

DOING SEMINAR READING: WAYS AND DETOURS OF READING/NOT-
READING SEMINAR TEXTS AND PAPERS AS ACTORS

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KEYWORDS

Higher education, academic seminars, knowledge production, qualitative empirical research, science and technology studies, teaching and learning

PUBLICATION DATE

Issue 16, May 31, 2024

HOW TO CITE

Sibylle Künzler. "Doing Seminar Reading: Ways and Detours of Reading/Not-Reading Seminar Texts and Papers as Actors." *On_Culture: The Open Journal for the Study of Culture* 16 (2024). <<https://doi.org/10.22029/oc.2024.1413>>.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22029/oc.2024.1413>



Doing Seminar Reading: Ways and Detours of Reading/Not-Reading Seminar Texts and Papers as Actors

Abstract

Reading scholarly articles is a core practice in academic seminars, which proceed under the assumption that seminar participants have read assigned texts and will incorporate the knowledge acquired from these texts into seminar discussions and train reading techniques. However, this seemingly self-evident situation perhaps only represents an ideal rather than actual seminar practices. This Science and Technology Studies-oriented contribution based on qualitative empirical research (participant observation, self-study, short interviews, forum theater experiments) will show how, where, when, and why students and lecturers do read texts, and what tactics they use when they have not read the texts ‘properly,’ ‘fully,’ or at all. How do they perform reading/not-reading; how does reading/not-reading bias knowledge circulation? In this hybrid process of collective and individual reading, reading and discussing seem to be intertwined, and texts become effective as actors, for example as digital scans or piles of paper. Reading and text-based discussions are material knowledge practices that entangle and are entangled in hegemonial arrangements. My aim is to make visible and negotiable an often self-evidently accomplished performativity of collective and individual reading, in its concrete and diverse practices, in order to work productively with the epistemological and didactic consequences.

1_A Performative Introduction

Letting the scene end in disaster: that was the task set by a trainer in a forum theater experiment, as part of a performance seminar in Cultural Anthropology at the University of Basel.¹ Students in this seminar had to pick and perform a commonly known, problematic scene from their everyday academic lives. In the first round, they were to stage this scene very dramatically, with the intent of getting the audience’s emotions running high. They were then instructed to perform the same scene a second time, but this time the audience of other students and lecturers, could intervene.²

One group decided to reenact a situation in which none of the students had read an assigned text, such that the lecturer was unable to initiate any discussion at all. The first version showed a debacle: the instructor paced uneasily in front of the class with a wry smile, saying, “Well...?” But the answer was only a yawning emptiness. The students sat in rows like zombies, staring at their flickering laptops. In this predicament, the lecturer started a PowerPoint presentation with prepared questions, but even this didn’t get the students to talk. At last, the lecturer left the seminar room with the paltry excuse of getting pens for the flipchart, but then didn’t come back again. After

a while, the first student packed up his things, then the second and the third. In the end, no seminar took place because no one had prepared the compulsory reading.

As the instructor of this performance seminar, I looked forward to what the interventions into the next round might reveal. One student recommended quickly googling and skimming a summary of the text. Another call for a stoppage of play by the audience was directed at the lecturer: An emotional discussion erupted—and remained inconclusive—about whether the lecturers or the students were responsible for resolving this plight. The question then arose as to whether it made sense for the students to admit that they had not read the text, and for the lecturer then to spontaneously improvise another sort of discussion. Ultimately, although we had reenacted an everyday scene, everyone left the seminar room with an unusually churning feeling, perhaps because we had gone beyond discussing merely the contents of knowledge production, and had also negotiated the circumstances of performances of collective reading/not-reading.

This experiment showed what is implicitly well-known when working in the humanities: reading and discussing scientific articles are core practices of everyday academic life, but are by no means neutral or unproblematic. Staging and performing such situations made it possible to perceive both the doing—the multisensory and ephemeral negotiations—and the material circumstances. A practice that is often taken for granted by the members of an academic seminar therefore became potentially negotiable and malleable.

In my current qualitative-praxeographical research project, I would like to transfer to academic teaching and learning what Science and Technology Studies has shown explicitly for laboratories and research communities, since so far the former have been less reflected epistemologically as a construction process.³ Things, rhythms,⁴ practices, and environmental arrangements are also actively involved in and intertwined in these enactments.

Doing Seminar Reading is about the meta-level of the praxeological and material performances in academic seminars, the multiple relational enactments of the single actors, the seminar group, things and so on while reading/not-reading. And vice versa, reading/not-reading is materialized as something else in each particular way of

knowledge production. It is about the emergence of knowledge, academia, actors, and the specific shaping of what reading/not-reading is while *doing* it.⁵

The aim of this contribution is to focus on how reading/not-reading is fabricated in each particular practice. Conversely, since the emergence occurs relationally, it is of interest how performances and actors, here in particular ‘text’ as an actant, co-create contents, practices, and arrangements. The assumption is that the performative dimensions of a seminar text and its content, that are read or not-read in academic seminars, go beyond the concept of reading as a single act of reading, as for example reader-response criticism has discussed.⁶ It is a process spread over several multimodal practices, an ongoing shaping of forms, relational settings, and meanings. Such an expanded understanding of reading accounts not only for situations sitting in front of a text. It is not primarily about the reader’s reactions—or better, about the reader’s use⁷—and subjective interpretations, not about the changed effect of a text while decoding the words, the reception of a text as new interpretation.

Readers/not-readers are not the only agents of will, as they themselves are embedded in changing material arrangements, hegemonic knowledge practices, infrastructures, particular situations, and in relation to the changing shape of the text. For example, teachers’ selections of texts already shape future readers, and this selection is already embedded in shared knowledge horizons, search engine options, special skills in literature research, and so on. Furthermore, the assumed group of future readers does not correspond to actual future seminar group. However, there is an entanglement queering multiple ontologies. The contents of a text are external to some single centers of intentionality, such as the authors, the readers, the texts, or the act of deciphering words, but are likewise not a product of just a collaborative act too. There are multiple actors, performing over time.

Here, reading/not-reading, in its broader definition as multiple enactments over time, gets examined as practices and embodiments of knowledge production in the flux of the performance. This article therefore takes a praxeographical Empirical Cultural Studies approach, inspired by Performative Studies and oriented on works from Science and Technology Studies and Post-Actor-Network-Theory.⁸ The approach is empirical-praxeographical, of interest is how knowledge production is shaped in academic seminars, and it is assumed that everything emerges praxeologically through martially embodied performances. This article follows Post-ANT by questioning ma-

terial arrangements in terms of their hegemonic character. In addition, the material actors, especially the text in its multiple manifestations, should be given a kind of say.

Academic courses are usually viewed as purely human meetings. By actively reflecting on the situational material associations through which knowledge is produced, a group should ultimately be able to discuss its hegemonic situatedness and its possible blind spots. The connection to Performative Studies lies in how processes of embodied practice are examined. These are also the fleeting moments wherein things, knowledge, texts, shaped practices, and so on emerge—nothing pre-existent—, and also where transformations, appropriations, and the smallest shifts take place.⁹ Although reading is generally considered a basic academic working technique, discussion about concrete reading/not-reading practices remains in the informal realm. Although various techniques for text acquisition are taught in introductory seminars, they are mostly presented in an application-orientated manner rather than as optional varieties of epistemological ways of construction.

