

UNEMPLOYMENT: THE GERMAN CASE  
A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF POLITICAL DISCOURSE

By

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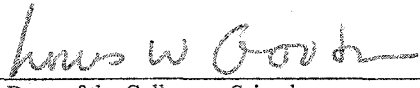
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ABSTRACT

In light of the mass unemployment in Germany and the growing resentment of unemployment policies, it becomes increasingly important to understand policies that are implemented to deal with the millions of unemployed persons. This study uncovers the nuances of meaning and their deployment in the political discourse regarding unemployment in Germany by analyzing debates of the German *Bundestag* and official local communications to find rhetorical commonplaces and evaluate their use.

The data show that commonplaces discovered in Germany are both similar and different than those used in other European countries and at the EU-level. Political discourse referring to unemployment as a disease, discourse stressing the difference between East and West Germany, and discourse relating to duty and sanctions are unique to the German case. The study offers insight into the functions of political discourse on unemployment in Germany and adds to the existing body of literature in the EU.

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This thesis is dedicated to my mom and dad, and to all of those who are living it.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

In 1989, the people of the German Democratic Republic filled the streets every Monday to voice their discontent with the Communist system. Slogans such as “*Wir sind ein Volk*” [We are one people] still ring in the minds of those that witnessed the fall of the Berlin Wall and the subsequent reunification of the two Germanys. Fifteen years later, in the summer of 2004, these *Montags-Demos* resumed, when more than 90,000 people, primarily the unemployed and their families, marched in Leipzig, Dresden, Magdeburg and Berlin to express their opinions about chancellor Schröder’s *Agenda 2010*<sup>1</sup>.

At the center of the controversy is new legislation, especially the Hartz-laws. In August 2002, the government commission “*Moderne Dienstleistungen am Arbeitsmarkt*” [Modern Services in the Labor Market] was created. The commission’s original purpose was to investigate a scandal surrounding the Federal Agency for Employment, but the mandate was soon expanded and the fifteen members were charged with finding better ways to reintegrate Germany’s unemployed into the workforce. The commission and the legislation based on its findings are nicknamed after Peter Hartz, director of personnel at Volkswagen, who led the team that studied the labor market and

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<sup>1</sup> *Financial Times*, 23 August 2004, *Financial Times*, 31 August 2004



suggested pertinent reforms.

### Research Question

In the fall of 2004, an article in the *Financial Times* contained a large photograph of a demonstration in Leipzig that showed people holding up banners that stated, “Work for millions instead of billions for the war” or the word “solidarity” in five different languages. But the most striking poster was “*Menschen Würde(n) Arbeit(en)*,” which roughly translates to “people would work” or “Human dignity: Work.” The author’s innate interest in linguistics and an exposure to various qualitative methods led to the development of a proposal for this study.

In light of the ever-growing number of unemployed people in Germany and the growing resentment to unemployment policies, it becomes increasingly important to understand policies, such as Hartz IV, that are implemented to deal with the millions of unemployed persons. More importantly, it is interesting to study the discourse that leads to the development of this policy. “Discursive resources such as talk and print provide the basic means with which policies are constructed, negotiated, and rendered into an enduring form” (Muntigl 2000: 1).

The purpose of this study, therefore, is to explain how the Hartz-reforms came to be and why other labor market reforms were not selected. In other words, how and why were the Hartz-laws chosen instead of other legislative proposals? To do this, this study attempts to uncover the rhetorical commonplaces and the nuances of meaning used in the political discourse regarding unemployment in Germany. The study will also evaluate the political representation of unemployment and the unemployed people.

Further, we analyze how the deployment of these meanings and representations legitimated the passing of the Hartz-legislation and failed to legitimate proposals of the opposing coalition.

In part, I seek to answer the following questions: What kinds of rhetorical commonplaces are being deployed in the development process of unemployment policy? How are these policies legitimated? Is there a dichotomy in the federal (international) and local (external) discourse on unemployment? In searching for themes, common threads and symbols, I plan to explicate a) the contextual reasons for policies, b) the positions of other parties' members' on the issues and c) the publicly acceptable reasons for their alternative policy suggestions.

