is therefore here understood as a discursive materiality of the dominant hegemonic regime of neoliberal strategies to urban governance, in which consensus-oriented rationales are strategically deployed towards the delivery of innovation and growth through diverse forms of knowledge, within the discourse on SUD in SCN.

Perhaps that is a form of rationality, in that this is the result emerging out of my analysis. This conceptualization of co-creation seems to have seeped into all manner of planning processes utilizing participation when engaging in matters of sustainability in the Nordics. For instance, Sørensen (Eva Sørensen, 2013) has argued that co-creation is now currently found at the heart of regional- and municipal reform schemes in Scandinavia trying to legitimize their processes through mantras of citizen empowerment and democratic consensus.

We find ample evidence of the this in the Southern Norwegian context. The principal vision of the regional university for the period of 2016-2020 has been titled "*Co-creation of knowledge*" (UiA.no, 2016). Here, co-creation is conceptualized as a type of regional engagement, where the university identifies itself as a central actor of its third-mission societal engagement with both the public and private sector (cf. Pinheiro, Karlsen, Kohoutek, & Young, 2017). According to Pinheiro et al. (ibid), this shift towards regional engagement, comes in the wake of the rise of a knowledge-based economy, as well as the importance attributed to regional competitiveness (ibid p.426). As briefly mentioned in the research framework, the university now has its own learning center for knowledge sharing and social innovation called CoLAB (UiA.no, 2020a).

Another example of the presence of this regime ,can be found in the aforementioned regional policy of 'Regionplan Agder 2030', whose frontpage slogan reads; "*Attractive, co-creative and sustainable*". The Agder region used to consist of two counties; East- and West Agder, which were merged as of January 1st 2020. The regional plan was created as part of this regional- and municipal reform initiated by the government in 2016. By the end of 2020, the Board of Municipal Executives of Agder County Municipality launched a new structure-policy for interaction across public sectors in the region (KS, 2020). This policy detailed, among other, three new regional forums intended to stimulate broad citizen participation and action through co-creation on the goals of the Regionplan. These forums target the three dimensions of sustainability of the 1987 Brundtland report (WCED, 1987), here specified as; climate and environment, development of business life, and equality, inclusion and diversity. This plan is, perhaps, the prime example in the Southern Norwegian context

of how citizen participation in collaborative forums targeting sustainability transitions through governance processes, taking shape as a hybrid strategies between political leadership and citizen involvement, is conceptualized- and identified as *co-creation*.

In other words, there is a tying together in the Southern Norwegian context of co-creation as a contemporary mode of participation involving the dual goals of democratic legitimacy and market-led development, and the local and regional administrative level of planning in the region as well as the local university.

5.3.2 Summary of Chapter 5

In this chapter I have conducted the re-construction of the discourse, as detailed in the research strategy.

In the first step, I analyzed moments, elements, and signifiers of multiple subjects via qualitative interviews. This data was further nuanced according to the fantasmatic registers, and then combined into one discourse formation matrix.

In the second step, I located, empty and floating signifiers and then presented four key areas of contestation to the discourse:

1. Projects vs. Exchange of Experience
2. Development vs. Degrowth
3. Theory vs. Practice
4. The Blame Game

I then tied the ontic manifestations of antagonism during arena activities, to the fourteen floating signifiers and the individual interview matrixes, and then showed how these key areas of contestation are navigated via the empty signifier.

In the third step, I tied evidence of co-creation as a contemporary participatory strategy of central institutions in the Southern Norwegian context, to the unanimously articulated elements of the discourse, as well as to the individual interview matrixes. I argued that co-creation could be understood as a discursive materiality that has

transferred from the dominant hegemonic regime of neoliberal narratives in planning practices, and then connected this to evidence of a consensus-rationale in such deliberative processes. I argued that these processes promote ideological closures on the grounds of displacing constitutive difference, by staging superficial encounters of difference within tightly controlled consensus-oriented schemes focused on minimizing conflict in order to deliver on the targets of innovation and growth. Rather than diffusing conflicts, consensus-oriented practices seek to eliminate conflict via the fantasmatic promise of a consensus-to-come, which can be obtained via the right kind of deliberative planning process. While individuals are kept at the cusp of such a promise, business-as-usual can continue undisturbed. I then went on to argue that this kind of displacement of conflict onto the local, can be observed in the discourse on SUD within SCN.

I will now move on to locate fantasy and desire in the construction of SUD, and the effects this fantasy has on discourse, understanding, and reasoning, in the particular case of Southern City Network.

6 Fantasy and Desire in the Construction of Sustainable Urban Development

The aim of this chapter is to pull together the chosen case of the thesis, the philosophical and theoretical assumptions of PDA, and the findings of the re-construction of the discourse, to locate fantasy and desire in the construction of sustainable urban development, within the context of Southern City Network. The goal is to conduct a discussion which enables me to answer the research questions in the conclusion of this thesis. As such, this chapter flows more like a discussion, than the previous, more analytically inclined, chapters have.

Gressgård (Gressgård, 2015) explains that a fantasy allows subject's to perceive certain paths forward as the best path, because it fills the theory of how something *is* with affective promises of what *is to come*. At the time of data collection, the status quo of SCN was an intense series of activities trying to mobilize a consensus for a joint agenda on how SUDs should be understood and approached, both in its thematic of the sustainable city, its ideas of co-creation as a viable strategy for stimulating urban developments, and in its struggle to find a vision of how SCN should be approached as a regional project. It was a hodgepodge of ideas and energies; different modes of working, different institutional temporalities, conflicting institutional frameworks and strategies, different experiences of-, with- and in planning, and a shared notion of the slippery nature of the very topic of 'sustainability' itself. It was, frankly, a bit of a mess, but one filled with the excited energy of trying something new in order to find that magical dialogical planning-formula that could unleash the imagined potential of a collaboration towards better futures for all of the partnering cities.

Many of the individuals that participated, did so outside of their allocated work-time, with no financial compensation, and out of a strong conviction that collaboration could be achieved through dedication and commitment to the arena. Many had also previously collaborated with each other, with varying success, in smaller projects or in other networks, and they were looking for something that could transform all these fragmented initiatives into one joint strategic arena in which competition was turned into cooperation for a general development of the region. It was a powerful promise

that SCN offered its participants; By consistently engaging with one another, they could achieve a consensus on how to address important societal challenges facing the vulnerable and resource-deprived localities of the region and move ahead to solve persistent issues for the betterment of all. By recognizing that many of the participants felt abandoned by state- and regional authorities, that they were overloaded and exhausted, lacking funds and resources to deal with even the most easily solved of local challenges, SCN was able to tap into the participants experience of how things really *were* in these localities, offering a powerful promise of how things *could become*. This mobilized a unity across this spectrum of differences, because it promised the participants that *this time*, with the right kind of deliberative planning-process, the many issues of small towns and places of the region would be prioritized.