Reading and not-reading are seen here as qualitative forms of practices. Based on such a praxeological approach, I mainly work with two theories to discuss questions critical to power: the concept of hegemony,¹⁰ and French cultural philosopher Michel de Certeau's design of 'strategies' and 'tactics' as modalities of practice. Dominant cultures—in the sense of the commonly accepted, the evident¹¹—and antagonisms emerge from practices and are (tacitly) negotiated through them. In relation to reading/not-reading, this means that certain practices only create specific (dominant) knowledge forms, and other ways of knowledge (production) are marginalized. Here, I employ de Certeau's theory, as he brings together language, space, and practices; focuses on the practices; and distinguishes between strategies and tactics as modalities of action. Strategic intentions attempt to bring things under control, to make things visible or physical, to fix spatial-temporal processes, and to structure actions. Tactical approaches, on the other hand, bring along an inherent logic that may oppose or subvert asserted demands of any kind.¹² The tactical exists and acts only between the official logics. It is something that is part of the silent/unsayable,¹³ and is more likely to be captured in praxeographic observations and informal conversations than in interviews.

There also exist mixed forms of strategies and tactics; the different modalities can merge into one another.¹⁴ Even if it may seem so at first, de Certeau's concept is not

dichotomous. For analytical interpretation, however, it is useful at least to separate strategies and tactics in the first step, in order to be able to recognize any reversals and mixtures in the second step.

The following deliberations are premised on formative observations in classrooms and experimental research settings, and on conversations with students and colleagues. Since performances are to some extent prelingual (and therefore part of what German sociologist Stefan Hirschauer calls the “silence,” or, say, the taciturnity of the social),¹⁵ it is necessary to make triangulations to include aspects that cannot be articulated linguistically and to obtain a denser impression. Another challenge is that teaching and learning are often given a lesser status than research.¹⁶ These are some reasons why the discussion about teaching and learning tends to take place on the basis of hallway conversations between colleagues, or in more informal conversations with students. Methodologically, this article is therefore based on a praxeographic approach as it focuses on the actions, practices, and performative acts in which the praxeographers are also involved.¹⁷

Praxeography is an adaptation or extension of classic ethnographic research methods because it totally breaks with the assumption that the praxeographer is external to the field. The field and the praxeographer are intertwined. Praxeography asks about the contours of a research practice that does not trace processes after they happen, but come along with them. Therefore, the praxeographical question arises: “Is there the possibility of an anticipatory ethnography that not only *follows* current processes but also *carries them out*?”¹⁸ This is important here because researching academic seminars, as both a lecturer and praxeographer at the same time, issues such a challenge. Empirical data collection happens while teaching and learning, as a multimodal proceeding, including informal conversations as well as crafting with material and technologies while preparing a lesson. The addition of a praxeographical approach therefore shifts away from a simply applied mode: my didactical reflections are part of an ongoing relational “participatory practice.”¹⁹ Beyond that, given my nearly fifteen years of teaching experience, my view of my field is already strongly shaped, and needs to be constantly re-questioned. And since my didactical design arises concurrently with the emergence of the seminar setting in situ, I also started to work with adapted approaches known from ethnomethodology as ‘breaching experiment,’ here

in the form of performing a common seminar situation as part of the performance seminar. This makes it possible to irritate and re-question such situations.

The empirical data on which this article is based are a multimodal conglomerate, which I have collected, and with which I have experimented, during my research on Empirical Cultural Studies as teaching and learning practices. First, in the ten or so courses that I conducted between 2019 and 2023, I conducted formative, praxeological research and focused on different aspects. Second, as part of a partial study on the long-term perspective on teaching biography, I conducted (and am still conducting) around ten biographical, narrative interviews. Third, an important research area for teaching and learning practice lies in the office and hallway conversations with colleagues; informal conversations with students before, during, or after courses; and the observations of situations, processes, and one's own practice. I tried to record these as field notes in writing, using hand sketches, collages, and photographs. Fourth, my own documents and those from colleagues, such as PowerPoint presentations, seminar programs, sketches of the performative course of a seminar session, and similar documents also belong in the corpus of research documents. These diverse forms of empirical data must be analyzed using different methodological approaches; for example: the interviews are coded in different manners, the sketches and PowerPoint presentations are examined using image analysis, and so on. Fundamentally, in the research project on Empirical Cultural Studies as a teaching and learning practice, analysis is understood as a continuous circular process,²⁰ combining theory, practices, experiences, and discussion, which has to be reflected on in each step. One's own assumptions must be recognized at all levels if one is to think about and experiment with them further.²¹

Doing Seminar Reading as practice and hegemonic power will be deepened using praxeographical data. Further, I highlight two specifics: first, in the setting of seminars, reading/not-reading are not solely individual processes; second, discussing and reading are intertwined. I then focus on texts as actors, and the material side of *Doing Seminar Reading*, reflecting likewise on digital dimensions of reading. Next, my argument again focuses on the things-related practices of students and teachers. Strategies and tactics are used by actors to strengthen dominant dispositions, to sustain the given relations, or to subvert them, to establish or defend antagonism.²² Here I question reading strategies and tactics, and conversely not-reading tactics and strategies,

on a micro level.²³ This means that every single aspect of the field, every small hand movement, every shifting of things, every gesture, every situational meeting of different actors is relevant and must be particularized. Of interest are the actual (anarchic) proceeding and the multiple ways of reading/not-reading. As my analysis of reading/not-reading practices in seminars raises epistemological questions about the conditions of knowledge production in academical everyday life, in closing I reflect on the epistemological and didactical consequences of the manifold ways of *Doing Seminar Reading* that welcome both not-reading and maverick styles of reading.

2_ *Doing Seminar Reading* as Hegemonial Knowledge Practice?

Observing teaching and learning in academia by making a “rupture d’évidence”²⁴ allows one to recognize the implicitly effective formations of common scientific practices. Each ontological path creates its own shape of thinking. One classic seminar structure is to have students (and lecturer) read one or two texts per week. Another common one is to start with a corpus of a few articles, and then decide together which additional writings to read. In most of the seminar programs that I have designed, a dominance of reading texts is plainly evident, even though I also always include practical sequences.

When planning a program, a lecturer may struggle to select suitable texts out of a multitude of possible contributions.²⁵ Some theories may be dear to that lecturer’s training or typical way of thinking and are taken up again and again; other times, preparing seminar readings also allows a lecturer the opportunity to read previously unknown texts. After a seminar, when evaluating the program, it often turns out that the selected articles fit quite well. Nevertheless, both teacher and students often cannot shake the feeling that they have read too few texts or have not read the selected texts intensively enough.²⁶ While research-based seminars, practical seminars, and excursions may offer different, less text-oriented settings, in the majority of classical seminars in the humanities, the focus remains on reading and discussing texts.²⁷

Lecturers in Cultural Studies, for example, are often free to decide what they read in seminars, however, they implicitly select writings that they believe are commonly accepted or at least fit a familiar way of thinking. These selections are often made in a highly reflexive way, as they can reactivate certain cultural gaps, for example by reconstructing male dominance²⁸ or by focusing on the popularity of a certain theory (or

on theory at all); as such, kind of canon may manifest itself implicitly despite Cultural Studies' desire *not* to produce a canon and instead to advocate particularity and polyphony. In the organization of seminars, such moments are sometimes carried out unconsciously, sometimes quite reflexively, but so far there has been hardly any epistemological discussion about them.