Unemployment is not a neutral term; it is socially and politically constructed. More importantly, the way in which unemployment is characterized may influence the components *Bundestag* members place into new unemployment policies. Similarly, there is no silver bullet in unemployment policy that can be implemented to address unemployment. To be sure, policies matter. But the ultimate policy choice is influenced by Parliamentary policy debates. These debates are the basis of this critical discourse analysis.

#### Initial Guess

Based on the reading of the existing body of literature I assume that the German political discourse on unemployment will address a variety of issues regarding unemployment, ranging from unemployment of youth and the elderly, long-term unemployment and gendered topics. The focus of this study will largely be on the long-

term unemployed as they are the ones most affected by Hartz IV and *ALG II*, but the political discourse on German unemployment may well include some youth or gendered-related commonplaces.

Some rhetorical commonplaces that have been uncovered by scholars at the EU-level of discourse include ‘problem’, ‘fight’, ‘struggle’, ‘strategy’ or ‘tackle,’ (cf. Straehle et al. 1999). It is highly probable, that German politicians borrow from the EU discourse. Depending on the motivations of the current administration in Germany, one might, however, find commonplaces and symbols that carry a more positive connotation. Other researchers have pointed to words such as ‘flexibility’ and ‘educational deficit’ (cf. Wodak 2000). In all, I do not want to limit my approach to discourse analysis by the existing literature, but rather push those data even further and build upon other scholars’ work.

In addition to categorization of unemployment, the German *Bundestag* centers its debates often on the categorization of the unemployed themselves. One prime example is chancellor Schröder’s remark about work shirkers in the labor market. In an article in *Bild* magazine the Chancellor declared that *Faulenzer* have no right to solidarity.<sup>2</sup> This comment alone sparked a lively debate in public discourse and some of the arguments are repeated in the political discourse developed in *Bundestag* debates.

#### Content of the Hartz-Reforms

The German government saw a need for the Hartz-Commission in part because of the staggering unemployment figures. In August 2002, approximately 4.06

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<sup>2</sup> “Wer arbeiten kann, aber nicht will, der kann nicht mit Solidarität rechnen. Es gibt kein Recht auf Faulheit in unserer Gesellschaft” (Kanzler).

million Germans were unemployed. To some extent, the situation was explained by the stagnant economy, welfare-oriented labor market policies and increased global competition. Additionally, Germany as a whole still has to carry the East German transition economy. During the communist years of the German Democratic Republic, the East German economy was centrally planned and hence inefficient and largely unproductive. Since reunification in 1990, unemployment has turned into a significant problem and the German government has spent approximately € 500 billion in transfer payments to help with East German reconstruction and the industrial recovery process. Still, unemployment rates in the East German states (*Länder*) averaged 18.1 percent in June 2004, compared to 8.1 percent in the West.

Within three years of the Hartz-Commissions report, the German *Bundestag* passed four different laws that were based on the Commission's recommendations. The laws official names are "*Moderne Dienstleistungen am Arbeitsmarkt I-IV*," however, internal and external discourse alike refers to them as Hartz I-IV. Hartz I and II were implemented beginning on January 1, 2003 and introduced such labor market reforms as "*Ich-AGs*" [Me-Inc.], "Mini-Jobs" and "Personnel-Service-Agency". In essence, these changes were enacted to present the unemployed with new opportunities to reintegrate into the labor market by providing a more efficient job agency and simpler ways to become self-sufficient. "*Ich-AGs*" were designed to encourage persons having a skill or trade, such as plumbers, to open their own business selling that skill. "Mini-Jobs" are a version of part-time jobs that allow the employer to hire someone for a limited number of hours per month while paying a lower, flat rate of unemployment and health insurance to the federal government.