The empty signifier doesn't just mobilize unity by generating feelings of coherence within a discursive terrain that is always open to contestation and political struggle (Gressgård, 2015, p.117). The empty signifier equally foregrounds the constitutive failure for any objectivity to achieve that desired full identity (Laclau, 2006). This implies that the local development project in the discourse on SUD, could be a case-specific reversal of the experience of the constitutive impossibility of arriving at consensus, simultaneously produced- and glossed over by the fantasy invested into the discursive practice. Here, the empty signifier can then be understood to motivate a fantasy of what is to come; The harmonious process of developing small towns and rural places, attentive to local needs, histories, knowledges, and experiences, circumventing the value-laden political struggles necessary to arrive at such development. The fantasy enables this systematic, reoccurring, behavior of avoidance, protecting the participants from facing the dissolving fata morgana of the Real; within the current neoliberal system of planning-practice, there is no feasible way that the participants will all get what they want, and certainly not without confronting the serious discomforts accompanied by the many different views, ideas and ambitions of what SUD *is*. Local developments may of course occur -and do occur-, but these developments are the result of painful negotiations with public-private partners in which a slew of criteria and selections to an extent devalue local voices over that of so-called expert statements and market interests (cf. Lund, 2018). In selecting some criteria for developments, regional and national authorities will inevitably have to

(de)select some perspectives, values and places when it comes to financial prioritizations.

Some participants even seem to consciously recognize this impossibility. If we look to the discourse formation matrix and the category of the guarantor, we find elements such as 'zero sum game', 'impossible' and 'complexity', in relation to all three thematic topics of the interview. 'Zero sum game' here refers to two things: the impossibility of achieving climate goals within a global capitalist system governed by logics of economic growth, and the impossibility of arriving at a consensus within collaborative arenas working on SUDs. Participants such as P8, P5, P6 and P20 spoke in length during the interviews about how they saw no feasible way of accomplishing regional climate goals in the short run, due to the sheer complexity of the institutions and processes involved. But beyond this, they pointed to the primary reason being the starkly different views, ideas and ambitions pertaining to sustainability amongst individuals meant to navigate these complex processes.

There is a kind of paradox here, an antinomy, in which the participants simultaneously recognize that it will not be possible to arrive at a consensus, but at the same time chose to abide by the consensus-oriented discursive practices of SCN, because it offers the promise of a harmonious outcome without political struggle. It is almost ironic, that the constitutive inability of arriving at a consensus in a dialogical approach to issues of planning (cf. Hillier, 2003), should give birth to an unconscious fantasy of not having to negotiate the views of others at all. Almost as if the participants are trapped in a fever dream; imagining themselves released from the consensus expected of the dialogical process, because it requires that they modify their views and values.

The observation of this paradox suggests that discursive closure in this case may be an attempt to escape the existential anxiety accompanied with the manifestations of the contingency of the social (cf. Daly, 1999, p. 221).

Glynos and Howarth (Glynos & Howarth, 2007) have argued that we can identify the presence of fantasy according to a 'methodological rule of thumb' (ibid, p.148), asking whether an object resists public official disclosure. In addition, the fantasmatically structured enjoyment associated with these objects typically possess contradictory features "(…) *exhibiting a kind of extreme oscillation between incompatible*

positions." (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 148). The type of paradox as witnessed above, surely witness of the presence of such an oscillation: In one instance consensus is revered as a goal, in another it is deemed an impossible goal. As argued in theory, it is within these impossible negotiations that fantasy works to produce the enjoyment of the subject. I am therefore going to expand the argument here, onto the concept of enjoyment, to grapple with the way this fantasy of escaping consensus comes to motivate the enjoyment of the participants engaging in the discursive practices of SCN.

For the sake of the following discussion, let us use the Lacanian term *jouissance* in place of its namesake enjoyment. Several PDA-authors have used the term *jouissance* in conjunction with the emerging theory of ideological fantasy, which combines Lacanian readings with Laclau and Mouffe's political logic of ideology (Cederström & Spicer, 2014; Daly, 1999; McMillan, 2017; Stavrakakis, 1999). In doing so, they highlight connections between the subject's desire for wholeness, with that of such reoccurring behaviors of avoidance, and stress the vital function of fantasy in this operation of naturalizing and explaining away antagonisms.

To avoid an obvious critique right of the bat here; Jouissance is a highly complex term in the Lacanian vocabulary, and I do not purport to understand its many nuances, as its significance shifts in the course of Lacan's work itself (Neill, 2011, p. 49). I merely pull on this term, like some of these PDA-authors have done, to explain how the subjects desire becomes structured through the repetitive articulation of fantasy, denoting this most intimate relation between fantasy, desire and language-use. The repeated avoidance and displacement of conflicts onto the local development project, could, in such a reading, be understood to motivate the subjects desire in specific ways.

The Lacanian concept of jouissance is derived from Lacan's engagement with the Freudian pleasure-principle, which denotes the regulation of tension on a pleasure-unpleasure scale (Cederström & Spicer, 2014). The pleasure-principle captures the idea that the subject will avoid excessive pleasure where such acts may lead to excessive suffering. A subject might, for instance, avoid courting the love of his life if she is married and he risks being killed for his act. Or, to put it in SCN-terms; a participant might avoid causing a fuss, if the arena is founded on a consensus-

rationale, and he perceives his act to lead to his own expelling from the social group. Jouissance, on the other hand, is something that overrides this principle to engage in an excess of enjoyment (Daly, 1999). The very threat of pain accompanied with receiving pleasure, would drive the subject to imagine all manner of ways in which he could enjoy intimate relations with his object of desire. Lacan captures this interdependence of pain and pleasure with his notion of jouissance (Moncayo, 2018), making pleasure something more excessive than calculative (Cederström & Spicer, 2014, p. 192). The subject enjoys, because he is not supposed to, he finds a valve to release the impossibility of wholeness into a fiction that can encapsulate it.

As argued by McMillan (McMillan, 2017), the experience of lack is not necessarily disruptive, rather, fantasies become "(…) *animated by a desire to overcome the lack of enjoyment within a discourse while avoiding confronting the inherent dislocation of the symbolic order and of the body*." (McMillan, 2017, p. 224). Fantasies attempt to return the subject to the enjoyment associated with the infants struggle to get -and subsequently get- the mothers attention (cf. Gunder & Hillier, 2016). Pleasure unconsciously becomes associated as much with the struggle to get her attention, as with the attention itself.

For the participants of SCN, the experience of dislocation, or lack, must find it's expression in some form through language, in order for them to deal with its presence. As activities and board meetings in SCN came and went without reaching the goal of a jointly established commitment to the agenda, the participants began to question whether the initiative could deliver on its promise. They complained, they argued, they threw backhanded comments at each other, and professed the incompetence's and egos of this or that person in private. The continuous deployment of the local development project, however, gave them a sense of relief, and thus stabilized the discourse. The empty signifier offered a valve to release their frustrations; there was nothing wrong with the process itself, the answer to their frustrations had to lie in the irreconcilable views and ambitions between them, which only served to confirm the unassailable uniqueness of each town and the very personal experiences and knowledges attached to them. As the dialogues became more strained, the local development project was taken to new heights. It both represented the promise, and the answer to the very same unfulfilled promise. And by enacting it over and over, the

participants could continue to stage the increasing discomfort they experienced against this promise, enjoying their own stalemate by fantasmatically constructing these antagonisms as sensible and objective evidence of the Real of this promise; We can come to a consensus in which no one has to lose.

