

Methodological Promises of Discourse Analysis in Philippine Environmental Research

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Abstract

Two situations characterize the state of environmental investigations in the Philippines: (i) the epistemic dominance of the 'natural sciences' perspective and (ii) the paucity of local resources (which advocate the use of) or which actually employed qualitative methodologies in framing environmental issues and challenges. As to the latter, the few that are available either have utilized the traditional social sciences methodologies e.g., survey and interviews as used in Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and similar endeavors or innovated by attempting to hybrid several approaches. More disconcerting is the observation that this dearth of literature has had very little understanding as to the epistemological underpinnings of qualitative approaches in general. Thus, the main objective of this paper is to address these situations by demonstrating that environmental issues are, in fact, socially constructed issues and to highlight the utility and relevance of a qualitative approach- discourse analysis (DA) in making sense of this genre of social issues.

Discourse Analysis as a Research Paradigm

Discourse analysis (DA) as a research paradigm is both a *theoretical* framework and a *methodological* approach (Phillips and Hardy, 2002). It cannot be used as a standalone method detached from its theoretical foundations. In other words, researchers must accept the basic epistemological premises of DA in order to use it as their method of empirical study (Phillips and Jorgensen, 2006).

As a theoretical paradigm, DA emphasizes the importance of the use of language as discourse in knowledge production. Such epistemic affordance of language forms part of the central interests of discourse analysis vis-à-vis power (Lehtonen 2000; Carabine, 2001; Hall 1992; Jaworski and Coupland 1999; Lemke 1995). As a methodological approach DA problematizes the relationships of texts- from individually innocent and isolated texts to a collectively powerful discourse (i.e. intertextuality). Text, in this context is no longer defined in limited parameters. DA's notion of *textuality* extended the modalities of texts to include gestures, interaction, conversation and anything that can be *read* and *interpreted* (Erasga 2010). As such, the variety of discourse analytic approaches depends on which mode of text is used as the unit of analysis.

Taken together, DA can be a powerful research tool to analyze social interaction, their intermediaries and contexts. As a theory it assumes that "our knowledge of the world should not be treated as objective knowledge. Reality is only accessible to us through categories, so our knowledge and representations of the world are not reflections of the reality 'out there,' but are products of our categorizing the world, or, in discursive analytical terms, products of discourse" (Phillips and Jorgensen 2006; 5; *see also* Burr 1955: 3; Gergen 1985: 266-7). As a method, it unpacks the discourses in order to reveal the constructed nature of knowledge, which determines power relations amongst social actors engaged in a social interaction.

Within the context of political ecology, environmental challenges are power issues. Determinations of what elements of the natural environment are valuable (hence they are referred to as *resources*) and who are allowed or have been allowed to access these resources are

power-based decisions that are discursive in nature (Contreras 2002, Lemke 1995). Logging, waste management, mining, urban planning and the likes are political decisions based on laws and legislations, which are clearly products of discursive processes (negotiations and debates among influential personalities and institutions). Hence, DA can be a powerful tool in analyzing environmental issues as social issues.

Notwithstanding, social scientists who are into environmental research still have limited interest in and often hostile reaction to DA. This disdain is understandable for various reasons. First, in the past DA had been a methodology employed almost exclusively in literature, philosophy, english, communications, cultural and critical studies. Only recently that it has gained currency in the social sciences and intimated into their research praxis. Second, as a theory and methodology DA is not easy to understand and “aggravated by the level of abstraction of much academic work on discourse which can be off-putting and seen as not worth the intellectual effort” (Brand and Thomas, 2005: 83). Lastly, the epistemological assumptions of DA run in sharp contrast with the positivistic and *physicalist* rendition of environmental problems as a purely objective and quantifiable phenomenon (Bird 1997).

Phillips and Hardy (2002) suggest that a gamut of topic could be studied from a DA perspective including issues related to the environment. Unfortunately, this cannot be said as the case in the Philippines. The relevance and appreciation of discourse analysis in environmental research could only be demonstrated if there is sufficient and readily available literature that lay down the basics of DA assumptions and methodology vis-à-vis the Philippine context. Ideally, these literature must identify the relevant epistemological assumptions of DA which must be translated into a set of operable research techniques and strategies and to specify the parameters with which such methodological techniques and procedures are most applicable.

