

Conceptual Explorations around “Politics”

Thematizing the Activity of Politics in the Plenary Debates of the German Bundestag

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses the ways of conceptualizing politics in parliamentary debates. When the politics-vocabulary is ubiquitous in them, which kind of speech act lies in emphasizing the political aspect? Focusing on thematized uses allows us to identify conceptual revisions in the politics-vocabulary in digitalized plenary debates of the German Bundestag from 1949 to 2017. My fourfold scheme for conceptualizing politics (polity, policy, politicization, politicking) provides the analytical apparatus. The units of analysis in this study are compound words around politics written as single words, a German language specialty. Their frequency has remarkably risen in the Bundestag debates, and the search engine can easily find them. This research interest allows me to speculate with changes in the understanding and appreciation of politics in postwar (West)Germany.

KEYWORDS

Bundestag, compound words, digitalization, parliamentary debates, policy, politicization, politicking, politics, polity

With this article,¹ I continue my long-term studies on the conceptualization of politics by analyzing the vocabulary of politicians in parliamentary debates. I use conceptual history both as an empirical study and as a medium of theorizing on politics.² When everything on a parliament’s agenda is regarded as a political question and the politics-vocabulary is ubiquitous in

1. This is a revised version of my lecture at the History of Concepts Group’s Annual Conference in Málaga, September 2019.

2. See Kari Palonen, “Conceptual History and a Style of Political Theorizing,” *European Journal of Political Theory* 1 (2002): 91–106.



the debates, why and how do the members emphasize the political aspect? Such emphatic use of the politics-vocabulary could provoke rethinking the concept, and we could understand parliamentarians in this respect as “innovative ideologists” in the sense of Quentin Skinner.³

The since recently available digitalized parliamentary debates open new possibilities for doing conceptual history in detail. With a study on the plenary debates of the German Bundestag in the first eighteen parliamentary terms (1949–2017⁴) as sources, I experiment with identifying and selecting the sources as well as with analyzing, interpreting, and judging their ways of using the politics-vocabulary.

In this article I concentrate on the compound words in the politics-vocabulary, a German specialty, increasing used since the 1970s and 1980s. Such words are easier to identify with the search engine than expressions written in separate words, but their discussion requires both knowledge in the history of the concept of politics as well as a typology of the aspects of politics. In both respects I make use of my previous work. This analysis of compound words offers me an explorative stage of studies, in which different topoi of conceptualizing politics will be discussed. The relative novelty of many compound words, as judged in relation to the politics typology, allows me to speculate with the changing understanding and evaluation of politics in (West)Germany.

The Politics of Politicians

“I take it that political life itself sets the main problems for the political theorist,” writes Quentin Skinner.⁵ The speeches and writings of political actors’ own conceptual horizons of politics, set in relation to their context and its conventions, offer “the clearest sign” of the presence of a concept.⁶ Later Skinner recommends reading Hobbes’s *Leviathan* as if it was a speech in par-

3. Quentin Skinner, “Some Problems in the Analysis of Political Thought and Action,” *Political Theory* 2 (1974): 277–303

4. Deutscher Bundestag, “Drucksachen und Plenarprotokolle des Bundestages—ab 1949” [Printed matter and minutes of the plenary proceedings of the Bundestag—from 1949], <http://pdok.bundestag.de/>.

5. Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), xi; on the formulation, see also Kari Palonen, “Political Theorising as an Aspect of Political Life,” *European Journal of Political Theory* 4 (2005): 351–367.

6. Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations*, x.

liament, interpreting any classic philosophical treatise as a contribution to debates.⁷

Parliamentary speeches are above all interventions in debates⁸ and provide, indeed, a paradigm for addressing an audience in which adversaries are expected to be present. They differ from all “we”-audience speeches. Speaking in parliamentary debates refers to ongoing ways of acting politically and offers us the perhaps closest publicly available approximation of doing politics live.

Setting a question to the parliamentary agenda politicizes it. When analyzing members’ actual uses of the politics-vocabulary in parliamentary plenary debates I assume that they regard every item on the parliamentary agenda as a political question, contingent and controversial. Why, when, and how the MPs on some occasions still need to emphasize the political quality of a question, of the ongoing debate or of some standpoints in that debate? To this question I hope to offer some answers here.

In this study, the main attention is dedicated to the illocutionary uses that thematize the concept, to use Austinian⁹ terms. The focus on thematizing uses of the concept, furthermore, allows us to reduce the range of the items in the corpus and to direct the main attention to more original formulations. However, the ways of thematizing politics are multiple and making a polit-word look harmless and well-known is a common rhetorical tactic. The identification of thematic uses cannot be done mechanically.

My aim is to discuss the ways of interpreting politics as an activity¹⁰ in the Bundestag debates. Any parliamentary debates might give rise to disputes on what is regarded as “politics” or “political,” including some legal debates¹¹ or those on members’ salaries and other benefits.¹² In this article I shall, however, avoid predetermination of the debates and operate with the possibilities compatible with the search engine of the Bundestag.

7. Quentin Skinner Interviewed by Alan Macfarlane, 10 January 2008. <http://www.alanmacfarlane.com/ancestors/skinner.htm>.

8. See Kari Palonen, *From Oratory to Debate: Parliamentarisation of Deliberative Rhetoric in Westminster* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2016).

9. J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, ed. J. O. Urmson and Marina Sbisa (Oxford: Oxford University Press, [1962] 1990).

10. See Kari Palonen, *Politik als Handlungsbegriff: Horizontwandel des Politikbegriffs in Deutschland 1890–1933* [Politics as an action concept: A horizon shift in the concept of politics in Germany 1990–1933] (Helsinki: Societas Scientiarum Fennica, 1985); Kari Palonen, *The Struggle with Time: A Conceptual History of “Politics” as an Activity* (Münster: LIT, 2006), 2. edition with a new preface, 2014.

11. See Palonen, *Politik als Handlungsbegriff*, 45–49

12. See Kari Palonen, *Rhetorik des Unbeliebten: Loblieder auf Politiker im Zeitalter der Demokratie* [Rhetoric of the unpopular: Praising politicians in the age of democracy] (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2012), chapter 3.

The Politics-Typology Specified to Parliament

The English adjective *political* refers to three nouns: *politics*, *policy*, and *polity*, interpreted for example by Karl Rohe.¹³ In “Four Times of Politics,”¹⁴ I modified the view and divided *politics* to activities of *politicization* and *politicking*, and reserve *politics* as an umbrella term for the entire conceptual cluster. The four ideal-typical aspects of politics consist of two axes, politicization-polity and politicking-policy. The politicization-polity axis deals with the marking versus closing the contingency available for action, the politicking-policy axis with two different ways of using that contingency.