When viewed in this way, ideological fantasy can be argued to be involved with the "*(…) endless (re-)staging of the primordial struggle between the symbolic-discursive order and the Real*". (Daly, 1999, p. 220). The subjects' kicking about, the screaming and complaining that he isn't getting what he wants, becomes mixed up in the unconscious memories of pleasure derived from the pain of demanding his needs be filled, coupled with the expectation that they are about to be fulfilled by the other. As Gunder and Hillier (Gunder & Hillier, 2016) explains it, this expected wholeness is no longer accessible to the subject in conscious recollection, but rather these inaccessible memories of wholeness "(…) *reside in our unconscious, ever split and barred from direct conscious awareness by our symbolic self. They reside in the Real*." (Gunder & Hillier, 2016, p. 79).

This suggests that the participants are likely not aware that their frustrations, on some level, provide them with relief. The fantasy which the participants mobilize in support of the empty signifier, which produces this jouissance, goes something like this:

> The Local Development project is the uniting factor for any collaborative process aiming to stimulate sustainable urban developments in the Agder Region. Sustainability in these small towns is about generating social meeting places, reducing the presence of cars in city centers, and improving public transport. Issues of time- and resource constraints are a clear obstacle to achieving these ideals, an obstacle which has led to the general overload of activities for local planners now threatening to prevent any actual local improvements. A strategy forward then, is to prioritize different and engage in modes of participatory planning, because persistent issues of sustainability and planning processes are intimately connected. Southern City Network is a helper in this matter, representing such participatory planning. Here, participants can engage with other disciplines and experiences from other southern cities, and perhaps even connect with particular individuals who hold authority or influence in political and financial matters. In this arena, it is deemed an

> important value to take initiative and engage in reciprocal relations with one another. The participants are, however, incompatible with each other, in both perceptions, values and agendas. But this incompatibility becomes synonymous with the unique and irreproachable character of local experiences, qualities, and developments, as exemplified by the local development project.

This most simplified description contains the twenty unanimously articulated elements from the discourse formation matrix, serving as the equivalential chain providing the local development project with its hegemonizing capacity, and through affective installment allows the empty signifier to become an object of desire.

To connect this fantasy to the desire of the subject, we could draw on a final Lacanian term here, in arguing that the empty signifier of the local development project figures as an *objet petit a* in the discourse. The Lacanian objet petit a is a type of imaginary positivization that stands in for the void that causes desire, allowing desire to exist as intention, and simultaneously that imaginary element which takes up the place of the void, camouflaging it (Glynos & Stavrakakis, 2004).

The local development project is both the unifying factor that camouflages the inherent contestations and instabilities of the discourse, and simultaneously masks as the answer to this same problem. As explained by Glynos and Stavrakakis, the object a can only function as the object-cause of desire in a fantasmatic narrative, so long as it stands in for that which is lacking, promising to cover up this lack in the Other (ibid, p. 210). Through the double movement of language-use, the enactment of the object a thus embodies both the lack in the other and the promise of its filling (ibid p.207). In a Laclauian framework, it can be understood as a highly popular object-cause of desire representing the lack of any actual meaning-unity within a discourse (Cederström & Spicer, 2014).

Relating this to the discourse on SUD, something must necessarily stand in for the lack of any possible unity in regard to SUD within the arena. Could the fantasy of SUD be a fantasy of consensus, held together by the empty signifier of the local development project? A fantasy which reverts the experience of the impossibility of arriving at a full meaning of SUD, into a fantasy sustaining collaboration around the notion of local development? The enabling obstacle, is the inability to arrive at

consensus in itself, an acknowledgement that it's not feasible. Yet this acknowledgement seems to uphold the very contradictory perception that it's possible. The local development project becomes the object cause of desire, reverting the experience of contestation, by giving the impossibility of consensus a presence in the discourse: We are incompatible, and realizing this makes us compatible. As argued by Torfing and Sørensen (E. Sørensen & Torfing, 2018), in reviewing three danish cases of multi-actor governance processes, participants in these processes often seemed to find consensus in the 'least common denominator' (ibid, p. 394) such as an agreement to disagree. In SCN, this ongoing avoidance is further enabled by the neoliberal rationales permeating the co-creative discursive practice making it difficult to exit such processes, while simultaneously enabling the production of a fantasy that protects participants from having to confront any meaningful debate about issues of what, how, who and why. And more importantly; this fantasy protects them from confronting exclusions that must be made to advance any actual developments to their localities, a process which would entail fierce debate and disappointment which would surely unveil the Real of a consensus-to-come as a mirage.

Now, this begs the question: If participants cannot establish a hegemonic articulation of sustainable urban development that can encompass the many diverging perspectives represented in the arena, and if they cannot engage in a meaningful debate about its contents without having to modify their values and views, and if they simultaneously cannot exit the process without jeopardizing their access to the space of representation, what do they do?

The troubling notion of fantasy and jouissance, is that desire must be kept out of reach in order for the subject to retain his jouissance-expected in the fantasmatic enactments of the objet petit a. We can separate here between jouissance-expected and jouissance-obtained (Bloom & Cederstrom, 2009; Daly, 1999; Glynos & Stavrakakis, 2004). When the participants enjoyment is threatened by dislocations and ontic manifestations of contestation, fantasy's primary function becomes the return to jouissance, and to push the structural impossibility of full enjoyment off to a comfortable distance (McMillan, 2017, p. 214). As Neill has argued, it is the fantasy in total that supports the production of desire, not the objet petit a in itself (Neill, 2011). Fantasy is what explains how certain empty signifiers take a hold of the subject

(Glynos, 2011), by representing both their desire to be positioned vis-à-vis a social group, and by defending the subject against desires of the Other (Neill, 2011). It is the objet petit a, as animated by the fantasy, which conceals the lack, whereas the fantasy in itself is what produces jouissance by showing the way towards the fullness of desire.