Hartz III followed one year later with the intent to de-bureaucratize the *Arbeitsverwaltung* [labor administration]. Its new name "*Bundesagentur für Arbeit*" [Federal Agency for Employment] was meant as a sign that the agency is giving a service to clients, rather than administering unemployment. Because they were proposed at the same time, Hartz III and IV are always debated together in the Bundestag.

However, the core of the reforms and the subsequent public debates and demonstrations is Hartz IV, which has the most tangible impact on the unemployed, as it alters unemployment benefits and welfare payments. Implemented in January 1, 2005, the new law amends *Arbeitslosengeld II* (ALG II), which now merges benefits for the long-term unemployed and welfare benefits for those who cannot work. Starting in January, 3.4 million people received €297 per month in Berlin and the West and €285 per month in the East, instead of benefits based on previous earnings as the original ALG II did. In addition, refusal of a job offered by the *Arbeitsagentur* [agency for labor] will now lead to a reduction of these benefits by thirty percent<sup>3</sup>. Hartz IV also restructured the job-agency system by having regional job agencies collaborate with local agencies. The cheaper and more efficient system will allow the caseworkers to have a maximum of 75 clients, an objective that has yet to be achieved in 2005.

The remainder of this study will systematically analyze political discourse on unemployment in Germany. Chapter 2 presents a critical overview on the existing scholarly literature on unemployment that conducted critical discourse analysis. Although the extent of this body of literature is not very large, scholars such Ruth

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<sup>3</sup> *Financial Times*, 19 August 2004 and 18 August 2004; *Welt*, 7 August 2003 and 29 June 2004

Wodak, Theo van Leeuwen and Carolyn Strachle have uncovered a variety of rhetorical commonplace used to legitimate unemployment-related policy changes in European countries. This study will gladly built upon the findings of these scholars. Chapter 3 outlines the methodological tools used for this study, which are to a large degree borrowed from P.T. Jackson's approach to post-war German reconstruction. The chapter also reveals the diversity and collection of source materials. Chapter 4 provides a brief overview of German economic history as well as a description of the German legislative process, which will place the discourse analysis in its proper historical and political framework.

The core of the study is contained in Chapters 5 and 6. The former is the critical analysis of unemployment discourse in the Bundestag; the latter is an analysis of external discourse reflected in written materials addressed to the German unemployed persons. Both chapters are enriched with insights into how discourse is developed and the ideologies and local circumstances interacting with it. The study concludes with Chapter 7, a comparison and contrast of the internal and external political discourse, and Chapter 8, a summary, conclusion and suggestions for further research in this field.

In essence, the goal of this study is to detect nuances and differences within the political discourse on unemployment in Germany surrounding the debates of the Hartz-legislation. The project analyzes the debates and speeches of the German *Bundestag* as well as official local communications and brochures semantically, ethnographically and genealogically, in order to find rhetorical commonplaces, themes and symbols.

This study, once completed, will be able to offer valuable insight into the

functions of political discourse on unemployment in Germany. The Federal Republic of Germany is Europe's largest economy and the fifth-strongest economy in the world, making it a salient country for analysis. With the help of this study, others can learn why the German policies regarding unemployment are what they are. The completed study will also add to the existing body of literature on political discourse on unemployment in the European Union (EU) and its member states.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

A wealth of literature exists that discussed the political, economic or social aspects of unemployment. All of this literature may have some merit to the scholarly community. But as this literature review shows, none of the non-discourse analytic explanations for unemployment policy can truly explain how economic theories are translated into politically viable outcomes. After a brief critique of the non-discourse analytic approach, this chapter will then review pertinent examples of the literature on critical discourse analysis of unemployment.