I recently applied the scheme to a rereading of Weber’s *Politik als Beruf*.¹⁵ Applying the typology to the Bundestag debates provides me a way to identify and classify the actual uses of the politics-vocabulary in the plenary speeches. Situating the politics-vocabulary expressed in the debates to this typology requires a thought experiment with a range of application that cannot be assessed in advance.

To speak of *politicization* within the activity-concept refers to the experience of marking chances to act either by intended moves of some actors or as unintended consequences of actions in a political struggle. Within the activity-concept of politics, politicization does not extend the margins of politics, but, on the contrary, all politics is regarded as results of politicizations, of understanding the aspect of phenomena as contingent¹⁶ and thus including alternative courses of action, as “playable” in multiple ways.

The moves that mark phenomena as politics or political are always politicizations of something and related to previous ones in the polities, regimes of regulation. The *polity* refers to a set of historical layers of politicization that have become widely practiced and accepted, and established polities tend to obstruct new politicization claims. Which forms of politicization are legitimate in a polity as well as how the polities situate themselves to each other remains controversial. Taking up a specific claim for politicization indicates a step toward its legitimization within a polity.

13. Karl Rohe, *Politik: Begriffe und Wirklichkeiten* [Politics: Concepts and realities] (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer ([1978] 1994), 61–67.

14. Kari Palonen, “Four Times of Politics: Policy, Polity, Politicking and Politicization,” *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 28 (2003): 171–186.

15. Kari Palonen, “Four Aspects of Politics in Max Weber’s *Politik als Beruf*,” *Journal of Classical Sociology* 19 (2019): 331–345, and “Concepts and Debates: Rhetorical Perspectives on Conceptual Change,” in *Conceptual History in the European Space*, ed. Willibald Steinmetz, Michael Freeden, and Javier Fernández Sebastián (Oxford: Berghahn 2017), 96–117.

16. See J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 1975), 156.

Politicking, in the formal sense of the concept,¹⁷ refers to the political actions applying the chances opened up by politicizations, and each politicization contains a momentum for chances to initiate new ways of politicking. Opening up a range of contingency does not yet dictate what can be done with that, but the actors in the situation are invited and challenged to explore, invent and use themselves the ways of politicking. Past politicizations seldom disappear but rather lose their momentum by exhaustion or by being outdated by new ones. Certain forms of politicking are clearly legitimate within the polity, others use the chances for action opened up by recent, still controversial politicizations. The imagination for politicking is “opportunistic,” discussing and making use of the available occasions in various ways. If the politicization-polity axis is marked by contingency, the politicking-policy axis refers to controversiality.

Policy consists of attempts to use the occasions for politicking to coordinated actions to a definite direction, focusing on a systematic utilization of occasions to a “line” or “program” or “plan” that coordinates the single moves and measures. A policy has been made possible by moments of politicization and constellations in the polity, but it marks an intentionally rigid style of politicking. It can be chosen by the actors to select among the horizon of chances only those that support moves in a certain direction and exclude those harmful to it. It can be seen as a choice to focus controversies in a single direction.

Parliamentary agenda-setting marks a procedural and institutional type of politicization of a question. This parliamentary-style politicization includes procedures and deadlines for getting items to agenda but excludes, for example, those that do not correspond to the parliamentary form, keep the deadlines for the items, or are judged not to be addressed during the current parliamentary term. The agenda politicization offers the frame within which members’ speeches using the politics-vocabulary can indicate new types of politicizations.

Parliamentary debate speeches consist of politicking in ongoing debates. A debate in the parliamentary sense is, as a rule, not a single event but includes several rounds, such as the three readings of a bill as well as distinguishing between plenary and committee debates with their different rules.¹⁸ The “parliamentary present” has a double significance: besides

17. See W. B. Gallie, “An Ambiguity in the Idea of Politics and Its Practical Implications,” *Political Studies* 21 (1973): 439–452.

18. See Kari Palonen, *The Politics of Parliamentary Procedure: The Formation of the Westminster Procedure as a Parliamentary Ideal Type* (Leverkusen: Budrich 2014); Kari Palonen, *Parliamentary Thinking: Procedure, Rhetoric and Time* (London: PalgraveMacmillan 2018).

the items actually under discussion, it also includes those remaining on the agenda in some stage of debate.

A considerable number of items on a parliament’s agenda consists of policy motions, proposals on legislation, or regulation of an issue. A major dimension of parliamentary politics concerns the relationship between policy-debate on the issue and the politicking in relation to the items between parliamentary actors in this debate, for example, along the government versus opposition divide or between the front and back bench politicians.

Documentation and Digitalization of Parliamentary Debates

Parliamentary debates in Western countries are an exceptionally well-documented genre of publication for a long time period, for example the Historic Hansard in from 1803 onward.¹⁹ There are problems in recording parliamentary debates after acceptance of the verbatim reporting,²⁰ but the extensive publication of parliamentary records in countries with powerful parliaments is an extraordinary resource for comparative conceptual history.²¹ The print versions include indexes and catchwords of debates, but they are hardly of help for studying such ubiquitous expressions as politics. The online debates in the German Reichstag²² were until recently an example of a manner of digitalization that remains difficult to use for this kind of concept. Historical studies have also seldom treated abstract concepts à la politics that are mostly not directly linked to items on the agenda.

Despite the digitalization of parliamentary debates, a systematic conceptual history use of parliamentary records still remains rare.²³ For the history of an abstract but ubiquitous concept, such as politics, the digitalization of parliamentary debates seems to open a gold mine. Their extensive anal-

19. “Hansard 1803–2005,” *UK Parliament*, <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/index.html> (accessed 6 February 2021).

20. On the documentation problems of parliamentary debates in the nineteenth century, see Onni Pekonen, “Debating the ABCs of Parliamentary Life: The Learning of Parliamentary Rules and Practices in the Late Nineteenth-Century Finnish Diet and the Early Eduskunta” (PhD diss, University of Jyväskylä, 2014).

21. As we claimed in Pasi Ihalainen and Kari Palonen, “Parliamentary Sources in Comparative Conceptual History: Methodological Aspects and Illustrations of a Research Proposal,” *Parliaments, Estates & Representation* 29 (2009) 17–34.

22. “*Verhandlungen des Deutschen Reichstags und seiner Vorläufer*” [Proceedings of the German Reichstag and its predecessors], *Munich Digitalization Centre*, <https://www.reichstagsprotokolle.de> (accessed 6 February 2021).

23. See, for example, Pasi Ihalainen, *The Springs of Democracy: National and Transnational Debates on Constitutional Reform in the British, German, Swedish and Finnish Parliaments, 1917–1919* (Helsinki: SKS, 2017).

ysis offers us a possibility to “test” the previous interpretations on the systematic basis of parliamentary sources and take into account that the use of politics-vocabulary is a byproduct in debates.²⁴

A consequence of the ubiquity of the politics-vocabulary the digitalized debates might, nonetheless, become a trap for the analyst. When the politics-vocabulary is present in almost every parliamentary debate, it is also impossible to study every actual use of it, and a focused reading is necessary. The gold mining also requires separating gold from the other elements.