The task of fantasy is to retain the jouissance-expected; not to satisfy desire, but to continuously construct viable paths towards a fullness of desire, paths that in themselves produce jouissance. As Glynos and Stavrakakis (Glynos & Stavrakakis, 2004) write, with general reference to Zizek, fantasy finds a way to postpone the 'final satisfaction of our desire' (ibid p.210), displacing it from discourse to discourse, keeping it out of grasp at all times. And, as they argue, the byproduct of this continuous process of displacement is the very specific structuration of the subjects' desire, so that his jouissance comes to depend on the particular modes of fantasmatic enactment of the objet petit a. In this way, fantasies become busy producing jouissance for the subject, and they do this best by creating obstacles to their own fulfillment:

> *"Here, the inherent intractable ontological encounter with the dislocation of discourse is re-presented as an identifiable obstacle accountable for our lack of enjoyment" (McMillan, 2017, p. 224)*

In SCN, this would entail that the participants actively engage in preventing choices from being made, in order to protect their jouissance-expected. It may at first seem absurd, that the participants would unconsciously be engaged in staging an obstacle to prevent achieving the solution they so desperately seek. But if such a solution were to require an engagement with the impossibility of consensus, which would disrupt the structure they have come to depend on for their enjoyment, then it makes sense that they would rather avoid this encounter by reverting it into something manageable; we are incompatible and therefore don't have to navigate this incompatibility. By unconsciously pushing off the very object of desire, the subject can experience a jouissance-obtained, a 'surrogate jouissance' (Neill, 2011, p. 61) standing in the place of the original jouissance. This is what the participants of SCN do, when they cannot fully express themselves during co-creative practices and simultaneously cannot leave the arena. They have to create their own obstacle in order to release some of this pressure.

How can we know that the participants are actively involved in constructing such an obstacle to their own enjoyment? By paying attention to the affective dimension of the language-use of the participants. If we look at the discourse formation matrix, we find the obstacle of 'incompatibility' amongst the top twenty unanimously articulated signifiers, articulated by fourteen respondents, twenty-four times. It is a part of the equivalential chain and is the fourth most unanimously articulated element in the entire discourse formation matrix.

If we consider now the analysis of the data, against this reading of the concepts of petit a, jouissance, fantasy and desire, it could suggest that the participants unconsciously don't really want a change to the status quo, because at least they can utilize it in a fantasy that produces jouissance. The fantasy provides them with a sense that they are in the right place, doing the right thing, it lets them retain the promise that local development can be achieved without formulating some hegemonic projects in which some ideals, values, strategies, activities and role-calls are favored, while others are discarded. The objet petit a promotes a temporary ideological closure, but this closure can never transcend the incompatibility of their perspectives once decisions have to be made (cf. Gressgård, 2015). The moment some concrete choices as to the agenda of SUD is established, the empty signifier is going to lose some of its unifying function, seeing as jouissance is bound up in the fantasy that encompasses all actors and all differences via the local development project. At this stage, some actors will experience that their enjoyment is stolen. We saw some indications of this from the observation data, particularly in the project vs. process aspect, where PKK was concerned that the purpose of the arena was becoming something else than he anticipated.

Because the respondents continuously deny each other a fullness of meaning, it allows them to collectively continue to believe in the promise of consensus attached to the local development project, letting it remain an object of desire. But the question is: for how long? SCN has been attempting to construct a viable agenda for four years, and this reading suggests that the participants have been investing the process itself with a jouissance which will have to be disrupted to move ahead. If the local development project is kept enjoyable through its constant failure to be identified, then any concretization of an agenda will surely see protests from the participants,

their enjoyment suddenly threatened by the antagonistic frontiers which could undermine the promises attached to the fantasy of sustainable urban development.

In Conclusion

The discourse on SUD constructs the local development project as an objet petit a, reversing the experience of the impossibility of consensus, and simultaneously smoothing over this impossibility with a promise of a consensus-to-come through the local development project. The continued (re)enactment of the signifier provides the equivalential chain with its hegemonizing power, and this operation in turn re-produces the hegemonic neoliberal consensus-rationale via the discursive materiality of the co-creative practice, in which any objection or protest is displaced back onto the obstacle itself. The participants affectively invest into this object, articulating the fantasy over and over to produce a jouissance that depends on the empty signifier to remain empty and inaccessible. These articulations are enabled by the discursive materiality of the co-creative practice which guides their enunciative possibilities to be compatible with the consensus-oriented rationale of a neoliberal regime.

Confronting the impossibility of reaching a consensus on the meaning of SUD, would threaten the jouissance of the participants, and they therefore avoid politicizing the arena. This fantasy is partly enabled by the empty signifiers unifying function, and partly by the discursive regime of consensus-oriented approaches to co-creation, restricting their enunciative possibilities.

I will now move on to the conclusion of the thesis, where I answer the three research questions.

7 Conclusion

In the introduction to this thesis I presented the case of Southern City Network; a co-creative arena attempting to arrive at a joint commitment on how sustainable urban development should be understood and acted on within the arena. I argued that language as well as desire is at the heart of these dialogical processes of identification, negotiation and storytelling, and proposed that we could understand the inability of the participants of SCN to settle on an agenda for SUD, and the peculiar bustle of activity that attached itself to this inertia, by investigating the way sustainable urban development was enacted in discourse while paying close attention to the affective investments made by the participants.

I constructed their 'active inertia' as a problematized phenomenon and developed three research questions:

: How is sustainable urban development discursively constructed amongst planning agents in Southern City Network?

: What are the key areas of contestation to this construction?

: What is the role of fantasy and desire in this construction?

As discussed in the research strategy, these three research questions target three interrelated aspects of the discursive practice of SUD; structural, dynamic and affective. Rather than answering the research questions individually, I will therefore now answer them combined, as they are all aspects of the same discursive practice.

7.1 Answering Research Questions

The discourse on SUD is constructed around the objet petit a of the local development project. This object-cause of desire reverts the experience of the impossibility of arriving at a consensus on the agenda, by giving it a presence in discourse; The local development project comes to represent this incompatibility itself, and simultaneously works to unite the diverse group around a surprising goal; To remain steadfast that

they are incompatible, and that this incompatibility must be protected, so that they don't have to try to arrive at a consensus. By acknowledging that they are incompatible with one another, they can avoid politicizing the process while continuing to participate in activities of the network, now with the perfect reason for not having to agree nor argue.

The local development project comes to represent the Real, a promise that it is possible to engage in these co-creative practices, without having to politicize the dialogical practice. Politicizing the practice would confront the participants with the actual disruptive encounter of the Real, revealing that consensus is not possible (cf. Roskamm, 2014). To move ahead with the agenda of SCN, some perspectives would have to be (de)selected, and if some development projects become valued over others, then this signifier can no longer provide the enigmatic promise of what is to come; the jointly accomplished local development projects, achieved via the very avoidance of the political struggle.

In this fantasy, most proposals and arguments are identified against the local development project which cannot be refuted. Local experiences and knowledges, local needs and challenges, local cultures, values, and traditions, all become embodied in the local development project. If an argument cannot be reflected against the uniqueness of the local, then it will likely not take hold in the discourse.