Many scholars place unemployment in a political or economic framework, some also study the social dimension of its effects. A seminal work in the socio-psychological field is Marie Jahoda's study of the unemployed in *Marienthal*. Her research paved the way for many unemployment scholars in the 20th century and sought to explore the effects of long-term unemployment on identity and self-concept. In addition, Gøsta Esping-Anderson has published numerous books on the welfare state that discuss that system's resilience as well as the need for reforms. While Jahoda and Esping-Anderson's work can enrich the literature on unemployment worldwide, they do not treat the material in the same empirical manner as critical discourse analysts would. In other words, they are not trying to explain how unemployment policy is made. These



books are therefore not particularly useful to this analysis.

There are, however, several books that claim to be able to explain how policy is made. Dennis Snower's *Unemployment Policy: Government Options for the Labor Market* is one of the many books that analyze the economic theories underlying unemployment. The authors in this edited volume assert that there are a limited number of policies available to governments trying to handle mass unemployment. The book presents four 'basic' types of policies: laissez-faire, demand-management, supply-side and structural. The authors then evaluate these policies based on the predictions that can be made with the help of the underlying macroeconomic theories and they also study the political process surrounding unemployment policy decisions. The book-jacket praises that the work "gives policy makers and academics a convenient basis for making policy decisions" (Snower 1997).

Economic theory can provide an evaluation and perhaps propose a goal, however, it cannot comment about process, means and politics. In that regard, the authors fail to see three very important points. First, there is no single correct unemployment policy to solve each specific unemployment crisis. While economic theories may be able to explain the cause of unemployment and present options for the solution of the problem in an abstract scenario, these theories ignore certain variables that ultimately influence the success of the new policies in a specific country. As such, the economic-theoretic approach excludes all cultural and historical development a country may have experienced. In Germany, for example, the laissez-faire approach suggested by Snower might not only be ineffective but socially unacceptable as well. Abstract theories about unemployment cannot give politicians a toolkit that will solve the unemployment

crises in different environments every time.

In a similar vein, non-discourse analytic studies cannot help us understand why policy makers chose certain unemployment policies over others. Snower et al fail to include the possibility that two economic theories might present an equally viable approach to the unemployment situation. If the authors were faced with this challenge they would be unable to explain, which policy option might be chosen and why. The economic-theoretic approach is unable to speak to the intricacies that influence the policy-decision process.

But thirdly, and most importantly, *even if* the economic theory takes into account the socio-cultural aspects and the history of the country; *even if* the theory is the correct one to deal with mass unemployment in this country; and *even if* the theory correctly predicts which policies will be chosen, the politicians are still faced with one problem that Snower et al cannot account for: having to explain, justify and legitimate the new policy to their colleagues and constituents. A discussion of the legislative system alone cannot show how the supposedly objective political and economic interests are turned into actual policies. Nor can four 'basic' economic theories explain why certain countries pass certain unemployment legislation and others do not. But taking into account the political, legislative and historical aspects of a country and analyzing the political discourse leading up labor market reforms can explain how policy is made. Snower et al cannot.

Critical discourse analysis is currently very common among European scholars; hence it is not surprising to find that most of the existing publications present research on discourse in either the EU or a European country. As critiqued below, there

has recently been an influx of discourse studies of unemployment and of subjects relating to it, such as employment or labor market reforms. However, there are still gaps that can and need to be filled, if not for specific countries, then certainly to be more inclusive of discourse relating to subjections of the unemployed, for example the youth or gendered discourse.

An example of an excellent analysis of discourse at the EU-level is “Struggle as Metaphor in European Union Discourses on Unemployment” by Straehle et al in 1999. The paper combs through speeches of EU commissioners and EU Presidency Conclusions over a period of several years and then semantically and syntactically analyzes them. The authors stress the prevalence of the struggle metaphor (i.e. problem, fight) in European discourse on unemployment and then consider this metaphor’s legitimating functions in political discourse. In the conclusion, the authors “speculate that the discourse on unemployment is strongly linked to economic discourses in general” (Straehle 1999:94). This is an important point to consider when tracing rhetorical commonplaces genealogically.