Word searches on the parliamentary websites offer us insight to the different linguistic varieties of the politics-vocabulary. Building a ranking list of frequencies of the polit-words in parliaments and identifying changes in ranking can offer us preliminary classifications. A low-ambition conceptual history might be content with analyzing shifting tendencies and conjectures in the vocabulary. Approaches focusing on typical, routine, and repetitive uses of the cluster around politics/the political that appear as unproblematic to the parliamentary audience give, of course, some indications of the conventions and their changes, especially of the dating of different words, but this would still not be proper research.

The absence of certain words might, indeed, be more interesting than their frequent use. For example, in the Hansard *politicize*, *politicization* do not in practice appear before 1972, whereas in the Bundestag debates *Politisierung* is present from the very first sessions in 1949 onward. This “finding” might allude to different conceptual horizons of politics in British and German parliamentary vocabularies and their history as well as require a closer look at the usages in both parliaments.

The profiles of the current parliamentary search engines vary considerably. Neither the Hansard nor the Bundestag fully distinguish exact word forms, for example between singular and plural forms of a word. The UK Hansard websites offer, unlike the Bundestag, word frequencies, and peaks of the politics-vocabulary can be found, operating with an optical identification of intensive uses of vocabularies and allowing them also to see the link to certain types of debates, such as that on the payment of members from 1880s to 1911.²⁵ The Bundestag search options require a two-stage process of identification: the search engine only counts the debates²⁶ in which an ex-

24. We have presented exercises of such analysis in Claudia Wiesner, Taru Haapala, and Kari Palonen, *Debates, Rhetoric and Political Action: Practices of Textual Interpretation and Analysis* (London: PalgraveMacmillan 2017), 142–155.

25. See Palonen, *Rhetorik des Unbeliebten*, chap. 3.

26. In strictly parliamentary terms, the units on the Bundestag website are not “debates” but may combine several debates on the same day. For the sake of simplicity, I nonetheless speak of them as “debates.”

pression is used rather than expressions themselves, which must be searched separately within the debates.

The Bundestag as a Parliament

The Bundestag website presents both documents (*Drucksachen*) and plenary records (*Plenarprotokolle*), but I have restricted the study to the plenary debates among the members. I analyze the debates from the beginnings of the Bundestag in September 1949 to the elections in September 2017—sixty-eight years and eighteen parliamentary terms.

Studying the Bundestag debates provides a “representative anecdote”²⁷ of the politics-vocabulary in parliaments in general. All free and non-dependent parliaments tend to a large extent to use similar language, historically indebted to the Westminster procedures and practices, including the politics of time, the freedom of members, and the parliamentary form of government.²⁸ We can speak of a parliamentary dialect within the language of politics. At the same time each parliament has a history of its own, which is also mediated to its procedures and debates and through them to their way of using concepts. As compared with the Westminster paradigm the Bundestag shows a number of distinctive features.

Sven-Oliver Proksch and Jonathan Slapin in their recent comparative study on parliamentary debate point out remarkable differences between Westminster and the Bundestag:

MPs in the United Kingdom are significantly more active in debate than their German counterparts. On average, more than 4,200 speeches are delivered each month in the House of Commons, but just over 180 in the German Bundestag. Yet this drastic difference is partially due to what constitutes a speech in the two parliaments. In the United Kingdom the business of the House includes ministerial statements, debates, adjourned debates, and debates on early day motions. Short interventions and exchanges between MPs are not only common but also significantly easier to engage in than in Germany because the flow of debate is regulated by the Speaker. As a result, a lively back-and-forth between government and opposition MPs is common. . . . In contrast . . . , debates in Germany tend to be prepared in advance, speaking roles are predetermined by the parties, the speeches are longer, and, although possible, spontaneous exchanges between MPs

27. In the sense of Kenneth Burke, *A Grammar of Motives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, [1945] 1969).

28. See William Selinger, *Parliamentarism from Burke to Weber* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019); Palonen, *Parliamentary Thinking*.

remain rare. . . . This appears to confirm the view of the United Kingdom as a debating parliament and Germany as a working parliament.²⁹

The passage indicates in a nutshell a number of singularities of the Bundestag debates that other studies have also emphasized. The older German tradition of relatively powerless parliament without a cabinet government responsible to parliament has so far left its mark on the Bundestag as the debates are not regarded as a major aspect of parliamentary politics. Gerhard Loewenberg in his study from the late 1960s insists on regarding politics in rather administrative than parliamentary terms.³⁰ Florian Meinel recently analogously judged the parliamentarization in the Weimar Republic as an adaptation to the bureaucratic tradition.³¹ The Bagehotian idea of government as an executive committee of the parliament³² and the Weberian program for the parliamentary control of administrative knowledge claims³³ were never taken up in the Weimar or Bonn parliamentary systems.³⁴

The rules of procedure (*Geschäftsordnung*) of the Bundestag recommend speaking freely, as opposed to reading a text, but this principle was not followed at least in the two first decades of the Bundestag.³⁵ It would be

29. Sven-Oliver Proksch and Jonathan B. Slapin, *The Politics of Parliamentary Debate: Parties, Rebels and Representation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 102–103.

30. “Politik wird immer noch in erster Linie unter dem Aspekt des Verwaltungsakts gesehen, zu dem Fachwissen und Tüchtigkeit gehören” [Until today, politics is considered to mainly consist in administrative acts that require specialized knowledge and competence]. Gerhard Loewenberg, *Parlamentarismus im politischen System der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* [Parliamentarism in the political system of the Federal Republic of Germany] (Tübingen: Wunderlich, 1969), 509.

31. “Mit der nachträglichen Parlamentarisierung einer schon ausgebildeten Reichsregierung wurden jenes Verwaltungsmodell und der ihm zugehörige Bürokratietypus verfassungskräftig festgeschrieben und in die demokratische Republik übernommen” [With the belated parliamentarization of an already established government, this model of administration and its respective type of bureaucracy were fixed and taken over into the democratic republic]. Florian Meinel, *Vertrauensfrage: Zur Krise des heutigen Parlamentarismus* [A question of confidence: On the crisis of contemporary parliamentarism] (Munich: Beck 2019), 53.

32. Walter Bagehot, *The English Constitution*, ed. Paul Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, [1867/1872] 2001), 11.

33. Max Weber, “Parlament und Regierung im neugeordneten Deutschland” [1918], in *Max-Weber-Studienausgabe* [The study edition of the complete works of Max Weber] 1/15, ed. Wolfgang J. Mommsen (Tübingen: Mohr 1984), 202–302, esp. 235–248.

34. See, however, Sven T. Siefken, *Parlamentarische Kontrolle im Wandel: Theorie und Praxis des Deutschen Bundestag* [The changing forms of parliamentary control: Theory and practice of the German Bundestag] (Baden-Baden: Nomos 2018), with a reference to Bagehot on 43.