Interestingly, the way participants turn this experience of lack into a fantasy of not having to agree, could indicate that they have caught on to the unavoidable conflictual condition of the social. The discourse on SUD is, without question, contested. There are four key areas of contestation to the discourse, which cannot be resolved via consensus-deliberation despite the project managers best efforts. These differences are never going to be eradicated entirely (cf. Laclau, 1990), and there is no one full identity of SUD that can be attained within this terrain. Rather, there are aspects of this terrain that are more sedimented than others, making some perspectives and arguments seem more reasonable and meaningful than others. All discourse is going to have an unstable border, it is going to be floating in uncertainty, but the examples drawn from the observational data illustrates the hegemonizing capacity of the equivalential chain, so long as it supports the empty signifier of the local development project. And so, true to the discourse, moments of contestation that erupt during arena

activities, are displaced via the articulation of the local development project, as well as by mobilizing the expectations attached to the discursive practice.

The participants enunciative possibilities are restricted according to the hegemonic neoliberal consensus-rationale dominating the co-creative practice. The participants have responded to the subject roles interpellated by the project management and have thus embodied the expectations associated with the discourse, in this case the roles of consensus-willing co-creators. They have invested in numerous identifications via this group and the discourse in question, and through these identifications their possibilities for expressing divergent perspectives and views become restricted by the expectations associated with the regime.

This adherence to the group, and the restrictions it entails of participants enunciative possibilities, makes it difficult to act in ways which are in contradiction to the expectations afforded by the co-creative practice. In other words, it makes it hard to say or do things that may be perceived to be at odds with the consensus-oriented rationale of the process. Further, this group has represented what is seen by the participants as a viable path towards actual sustainable local developments for small towns and places with very few places to go, making it particularly difficult to justify leaving the initiative.

The participants become squeezed into a corner. Collectively they are not able to articulate a hegemonic project of SUD, because it would threaten its unifying function. Individually, the hegemonic neoliberal consensus-rationale of the co-creative practice makes it difficult to fully express their values and views without potentially losing credibility and influence in the arena. And, the powerful promise of the local development project, make it difficult to withdraw from the arena because participants likely perceive the arena as one of the most realistic ways forward.

To find some kind of relief in this situation, the participants stage the ontic manifestations of antagonism during arena activities into a fantasy in which these contestations only serve to prove their suspicions that they are incompatible, and further become a testament to the unassailable local experience.

There can be little doubt that the participants of SCN consciously experience the uncomfortable dislocations that erupt in these kinds of complex deliberative

processes, in which even the most experienced project manager breaks a sweat trying to facilitate such a varied crew. But they are not consciously aware that they use these same discomforts to construct an obstacle in the form of 'incompatibility', to produce enjoyment in the stalemate. By sticking to the notion that they are incompatible, they can enjoy the discomforts associated with not being able to arrive at an agenda, not being able to express themselves, and not being able to withdraw from the arena.

This jouissance becomes their saving grace; it convinces them that their discomforts are a sign that they are doing something right. That they are accomplishing something important by participating in the arena, that what they are doing is meaningful and relevant. It relieves them of the anxiety associated with the encounter of the absence any ultimate truth (Daly, 1999). And so long as the local development project remains inaccessible, so long as it remains out of reach, so long as the conflicts pertaining to the constitutive differences of the participants continue to be displaced, the participants can continue to produce their enjoyment. Desire, must remain unfulfilled.

What is the role of fantasy and desire in the construction of sustainable urban development, amongst the participants of Southern City Network? To protect the participants from their own avoidance of the political.

Let's assume that Glynos and Howarths methodological rule of thumb is accurate in that this fantasy would resist public official disclosure, that fantasies must remain implicit, for the ideological structure to perform this function successfully (Davidson, 2012, p. 21). How would the participants react to a critique proposing that they were actively engaged in staging their own obstacle to arriving at an agenda for SUDs? If a Ph.D. student, perceived not to bring any relevant 'assets' to the process, aside from legitimizing the overall initiative with her presence, were to put forth such a critique, would the participants react with anger or be upset in other ways? Or would they shake their head and laugh, thinking such critique had missed the mark on the real serious issues pertaining to their localities?

Conversely, how would they react if this critique came from the vice-rector of research, a man who is highly regarded at the university, who frequently speaks in public on issues of locality and culture, being the very person who initiated the initiative? Such an individual holds a different kind of position within the social group

due to the perceived assets he brings to the process. The vice-rector, to a large extent, withdrew from the bustle of activity in 2019, something which was increasingly regarded amongst the participants as a sign that the university no longer backed the project. If he were to make this critique now, would the participants react with anger and refute the claims that their lack of progress gave them a certain satisfaction?

We cannot know the answers to these questions unless the Ph.D. student or the vice rector decides to tempt fate. But it does not seem entirely unreasonable to think that these findings would be experienced as upsetting to the participants.

When the idea of Southern City Network was first introduced in 2016, it was driven by a shared desire to solve the experience of fragmentation and isolation amongst public planners and politicians of small towns and places in Southern Norway. The initiative was seen as a fresh breath of air, a solution to multiple mounting issues for municipalities struggling to make ends meet and simultaneously finding ways of evolving themselves out of a looming demographic crisis threatening their way of life. It promised to solve the difficult question of what sustainable urban development actually meant for small-to medium sized towns of the region, and to move beyond the inability to translate sustainability into practices, by connecting the local specific challenges of struggling municipalities to regional competencies, authorities and political interests.

While the network never offered a clear vision of how it was going to resolve this inability to transcend the multisectoral and multidisciplinary regional level of collaboration around such costly and difficult problems, it was still able to mobilize unity across a diverse group of actors, through the notion of the irreproachable local experience. This signifier kept many of the actors lodged in arena activities for over four years. SCN told the story of diverse and unique localities banding together in a resourceful partnership capable of solving local crisis' while catering to the local university's outspoken desire for increased research collaborations across the region.

Why couldn't they settle on an agenda? Because their enjoyment became wrapped up in the very task of pushing off the disagreements necessary to arrive at an agenda. When viewed in this way, the fever of activity of spring 2019 starts to make sense. The more apparent it became that they could not reach a joint commitment on the

agenda, the more unstable the discourse became. And the more unstable the discourse became, the more the fantasy was needed to stabilize it, so that the participants could retain their enjoyment.

Why did the network activities die down towards the end of 2019? I do not know; the data collection did not stretch that far in time. But if I were to venture a guess, it would be that the participants were not able to continue the intense activities due to other responsibilities in their respective disciplines and organizations. And I imagine that colleagues of their respective work arrangements were growing weary of lacking results.

The official website of SCN still promises the reader that an agenda will come - sometime fall 2017 (webredaksjonen@uia, 2017). It shall be interesting to see what the university now does with the initiative, and whether they decide on a different approach to the dialogical process.

I would like to offer a word of caution to researchers and planning actors alike: Beware of an overemphasis on the unassailable quality of local experiences in dialogical-, deliberative- co-creative-, and participatory processes. For such a persistent focus may indicate the presence of a consensus-oriented fantasy which masks as meaningful democratic debate, while strategically displacing constitutive differences to deliver on the targets of innovation and growth. In these instances, planning-decision making may, counter-intuitively, become de-politicized in the very pursuit of a more democratic and inclusive process (Lund, 2018; MacDonald, 2015). As discussed in the introduction to this thesis, sustainability or the concepts related to it, may be mobilized in dialogical and deliberative processes as a 'feel good' issue which is hard to refute, denying the legitimacy of more radical alternatives, and significantly narrowing the capability of such processes to explore alternative approaches to planning (Allmendinger & Haughton, 2010, p. 804). The local development project was certainly launched as a 'feel good' issue, which became nearly impossible to question.