In order to address the above concerns, the present article identified some basic epistemological assumptions and corresponding theoretical concepts that are peculiar to a type of discourse analysis-*textual* discourse type. It then translates these epistemological assumptions and theoretical concepts into a set of methodological procedures useful in doing discourse analysis using environmental texts. To achieve the objectives, two research texts are used to concretize the application of the methodological procedures.

Cases and Their Approaches

Two types of research texts (representing two cases of analysis) were used to demonstrate- (i) a research text that employed a genre of discourse analysis as its methodology and (ii) a text to be analyzed using a textual discourse analytic method. In both instances, the relevance of DA as a qualitative research approach is highlighted.

For case 1, I selected a research on the interpretation of the social history of rice as *the* history of environmental awareness in the Philippines (Erasga 2006). In other words, this work highlighted how genealogy was used in constructing a history of environmental consciousness in the Philippine via the biography of rice. Using DA, Erasga read the social history of rice as a parallel history of environmental articulations in the Philippines. This was accomplished by juxtaposing selected texts (i.e. canonical texts) from different historical periods from 1946 to 2005. Although divergent in their content, these canonical texts, taken together (and read as a continuum), inspired the conceptualization of an ideal rice plant- the modern rice- a crop that required a package of farming practices and petrochemical inputs which were later blamed for the rapid deterioration of the environment.

For Case 2, I picked the research text on the social construction of solid waste written by Arlen Ancheta (2006). Ancheta conducted a study on the discursive struggle over a component of the built environment by examining the construction of the concept of solid waste. By analyzing written (and verbal accounts) from documents concerning solid waste management, she identified a variety of *claims* as to how to deal with solid waste articulated by three local claims-makers namely (i) a government agency, (ii) a school-based NGO and (iii) a community-based NGO. By doing so, solid waste became a socially constructed reality made possible by the claims made about it. For my intents and purposes, I used textual discourse analysis to show that claims made by people are linguistic tactics that could be unpacked to reveal discursive strategies. Within the context of environment, I interpreted their claims as discursive repertoires that reflect their particular conception of the environment and their relations with it.

The techniques vary from case to case given their different methodological orientations (see Table 1). In Case 1, for instance, the text selected was archival research that used a discourse analytic methodology called genealogy (hereinafter referred to as genealogy text). Hence the methodological techniques discussed were the actual procedures employed by the researcher himself. Case 2 text was an empirical research on an environmental issue but did not employ a discourse analysis approach (hereinafter referred to as claims-making text). The techniques suggested are designed to *read* the entire text as an environmental discourse.

Table 1. From Concepts to Tools of the Genealogical Analysis

□ Analytic Concepts	◆ Tools
<p>□ Discursive periods: A continuum of timeframe defined by a set of definitive issues. Discursive period can be a set of historical events invoked by and common to standard Philippine historical texts.</p>	<p>◆ Canonical texts: Documents that circulate within a given discursive period written by people and institutions. Their contents condition emerging period themes and corresponding storylines. Canonical texts, therefore, are the vessels and mouthpieces of issues and are selected based on authorship, publication language, and range of issues they contained.</p>
<p>□ Intertextuality: Refers to the confluence of canonical texts which shapes and gives direction to the emerging version of events (i.e., issues) thus producing the period's unique set of discourses. No single text dominant or marginal is, however, capable of conditioning any discursive episode. In Erasga's research, intertextuality shaped the way rice was depicted in each episode.</p>	<p>◆ Storylines: Crisp generative statements / phrases that bring together previously unrelated elements of reality. Their main function is to help people to fit their bit of knowledge, experience and expertise in the larger jigsaw puzzle of an issue. Storylines often carry metaphors- linguistic devices that convey understanding through comparison. In Erasga's research "land for the landless," "war on hunger," "miracle seed," and "rice is life" were concrete examples of powerful storylines.</p>
<p>□ Genealogical break: Refers to the flow of events which are Hence, it may produce contingencies such as events that are neither linear, continuous, nor predictable. Within the context of rice, several unrelated issues hooked together like, for example, the peasant unrest which produced a version of events leading to a depiction of rice as a grain of discontent (the object of peasant struggle against their landlords).</p>	<p>◆ Interpretive repertoires: Linguistic resources that constructed events, persons, processes, or objects created as justification or explanations revolving around one or more themes or metaphors. They are broadly discernible clusters of terms, descriptions and figure of speech often assembled around metaphors or vivid images. They are historically developed and make up an important part of the common sense of a culture; although some may be specific to certain institutional domains. Examples are "land reform," "tenancy reforms," "sustainable development," and "Green Revolution."</p>
<p>□ Episodic image: The image of rice is reflective of the material effects that go with the way rice is written / talked about, e.g. as a grain of discontent during the peasant unrest period (1946-1965), a miracle seed during the Green Revolution period (1966-1985); and as a metaphor of life during the sustainable development period (1986-2005).</p>	<p>◆ Thematic analogies: Images are converted into analogies rather than fluid concept or loose jargons. The development of environmental discourse in the Philippines follows three thematic analogies related to palay: as <u>grain</u> (referring to food), as <u>seed</u> (referring to its productive capacity), and as <u>nature</u> (referring to the environmental impacts of its production).</p>