35. See Loewenberg, *Parlamentarismus*, 455.

tempting to regard this as a consequence of Gerhard Leibholz’s influential thesis on the *Parteienstaat*, for which the classical parliamentary principle of free mandate of the members had become obsolete and parties were the constituent actors in parliamentary politics.³⁶

The parties have a strongly institutionalized status in the Bundestag, above all in the *Ältestenrat*. It has a key position for the parliamentary agenda-setting regarding the working plan and rhythm, the items on the agenda, the length of debates. The list of speakers is to be agreed between the representatives of parliamentary factions as well.³⁷ In the formation of the first permanent *Geschäftsordnung* from 1951, orderly sittings were considered more important than the rights of individual members and the parliamentary control of government, as Marie-Luise Recker emphasizes.³⁸ Unlike the Westminster principle of granting parliamentary initiative for each individual member, the motions of members in the Bundestag required at least ten signatures, and for obliging the government to debate the queries of members signatures were required. This prevented small groups or *Störenfriede* from obstructing but restricting the rights of the members as well as of the parliament itself.³⁹

Proksch and Slapin use the concept of working parliament (*Arbeitsparlament*) in the quoted passage by referring to a further aspect of the Bundestag. In such a parliament the committees (*Ausschüsse*) are politically more important than plenary sessions, in the amount and distribution of spending parliamentary time⁴⁰ as well as in the control of government. The 1969 *Geschäftsordnung* reform strengthened parliamentary control just through the

36. Gerhard Leibholz [1951], “Parlamentarismus und parteienstaatliche Demokratie,” in *Parlamentarismus* [Parliamentarism], ed. Kurt Kluxen, (Köln: Kiepenhauer & Witsch, 1960), 349–360.

37. Marie-Luise Recker, *Parlamentarismus in der Bundesrepublik: Der Deutsche Bundestag 1949–1969* [Parliamentarism in the Federal Republic: The German Bundestag, 1949–1969] (Düsseldorf: Droste 2018), 182–184.

38. “Die Furcht von einem ‘Mißbrauch’ parlamentarischer Rechte erwies sich als stärker als der Vorsatz, den Aktionsraum der Abgeordneten gegenüber der Exekutive zu wahren” [The fear of a ‘misuse’ of parliamentary rights proved stronger than the intention to protect the parliamentarians’ room for maneuver against the executive]. *Ibid.*, 234.

39. “ebenso waren die Rechte einzelner Abgeordneter oder des Parlaments insgesamt gegenüber der Exekutive deutlich eingeschränkt” [also, the rights of individual parliamentarians or the parliament as such against the executive were significantly restricted]. *Ibid.*

40. From a juridical point of view, see Basile Ridard, *L’encadrement du temps parlementaire dans la procédure législative. Étude comparée: Allemagne, Espagne, France, Royaume-Uni* [The framing of parliamentary time in the legislative procedure: A comparative study of Germany, Spain, France and United Kingdom] (Paris: Institut Universitaire Varenne, 2018).

committees.⁴¹ This *kleine Parlamentsreform*, initiated by a cross-party group of younger members, also revised the procedure in favor of a more debating parliament and strengthened the rights of members.⁴²

These reservations limit what can be expected from analyzing the Bundestag plenary debates. Nonetheless, the similarities with other parliaments remain obvious, as parliaments always attempt to expand their powers through practice, in spite of the formal rules, and also the Bundestag follows this pattern in its debates.

The controversies on the conceptualization of politics seldom take place as direct controversies on the interpretation of the concept. The expressions of the politics-vocabulary themselves have hardly been subject to debate in the Bundestag. However, the scholar can identify conceptual novelties in the formulations, independently of whether they have ever been taken up in actual debates. With the politics-typology, the analysis can be directed to different types of expressions and their conceptual profiles.

The Bundestag speeches refer to each other and certain spontaneity is a part of an ongoing debate. We could speak of parliamentary inter-orality, including a willingness to listen to replies and encounter spontaneous interjections (*Zwischenrufe*).⁴³ William Gerard Hamilton's maxims, collected in the second half of the eighteenth century, already include modifying the range or evaluation of the concepts as a major tool in parliamentary debates.⁴⁴ This also holds for the speeches using politics-vocabulary.

When the members take it for granted that every item on a parliament's agenda is political, it does not make much sense to claim that some question is not political. Still, as Carl Schmitt suggested,⁴⁵ this denial of the political quality is a common rhetorical practice, also in parliaments. The polemic against politics in parliament is itself a political act that is occasionally interesting for thematizing which aspects of politics are seen as unacceptable for the members.

41. See Meiner, *Vertrauensfrage*, 179–182.

42. See Recker, *Parlamentarismus*, 352–374.

43. See Armin Burkhardt, *Zwischen Monolog und Dialog: zur Theorie, Typologie und Geschichte des Zwischenrufs im deutschen Parlamentarismus* [Between monologue and dialogue: On the theory, typology and history of floor interjections in German parliamentarism] (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2004); Armin Burkhardt, "German Parliamentary Discourse since 1848 from a Linguistic Point of View," in *Parliament and Parliamentarism: A Comparative History of a European Concept*, ed. Pasi Ihalainen, Cornelia Ilie and Kari Palonen (Oxford: Berghahn, 2016), 176–191.

44. William Gerard Hamilton, *Parliamentary Logic*, ed. Courtney S. Kenny (Cambridge: Heffers, [1808]1927).

45. Carl Schmitt, *Der Begriff des Politischen* [The concept of the political] (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, [1932]1963), 21n.

Applying the Politics-Scheme to Parliamentary Debates

Reinhart Koselleck speaks on the veto power sources.⁴⁶ We should read the primary sources with an open mind and be wary of classifying them too easily according ready-made categories. We should expect to encounter something unexpected and if needed modify our analytical apparatus to cope with that. However, we should, as Koselleck certainly did, recognize that the sources never speak for themselves, that their veto is not absolute, but it is the scholars themselves who must interpret the veto claims.

The interpretative schemes serve the analysis as ideal types, based on a one-sided accentuation of historical features in order to strengthen the profile.⁴⁷ This link between the ideal-typical perspectives and the sources cannot be formed a priori, but requires a preliminary acquaintance with the sources and a heuristic guesswork and experimentation with mediating instruments. Tools are needed to establish how to connect the conceptual scheme to the identified uses of polit-words in the debates. A look at the sources is necessary to understand in which types of debates or, conversely, with which kind of search options, we might expect to find something interesting on politics.

Politik and *politisch* are present in practically each of the more than four thousand Bundestag debate units of the period, and the search engine of the Bundestag does not even distinguish between the two. We need additional devices to select and guide the identification of the interesting expressions and to analyze them further within the selected sources. The analysis below illustrates types of problematics that arise when applying analytical tools to bridge the conceptual scheme with the actual uses of the vocabulary.

