Taming the publication machine

or

Discourse analysis made subliminal

François Thoreau, UA workshop on discourse analysis, 15 Nov., 2010
Layout

- What?
- How?
What? The framework

- European Master in Science, Society and Technology at UM
- Fieldwork in October 2009 at Biochemistry Department
- Ethnography or loose ethnomethodology
What? The issue

- Empirical observations: a team «negotiating» a microscope

- Theoretical framework = Trading zone
  a social, material, and intellectual mortar binding together the disunified traditions of experimenting, theorizing and instrument building (Galison, 1997)

- A point: while setting up the microscope, the team was actively generating a sense of unity among its members
How? The Method

- Unintended paper, loose methodology, few preparation (esp. recordings)
- For the record, I literally sold my body for science
- Constant travels back and forth between data, numerous meetings and brainstorming sessions with Maria
How? The Contrast

• A solution that "spontaneously" emerged: contrast acts with discourses

• Act of setting up a SP5, each scientist after the other: thick description
How? Point out to discourses

• Manifold and complex discourses on the reasons to do so: threefold repertoire of discourse

• Scientific: best knowledge + culture of bricolage
  "If you don’t need all the fancy stuff from this machine, why should you use it?"

• Economic: expensiveness, competition issue (broken lens)

• Strategic: easy publication path and positioning
  "It’s like a publication machine"
How? Eventually, grounded

- In the spirit, not the letter, fairly similar to Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967)
- Constructivist uptake on it (Charmaz, 2005; Charmaz & Bryant, 2007) - interpretation
- Way to classify and sort out a (usually massive amount of) data (Bowker & Star, 1999)
- Label issues from data and create categories, then structure it so that paths emerge
Make sense, locate and understand collaborative work which increasingly shape scientific practices
Thank you!