As to the claims making text, I performed a two-tiered interpretation-that of the author herself (Ancheta) and that of the organizations she studied. In the 1st tier, I assumed that Ancheta was, by focusing on claims as institutional discourses, doing a form of discourse analysis. In the 2nd tier, I read Ancheta's text as object to be analyzed using discourse analysis. The approach is based on the assumption that in interpreting organizational claims as environmental statements, Ancheta was simultaneously offering her own interpretation of what the environment is using her

own *reading* of the different solid waste claims. In this sense, I was interpreting an interpretation of an interpretation, which is an application of what philosophers describe as mimetic processes.

Interestingly, there was an overlapped in the analytical treatment of the cases. It can be noticed that the techniques used in the *writing* of the genealogy text were of the same types as those employed in *reading* the claims-making text (i.e., claims as narratives and embed interpretive repertoires). The techniques, notwithstanding, were used to answer different sets of questions as the thrusts of each research were disparate.

Let me illustrate. The genealogy text aimed to trace the development of environmental awareness in the Philippines using non-environment texts, hence sought to answer questions regarding *origin* namely:

- (i) How do unrelated historical events from 1946-2005 coalesce in such as way that gives birth to environmental articulations?
- (ii) What are the series of issues debated during each discursive episode and what are the linguistic shifts that helped shaped the construction/framing of these issues into environmental issues?
- (iii) What are the productive and material effects of the issues identified in each discursive episode?

The claims-making text, on the other hand, focused on how an environmental issue (i.e. solid waste) has been claimed, debated and negotiated, hence aimed in providing answers on questions related to *divergent accounts* of solid waste such as:

- (i) How is “solid waste” talked out by the different stakeholders including Ancheta herself?
- (ii) How were these talks (or “claims” in Ancheta’s narrative) assembled in such a way as to create a particular frame of understanding the environment (in general) and the human-environment nexus (in particular)?
- (iii) What are in the claims, institutional interest and resources that legitimated the reckoning of these environmental accounts as environmental problems?

In both cases though, the constitutive and consequential features of discourse- how discourses work to achieve particular effects¹- were given emphasis, i.e., the *construction* of environmental consciousness in the genealogy text and the *legitimation* of a concern as an environmental issue (a discursive effect in the claims-making text).

Case 1: The Genealogy Text

Synopsis of the Work

Although the study suggested an interest on environmental articulation, Erasga’s research was neither focused on any specific environmental problems nor interested in their historical documentation. In this research, the author attempted to retell an “alternative version” of how the environment evolved to become a discursive (or textual) phenomenon in the Philippines. He gazed into the social history of the rice crop and used it as prism to reconstruct the story. Using textual analysis, the research investigated how key documents (i.e. canonical texts) in different historical periods from 1946 to 2005 produced different depictions (or “discourse” in his methodological jargon) of rice. These evolving depictions of rice, translated into a three-fold

image- from a political grain to a scientific seed to a powerful metaphor of nature- were explored as a parallel history of the problematization of the environment in the Philippines (Fig 1).