In order to make conceptual comparisons possible, it is important to identify recurrent and regular but not too frequent uses of the polit-vocabulary. For instance, *Politik betreiben* gives a “hit” in more than five hundred debates and is therefore for my present purposes a “too frequent” expression. When we do not have public knowledge of how the search engine counts the expressions and what it includes or excludes, it is by no means certain that all mentions of the vocabulary will be worth discussing for activity of politics or that some expressions have been unjustly excluded. Trials with the search based on *Relevanz* on the website do not provide any clear hints to the criteria of relevance, either in terms of quantity of the words or in terms of political weight of the debates.

46. Reinhart Koselleck, “Archivalien—Quellen—Geschichten,” in *150 Jahre Staatsarchive in Düsseldorf und Münster* [150 years of state archives in Düsseldorf and Münster] (Düsseldorf: Selbstverlag der Staatsarchive, 1982), 21–36.

47. Max Weber, “Die ‘Objektivität’ sozialwissenschaftlicher und sozialpolitischer Erkenntnis” (1904), in *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre* [Collected essays on the theory of science], ed. Johannes Winckelmann (Tübingen: Mohr, 1973), 191.

At this stage of analysis my key heuristic idea lies in applying an elementary specialty of the German language, namely focusing on compound expressions written as single words, a rare practice in English or French, for example. Thus, we can search for words such as *Politikverständnis* or *politik(un)fähig*, beginning with *Politik*, more seldom with *politisch* or *Politiker*. The polit-word can also be the second part of a compound, as in *Realpolitik* or *Berufspolitiker*. The search options for the Bundestag are much easier to apply for such compounds than for expressions written in two or more words, such as *Politik betreiben* or *Politik als Kunst*.

I have experimented with the compounds, their frequency is counted by the Bundestag search engine. The search option *Datum* can link the findings to the date of debate and parliamentary term. Then the debates in which the expression is used can be opened and the quote identified. The website counts the number of debates mentioning an expression, and inside the debates it counts the number of uses. Neither counts are completely reliable. For example, words hyphenated in two lines are quite often missed or are difficult to find. Inside debates the number of expressions is sometimes greater than the count indicates, but for single or few mentions the search engine works well.

For the closer analysis, I picked a number of polit-words relevant for the action-concept with relative high occurrence (between thirty and three hundred “hits” for debates) and selected a passage around the expression in debate to the quotes to be analyzed. With these quotes I built a secondary corpus referring to a limited number of polit-words. For my present purposes these examples are sufficient to illustrate the actual vocabulary as well as the ways of using the search engines.

For the closer analysis I selected the following termini, including all their grammatical forms (see the dating and frequencies in the Appendix).

Berufspolitiker
Polansatz
politikfähig
Politikgestaltung
Politikkonzept
Politikstil
Politikum
politikunfähig
Politikverständnis
Politisierung
Realpolitik

Politikum and *Politisierung* are not compounds but can be compared with them. *Politisierung* in German does not necessarily correspond to *polit-*

icization in the typology. There is no single German word for politicking: the intransitive *Politisieren* refers almost exclusively to talking about “politics.” *Politik* refers in some contexts to policy, in others to politicking, but it can also be an umbrella term for my entire politics-scheme.

Many termini chosen for the closer analysis were not obvious candidates. For example, the 155 cases of *Politikansatz* could be compared with termini closely linked with policy, such as *Politiklinie* (5) and *Politikstrategie* (12). The over 130 cases with *Politikverständnis* could be compared with *Politikauffassung* (6) and *Politikbegriff* (2). In this article I have limited myself to the more frequent termini, which allow a more detailed analysis of the profile of uses. With the politics-typology, I went through the selection of quotes from the chosen compounds of polit-words and situated them to each of the four aspects, with an understanding that some of the words could refer to more than aspects of the typology.

As we can see from the Appendix, the dating of key compound words turned out to be interesting. Many of the key compounds of contemporary German politics are, according to the search engine, unknown in the Bundestag before the beginning of the Social-Liberal coalition in 1969 or even before the entrance of the Greens in 1983. Since then we can speak of an expansion of the politics-vocabulary in Bundestag.

The new compounds have considerably enriched the conceptual resources of speaking about politics among the members of the Bundestag. Contrary to what one perhaps might expect, hardly any of these “new” words has a strong and permanent party bias, but most of them were used by the three traditional parties (CDU/CSU, SPD, FDP) as well as by the Grünen and later also by the PDS/Linke.⁴⁸ Some of the compounds were initiated by the Social Democrats, others by the Greens, but they have been more or less adopted across the political spectrum, although the normative color of using the terms continues to show some variation between the parties in the Bundestag.

48. Acronyms for the German party names used in this article:

BHE = Block der Heimatvertriebenen und Entrechteten (League of Expellees and Deprived of Rights);

CDU = Christlich-demokratische Union (Christian Democratic Union);

CSU = Christlich-soziale Union (Christian Social Union);

DP = Deutsche Partei (The German Party);

FDP = Freie Demokratische Partei (Free Democratic Party);

GB = Gesamtdeutscher Block (All-German Bloc);

Grüne = Die Grünen, later Bündnis 90/Die Grünen (The Greens, later Alliance 90/the Greens);

Linke = Linkspartei (The Left Party);

PDS = Partei des demokratischen Sozialismus (The Party of Democratic Socialism);

SPD = Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (The Social Democratic Party).

Seen from the opposite angle, the traditional politics-vocabulary of the four first Bundestag terms until 1965 is replaced by a richer language of politics containing previously unknown compounds. In the early Federal Republic, *Politisierung*, *Berufspolitiker*, and *Politikum* were met with suspicion and *Realpolitik* was used more than ever in the two first Bundestag periods, each appearing in more than twenty debates, although with an emphasis different from the Bismarckian tradition. The extended vocabulary allowed the parliamentarians to conceptualize new aspects in politics.

The Polity Aspect

This historical indication of expanded linguistic resources in the politics-vocabulary makes it sensible to start the analysis of the debates with the polity aspect. The next step consists in analysis of the policy and politicking aspect and terminating the discussion with politicization.

The main keywords referring to the polity are *Politikverständnis*, *Politikgestaltung*, *Berufspolitiker*, and *Politisierung*. The pejorative uses of *Berufspolitiker* and *Politisierung* provide an indirect view of what marked the legitimate and established *polity* in the early Federal Republic. The denunciations of *Politisierung* and polemics against *Berufspolitiker* declined from 1970 onward, whereas the compounds *Politikverständnis* and *Politikgestaltung* appeared for the first time in this period and soon become fashionable. Both of them referred to different historical layers of the polity, which had accepted some challenges of politicization.