I also want to stress, that I am not arguing that local experiences, perspectives, values, norms, and cultures are not important. Quite the contrary; I want to emphasize how

the co-creative practice witnessed in SCN did not do this diversity justice. The discursive practices of SCN, as observed during the spring of 2019, never allowed the participants to genuinely engage with the burden and privilege of the political. It never allowed the political to be consciously foregrounded in such a way that the participants would have to make a choice regarding who was going to lose, for a time being, for someone else to win (Metzger, 2016). In a sense, this avoidance concealed the constitutional, imminent and unavoidable conflictual condition of the social (cf. Marchart, 2018).

Surely there must be an alternative?

7.2 Contributions of the Thesis

In the introduction to this thesis, I highlighted three aims:

- To provide novel insights on the problematized phenomenon
- To develop an original research strategy for conducting PDA.
- To explore the potential productivity of conflict inherent in language-use.

I will now briefly present the contributions these three aims has led to.

Providing novel insights on the problematized phenomenon

By connecting the practice of co-creation, as a contemporary mode of participation in the Nordics, to the emergence of new hybrid forums for planning, I was able to suggest that the neoliberal consensus-rationales often associated with the dialogical processes of these forums materialized in the practices of SCN. This could open up a dimension for reflecting on co-creative and dialogical processes, not just in SCN, but within other collaborative projects at the university, as well as within Agder county municipality. Suggesting that actor's enjoyment in such processes become tied to the very obstacle

inherent in consensus, could perhaps open up a venue for experimenting with other forms of deliberation and dialogue.

The re-construction of the discourse on SUD has showed that case-specific studies of the particular ways sustainability is enacted in language, can help to highlight ways in which the discourse on sustainability actually works and varies in between local contexts. In this case, the empty signifier of the local development project seems to have taken the place of the signifier of sustainability. Whether these are findings that may be used in comparison to other cases to generalize some new developments in the discourse on sustainability in the Nordics or elsewhere, remains to be explored.

Developing an original research strategy for conducting PDA.

Methodologically, I have provided three contributions to expand on the analytical vocabulary of PDA. The first is a circular model for conducting PDA, the second is a middle-range concept intended to nuance data entries analyzed via the circular model according to fantasmatic registers, and the third is a particular research strategy in which data produced by the two other contributions are generated into a discourse formation matrix. While these tools were all developed as an experimentation, they may yet provide inspiration for others to either try something similar, or to emancipate themselves from the expectations of others regarding how discourse analysis should be done.

I would also like to suggest that there is an untapped potential inherent in the Fantasmatic Registers of WHO, HOW, WHAT and WHY. Once the discourse formation had been generated, I quickly understood that the discourse analysis could just as well have been conducted by taking onset in these four categories. The choice not to do so, regarded my primary interest in tracing points of sedimentation and contestations to the discursive structure. There is also a potential here, to turn these four categories into a more hands-on tool for planning-practitioners seeking to investigate how, for instance, citizens relate to plans and policies they develop, or to particular development projects and so forth. In fact, I tested this out myself, by making a brief 5 page-pamphlet, using the data I already had to investigate how the participants discursively constructed the Regionplan Agder 2030. One page for each

of the four categories, and a final page where I drew up the four areas of conflict. The pamphlet got me a job at the county municipality, which I start April 15th 2021, as an advisor on sustainability and responsible for one of their new forums on climate and environment.

Explore the potential productivity of conflict inherent in language-use.

The discourse analysis has showed that it is possible to foreshadow some sedimentations and potential points of contestation to a dialogical process. This implies that it might be possible to conduct this type of analysis out of qualitative interview data from actors in dialogical processes, at an early stage, to experiment with the potential productivity inherent in these points of contestation rather than strive to avoid them.

The illustration of the social ontology of radical contingency is a contribution I am particularly proud of. It took nearly two years to arrive at this illustration, over the numerous reflections on Laclau's conceptualization of discourse, the nature of antagonism, and the position of desire. As a communicative tool, the illustration can perhaps be used to make Laclau's somewhat inaccessible theory of discourse and meaning accessible to a broader audience. I was able to confirm this with an episode close to home. My father has professed to me that the theories I work with are incomprehensible him. No matter how many times I have tried to explain them to him, in all the varieties of words I could think of, he could not grasp them. But via this model I was able to help him understand the nature of a conflict in the church he frequents, simply by drawing the lines on a napkin over morning coffee. He still does not grasp the words of these theories, but via the model he was able to utilize Laclau's approach to discourse, to understand why a member of the elder council was causing a conflict. These are the kind of experiences that I find extremely exciting.

7.3 Future Potential Research

The following is a brief list of future areas for research that could connect to this thesis or expand on it.

- The post-political and the conflictual. The findings of the discourse analysis seems to lend itself well to a discussion on the post-political in Norway. I indicated as much in the introduction of the thesis as well and should like to continue by writing an article tying these findings to such a discussion.
- Re-politicizing co-creation. It would be interesting to collaborate with other researchers who have studied co-creative, deliberative and dialogical practices in the Nordics, and compare findings to explore potential ways of re-politicizing these practices where such is warranted.
- Strategic dishonesty. I hinted at this phrase in chapter 6 but did not have time to develop the concept further in this project. I should like to explore the notion that subjects modify their values and beliefs in order to be able to retain these very same values and beliefs by articulating them into fantasies instead.
- Ideological fantasy. I discovered the field of ideological fantasy late in the Ph.D. journey, much to my dismay. I should like to further explore ways in which the methods elaborated on in this thesis could apply to other kinds of qualitative material in the search of ideological fantasy in the non-verbal.
- Experimental planning. This kind of experimentation with the limits in language, with immanent and constitutive conflict, should lend itself to different kinds of experimental research projects. For instance, it would be highly interesting to run a discourse analysis, after the method elaborated on in this thesis, on a small group and then experiment with ways of letting the participant themselves interpret the discursive structure.

7.4 Experiences Gained

Aside from the indisputable fact that townhall coffee tastes the same from Farsund in the west to Risør in the east there are two experiences I would like to share. Following these I will give my final reflections on antagonism as a condition for hope.

On the foul play of the unconscious

How do you design inquires supposed to offer some kind of relevant take on a series of events involving a lot of different people, all from within your own perspective? How do you try to offer something that could be relevant for others, while at the same time reflecting on, and accepting, that really, it's all just in your own mind? No matter what you present it won't reflect what you mean, and the actors who might read it, will also interpret the text in their unique way. All discourse analysis is going to be a creative representation made by the researcher, according to her experience.