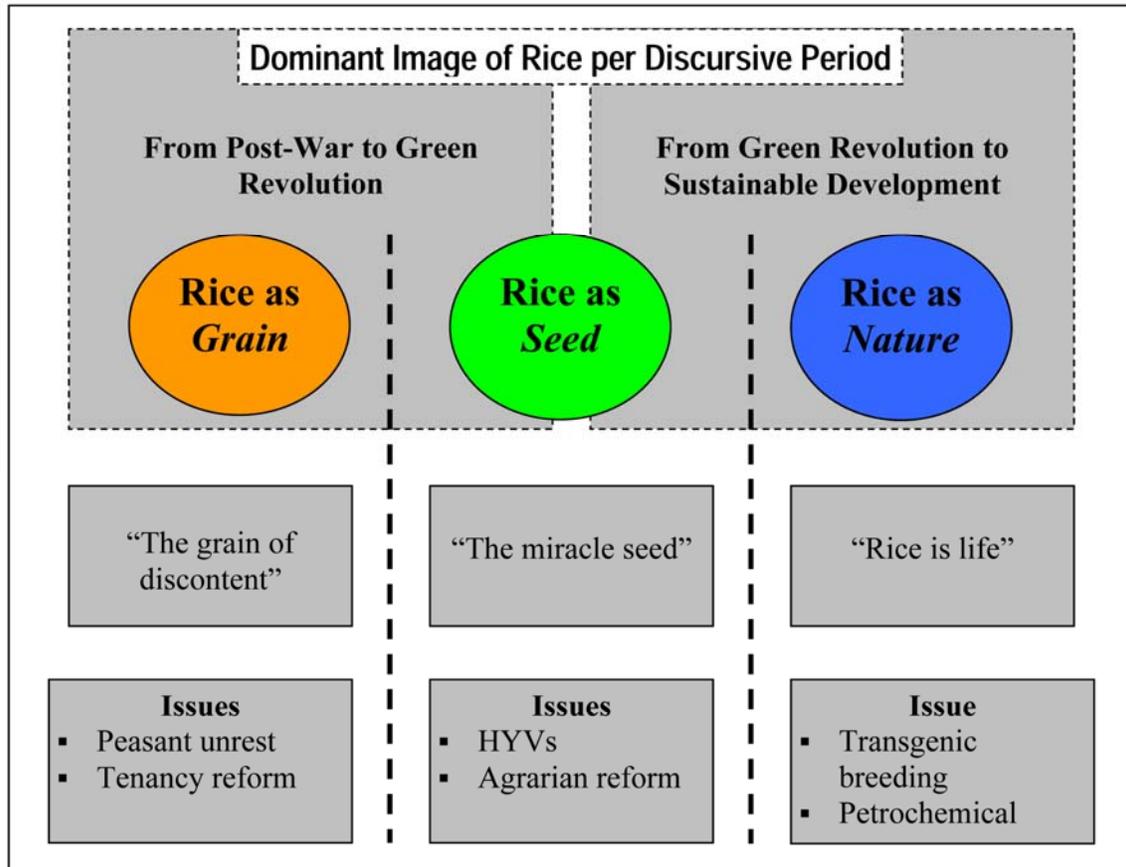


Figure 1. A Triptych of Rice Discourses in the Philippines, 1946-2005

Epistemological Underpinnings of Interpretive Genealogy

The word genealogy refers to origin and evolution. It was so named because its main assumption highlights the importance of historical analysis in understanding the present. However, more than historical analysis, genealogy does not portray the past as a series of events unfolding into the present. It aims at the construction of intelligible trajectories of events, discourses, and practices with neither a determinative source nor an unfolding toward finality (Dean, 1992, p. 217). A Foucauldian genealogy emphasizes a reconceptualization of the current order, rejecting what is tacitly accepted but known to be flawed, and problematizing it in terms of its historical production.

Genealogy is a descriptive exercise rather than a search for origins and essences. Hence, Foucault reiterated that genealogy seeks to analyze present systems in the light of their history. The method was based, quite simply, on the historical behavior and thought of humankind - to look at a single concept, and to wonder, how would it look to different individuals across different times in the existence of humans, to be an objective examiner studying a particular

phenomena's evolution, to "interview" people of different times via texts and records left by them about an issue.

Given the above theoretical nuances, genealogy largely deals with materials that are (i) textual in form, (ii) historical in orientation, and (iii) issue-based. Table 2 presents the analytic concepts that can be used to analyze such materials in terms of data operationalization (i.e. analytic concepts) juxtaposed with the analytic tools intended to capture such data. These tools are not designed to trace the evolution of meaning of an issue. Rather, they are meant to capture the specific change(s) in social definition of a concept. They are sensitive to the movement of the changing definitions and detain the changes in terms of thematic episodes. The discussion was situated within the rice topic of Erasga.