With these examples it is possible to discuss important nuances of what constituted a polity. The rejection of *Politisierung* aimed at both to maintain the “legitimate” range of the polity on the federal and perhaps municipal institutions and to oppose the mixing of “politics” with other institutions or practices. In the Bundestag,⁴⁹ we can find regular warnings against the *Politisierung* of the judiciary (see the debate between Karl Weber, CDU, Otto Heinrich Greve, SPD, Minister Fritz Neymayer, FDP, and Alfred Gille DP/BHE, 20 June 1956), the administration (for example, Josef Ferdinand Kleindinst, CSU, 15 February 1950), the military (for example, Richard Jaeger, CSU, 15 June 1955), the economy (for example, Richard Hellwig, CDU, 28 November 1957), sport (Karl Mommer, SPD and Emil Kemmer, CSU 29 August 1957), and the universities (Minister Gerhard Stoltenberg, CDU, 7 May 1968).

49. Parliamentary debate citations are included in the text parenthetically with the name of the speaker and the date from the website Deutscher Bundestag, “Drucksachen und Plenarprotokolle des Bundestages – ab 1949,” <https://pdok.bundestag.de/>.

The language of the early Federal Republic manifests also a suspicion toward *Berufspolitiker*, regarded as being too separated from the lives of “ordinary” citizens (for instance, Max Becker, FDP, 17 July 1952; Fritz Becker, DP, 26 May 1954). However, although the negative uses dominated, from early on professional politicians also had supporters in different factions (Gerhard Lütken, SPD, 21 September 1950; Hans-Joachim v. Merkatz, DP, 22 September 1950).

Politikverständnis was, according to the search engine, used in the Bundestag first by the parliamentary state secretary Karl Moersch (FDP) on 24 February 1972. A closer look indicates that the term mainly refers to the polity, more specifically to identifying and classifying the central conflicts and dividing lines between political actors. Interestingly, the term does not mainly concern the old divisions to the right and the left or the bourgeois and the socialist parties on a socio-economical basis. Speaking of *Politikverständnis* suggests that traditional divides began to lose their unconditional priority at the time when the term became more frequently used.

Helmut Kohl, as the Prime Minister (*Ministerpräsident*) of Rheinland-Pfalz and later as the parliamentary leader of the CDU opposition frequently used *Politikverständnis* since mid-1970s. In a speech on 26 November 1980, Kohl accuses Chancellor Helmut Schmidt (SPD) for “Ihren ökonomisch verkürzten Politikverständnis” (your narrowly economic understanding of politics). Two days later Schmidt replies—referring to Kohl’s earlier formula on his “kaltes, technokratisches Politikverständnis” (cold, technocratic view on politics) (Kohl, 21 September 1978)—and turns against Kohl’s demand for “geistige Führerschaft” (spiritual leadership), against which Schmidt takes stand for “Vielfalt und Toleranz” (plurality and tolerance) (28 November 1980).

Since the 1980s, all along the political spectrum it became common to speak of *Politikverständnis* in terms of the dichotomy “new” versus “outdated” in a partisan way, without precisely defining the content. The term, however, illustrated the changing agenda-setting, such as the rise of the environmental and gender issues as new political dividing lines. Moreover, growing importance of the European and global issues in the Bundestag debates that was sooner or later adopted by all major parties is visible in the extensions of the polity beyond the borders. Dietmar Schütz (SPD), for example, blames the Maastricht Treaty for a traditional *Politikverständnis* in the sense of still not including an environmental union of Europe (8 October 1992).

Politikgestaltung is not a new term, but the search engine identifies Hans-Dietrich Genscher (FDP) as the first user of the expression in the Bundestag debates on 28 November 1969 a few weeks after he had become the Minister of the Interior in Willy Brandt’s new social-liberal government. The word gained ground in particular since the late 1980s.

Politikgestaltung marks the frame of the polity, both leaving a *Spielraum* for contingency and giving to the polity a definite shape, including the ranking of financial priorities (for example, Helmut Wieczorek, SPD, 10 November 1995; Heinz-Peter Haustein, FDP, 19 January 2010). *Politikgestaltung* has also been suggested as a German translation of *governance*, giving it a more openly political tone than the original word (on the interpretation of the EU's FLEGT regulation see, for example, Eva Bulling-Schlöter, Linke 29 June 2006; Petra Crone, SPD 21 February 2013). It has, furthermore, been used to justify claims to use the existing powers of the Bundestag better to shape politics and policies (see Wolfgang Mischnick, FDP, 13 October 1988; Siegrun Klemmer, SPD, 12 September 1996; Markus Kurth, Grüne 8 July 2010).

The openness in *Politikgestaltung* also allows transcending the national polity-level toward European integration or globalization and the correspondingly increasing powers of the inter- and supranational institutions. On a task for *Politikgestaltung* in Third World politics speak, for example, Ursula Männle (CSU, 15 June 1989) and Dieter Schatz (SPD, 20 May 1992), a number of members speak of Europeanization as a change for *Politikgestaltung*, understanding the polity in European terms. Angelica Schwall-Düren (SPD) speaks of “konkreter innovativer und nachhaltiger Politikgestaltung” (a concrete, innovative and sustainable framing of politics) (22 November 2016).

The rise of *Politikverständnis* and *Politikgestaltung* indicates an overcoming of the frame of a single national polity among the members of the Bundestag. The plurality of the issues and conflict dimensions as well as European and worldwide polity levels rendered the vision of what constitutes a polity problematic, and the different polity-levels offer opposing angles to the debate. The entire political setting is, since the 1980s, seen as more complicated than before, and a personal positioning to the questions of the polity has become more important for every citizen.

Rethinking the Policy

The old German tradition of cameralist economics⁵⁰ was revived in the late nineteenth-century around the *Verein für Sozialpolitik*. The cameralist thinking not only separated the policy fields in ever stricter terms—economic, financial, monetary, or discount policy and so on—but also tacitly assumed that best policy would be more or less determined by the object. In the early

50. See Keith Tribe, *The Strategies of Economic Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

Bundestag we can still see remnants of such an essentialist view. Bruno Dickmann (SPD) criticized that the Bundestag has nothing to say about the budget of the federal postal ministry (16 June 1955), criticizing the cameralist style of reducing political questions to administrative ones that left limited powers to parliament and government.

Thinking of policies as conscious choices of a line that coordinated measures to a distinct direction became common in Germany in the 1970s. This enthusiasm for planning the policies underplayed the contingency of their consequences, among the Social Democrats in particular. For example, Ursula Burchardt (SPD) regards the environmental plan as a *Politikinnovation*: “Er koordiniert die Planung der Ressorts, bedeutet Folgenabschätzung für Entscheidungen in Politik und Verwaltung und fördert mehr Demokratie” (It coordinates the planning of the ministries, includes an impact assessment for decision-making in politics and administration, and promotes democracy) (20 March 1997). The defects of too much planning were soon better understood, with the rise of the new key term *Politikansatz* as the core.