When planning programs or lessons, teachers may assume that all participants will have thoroughly studied the required readings. But as the scene described in the introduction showed, this corresponds more often to an ideal. My fieldnotes reveal that just before the start of any given lesson, a certain—partly justified—concern may arise, among students and teachers alike, as to whether documents have been prepared well enough. Even if students and instructors have read the text, they may feel insecure about whether they have read it “well.” Some teachers note that “at best,” students bring a printout to class in which they have marked “not too many” and “not too few” passages that they have read intensively and critically. It might be “good” if they had also drafted an excerpt or perhaps even “better” if they had even tried to “think the theory further” or “think beyond the text.”²⁹ In the ideal-typical variant, the students' close reading skills and the reflections they have made during previous reading are deepened in class. The aim is that they learn to read in a scientific way and likewise comprehend the theoretical contents. However, in team meetings many lecturers address the difficulty of actually encouraging students to read intensively and critically. They try to achieve this, for instance, by inviting students to submit reading notes or questions before class, via their university's learning platform—the technical infrastructure invites them to do so—before class so that they can work on them together at the next lesson.³⁰

These fieldnotes demonstrate the ways in which values and mutual validation shape the reading/not-reading processes of knowledge production. In practice, there are taken-for-granted conformities that create and stabilize certain forms of dominant hegemonies about how to teach, learn, and read, and how not to read, learn, or teach. But when dominant configurations form, there is always antagonism and idiosyncratic use.³¹ And these practices are materially embedded. Material actors and historically evolved space-times³² also become effective in these enactments. For instance, library architectures and their reading rooms, lecture halls and their arrangement of

speech acts, the marker pen on the printed-out letters, or the keypad used to scroll through the digital file: these are all co-creators of reading/not-reading practices.³³

Considering the aspects mentioned, *Doing Seminar Reading* can therefore be identified as a hegemonial process in which strategies and tactics, things, spaces, rhythms, students, and instructors are actively involved by creating, stabilizing, or destabilizing dominant knowledge, or by balancing different ways of knowing. *Doing Seminar Reading*, understood as a performative act, is political in that the dominance of some types of knowledge is shaped in a particular way, and other ways of knowing and practices thus (tacitly) are marginalized or excluded. But the practice is also the place of transformation, and therefore, ‘resistance’ on the micro level of every single move and enactment.³⁴

3_Hybrid Processes: Collective-individual, Reading-discussing

With a praxeological definition of culture in mind, one focuses on the verbs, not the nouns; on theorizing, not theory; on the speech act, not language; on doing, on fabricating knowledge with cultural techniques, on the ways of reading/not-reading, and not on the read/not-read contents and thoughts as end-products.³⁵ These practices are ephemeral and can be studied only as open processes, because they are entangled and merge into one another. It is not possible to define exactly where reading begins and ends, or if not-reading is an intrinsic counterpart to reading,³⁶ or is totally external to it. As French literary theorist Pierre Bayard has fruitfully demonstrated in epistemological terms, it is just as unclear what ‘not reading’ stands for.³⁷ In this chapter, I emphasize the hybridization of different practices in the ways of reading/not-reading. *Doing Seminar Reading* includes hybrid processes consisting of individual reading/not-reading, as well as collaborating with others; there is variation and commoning³⁸ and it is hybrid due to the intertwining of reading and discussion.

Students and teachers read texts with their current ‘community of practice’³⁹ in mind—which they thereby (re-)fabricate—and with the aim to discuss the content; or, conversely, they read it in another way after having discussed it as a collective. Therefore, reading practice for seminars goes beyond brooding at a table and pondering a few lines, but even this reading scenario only springs from an ideal-typical imagination, for “[n]o one ever reads alone.”⁴⁰ How academics read or not-read and why they are doing this is intertwined with the surrounding and the framing of these

practices. Although the concrete practice of reading—deciphering letters, recognizing words, sentences, and a context of meaning—is done alone, reading/not-reading is always relationally entangled with other actors, temporalities, and materialities. In relation to the reading of seminar-texts, this collective aspect becomes particularly clear. The lecturer forms an imaginary group while selecting the texts.⁴¹ And while reading/not-reading, the individual thinks of the group. The seminar as a practice-community forms a framework for text comprehension, and the way to read/not-read the text, a sort of epistemic culture.⁴²

Each group enacts reading/not-reading and the texts in a different way. For example, Annemarie Mol's text "I eat an apple"⁴³ is read/not-read and understood/not-understood differently in each seminar.⁴⁴ The text and its content ontologically are results of joint reading/not-reading practices.⁴⁵ In the process of understanding the text, the individual reader refers to jointly developed knowledge, even if he or she develops contrary associations. Even for the lecturers, who may have read the text several times, the content changes with each group and their culture of discussion, or with each new seminar program and its order of texts, or with every other classroom or other life situation from which the text is understood. The discussion may also transform the content as understood by one reader, and may shape his or her further way of reading. Thus, by reading/not-reading and discussing/not-discussing the text, the readers/not-readers transform as well. The discussion, in turn, cannot be limited to the spoken word. Rather, it's a gathering, a performance, carried by read and spoken words, a joint speech act. Therefore, the atmosphere of the seminar room also co-creates the topological landscape of the text. It's a hybrid field of (if possible: free) associations, whatever comes to mind while reading/not-reading; of concrete experiences, whatever you perceive of your surroundings; and of what you share with your classmates and teachers; as well as the text, its corporality and the author incorporated;⁴⁶ his or her words and surroundings; the historical situation at that time of its composition and its reading; the possibilities and boundaries of writing down his or her thoughts; as well as the historical situation of the readers, and the rhythms with which they read/don't read.⁴⁷

If *Doing Seminar Reading* can be conceptualized as processes that overlap different practices, then it is materially and multisensorially mixed. As the following chap-

ter explores, one very special (multiple) material actor is ‘the text’ itself: entangling the practices, processes, and the other actors.

4_Papers as Actors

Teachers and students are well-known characters in the play *Doing Seminar Reading*: they can be acted in manifold ways, but still follow a historically shaped, gender-specific and socially positioned habitus.⁴⁸ Further, there are actors like auditoria, with their rows of seating, their odors, even their ceilings; the academic quarter and other rhythms; flip-chart papers for group works; the students’ roommates, parents, or other cohabitants, and their opinions; the facility managers or the IT specialists checking the room before class, and so on. One of these companions, which is arguably the most important material actor in relation to reading/not-reading, is the text. It exhibits various plasticities and types of augmentation.

Often, contemporary students read texts onscreen, and mark passages by activating the digital highlighter with their fingers on a laptop trackpad.⁴⁹ Citing insights from the Stavanger Declaration on the Future of Reading,⁵⁰ some lecturers I spoke to initially tried to change this: they wanted students to bring printouts to class, on the grounds that long contents are conceived substantially and are remembered better when a text is read on paper or in a book rather than on a screen.⁵¹ As observed, class discussions with open laptops are often not very productive; the screens invite students to hide in a way that is not possible with a printout. However, reading digital texts has become a common skill, and opens up other possibilities such as thinking through transmedia.⁵²

Further, as I observed in my fieldwork, the meaning of ‘text’ is versatile as well: Sometimes, for example, it connotes the material thing, the letters, sometimes the discussed content, the argumentation, or even an imaginary of the theory ‘behind.’ Sometimes ‘the text’ signifies the compulsory task, or a step in becoming acquainted with a subject or a discipline. For the individual reader, the text is some kind of weekly counterpart from one lesson to the next. It requires temporal and spatial organization to read it (or not). In my practice, I have observed that if one is guided by a ‘thirst for knowledge’ or is a disciplined type, reading is more or less a simple matter. One colors the lines with fluorescent markers, or the text gets expanded with side notes, or converted into an excerpt. Perhaps one falls in love with the text, with the

ideas circulating through letters, or with what one understands, and the words change one's perspectives and way of thinking. The text here is an incorporated one. But if this liaison between oneself and the text is hostile, one carries that admonishing, obnoxious fellow around in one's mind. Maybe it's waiting as a lurking pile of paper, or possibly it is already too nerve-wracking to even download the PDF from the educational platform—gosh, what agony.⁵³

At the level of the seminar collective, the texts read in a semester have a hinge function. The scholars, thoughts, and rhythm-spatial arrangements are connected through the texts circulating. In this case, 'the texts' build a kind of plasma.⁵⁴ The weekly text is a main actor, that arranges the others around itself, even though the text itself seems somehow to vanish. All the other practices, actors and things materialize the text 'wafting around.' The text as material actor gets enacted in practice with others, it does not pre-exist 'somewhere,' but emerges through manifold ways and therefore manifests in different shapes (or as absentee but present in the material arrangements of the particular situation), and this in turn again has an impact on knowledge production.