Table 2. Discursive Periods: From Grain to Seed to Nature

Issues	Themes	Discursive Episodes and Image of Rice
<p>□ Pertinent events peculiar in a given set of historical frame were identified.</p>	<p>□ The set of subject matters or concerns common to the selected issues were stringed together.</p>	<p>□ In relation to rice, the themes determine the dominant image of rice per episode.</p>
<p>1946-1965</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ peasant unrest as a response to unfair tenancy practices ○ poverty and hunger, exploitation of the tenants by landlords ○ Hukbalahap insurgency ○ landlessness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - land redistribution - equity and social justice - tenancy reform 	<p>The <u>peasant unrest</u> period depicting rice as a <u>grain</u> of discontent.</p>
<p>1966-1985</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ rice self-sufficiency ○ enhanced agricultural production ○ population growth ○ high yielding varieties (HYVs) ○ food shortage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - war against hunger - agrarian and land reforms - green revolution - economic development 	<p>The <u>Green Revolution</u> period depicting rice as miracle <u>seed</u>.</p>
<p>1986-2005</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ land and water pollution due to pesticides and fertilizers ○ water shortage ○ disappearance of traditional varieties ○ genetic erosion ○ changing farmer practices courtesy of HYVs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - sustainable development - environmental degradation 	<p>The <u>sustainable development</u> period depicting rice as metaphor of <u>nature</u>.</p>

The Discursive Periods

Given the relative paucity of available documents from the pre-colonial to pre-war periods (i.e., pre-Hispanic time till the end of the Japanese Occupation), Erasga started from 1946. This decision was triggered by several practical considerations. One, based on the preliminary literature review he observed that the array of rice and rice-related issues from the early 1900 (even dating back to pre-colonial period) until the beginning of the war were similar (i.e. rice as food). Two, some notable yet loosely circulating pre-war issues i.e. land tenancy issues and peasant uprising, became textually articulated only during the 1940s. Since then some of them became the subject of historical and academic investigations such as those of Pelzer (1945) Piron (1956), Guerrero (1967), Mears (1967), McLennan (1969), Lachica (1971) and Kerkvliet (1979) to name just a few. Quite noticeably, it was immediately after the war that significant rice documents began to appear and became available to the reading public.

From the procedure described in Table 3, Erasga came up with three (3) discursive periods from the specified timeframe of the study. They were (i) the peasant movement (1946-1965), (ii) Green Revolution (1966-1985), and (iii) sustainable development (1986-2005) each corresponding to a specific image of rice.

The peasant movement period characterized the end of the Japanese occupation in 1946. The uprising was more definitive and intense in rice producing provinces in Central Luzon Plain (Riedinger, 1995; Kerkvliet, 1979). Land was the obvious template of tenant-landlord relationship, but such relations were mediated and made meaningful by rice- its most important unit of exchange. Rice was used by landlords to assert their dominance over their tenants and their families and was the ‘medium’ which perpetuated their unequal relations. The peasant agitation then was not exclusively triggered by land issues but more by disputes spurred by rice-sharing tensions between the two parties (Erasga, 2009). The administrations of Magsaysay up to Marcos launched a series of tenancy reform efforts to address the growing discontent among poor and agitated peasantry.

The Green Revolution period otherwise known as the agricultural development era, is marked by the official release in 1966 of the first rice “high yielding variety” (HYV) - the IR8. the Green Revolution in the Philippines was launched to check the growing number of hungry and angry peasants through improved rice productivity (Jacoby, 1961; King, 1953). Created in 1960 to achieve the goals of Green Revolution, the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) conceptualized an ideal rice plant and later released new lines of rice seeds in 1966 till the 1980s. This period signaled the rise of ‘rice as a scientific seed’ into the political limelight paving the way to the prolific spread of a whole series of rice HYVs in the country and in the entire Asian region (Brown, 1970; Lynch, 1972). Breeding emerged as the main epistemic praxis of understanding and producing knowledge about the rice crop. Immediately the rice seed officially became the object of scientific attention (Oasa, 1981; Jennings and Johnson, 1966). The same period witnessed the birth of IRRI’s local counterpart - the Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice) created in 1985 along with other institutions and numerous pieces of legal instruments geared toward improving the agricultural production of farms through science.