In the early Bundestag, *Realpolitik* did not strictly follow Ludwig August von Rochau’s classical view to accept only what was surely possibly.⁵¹ Arthur Stegner (FDP) rejected the narrow interpretation of politics as the *Kunst des Möglichen* (art of the possible) (10 January 1952), and the later Chancellor Kurt-Georg Kiesinger (CDU) distances himself from *Realpolitik* “wie es einmal in Deutschland gemeint war” (as it was once understood in Germany) (7 October 1954). *Realpolitik* in the Bundestag meant above all adaptation of the policy to the facts: “Sich den Tatsachen beugen heißt Realpolitik machen” (doing *Realpolitik* means to bow to the facts) (Anne-Marie Heiler, CDU, 26 March 1963). It was also opposed to *Romantik* (Max Becker FDP, 15 November 1949), *Illusion* (SPD leader Kurt Schumacher, 8 November 1950), *Phantasie* (Carl v. Campe, DP, 10 and 24 March 1950), *Gefühl* (sentiment) (Herbert Schneider, DP, 6 March 1956), or *Wunschvorstellungen* (wishful thinking) (Heinrich von Brentano, CDU, 28 June 1956).

A new connotation to the term was given in the 1980s in debates between the *Realos* and the *Fundis* in the Green party. This difference became visible in a dispute on the status of human rights in German foreign policy between Green members Joschka Fischer, who was the Foreign Minister of the Gerhard Schröder government, and Claudia Roth (10 October 1998).

Politikansatz became a new key term mainly for the policy aspect with more than 150 uses in the Bundestag since the mid-1980s (see Dieter Schanz, SPD, 29 March 1985). With this new key term, the policy differences between parties could be expressed in a more nuanced way, transcending

51. Ludwig August von Rochau, *Grundsätze der Realpolitik* I-II [Principles of *Realpolitik*] (1853/1869) (Frankfurt/M: Ullstein, 1972).

classical -isms in favor of coordinated policy approaches (see Hans-Joachim Fuchtel, CDU, 25 February 1999; Anja Hajduk, Grüne, 23 November 2006; Matthias Miersch, SPD, 23 January 2013).

Politikkonzept is another policy term applied in the debates since mid-1980s (Ludger Volmer, Grüne, 16 November 1986). Here integration and coordination of policies are linked to a more flexible vision, which is frequently found lacking in governmental policy (see Dieter Schanz, SPD on the German policy in the Rio development conference, 20 May 1992). Wilfried Herrmann (Grüne, 30 January 2004) emphasizes transcending ministerial and administrative borders (*Ressortborniertheit*) as the main criterion for speaking of a *Politikkonzept*.

The paradigmatic novel expressions *Politikansatz* and *Politikkonzept* emphasize a shift in the policy-dimension from the belief into planning of policies to more flexible views. This also renders the divide between policy and politicking relative.

Politicking: Competence and Political Styles

The vocabularies of *Politikverständnis*, *Politikgestaltung*, or *Berufspolitiker* also have their links to new and more acceptable ways of politicking. Here I shall take up two concepts still more focused on this aspect, namely *Politik[un]fähigkeit* and *Politikstil*.

It is fairly common in the Bundestag to accuse parliamentary adversaries, in particular the Greens and later the PDS/Linke, for political incompetence. Such accusations mark a lack of respect for the politics of adversaries, a main feature of parliamentary culture. A common criterion for *Politikfähigkeit* was seen in the readiness to compromise as a condition for participating in a coalition government (see Peter Ramsauer, CSU, 28 November 2007). Hubertus Heil (SPD) accuses the Left of lacking the capacity to differentiate (22 May 2014), and Volker Beck (Grüne) criticizes the Left for being unable to fairly negotiate with others (21 February 2013).

The key slogan for *politicking* in the Bundestag is *Politikstil*. The term marks another dimension of growing complexity of politics: besides the divisions in policies or in classical isms, alternative styles of doing politics also matter. The point is opposed to the fixed policy lines, giving more chances for variation, individual profile and initiative in politicking. Helmut Kohl's quoted polemics against the Helmut Schmidt's technocratic *Politikstil* can be as an early sign of such view.

All that has been blamed as a "personalization of politics," especially among the Social Democrats (Renate Rennenbach, SPD on the *Spaßgesellschaft* rhetoric of the FDP 4 July 2001), or a theatricalization of politics

(Andrea Fischer, Grüne, 13 June 1996). The Schröder government’s sharp turns in policy were criticized by Klaus Hofbauer (CSU, 4 March 1999). Fritz Kuhn (Grüne) in his turn notes the strangely similar *Politikstil* of the CSU and the Linke, namely on lacking sense of responsibility by presenting demands that they know to be unrealistic (17 September 2008).

A common critique of governments lies in its the disregard for arguments and relying solely on its majority. Angela Merkel, as the leader of the CDU opposition, stresses the role of “demokratischem Streit” (democratic dispute) (26 January 2001). Her politics as Chancellor have frequently been criticized for the lack of alternatives or for not recognizing them (see, for example, Irene Michalic, Grüne, 10 February 2017).

The introduction of stylistic controversies contributed to the loosening of the hard *Parteienstaat* setting in West German politics. The Greens with their new types of parliamentary agenda-setting and provocative performances further opened up a dimension of contingency that consists of different political styles in the Bundestag. The multiplication and differentiation of political divisions includes closer attention to the styles of politics, to the manners of its presentation and ways of conducting controversies in parliament.

The Gradual Acceptance of Politicization

Recognizing the growing importance of politics in the lives of citizens is a clear sign of a break with the parliamentary language of the Adenauer era. The three aspects of politics can refer to a growing experience and de facto acceptance of politicization in the West German polity, even then when the word is not used.

In the 1950s, the emphasis that a question is a *Politikum* was a frequent topos, but struggles arose whether the criterion was belonging to the polity or the intensity of the struggle. This can be seen in the opposing views of the CDU members Detlev Struve (29 May 1952) and Richard Mustermann (18 July 1952), the latter referring to the intense struggles in film politics, whereas the former rejected the intensity criterion and stuck to separate spheres. Interestingly, the European integration was seen then as a *Politikum* to be supported (Arthur Stegner, GP/BHE, 21 March 1957; Heinz Starke, FDP, 4 May 1960; Karl Mommer, SPD, 15 June 1962).

In later decades, talking about *Politikum* still appears controversial. Helga Timm (SPD) regards Chancellor Kohl’s visit to Israel “als folgenschweres Politikum,” (as a political affair with severe consequences) to which the state secretary Peter Boenisch (CDU) responded that with her speech an accidental event was “zum Politikum hochgespielt worden”

(elevated to a highly political affair) (both 23 February 1984). Recently Hans-Christian Ströbele (Grüne) reminded that the *Majestätsbeleidigungsparagraph* forms an anachronism in penal law: “Damit wird die Strafverfolgung zu einem Politikum” (the penalization thus turns into a highly political question) (1 June 2017).