After focusing on the material actors, the next two chapters analyze these practices and performances.

5_Reading Strategies and Tactics

From a perspective oriented towards the approaches of Knowledge and Science Studies, reading appears as a "cultural technique,"⁵⁵ as practices that are embedded in dispositive environments, have emerged over time, and in turn feature functions that organize 'life' in a specific way. To understand practices as cultural techniques also means to assume them as not being naturally given, and to detect their dispositive character. While, for example, writing has been more extensively researched as a cultural technique, this term has less-often been applied to reading as a specifically organized material practice, since it was seen more as a quasi-natural process.⁵⁶ Another reason for this may be that the reading process appears fleeting at first glance. Such an assumption arises from a one- or two-dimensional understanding of reading as largely a visual process, virtually incorporeal: the reader's eyes flee over a flat screen or paper, or follow a linear, chronological path along the text that lines the pages of a book. But if you look at reading as a three- or even four-dimensional act (as a cultural

topologist I would specify as a multi-sited enmeshing-practice), reading also happens when, for example, a person swimming in a lake considers reading a book after one's swim. In this particular situation, reading is not just an idea of a practice that happens later, but materializes in the presence of the swimming body at this very moment.

Officially recognized reading strategies can be looked up in guides, and are taught in introductory seminars with the aim of giving students academic tools to better structure their reading.⁵⁷ These strategies are based on the implicit assumption that students cannot yet read 'properly' or do not yet have the know-how to read specialist literature in a scientific manner. On one hand, this may be true with regard to a subject-specific approach to texts and theories; on the other, it's just an assumption or an ascription that students are 'not yet able to read.' In fact, some students seem to be more trained in high school to decipher the contents of the texts, and are therefore less able to reflect them at a meta-level of their construction, or to use them as accomplices that challenge their thinking.⁵⁸ But this point of view also implies a standardized and officially accepted reading mode that needs to be learned. So, when entering academia, reading is something to be learned anew, a further kind of "reading socialization."⁵⁹

When I once accompanied students in a reading course of basic studies, it was my job to teach them scientific working techniques and to train them in their "reading competence."⁶⁰ The program therefore was highly structured. While reading the first text, students were to note keywords in the margin that summarized important passages; they had to represent the next text in a mind map; after that, they were to draw up an excerpt; then, to employ the theory to an empirical example, and so on. Then, corresponding to the last step in the (extended) Bloom's taxonomy of learning goals, students were to create something new,⁶¹ to write an essay going 'beyond the text.' Some students were grateful for these tools, but others completed these tasks with reluctance, simply turning in something that would check off that assignment. These reading strategies were something that I as a lecturer could compare and evaluate based on the (tacit) subject-specific catalog of requirements. Such strategical reading also features spatial, temporal, and sensory dispositions: it is recommended that students use the library reading rooms, where one might practice silent reading,⁶² sitting in a chair at a table. Yet from the perspective of some students, their reading time shouldn't last longer than the credit point system dictates.⁶³

Reading has an extremely positive connotation: as German literary scholar Ute Schneider decodes this affirmative approach, reading should educate, expand the intellectual horizon, inspire the imagination, and open up new perspectives.⁶⁴ Without rejecting the practice of reading as a scientific working technique (dear readers, don't misunderstand my critique) it must nevertheless be stated that these are some reasons why reading and science, especially the humanities, enter into some kind of positivistic marriage. Reading strategies are embedded in their subject-specific dispositifs and likewise fabricate them. Nevertheless, they may help to not only read from the text what the individual reader is currently interested in, as well as to understand more than what was previously known. As disruptive factors, strategical reading tools can be instruments to challenge cognitive processes.

In the above-described course, I also asked students to talk about their personal reading experiences and made efforts to create a friendly and open seminar atmosphere that would invite them to express themselves freely. However, students were often unable or only barely able to describe their concrete approaches and their (associative) thoughts, even though they had only just acted through these individual reading situations. I would like to define this realm as reading tactics.⁶⁵

Thinking of the discursive—how to talk about reading/not-reading—as well as dispositive, materially based power of reading strategies, it is comprehensible that students (and lecturers) do not want to or do not know how to talk about their tactical approaches. They may not want to reveal their idiosyncratic ruses, or do not assume that they are significant for (mis)understanding the text anyway. But viewed from a knowledge-science and anthropological perspective, all of these circumstances, strictly speaking, are co-creators. Concerning reading practices, they become effective in each particular situation.⁶⁶ *Doing Seminar Reading* is a multiverse of little “laboratory life.”⁶⁷ In those micro-cosmological enactments every detail, every actor, and every particular association that they build are relevant and shape the knowledge production.

As German sociologist Björn Krey worked out in his study *Textarbeit: Die Praxis des wissenschaftlichen Lesens*—an approach that unexpectedly coincides with the perspective of the present contribution—those situations are rich in detail concerning the material participants. As I observed, it already makes a difference if, for example, a printed text is held in the hand, lies on the table or on the knees, if one reads it wear-

ing glasses or without, if the reader lies on the sofa, is sitting on an armchair or on a chair, if one is eating or drinking while reading, if one is using a simple paper cup or one's favorite mug, if one uses earplugs to shield outside sounds, or if there is a special illumination source, and so on.⁶⁸ Many times, I have seen students during the summer months sitting in the sun on a stone bench or in the grass or under their "favorite reading tree,"⁶⁹ listening to music, hunched with a pen over a printed text scratching their noses or chins with their fingers.⁷⁰ I see them on the crowded commuter train, immersed in the article on the screen; during the coronavirus pandemic, streaming videos revealed class participants sitting on their beds (and as I can attest, the bed is certainly a comfortable place to read). But to speak at university about the cozy pillow on which one has lain while reading is a topological connection-taboo, although such a circumstance could be epistemologically relevant.

Reading tactics are multisensory spectacles in the modus of 'to read *with*' it.⁷¹ 'The text' incorporated scratches your chin; while reading, *you* forget to breathe, or the letters sound like the silence in the library and you smell the other silent readers; or, depending on your taste, you create an auditory Mol-Lady Gaga or Mol-Metallica association when you listen to music through your headphones at the same time, and so on. Reading situations are not something external: reading is not just looking at the letters or turning the pages. In doing so, the reader "goes through" the text or "further,"⁷² and combines the circumstances, the sensory perception, and the emotion with other (mental) things like personal memories, theories that have already been read, or the knowledge of a certain time frame. Last but not least, the different motivations for reading a text also change the way that one approaches the text.⁷³

As Bayard suggests for not-reading, it would perhaps also be epistemologically appropriate to determine more precisely how, when, and where something was read: to read a text—*I eat an apple* again—while splashing around in the bathtub or while sitting with the tablet on the knees, from a process-epistemological or ontological point of view, each way probably produces a totally different text or knowledge in each case.

