

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

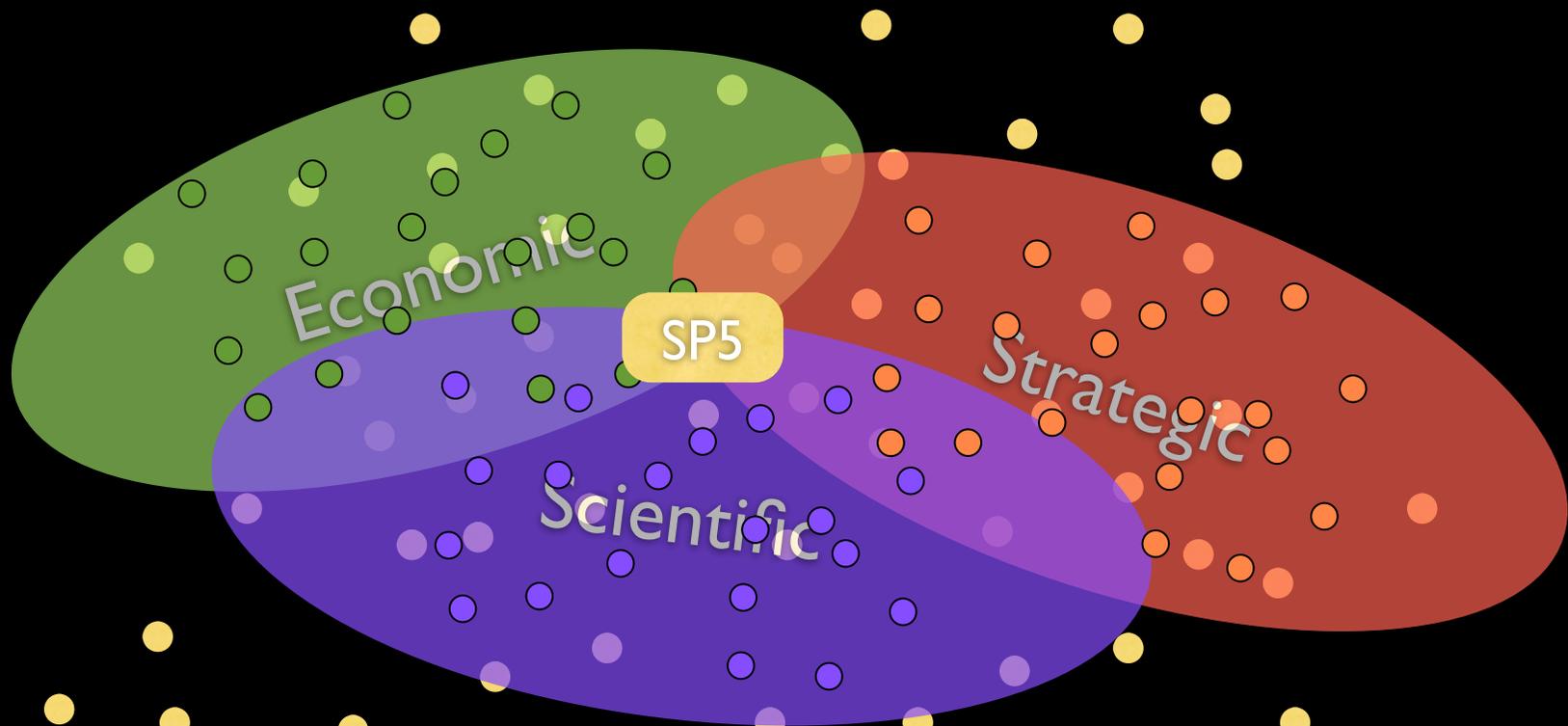


# How? Point out to discourses

- 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!