Sermons against politicization declined in the 1970s and turned to new specific subjects, such as the United Nations, whereas the everyday politicization of issues was taken more or less for granted. Hedda Heuser, FDP, a medical doctor, accepted at the end of the 1960s the unintended politicization of health questions, saying that in the Bundestag is the “Bereich Gesundheit zunehmend politisiert worden” (the of health has become increasingly politicized) (26 June 1969).

Then Minister of Defense in the Brandt government Helmut Schmidt takes the more provocative view that he has nothing against “eine Politisierung der Bundeswehr,” (politicization of the Bundeswehr) if this means nothing more than a growing competence of political judgment among the soldiers (26 March 1971). Later, the former officer Albrecht Mechtersheimer (Grüne) applauds the rising number of conscientious objectors, due to the politicization of universities and schools (19 January 1988).

Claims for active politicization of different phenomena remain, after all, rare and can be found almost exclusively among the Green parliamentarians. Hannelore Saibald demands “eine Politisierung des Konsums” (a politicization of consumption) (6 May 1987); Peter Sellin insists in the name of democracy on “die Politisierung industriepolitischer Entscheidungen” (the politicization of decisions in industrial policies”) (28 November 1988). The EU is here a major polity level. Claudia Roth sees in the Charter of Basic Rights a project of “der notwendigen Demokratisierung und Politisierung Europas” (the necessary democratization and politicization of Europe” (18 May 2000), and Christian Sterzing regards the parliamentarization of the EU as “Politisierung und Entnationalisierung der Debatte” (politicization and de-nationalization of the debate) (12 December 2001).

In other words, there remains a difference between two forms of politicization. The experience that something has “become politicized” has been frequently blamed by the bourgeois members, but increasingly taken as a “fact” or accepted as the condition in a democratized polity, as when Schmidt accepted it for the “citizens in uniform.” The demands to politicize issues are more challenging to the established order and lifestyles, which gains support only among the Greens.⁵²

52. On politicization in Bundestag and Westminster, see also Kari Palonen, “Politicisation—Disorder or Chance: From Literary to Parliamentary Debates,” *Contemporary Political Theory* 18 (2019): 249–254.

Preliminary Conclusions

The focus on the activity of politics, interpreted with a scheme dividing it to four main aspects, has offered me a perspective for interpreting what is interesting in the politics-vocabulary as used in the German Bundestag. Focusing on compound words that are neither too rare nor too common avoids an a priori selection and makes visible the broad spectrum of politics-vocabulary that is present in the debates. Judging the compound words with the politics-typology required detailed interpretations of the actual uses of these compounds. The interpretations I have presented here are exploratory illustrations interesting to the conceptual history of politics and spelled out in the Bundestag debates, and they should be understood as sketches and theses to be revisited in further studies.

The most obvious result lies in the linguistic enrichment in the politics-vocabulary, mainly in the 1970s and 1980s. The more extensive use of compounds with politics created new resources for conceptualization among the actors and, conversely, made visible the relative scarcity of the vocabulary in the two first decades of the Bundestag. What must be left to further studies is how far this can be connected to the coalition shift in 1969, to the entrance of the Greens to Bundestag in 1983, to the procedural reforms of 1969, or to the general cultural changes around the activist movements since the 1960s or other phenomena.⁵³

The sheer enrichment of the politics-vocabulary or the dating of it is not the main result of the study. The point is rather that at each level of the politics-typology, the expansion of the vocabulary refers to conceptual revisions, all of them containing an extended reinterpretation of what is regarded as politics or political. I have indicated some of the rhetorical moves with the first or the most striking examples of these changes. No specific “innovative ideologists” can be named as their initiators, but the examples cited contain both leading politicians, including the Chancellors Helmut Schmidt

53. There are few studies on the more systematic use of the politics-vocabulary in postwar Germany. Relevant mainly for the *policy* aspect in the early Federal Republic are, however, Gabriele Metzler, *Konzeptionen des politischen Handelns von Adenauer bis Brandt. Politische Planung in der pluralistischen Gesellschaft* [Conceptions of political action from Adenauer to Brandt: Political planning in a pluralistic society] (Paderborn: Schöningh 2005); Stefan Scholl, *Begrenzte Abhängigkeit ‘Wirtschaft’ und ‘Politik’ im 20. Jahrhundert* (Limited dependence: “economics” and “politics” in the twentieth century) (Frankfurt/M.: Campus 2015); Hauke-Hendrik Kutscher, *Politisierung oder Verrechtlichung? Der Streit um die Verfassungsgerichtsbarkeit in Deutschland (1921/1958)* (Politicization or judicialization? The dispute on the judicial review of the constitution in Germany 1921–1958) (Frankfurt/M.: Campus 2016). All of them operate with a spatial concept of politics.

and Helmut Kohl, as well as rank-and-file parliamentarians from different parties.

It is also possible to identify a greater acceptance and even appreciation of politics. A clear sign of this lies in the shift from accusations of *Politisierung* to the lamentations of *Politikunfähigkeit*. The former practice corresponds to Schmitt's dictum of blaming adversaries for politicking while claiming oneself to be neutral or objective. In directing the blame against *Politikunfähigkeit*, that is, the actors deny the political competence of their adversaries, this tendency has been inverted. From the perspective of fair parliamentary politics this can be taken as a recommendation to the adversaries to learn how to do politics. The acceptance of the Europeanization and globalization of politics can also be read as further steps in accepting the complexity of politics.

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Appendix: Compound Words in the Bundestag Debates

Wahlperiode	Berufs- politiker	Politik- ansatz	Politik- fähig	Politik- gestaltung	Politik- konzept	Politik- stil	Politi- kum	Politik- unfähig	Politikver- ständnis	Politi- sierung	Real- politik
1949–1953	3						27			20	21
1953–1957	1						28			12	21
1957–1961	2						22			5	13
1961–1965	1						22			1	5
1965–1969	1						18			16	8
1969–1972				1			8		1	11	7
1972–1976	4			1			14	1	5	16	7
1976–1980	3					1	7	1	4	18	6
1980–1983			2		1		7	1	3	7	3
1983–1987	5	4	3		2	1	12	4	14	16	21
1987–1990	2	1	8	4	4	2	8	7	9	15	19
1990–1994	4	17	6	5	13	2	6	13	11	4	22
1994–1998	5	16	13	6	13	7	12	12	7	17	21
1998–2002	1	39	12	5	5	9	6	10	21	10	19
2002–2005		16	1	6	5	6	8	2	9	2	13
2005–2009	3	32	12	8	6	12	3	1	9	13	18
2009–2013	3	23	4	13	1	15	5	4	23	3	41
2013–2017	5	13	2	6	1	7	5	3	10	8	24

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