In my last section of this chapter about reading strategies and tactics as stabilizing or destabilizing modes of a hegemonic practice in academia, I would like to throw a cursory glance on the phenomenon of misreading—a mixture of strategies and tactics. Since reading- and not-reading practices overlap, it is also not entirely certain what it

means to ‘misread’ a text. It is not clear who is entitled to define it, and on which level it is located. To misread could mean that a person reads another word or another word order than what is written⁷⁴ (“I beat an apple”), or it could mean to misunderstand the given respectively to create another content (Mol prepares a meal). At least tactically, abduction can be a jolly quipster that opens up the mind for not-yet-thought insights, since it’s playing with the sense of possibility.⁷⁵ It is also unclear how actively and intentionally the reader intervenes, or whether this happens at random due to the associations of the reading situation. But in order to claim that someone has read something ‘wrong,’ the person saying that needs a supposedly valid frame of reference with which to try to legitimize that statement. Given all the multiple ways of reading, it is becoming more and more complicated to say who is able and authorized to define that framework. ‘Misreading’ might be the more common kind of reading anyway, since no actor ever can recognize another’s ontology in its particular details.⁷⁶

6_Not-Reading Tactics and Strategies

Since there exists a certain “obligation to read,”⁷⁷ not-reading often is connoted negatively *per se* in everyday academic life. Focus on reading/not-reading practices and performances makes not-reading appear in a different light. It’s not about accusation: for example, of not having understood the content, doing something wrong, or being too lazy. Rather, these practices are considered and reflected here as possible antagonistic approaches to written contributions, or as revolts against reading as a dominant practice, or against *what* shall/should be read, or against reading in academical way, or as an expression of a strongly multimodal mode of knowledge acquisition in contemporary everyday life. Such an approach attempts to reveal the potentially productive sides of the phenomenon in favor of increasing epistemological transparency.

In regard to not-reading practices, the concept of strategies and tactics can be used in reverse order than in the chapter above: in the following, the argumentation goes from not-reading tactics to not-reading strategies and again to a mixture of both. Not-reading tactics can be grounded in decisions made in accordance with chance circumstances, or can describe a particular leeway of semi-conscious unwillingness.

As discussed informally with students and colleagues, it is sometimes not possible to read (completely and in depth) all texts that need to be prepared for various cour-

ses, often purely due to lack of time, for example because of the tight schedule of studies due to the Bologna Reform, or because many students work alongside their studies, or pursue other activities (sports, art, politics, social affairs, fun, and so on), or they do not like to “read so much all the time.” One student said she couldn’t understand why lecturers do not work more often with different media—“more than just texts”—and why they usually only require the submission of written essays or something similar, why students do not receive assignments of a completely different kind, for example to carry out an image search and to create a ‘collage’ that could serve as the basis for a discussion.⁷⁸

Here too, the aim of this article is not to give advice on how one should ideally teach at university level, but rather about making visible that reading, or specifically not-reading, is related to other everyday media practices and that they equally have the potential to generate knowledge. Not-reading tactics therefore may express problem areas of a larger scope: for instance, gaps between academia and peoples’ everyday lives or dense working worlds. Unwillingness can be part of this phenomenon, in the style of the currently often-discussed “quiet quitting”⁷⁹ as a criticism against neoliberal working environments, and be expressed by just skimming the text, by only reading the headlines, or by leaving the whole article fully unread. But in any of these cases, the text already exists as a partner in the little life of the unwilling reader, who has to come to terms with it. ‘The text’ emerges as a phantom of an uncomfortable feeling in the modus of ‘I should actually read that (now).’ Not-reading tactics are visible in procrastinating acts of most various kinds: vacuuming, refilling the coffee cup, checking social media, taking a shower, buying a pullover, reading something else, and so on. Again, these associative connections show that on the level of practice-analysis it is not quite easy to define when reading/not-reading starts or ends. All these kinds of practices and thereby the collected experiences can form an epistemological *mélange* with the later understanding, reading, or discussing the content as traces of individual and situational knowledge processes—perhaps sometimes also with a slightly sullen undertone (in discussions) or displeasure: I vacuum an apple.

Empirically, not-reading tactics also are tangible in different coping acts. For example, there are YouTube videos and summaries on various platforms for all kinds of topics, quickly skimmable on a device’s surface.⁸⁰ (Assessing quality requires a certain amount of know-how.) With a cursory glance, you can skim through a wide vari-

ety of formats on the Internet and, as an experienced, critical Internet user, get a half-way-decent impression of the topic. Otherwise, if you have not read the text, the discussion will pressure you into a certain behavior, such as: sitting in the back, buttoning your lips, or simply looking unsuspectingly friendly. Not-reading lecturers have a slightly different scope for their own actions: for instance, they create group work, expand the topic area to include current popular discussions, or repeat last week's topic in a little more detail. Most of the time, however, at least the lecturers have read the text, sometimes even several times. Yet still, the more they know, the more they cannot shake the feeling of *not* having read the material deeply enough.

Different not-reading “line[s] of flight”⁸¹ can also intersect: the lecturer's retro-spection doesn't match with creative YouTube summary answers, or the group-work clashes with the vacuum cleaner-Mol. But as Bayard stated, a nice—and I would say, also shrewd and knowledgeable—conversation can still arise even about books or texts not read, “especially if the other person has not read them either.”⁸² The resulting body of knowledge should not be necessarily conceived as wrong—humanities are based on pluralism anyway—but simply different from what was planned or is officially legitimated. Instead of making this empirical fact taboo due to scientific dominance cultures, it perhaps would be more in line with the scientific criteria of traceability to come to an understanding about precisely these meta-levels of knowledge construction, about these multiple ways of reading/not-reading. Deconstructing unwillingness can function as an analytical tool to detect tacit powerful arrangements.

Therefore, not-reading strategies can also be located as part of such a critical agency. Openly admitting that you have not read the text can sometimes be an expression of simple disinterest, an expression of the fact that other things simply appeal to you more. But, as observed, this case seems to be rare. The students and docents gather, they are *Doing University*⁸³ because they want to read, to discuss and to think things over (in scientific ways). As such, not-reading strategies could sometimes manifest a science-political statement, or an appropriation, or express a (dismissive) attitude toward dominant knowledge. It would be interesting to see how the understanding of academia changes as the individual not-reader shifts from tactic to strategy: I don't want to read this text. Members of the community of practice would inevitably react to such a statement, wanting to discuss this refusal. Maybe then it should be discussed whether something else should be read, and why—Marx, Bour-

dieu, ‘Miss Unknown,’ a collaborative work or an article of a postcolonial theorist—or what else one can do, for example to act, to revolt, to draw, to be silent and so on.

But unwillingness as a strategic practice must not always be sounded in accordance with the official logic of action. A mix of strategic and tactical reading interventions is discernible in the well-known saying from Herman Melville’s *Bartleby the Scrivener*: “I would prefer not to.”⁸⁴ When *Doing Seminar Reading*, there is some pressure to admit that one has not read the text, even if only with a wry smile. But if not-reading always has to be explained, it could lose its violent power.⁸⁵ These statements should not be interpreted as a general plea for not-reading, but as an invitation to mindfully analyze the practices at a microanalytical level as various powerful ways of knowledge production and negotiation and to stay open for what happens.

As a last point of not-reading strategies and tactics, I must point out that the perspective on not-reading in the mode of a *Thought of the Outside*⁸⁶ can also raise the question as to who is not allowed to read in academia, or where, when and how ‘not-reading’ is put to use as an ascription to stabilize boundaries or internal orders. Access to universities is still not equal:⁸⁷ students who are not already trained in reading sophisticated texts (in the national language, or in English or other foreign languages) strain, or maybe fail, or were not even admitted in the first place. Here, the argumentation leads back to reading strategies, since they can also function as sober tools, as trainable reading competences that not only *have to*, but also at least *potentially can* be learned. Strictly speaking, the same pertains to the reading tactics, the not-reading tactics and even the not-reading strategies. Thus, in the last chapter I would like to take a look at the possible epistemological and didactic consequences that can be crystallized from the perspective of *Doing Seminar Reading*.