I tried my best to present my work as relevant and useful to a larger public, at various stages of the process. I tried to argue in front of others, that my goal was to help the participants of SCN to make some progress on the agenda of SUD.

But when I observed these moments of open conflict during arena activities, in which the participants circumvented the impossibility of consensus via the focus on the local development project, I had to admit to myself that my experience too was distorted by what I can only call an intrusion of my own senses, somewhere beyond the logic of words. I could sense the way participants engaged in these unconscious games of affirmation with each other, that they were playing pretense in order to restore reason and sensibility, and that it was this play in itself that was so deeply and desperately important to them. But I could not describe it. I only knew, through subjective intuition, what these episodes meant, to me, and simultaneously understood that my own unconscious was playing foul. I desperately wanted them to be playing mindless games, confirming my long-running suspicion that there was a better way forward to be attained through open engagement with these ontic antagonisms. I wanted to ignore the unnerving experience that these episodes were 'truly' experienced differently for others present, to retain my sense of enjoyment in having to sit through the same lengthy discussions over and over. Their disorder became my order; I was in the right

place, doing the right thing, I saw the world for what it truly was, their delusions was my opium. God help me if they ever solve their inertia.

Yet this is all I have, right? This is what language does. This is why my account of this discourse is but one of so many accounts that could be told, and why you, the reader, should take everything in this thesis with a grain of salt. It is not the answer, it is not a more accurate depiction of what went down in the arena than what, for instance, the project manager or the professor initiating the arena might tell you. This is just one account, one reading, trying to twist your gaze towards a genre as I want it to be. What I want, is for you to see that paying close attention to the nuances of the affective aspects of language-use, could potentially offer insights into points of sedimentation and contestation, as well as discursive regimes and fantasies, at the early onset of such collaborative processes. This kind of nuancing might just offer a particular kind of reading that could help to identify unhealthy habits, previously unseen possibilities, or convince die-hard consensualists that difference goes to the core of meaning-making in itself and is as ineradicable as it is impossible. It offers up a particular kind of reading which could lend itself to questions of experimental planning, political ideology and democratic legitimacy in planning.

On the Mysteries of the Discourse Formation Matrix

Generating the discourse formation matrix was an incredible experience in its own right. I was able to test my circular model as well as the fantasmatic registers and play around with scale in a way I did not expect. And one of these ways was a bit of a double-edged sword, which partly pertains to the point above.

Different individuals will see different things in a material such as this. When I first presented the discourse formation matrix to my supervisors, the three of us were left with three very different ideas for how I should approach the material and move on to re-construct the discourse. These ideas ranged from a narrative reading of the fantasmatic categories, to a sociogram charting the relationships between elements via vertices and edges. This was frustrating at first, disheartening even, as it opened possibilities rather than narrowing down the path forward. But as time went, I came to appreciate how the material seemed to reflect these very subjective ways of seeing

and understanding the world and things in it. And I came to the decision that I wanted the reader to also have the opportunity to read this constructed source-material before I lassoed in their attention again for my own re-constructive adventure. And this is one of the reasons I insisted on showcasing it in the re-construction. Showcasing how these things are made, and read, are as much part of a creative representation, as any other act of signification.

This decision also reflected the purpose of exploring alternative ways of thinking and doing PDA analysis. I run a risk, of course, in that the reader finds the materials lacking. If we take Laclau's work at face value, such an experience of lack is guaranteed even. But there is a beauty in precisely this lack which opens up different ways of reading at different stages of the process. An emancipatory spirit that flirts with the heterogeneity of the outside, that is keen to be surprised and challenged and overthrown by something new and different.

7.5 A Condition for Hope

Antagonism. It is at the very core of why we talk to each other. Despite our best attempts at conveying what we mean, meaning is always going to rely on unavoidable and insurmountable differences which provide the social with the very undecidability that allows us to construct identifications by which to make something meaningful. Antagonism is the very passage we must move through, to relate to other human beings.

Therefore, any co-creative process utilizing dialogue as a primary tool, must be conscious of the political dimension and resist the knee-jerk reaction to wish it away. It is through contestations, the kicking of the chessboard, that these processes might really come into their own as experimental alternatives to established processes of planning decision-making and governance.

Laclau saw the always presence of dislocations as a source of freedom, not isolation or entrapment (Laclau, 1990). Laclau's subject is not a slave to the structures, rather, he has a distinct agency which is guaranteed to introduce moments of freedom for others via constitutive dislocations. Where Laclau conceptualized hegemony as a process of attempting to influence this boundlessness of the social, to domesticate and

"(…) embrace it within the finitude of an order." (Laclau, 1990, p. 91), the free subject will inevitably always skew this order out of joint.

Participants in co-creative processes are capable of action beyond the discursive regime to which they adhere, let us never undermine their autonomy in accounts like these. We must remember that Laclau conceptualized the social as a multiple myriad in an endless evolution, as a limitless space of encounters and connections, contestations, and possibilities. The always conflictual condition of the social is a condition of opportunity, not impossibility. It is a condition for hope.

Dear Reader

You are completely unique. No really, you are, clichés aside and all. Only you see the world exactly as you do.
There are many forces in this world trying to tell you it isn't so, that there is an objective version of reality out there which you can either attain or should conform to.

Realizing it isn't so can be terribly lonely, to accept that you walk a road that no one else can share completely with you. Some will use this loneliness to instill fear in you or manipulate you to do, say or support things that you don't want to do, say or support. It can feel even more isolating when you realize that they, too, are trapped in their own perspective of reality, unable to break out of the prism that separates them and you.

But worry not, it's quite beautiful, I assure you. This is a condition of hope, hope for change of things that aren't as they should be, knowledge that nothing ever remains the same and encouragement that small actions can influence the big scope of things. It makes people and places unpredictable, and it makes life exciting.

And you can never know exactly what will happen tomorrow. Isn't that liberating?

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Footnotes

[1] Bruce Fink (Fink, 1995), reading Lacan from a clinical orientation, draws on Lacan's metaphor of the möbius strip in describing this constant tension between the ego and the unconscious: They are both of the same material, linguistic in nature, but one part of the surface will always be hidden and one visible. He and others have argued that it is within this divide that the subject is realized, that *the* subject can be conceived of as this dynamic divide between the two sides. (cf. Fink, 1995, pp. 46-48; Neill, 2011, p. 31). Just as there can be no social without the impassable chasm of antagonism motivating the production of the social, there can be no subject without the impassable split which constitutes the subject. So, as Fink argues, the split itself becomes the 'condition of possibility of the existence of a subject' (Fink, 1995, p. 48).

[2] Most authors refer the discussion of the unconscious to Glimpsing the Future (Laclau, 2004) where Laclau argued that the Lacanian conception of the unconscious is something structured like a language that has an unconscious force. To this unconscious force Laclau conceptualized affect as a cathectic energy residing in the unconscious, from which it performs a mediating role in the production of discourses. In Laclau's terminology, affective investments are defined as cathectic, which means they are invested with energy (Glynos & Stavrakakis, 2010)

[3] See for instance Glynos and Howarth (Glynos & Howarth, 2007) where the authors separate between individual and collective discursive practices in their Logics approach.