In the sustainable development period the new seeds were blamed for radically altering the portfolio of practices of the Filipino farmers which included heavy usage of petrochemical fertilizers, hazardous pesticides, large volume of water, and the disappearance of traditional varieties (*see* Perlas & Vellve, 1997; Salas, 1991). Originally articulated as social, economic, and technological problems, a ‘linguistic shift’ began to take shape as these very issues were

eventually dovetailed with the rapid deterioration of the environment. Issues like water pollution, mutation of pests courtesy of extensive monoculture regimes, genetic erosion, and microclimate change became official contents of texts on Green Revolution. Then from the 'seed' the attention moved to the 'science' of breeding which in IRRI's jargon was just "extending the works of nature" (IRRI 1998). Transgenic breeding produces a whole new set of rice varieties- seeds that are no longer exclusively seen as food, but as directly associated with life and environment. Hence, during this period, the transgenic rice becomes an icon of nature specifically as a metaphor of biodiversity itself (Erasga, 2001; Borromeo, 2003). Rice officially turned into an environmental crop implicated in the environmental discourses of both the opponents and supporters of Green Revolution. Not surprisingly, the year 2004 was declared the International Year of Rice (IYR).

Synthesis

Within the purview of environmental research, Erasga's study yielded three significant insights about discourse analysis as a method in general and of textual materials in particular.

First, discourse analysis can offer an alternative history of the present. By employing this approach, Erasga mapped the changing meanings and signification that Filipinos attached to their natural environment through the story of their most important cultural crop-rice. By doing so, Erasga was able to offer an alternative version of how the environment became a problematic aspect of the lives of Filipinos (and eventually became part of their ecological psyche). His version of the story of the Filipinos' environmental awakening offered a more culturally nuanced explanation as it implicates rice. Conventional explanations of environmental evolution employed resource degradation approaches which explain the origin of environmental issues as the direct results of wanton and irresponsible use of natural resources such a forest, water and mines. Although valid and legitimate as an explanatory paradigm, it lacked sophistication in terms of cultural sensitivity. Environmental problems may be generic in their forms and may be present elsewhere in the world, but the resource degradation approaches failed to recognize that environmental challenges can be mediated by a culture's unique a set of forces and/or by its unique set of natural resources.

Second, Erasga's research concretized the productive power of discourse. When agricultural production dictates of the American colonial power was dovetailed with that of landlessness and poverty, the gaze was unexpectedly focused on rice (the staple food of Filipinos). This discursive attention inspired the scientific interests on this crop, which resulted to the creation of new rice seeds that are capable of growing in almost all types of agroecological conditions. New seeds were not the only material product of the triumvirate of poverty, landlessness and agricultural production discourses, but also environmental issues. The petrochemical packages that went with the new seeds engendered new agricultural practices and new regimes of resource utilization.

Third, discourse analysis resurrects the empirical power of texts. Documents are not lifeless documents. They can be empirical resources which can allow researchers to take a fresh and novel look at the meanings people assigned to issues. Texts are accurate barometers of the movement of issues, changing values, and changing patterns of people's interactions. Within the context of environmental research, Erasga's study demonstrated how the confluence of texts may generate new points of view to reinterpret the story of how the environment became a serious object of awareness- an interpretation that is sensitive to cultural nuances.

Case 2: The Claims-Making Text

Synopsis of the Text

The background of Ancheta's work involved the question of how a component (i.e. solid waste) of a built environment (an urban setting) becomes the object of attention of organizations. Historically speaking, these organizations, namely Manila Metropolitan Development Authority (MMDA), Miriam Peace, and the Mother Earth Foundation have been partly created (the case of MMDA) or their status developed into recognizable presence as a result of such problematization (the cases of Mother Earth Foundation and Miriam Peace). The core of Ancheta's study suggested that solid waste must have evolved into a widespread and legitimate environmental issue in Metro Manila as a result of the confluence of their claims regarding solid waste as a social issue. Solid waste and the organizations, henceforth, mutually defined each other.