7_Epistemological and Didactic Consequences of Reding/Not-Reading in Seminars?

This article has so far shown that actual practices in their material concreteness and diversity are rarely shared and discussed, even when reading experiences are questioned. Not-reading remains even more in the realm of the unspeakable⁸⁸ and, as mentioned, is partly used intentionally as a weapon.

If (tactical) modes of reading or not-reading, as described above, are excluded due to dominant performative modes of reading, then the knowledge produced at universities represents as more ‘polished’ than it *is*, strictly speaking. Where are the idiosyn-

cratic or involuntary thoughts; where are the surprising, diverse, and situationally dependent ways of reading a text and discussing it together? In order to shape academia, and in particular the humanities, as a polyvocal, multimodal, and diverse project, all of these different kinds of reading/non-reading practices must be equally embraced as epistemological paths.⁸⁹

Now, these (partly critical) statements should not be interpreted as a general plea for not-reading, or as a glorification of tactical practices, or anything similar. Nevertheless, it is an invitation to care and to mindfully appreciate *all* the various practices of reading/not-reading as powerful ways of knowledge production and negotiation, and to work with them more transparently⁹⁰ at a microanalytical level. The integration of such a meta-reflection on the common situation into the seminar discussion makes it possible to negotiate the conditions of knowledge production, to make dominant hegemonies transparent, and to change them if necessary. However, the tactical always remains something in between, and in a fleeting mode: lecturers can only grasp the tactical practices of the students and other lecturers to some extent, and conversely, students only partly recognize lecturers' and other students' tactics.

But if (didactical) situations are created in which the tactical plays an important role, and the inherently logical, material connections can be discussed, the respective blind spots become recognizable, addressable, and therefore changeable. A shared struggle⁹¹ with the supposed inability or erroneousness, and the sharing of tactical "desire paths"⁹² probably sets in motion mutual learning processes, rather than strategic attempts to organize reading. Sharing different ways of reading/not reading can lead to engaging in different modalities, trying different things. But these modes need to be communicated with each other, and I propose doing this through the discussion of/with the material performative side. If the material and concrete situations are not simply skipped over, but can be experienced and discussed together, one can reflect (critically) on social togetherness. It is an active relationship about and with things, and therefore also coming to an arrangement with the people in situ, and their situatedness.

Doing Seminar Reading also means that when reading and discussing texts in academic events, one must also discuss who has read/not read what and how, where one comes from, what environment one moves or has moved through, who is allowed to speak and how, and who actually has access to the universities, who is performing

here, which actors are involved in the play. Reading/not-reading is one of the praxeological sides of this, and creates the architectures of knowledge production, but can also be the doing through which they are changed. Reading/not-reading as performative acts are therefore powerful.⁹³ With regard to reading/non-reading practices, it is therefore fruitful to turn the ‘laboratory to the laboratory.’ This means not merely making experiments with the contents of texts being read, like by discussing (unexpected) questions, or by arranging collaborative think tanks, or otherwise working on a text or a theory, but rather by experimenting with the performative possibilities of *Doing Seminar Reading* as well. Modeling experiments with reading/not-reading do not spring from particular talent.⁹⁴ It’s a competence that can be operationalized, encouraged, and learned. (Re-)enacting, analyzing, and discussing the performative dimensions of the reading/not-reading acts may help to tacitly get in touch with hegemonomies, boundaries, and specific possibilities of (one’s own intrinsic motivation of) knowledge production. Fortunately, these experiments do not always have to end in disaster.

Endnotes

- ¹ Seminar: “bewegt. Empirische Forschung und/als Performance,” course catalogue of the University of Basel, accessed July 7, 2023, <<https://vorlesungsverzeichnis.unibas.ch/de/semester-planung?id=274158>>. This Forum Theater experiment was a co-production together with theater director and drama coach Matthias Werder.
- ² The form of *Forum Theater* was initially created by Augusto Boal, see Augusto Boal, *Theater of the Oppressed* (London: Pluto Press, 1979).
- ³ For further information to my project, see e.g.: Sibylle Künzler, “Modeling (in) Cultural Studies: Creating as a Practice of Teaching and Learning in Empirical Cultural Studies,” in *Journal of European Ethnology and Cultural Analysis (JEECA)*, no. 6/2 (2023): 184–202.
- ⁴ For the concept of *rhythms* in teaching and learning, see e.g.: Sibylle Künzler, “Die akademische Viertelstunde oder 30 Minuten Gruppenarbeit sollten reichen: Temporalitäten und Rhythmisierungen des kulturwissenschaftlichen Lehrens und Lernens,” in *Zeit: Zur Temporalität von Kultur*, eds. Manuel Trummer et. al. (Münster: Waxmann 2023), 146–156; see also: Björn Krey, *Textarbeit: Die Praxis des wissenschaftlichen Lesens* (Berlin/Boston: de Gruyter, 2020): “Gelesen wird, so Arno, wie es ‘der Rhythmus des Semesters auch irgendwie vorgibt,’” 40; “Gelesen wird die Literatur dann in aller Regel am Vortag oder am Tag der Semindiskussion. Je erfahrener die Lehrenden sind, desto kurzfristiger vor Seminarbeginn bereiten sie sich vor,” 41.
- ⁵ For *relational effects*, see Tara Fenwick, Richard Edwards, “Introduction,” in *Researching Education through Actor-Network Theory*, eds. Tara Fenwick and Richard Edwards (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), ix–xxiii, here: xv. “The overriding insight of ANT views of the world is that all objects, as well as all persons, knowledge and locations, are relational effects. The teacher is an effect of the timetable that places her in a particular room with particular students, in a class des-

- igned as Social Studies 6, among textbooks, class plans and bulletin boards and stacks of graded papers with which she interacts, teaching ideas and readings she has accumulated in particular relationships that have emerged with this year's class of children. In the pedagogical practices of her work, she is a 'knowing location'; for the concept of *enactment* as a relational materializing making see Annemarie Mol and John Law, "Embodied Action, Enacted Bodies: The Example of Hypoglycemia," in: *Body and Society* 10, no. 2/3: 44–61.
- ⁶ For *readers response criticism* see Andrew Bennett, ed., *Readers and Reading* (London/New York: Longman, 1995).
- ⁷ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 29.
- ⁸ Christopher Gad, Casper Bruun Jensen, "On the Consequences of Post-ANT," in *Science, Technology, & Human Values* 35, no.1 (2010): 55–80.
- ⁹ Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," in *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 4 (1988): 519–531.
- ¹⁰ Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci first conceived a theory of hegemony in his *Quaderni del carcere* (1929–1935). It was then adapted and expanded in various disciplines, see especially Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London/New York: Verso, 1985). Here I also take up the concept of dominance, which Raymond Williams introduced following his reading of Gramsci, see Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).
- ¹¹ John Rajchman, "Foucault's Art of Seeing," in *October* 44 (1988): 88–117, here: 95.
- ¹² de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, especially: 29–42.
- ¹³ Stefan Hirschauer, "Ethnographic Writing and the Silence of the Social Towards a Methodology of Description," in *Zeitschrift für Soziologie* 30, no. 6 (2001): 429–451.
- ¹⁴ de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 112.
- ¹⁵ See Hirschauer, "Ethnographic Writing and the Silence of the Social," 429–451.
- ¹⁶ Robert Schuster and Romy Hilbrich, "Frauen lehren – Männer forschen? Neue Professuren und alte Geschlechtermuster in der Universität," in *Gender und ökonomischer Wandel*, eds. Ilona Ebbers, Brigitte Halbfas, and Daniela Rastetter (Marburg: Metropolis, 2013), 215–240.
- ¹⁷ Michi Knecht, "Ethnographische Praxis im Feld der Wissenschafts-, Medizin- und Technikanthropologie," in *Science and Technology Studies: Eine sozialanthropologische Einführung*, Stefan Beck, Jörg Niewöhner, and Estrid Sørensen (Bielefeld: transcript, 2012), 245–274, here: 269.
- ¹⁸ Knecht, "Ethnographische Praxis," here: 268–269. Translation by Sibylle Künzler, originally in German: "Gibt es die Möglichkeit einer antizipatorischen Ethnographie, die aktuelle Prozesse nicht nur *nach-*, sondern *mit-vollzieht*?" 269.
- ¹⁹ Tim Ingold, *Anthropology and/as Education* (New York: Routledge, 2018): 17.
- ²⁰ Johanna Rolshoven, "Europäische Ethnologie: Diagnose und Prognose der kulturwissenschaftlichen Volkskunde," in *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 15, no. 4 (2004): 73–87, here: 82. Doi: [10.25365/oezg-2004-15-4-5](https://doi.org/10.25365/oezg-2004-15-4-5).
- ²¹ For an extended understanding of ethnography and an experimenting analysis, c.f. Andrea Balles-tero and Brit Ross Winthereik, *Experimenting with Ethnography: A Companion to Analysis* (Durham/London: Duke University Press, 2021), especially the contributions of Sarah Pink, "The Ethnographic Hunch," 30–40, and Rachel Douglas-Jones, "Drawing as Analysis: Thinking Im-