[4] This idea of meaning as something actionable is not to be confused with more dialogical approaches to the interpretation of meaning in which the researcher brings meaning into being through a kind of exploratory interaction with the study-object (cf. Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018). While the ontological position of Laclau's discourse theory implies that meaning is the dynamic interplay of the subjects back and forth interactions with the world, research strategies inspired by PDA are usually mostly concerned with societal contexts that guide or restrict this rhythm of meaning-making.

[5] Some authors have wished to move antagonism into the strictly ontic category as but one of many discursive forms, leaving dislocation as the primary ontological category of the radical contingency of social reality (cf. Hansen, 2013; cf. Thomassen, 2005).

[6] This perspective on the discursive as social objectivity answers the criticism that followed Laclau's work in the second half of the 90'ies which revolved around a kind of chicken-egg debate amongst spatial theorists on whether the social or our representations of it comes first in the construction of social reality (Marchart, 2014). Laclau was criticized for treating the social as a realm of stasis in which duality trumped everything, as a static thing consisting of opposing equal forces, and the criticism that followed was a plea to see the subjective position as the dominant constructing force, and our reproductions of the social as secondary (ibid). This implied that the social could take on an agency of its own, that it could hold a very real influence on a moment of productivity. But if we consider Laclau's concept of the incomplete structures that grant social objectivity to discourses through subjectivity, we see that his concept transcends this criticism as it returns to subjectivity as the source of all cognition (Marchart, 2014).

[7] It was Heidegger who first introduced this concept of the reciprocity between text and context, and with it challenged the original conception of meaning that could be found with the subject alone (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018). He illustrated his ideas with the hermeneutic circle which depicted a circular model illustrating the reciprocal relations of meaning-production between the individual parts of a text, and the whole of the text. Neither can be understood without the other, and the subject is therefore 'thrown' into the world, his self-understanding rooted in the world as a 'being in the world', his understanding of the world and objects in it a constant dialogical relationship between understanding and preunderstanding (Alvesson and Scholdberg 2018). Meaning exists somewhere between the objective-discursive relations beyond the self-conception of the subject, the 'being of the world', and that of the subjective as he interacts in a discursive mode of 'being in the world'. Wagenaar (Wagenaar, 2012) claims that this concept was further nuanced by Gadamer who pointed out the ways in which this beingness trapped the subjects understanding of the world in his own traditions. Prejudism, for instance, is inescapable, as traditions, norms and ethics are a pre-existing condition for our understanding. The hermeneutic circle thus represents something more than just the sum of its parts, it refers to a 'whole' that is constructed in a

particular way. If you switch the places of two elements, the totality will appear different, and so the meaning of the whole will change, thus in turn influencing the meaning of the parts.

[8] Wagenaar claims that this conception of the way meaning is configured in relation to the social, is a recurring motif of the critical philosophers of subjective meaning. But where philosophers like Heidegger, Wittgenstein, Dewey, Gadamer, Bourdieu and Taylor all agree on the key feature of meaning as something that is formed in larger social configurations, they disagree on the conceptualization of the term 'social configuration' (Wagenaar, 2011). According to Wagenaar it is at this point in the history of hermeneutics that we can see a junction forming in interpretive theory, between that of the discursive-meaning approach and the dialogical-meaning approach. Both approaches mobilize the two requirements of a limited perspective and the outside interpreting observer, but in completely different ways.

[9] A research framework can be compared to the criteria and conditions that must be taken into account when designing a blueprint for a building site. My father plans to build a new sawmill house during 2021. For this purpose he has tasked a builder to draw up a blueprint of the building. This blueprint must follow certain building criteria in order to perform its intended purpose. It is designed to fit the landscape, it's dimensions are adjusted to fit the type of bandsaw machines going under it's roof. The angle of the walls, the fit of the frame, are all carefully planned out to fit a certain size of timber wagons and the radius of their claws. The blueprint plays to the strengths of the site, while fortifying against its weaknesses such as spring floods that are common in this area.

[10] According to Østbye et al. (Østbye et al., 2013), there are two ways to treat documents when conducting research; They can be the focus of our research, or they may serve as source material to our research. Because these documents are not publicly available, because they are mostly written by the same person, because there is a discrepancy of who have received what, and because the research focus of this project is not aimed at the development process of the network nor the perspective of the secretariat, a conscious choice has been made to exclude them as analytical material. When viewing documents with a discourse theoretical lens, documents can be understood as a discursive practice because they represent reality in certain ways, either for their author or for a group of individuals adhering

to them. As the project manager of SCN expressed in an email to the researcher upon delivering a report of activities from 2016-2020: "*This is the story as told from the secretariat perspective.*" (William Fagerheim, 19.10.2020). If documents are to represent the discursive practice of a group however, it demands equal access to the same documents across the group, over a significant period of time (ref), and further there must be an authorship commonly accepted by the group via some type of process such as a formal resolution.

While participants attending an activity have received documents in relation to said activity, the documents detailing other subject matters, such as proposals for the overall strategy of the network itself, may not have been received by the same participants. Furthermore, the interviews which form the data material for the analysis have taken place over the span of nine months, and so participants interviewed near the end of this period have potentially had access to different information regarding the network than those interviewed in the early stages. There is also no guarantee that the researcher is in possession of all documents. It would have been possible to perform a discourse analysis in which the documentation served as the perspective of the author, William Fagerheim, and the interview data could have been set up to contrast this perspective. However, the aim of this thesis is to discuss the meanings and subjectivities attached to the notion of 'sustainable urban development' among a group of individuals who participates in a communicative arena. For this reason, the documents only serve as source material.

[11] A common trait amongst the partnering cities is their relatively low population numbers, save for the region capitol of Kristiansand and the eastern city of Arendal. These cities are locally known for being 'sleepers' during winter months, with little to no street-side activity, while summer months see an influx of second homeowners and tourists, local music- and arts festivals and generally a very high level of events and street-side activity. This has resulted in several social challenges, such as demographic trends shifting towards an aging population and general struggles to attract young families.

[12]. The cultural heritage of the 'traditional coastal town' was subjected to its own county municipality strategy in 2015 (Vest-Agder-Fylkeskommune, 2015).

[13] For more of Marttilas' references regarding structuralist approaches to narrative analysis, see Somers (Somers, 1994, 1995) and Titscher, Wodak, Meyer and Vetter (Titscher, Wodak, Meyer, & Vetter, 1998).

[14] In Logics of Critical Explanation, Glynos and Howarth (Glargue for the validity of their concept of 'articulation', that it is a way of guarding the researcher from falling into naïve empiricism or abstract theoreticism, which in both cases are not mediated or constructed by some defined concepts.

[15] Interestingly, the sister-element of 'Example.Local Development Process' was only coded twice, whereas the 'Example.Local Development Project' has been coded 58 times.