To concretize her research thesis, Ancheta focused on how claims are made and what made certain claims more dominant than other claims made about solid waste. She suspected that the organizations she studied deployed different techniques and resources as they go about staking their claims and possessed different power bases, viz. MMDA being a government mandated entity; Miriam Peace, with academe-based experts and the Mother Earth Foundation representing the network of a non-government organization. The organizations were situated in different locations within the solid waste stream (p.115). Miriam Peace and the Mother Earth Foundation were positioned in the waste generation sector; while the MMDA was situated in the transport and disposal sector. Ancheta argued that their positionality defined their mutually exclusive claims about solid waste. Using this scheme, Ancheta surmised that the dominance of the MMDA amongst the claims makers was never exclusively due to (i) its political clout as a government unit, (ii) or to the resources it can deploy under its armory, (iii) or even because of its well organized bureaucratic machinery. It was the strategic location of MMDA within the waste stream that gave it a very powerful voice as this location has a built-in mandate to coordinate institutional activities and to manipulate individual behavior and even movement of people.

Ancheta as a Discourse Analyst: Claims as Discourse

According to Ancheta claims are people's versions of reality or of state of affairs. They served as frames through and with which people make sense of what is happening around them. Loseke (2003) identifies three types of framing: diagnostic frame (what type of a problem is it), motivational frame (why should the target audience care), and prognostic frame (what should be done). Claims making starts with a definition of a problem and from there the different frames in succession can be deployed. Within the context of solid waste, these types of claims are articulated by the three organizations all of which intersect with the idea that solid waste threatens the environment and endangers human health. In this context, claims are discourses on solid waste that condition every possible ways of conceiving it as an issue.

In order to analyze the sequencing of claims, Ancheta situated the claims-makers in two separate spheres within the "solid waste management stream"ⁱⁱⁱ. Miriam Peace and the Mother Earth Foundation were located in the waste "generation" sector; while the MMDA was positioned in the waste "final disposal" sector. Their positionality demanded a unique set of claims and the corresponding language to articulate such claims. Although they have peculiar

language with which to stake their claims, Ancheta established that their articulations were often bridged by terms and concepts that facilitate common ways of understanding the issue. Notwithstanding, Ancheta appeared to be saying that claimants were not really staking dissimilar (or antagonistic) claims *per se*, but staking claims on different facets of solid waste as a social concern.

For example, the two non-government claims-makers were problematizing how solid waste was generated by individuals, families and institutions. Expectedly, their focus was on these actors' waste-generating lifestyles and on how to influence such behaviors thus reducing waste. MMDA, on the one hand, zeroed in on how to deal with the volume of waste produced by people. The bulk of its claims, therefore, were poignantly focused on managing the flow and destination of waste- from collection to transport to the final dumping. Overall, the nuances of their claims were caged within their unique location vis-à-vis the waste lifestream.

In processing claims this way, Ancheta was, in effect, mapping the *exchanges* and *complementation* of claims made within and across the claims-makers. Although the work is principally geared toward assessing power relations, the issue (within the purview of the present study) was not so much in establishing which claims were powerful and which ones were marginalized. Rather, what needed to be emphasized is the constitutive effects of the diverse and positionally articulated claims- the legitimation of waste as an environmental issue. The unrecognized agreement that (i) waste is a problem, that (ii) needs to be addressed by all of them, and (iii) the admission that each of them are equally responsible in guaranteeing that something has to be done constructed waste as an *objective* reality, hence, a legitimate object of attention and action.

Understanding Ancheta's Text via Discourse Analysis

What notions about the environment are being articulated in Ancheta's text? What are the meanings she established and what meanings she excluded across different claims? From the various storylines drawn from by the organizations, what are those that she favored and what storylines she set aside? Does she interpret these storylines in different ways so there is a struggle to fix meanings in terms of one discourse rather than many? What identities and groups are discursively created? My task, therefore, is to account, using DA, for the changing meanings of solid waste and how Ancheta weaved the discourse (i.e. claims) of these organizations in such an interesting fashion.

Quite noticeably, Ancheta's text talked exclusively within terms of an ecological management discourse of an environmental issue. It stressed the importance of protecting the environment through holistic, efficient, organized and informed programs and corollary courses of action. Managerial discourse ascribes to organizations the role of green managers, whereby they should be actively engaged in environmental problems and recognize their role as experts with sufficient resources and appropriate technical skills and know-how to deal with solid waste as a social issue. According to this discourse, engagement in managing the environment is a matter of knowing where the process starts and where it ends and track down where in the process' lifecycle the problem(s) may likely arise. Their organizational identity then is constructed around the discourse of *ecological activism*; a notion suggesting that enlightened individuals can head start environmental action. Their pioneering efforts are expected to lead to a reorientation of organizational and individual actions towards a more ecologically sound lifestyle.