- ages, Writing in Words,” 94–105.
- 22 de Certeau: *The Practice of Everyday Life*, especially: 29–42.
- 23 Brigitta Schmidt-Lauber, “Feldforschung: Kulturanalyse durch teilnehmende Beobachtung,” in *Methoden der Volkskunde. Positionen, Quellen, Arbeitsweisen der Europäischen Ethnologie*, eds. Silke Götsch and Albrecht Lehmann (Berlin: Reimer, 2007), 219–248, here: 237.
- 24 Rajchman, “Foucault’s Art of Seeing,” 95.
- 25 Interview with a lecturer, January 15, 2024.
- 26 Such time-experiences were discussed in the interview of June 12, 2023. The interview partner (long-time lecturer) also posed the questions: Why not read one text over fourteen lessons?
- 27 Other well-known formats like ethnographic seminars with participant observations, practical seminars that design exhibitions or post-ethnographic experiments and so on are less text-based.
- 28 Feminist literary criticism states a male dominance in the literary canon, see Andrea Bertschi-Kaufmann and Natalie Plangger, “Genderspezifisches Lesen,” in *Grundthemen der Literaturwissenschaft: Lesen*, eds. Alexander Honold and Rolf Parr (Berlin/Boston: de Gruyter, 2018), 550–570, here: 562.
- 29 These valuations are paraphrased field terms.
- 30 All statements in this section are based on participant observations and conversations with students and colleagues.
- 31 For *idiosyncratic use* see e.g. Rainer Winter, “Praktiken des Eigensinns und die Emergenz des Politischen,” in *Enigma Agency: Macht, Widerstand, Reflexivität*, eds. Hans-Herbert Kögler, Alice Pechriggl, and Rainer Winter (Bielefeld: transcript. 2019), 173–192.
- 32 For *rhythmanalysis* see Heri Lefvre, *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life* (London: Continuum, 2004).
- 33 For *digital reading* see Franziska Wilke, *Digitales Lesen: Wandel und Kontinuität einer literarischen Praktik* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2022), especially chapter 4.2.
- 34 Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution.”
- 35 For *praxeological approach*, see e.g. de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*; Karl H. Hörning and Julia Reuter, “Doing Culture: Kultur als Praxis,” in *Doing Culture: Neue Positionen zum Verhältnis von Kultur und sozialer Praxis*, eds. Karl H. Hörning and Julia Reuter (Bielefeld: transcript, 2004), 9–16; Andreas Reckwitz, “Grundelemente einer Theorie sozialer Praktiken: Eine sozialtheoretische Perspektive,” in *Zeitschrift für Soziologie* 32, no. 4 (2003), 282–301; Theodore R. Schatzki et al., eds., *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory* (London: Routledge, 2006). For *fabrication* see especially Karin D. Knorr-Cetina, *The Manufacture of Knowledge: An Essay on the Constructivist and Contextual Nature of Science* (Oxford et al.: Pergamon Press, 1981), especially: 1–32; for *theorizing*, see Lawrence Grossberg, “On Postmodernism and Articulation: An Interview with Stuart Hall,” in *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 10, no. 45 (1986): 45–60, here: 60.
- 36 The contrapuntal reading e.g. asks about what is excluded from the text, see Edward W. Saïd, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1994).
- 37 Pierre Bayard, *How to Talk About Books You Haven’t Read* (London: Granta Books, 2009).
- 38 Ingold, *Anthropology and/as Education*, 17.
- 39 See Etienne Wenger, *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
- 40 Patricia Meyer Spacks, *On Rereading* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 243.

- 41 Nina Daskalovska, “Extensive Reading and Vocabulary Acquisition,” in *The Idea and Practice of Reading*, eds. R. Joseph Ponniah and Sathyaraj Venkatesan (Singapore: Springer Nature, 2018), 25–40, here: 36.
- 42 Cornelia Schlicht, “Geschichte und Formen sozialer Lesekonstellationen,” in *Grundthemen der Literaturwissenschaft*, eds. Rolf Parr and Alexander Honold (Boston/Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), 273–293, here: 273.
- 43 Annemarie Mol, “I Eat an Apple: On Theorizing Subjectivities,” in *Subjectivity* 22 (2008): 28–37.
- 44 Mols theoretical excursions about where and how “I eat an apple” happens and of which materiality it can be, strictly speaking, has also to be located at the level of what readers/not-readers are doing with it—not in the style of reception research, but as widening of the multiple phenomena of the sentence and the practice “I eat an apple.”
- 45 See de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 169.
- 46 Mol, “I Eat an Apple,” 32.
- 47 For comparable arguments about the multiple dimensions of a text, its active role in the constitution of readers and their understanding, see also the text hermeneutic approach of Paul Ricoeur, “Philosophische und theologische Hermeneutik,” in *Evangelische Theologie* 34 (1974): 24–45, here: 27–34.
- 48 See e.g. Pierre Bourdieu, *Homo Academicus* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1988).
- 49 Matthias Bickenbach, “Knopfdruck und Auswahl: Zur taktilen Bildung technischer Medien,” in *Zeitschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Linguistik* 30, no. 117 (2000): 9–32.
- 50 See Stavanger Declaration, “Concerning the Future of Reading,” accessed September 29, 2023, <<https://futureofreading.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/StavangerDeclaration-1.pdf>>.
- 51 As currently discussed, the digital text bodies could change anyway: Since the texts selected in seminars were often scans from anthologies or theoretical works, it was usually assumed that these had been checked for their scientific quality. The ability of artificial intelligence (AI) to compose texts could lead to the development of further reading skills or at least increase skepticism towards writing in general. And there is not just a single digital, analog or augmented form: the concrete interface and the “thing” spring from situational associations, for example from an individually shaped usage, the technical infrastructure or shared discourses that determine how media can be talked about.
- 52 Henry Jenkins, “Transmedia Storytelling 101: Confessions of an Aca-Fan,” March 21, 2007, accessed March 17, 2024, <http://henryjenkins.org/blog/2007/03/transmedia_storytelling_101.html>, Jan-Noël Thon, “Converging Worlds: From Transmedial Storyworld to Transmedial Universes,” in *Storyworlds. A Journal of Narratives* 7, no. 2 (2015): 21–53.
- 53 This was observed among students as well as autoethnographically. I fictionalized it in the text in a colloquial style and somewhat exaggerated it.
- 54 Bruno Latour and Emilie Hermant, “Paris: Ville invisible,” accessed September 29, 2023, <<http://www.bruno-latour.fr/virtual/PARIS-INVISIBLE-GB.pdf>>, 4.
- 55 Susanne Bayerlipp, Ralf Haekel and Johannes Schlegel, “Cultural Techniques of Literature: Introduction,” in *ZAA* 66, no. 2 (2018): 139–147, here: 140.
- 56 See Christian Harun Maye, “Kulturtechnik Lesen: Zur Materialität der Rezeption,” in *Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Blog-Netzwerk für Forschung und Kultur*, February 8, 2022, <<https://blog.sbb.berlin/termin/kulturtechnik-lesen-18-1-22/>>.