Solid waste as an urban predicament serves as a master storyline which seems to be the basis of the specific interpretive repertoire invoked by the three organizations. It functions as a fitting context that justifies the articulation of the twin discourses of waste as a management problem and organizations as environmental managers. And drawing from this twin discourses, Ancheta sketched the complementary roles of the three organizations in terms of their signature interpretive repertoires and managerial capabilities outlined in Table 4 below.

The organizations begin positioning themselves within an *ecological management discourse* and end by positioning themselves within a discourse of ecological activism where they see the need of organizational leadership with proactive perspective and ready set of prescribed courses of action. They constructed self-identity out of fragments of disparate discourses which are linked together in a jointly-constructed narrative and thus articulated together to form an interdiscursive mix or hybrid of discourse. This is consistent with the basic discourse analytical premise that people and organizational identities are constructed across different, contradictory and often antagonistic discourses (Phillips and Jorgensen, 2006).

Synthesis

Ancheta's research, on the one hand, allows us to explore the power of claims as discourse and claims-making as a discursive practice. Using the claims-making approach as her theoretical entry, she exposed the constitutive effects of even divergent claims. Although, solid waste has been problematized in three different ways, the overall impact was that it becomes an objective target of attention and action. Moreover, claims-making as discursive practice supports the contention of the discourse analytic approach that emphasizes the productive effects of claims in terms of engendering identities.

Her research texts, on the other hand, served a rich material that provided us the opportunity to understand how organizations as claims makers positioned themselves in relation to the issue of solid waste. Such positioning reflected not only the storylines they embraced as real, but also the admission that solid waste was a uniquely urban management problem, which requires educated (Miriam Peace), practical (Mother Earth Foundation), and action-oriented (MMDA) ecological managers. In a sense, Ancheta's text reflected her very own bias about solid waste as an environmental issue. Being an academe-based researcher and member of the Mother Earth Foundation, Ancheta drew from the discourses of her organizations - discourses that look at environmental activists as enlightened agents of change (p. 151).

Conclusion

To use DA is to emphasize the utility of qualitative methodologies not as alternative but as complementary approaches to the traditional ones. In doing so, it revisits and invigorates one of the powerful concepts in qualitative research - *text*- from a lifeless document to an empirical resource. It is also a timely advocacy piece for the use of qualitative approaches in environmental science research. Given this, DA can help us understand environmental problems in a new light, towards a different direction.

As a methodological perspective, DA provides a powerful qualitative method that stresses the importance of interpretation of texts. This however, poses several problems with notions of validity and reliability as observed in the traditional research practice. First, all events and phenomena are considered texts. Therefore, discourse analysis expands the horizons of

interpretable objects of research. Second, there is no single meaning of a text, which means that there can be an infinite number of valid readings of a text. Consequently, the internal consistency and strength of interpretation become warrants to the validity of the reading of the text. Lastly, one interpretation may be challenged (in a dialectical process, of course) by other readings.

Since analysis of discourse always remains a matter of interpretation, the reliability and the validity of one's research and/or findings depends on the force and logic of one's arguments. Even the best constructed arguments are subject to their own deconstructive reading and counter-interpretations. The validity of critical analysis is, therefore, dependent on the quality of the rhetoric. Despite this fact, well-founded arguments remain authoritative over time and have concrete applications (Phillips and Jorgensen, 2006).

Finally, the strength of DA and the fertile possibilities of its usage in Philippine environmental research is a promising start for social science researchers. Given the textual nature of most environmental arguments in media, the scope of its application as a research paradigm and methodology can generate new insights into the nature of culture-nature nexus and on how social agency can shape more benign environmental results.

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Notes

ⁱ In this regard, Brand & Thomas (2005) asserted that "discourse analysis involves taking a careful and systematic look at how issues came to be defined, constructed in particular ways and given prominence, how other issues and understanding of events are *talked out*, the interests and power relations in play, and so forth" (pp. 83-84, *emphasis added*).

ⁱⁱ In my recent conversation with Ancheta (September 5, 2009), she referred to this complex of process and as functions as "wastescape" to capture the breath and temporality of activities involved.