- ⁵⁷ There is a large selection of literature that provides information on how to read texts academically, see e.g. Norbert Franck, *Handbuch Wissenschaftliches Arbeiten: Was man für ein erfolgreiches Studium wissen und können muss* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2017), especially: 79–86 and 243–247; Ulrike Langbein, *Fachtexte: lesen – verstehen – wiedergeben* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2018); Otto Kruse, *Lesen und Schreiben: Der richtige Umgang mit Texten im Studium* (Konstanz: UVK, 2010).
- ⁵⁸ Based on participant observations.
- ⁵⁹ See Rolf Oerter, “Theorien der Lesesozialisation,” in *Lesesozialisation in der Mediengesellschaft: Ein Schwerpunktprogramm*, ed. Norbert Groeben (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1999), 27–55.
- ⁶⁰ For the *competence*-approach in teaching and learning, see e.g. Franz E. Weinert, *Leistungsmessung in Schulen* (Weinheim: Beltz, 2014); Kurt Reusser, “Kompetenzorientierung als Leitbegriff der Didaktik,” in *Beiträge zur Lehrerinnen- und Lehrerbildung* 32, no. 3 (2014): 325–339.
- ⁶¹ See Lorin W. Anderson and David R. Krathwohl, eds. *Taxonomy for Learning Teaching and Assessing: A Revision of Bloom’s Taxonomy of Educational Objectives* (New York: Longman, 2001).
- ⁶² For *silent reading*, see Matthias Bickenbach, “Geschichte und Formen des individuellen Lesens,” in *Grundthemen der Literaturwissenschaft: Lesen*, eds. Rolf Parr and Alexander Honold (Boston/Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), 256–272.
- ⁶³ The tight time regimes for the study process associated with the introduction of the Bologna reform at universities also affect the time resources for reading.
- ⁶⁴ Ute Schneider, “Facettenreich und unverzichtbar: Die multiplen Leistungen und Funktionen der Kulturtechnik Lesen,” in *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, March 15, 2019, <<https://www.bpb.de/shop/zeitschriften/apuz/287311/facettenreich-und-unverzichtbar/>>.
- ⁶⁵ De Certeau also refers to reading in tactical mode as poaching since the reader invents his or her own meanings, de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 169–170.
- ⁶⁶ Krey, *Textarbeit*, 58.
- ⁶⁷ Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar, *Laboratory Life: The Construction of Scientific Facts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979).
- ⁶⁸ See also Krey, *Textarbeit*, 58–59.
- ⁶⁹ As discussed in an introductory seminar in 2019, reading under trees is popular.
- ⁷⁰ See Julia Bertschik, “Kulturwissenschaftliches Lesen,” in *Grundthemen der Literaturwissenschaft: Lesen*, eds. Rolf Parr and Alexander Honold (Boston/Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), 571–587, here: 580; see Thomas Mc Laughlin, *Reading and the Body: The Physical Practice of Reading* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).
- ⁷¹ Tim Ingold, *Making: Anthropology, Archaeology, Art and Architecture* (Oxon/New York: Routledge, 2013), 15.
- ⁷² Iris Bäcker, “Lesen und Verstehen (Sinnbildung),” in *Grundthemen der Literaturwissenschaft: Lesen*, eds. Rolf Parr and Alexander Honold (Boston/Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), 140–155, here: 140.
- ⁷³ Krey, *Textarbeit*, 50–51.
- ⁷⁴ Simon Aeberhard, “Fehllesen,” in *Grundthemen der Literaturwissenschaft: Lesen*, eds. Rolf Parr and Alexander Honold (Boston/Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), 177–193.

- 75 For *Möglichkeitssinn*, see Robert Musil, *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1978[1930]), 16.
- 76 Since the author's death (cf. Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," 1968), one can no longer assume that the text has a single correct meaning anyway.
- 77 Bayard, *How to Talk About Books*, xiv.
- 78 All statements in this section are based on short interviews with students.
- 79 See e.g. Cal Newport, "The Year in Quiet Quitting: A New Generation Discovers that It's Hard to Balance Work with a Well-lived Life," in *The New Yorker*, December 29, 2022, <<https://www.newyorker.com/culture/2022-in-review/the-year-in-quiet-quitting>>.
- 80 A kind of surface reading on surfaces, for *surface reading*, see Stephen Best and Sharon Marcus, "Surface Reading: An Introduction," in *Representations* 108, no. 1 (2009): 1–21.
- 81 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, Chapter 1: Rhizome.
- 82 Bayard, *How To Talk About Books*, xiv–xv.
- 83 Brigitta Schmidt-Lauber, ed., *Doing University: Reflexionen universitären Alltagspraxis* (Wien: Verlag des Instituts für Europäische Ethnologie, 2016).
- 84 Herman Melville, *Bartleby the Scrivener: A Story of Wallstreet* (New York: Open Road, 2014 [1853]), 20.
- 85 Slavoj Žižek, *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections* (London: Profile Books, 2008): "Sometimes doing nothing is the most violent thing to do," 217.
- 86 Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1988), especially chapter "Das Denken des Außen (Macht)," 99–101.
- 87 There are e.g. disability or gender offices at universities. Not to speak about all other possible intersectionalities.
- 88 Stefan Hirschauer, "Ethnografisches Schreiben und die Schweigsamkeit des Sozialen: Zu einer Methodologie der Beschreibung," in *Zeitschrift für Soziologie* 30, no. 6 (2001): 429–451, here: 437–439.
- 89 And that is, as I observed, actually what many lecturers in the field of cultural studies strive for with their didactic work.
- 90 Bayard, *How to Talk About Texts*, he suggests indicating how a text was read.
- 91 For the aspect of painfulness of the experience as a fundamental aspect of learning processes, see Otto-Friedrich Bollnow, "Der Erfahrungsbegriff in der Pädagogik (1968)," In *Phänomenologische Erziehungswissenschaft von ihren Anfängen bis heute: Eine Anthologie*, ed. Malte Brinkmann (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2019), 163–195, here: 168.
- 92 The concept of desire paths can be seen as a tactical mode of going/walking—also though non-three dimensional knowledge topologies. For the concept of desire paths as a possible place of sharing the social, see Steven van Wolputte, "Desire Paths," in *Etnofoor* 30, no. 1 (2018): 97–108, here: 105.
- 93 Again: Butler, *Performative Acts*, 531.
- 94 For critical discussion of *talent/originality*, see Robert Niemann, *Zum Wandel des wissenschaftlichen Subjekts von kritischer Wissensschöpfung zum postkritischen Selbstmanagement?*, (Bielefeld: transcript, 2020), especially chapter IV, 47–63.