This article is extraordinarily insightful, in part because the authors consider internal as well as external organizational discourse, making an effort to uncover differences between the two. Still, it is important to note that unemployment is not a criterion for accession to the EU, and the Maastricht Treaty of 1992 does not specifically address EU-wide coordination of employment matters. The authors’ admitting, “unemployment and labor policy today still remains to a large extent the responsibility of the individual Member States” (69) is a case in point. Thus, discourse at the EU-level is relevant only as a “dispositif idéal” (Godelier, 1984, cited in Straehle 1999:70) or general

political direction. While there has been increased cooperation among the member states, unemployment policy still needs to be legitimated at the national level and Straehle et al fail to address this.

“Struggle as a Metaphor...” also poses limitations on itself. Having discovered a pattern, the authors uniquely focused on finding discourse related to their metaphor, thereby limiting potential other findings. Working with obvious pattern is necessary in order to be able to analyze discourse at all; but the authors concede that not all of the rhetorical commonplaces they found fit the struggle-pattern. The authors also mention that some discourse includes metaphors such as sickness, fire or nature/ catastrophe; some of these may prove relevant in this study.

Not intending to discredit this work altogether, I want to use some of Straehle et al.’s findings and explore their use in German political discourse. It is probable, that some of the national discourse in Germany will allude to what has been said at the EU-level. The politicians may even use the discourse from speeches of EU commissioners and EU Presidency Conclusions as a scapegoat for national policy reforms. At the same time I plan to look beyond the struggle-metaphor and see what other kinds of metaphors might be employed in German political discourse on unemployment.

Peter Muntigl, Gilbert Weiss and Ruth Wodak’s book *European Discourses on Un/Employment* published in 2000 also studies discourse at the EU-level, and recontextualization in particular. The book analyzes the decision-making process as well as lines of argumentation at the European Council summit in Luxembourg in 1997 (also known as the Unemployment summit). The authors consider European integration

the primary factor influencing policy-making and political discourse at the national level, a claim that is debatable as much unemployment discourse is contingent upon social, political and cultural heritage of the nation-state.

Discourse uncovered by Muntigl et al is based on the rhetoric of globalization and competitiveness, which includes two main ideas. First, there is the deconstruction of the nation or welfare state as an impotent actor in light of new economic constraints. Second, unemployment is de-politicized and ideologized. This discourse could in the future allow EU officials to call for new supra-national bodies or policies to deal with unemployment.

Because of its focus on recontextualization, the nature of Muntigl et al's book is more network-analytical than discourse-analytical. The authors attempt to trace the transformation of information through the organizational system. I am less interested in the origins and the development of political discourse, but more concerned with the discourse itself and the legitimations it makes. As with Straehle et al, the rhetoric uncovered in this book will be useful because the discourse of flexibility and competitiveness in the EU will have some spillover into national discourse. However, I am certain that the German parliament and its local job agencies will have an additional unique discourse, as they have to legitimate unemployment policy to a unique set of colleagues, voters and constituents.

There are several publications discussing unemployment discourse in individual member states of the European Union. One example is Theo van Leeuwen's chapter on "Discourses of Unemployment in New Labour Britain," which was published in 1999 in *Challenges in a Changing World – Issues in Critical Discourse Analysis*,

edited by Ruth Wodak and Charles Ludwig. The study analyzes sections of Chancellor Gordon Brown's Budget Speech in 1998 and subsequent media coverage of this speech. The author found an elaborate system of taxonomies, i.e. division of the unemployed into at least eleven subgroups (e.g. long-term unemployed, single parents looking for work). Van Leeuwen points out that the discourse in the 1998 Budget Speech contains moralization and authority to propose and legitimate specific policies for each of the subgroups.

Increasingly, policies to alleviate unemployment in Germany are more similar to those in Great Britain. The UK uses the Anglo-Saxon model of a market economy; i.e. the market is much less government-regulated and there is a less generous welfare system than in Germany. Yet, as the advent of Agenda 2010 and the passing of Hartz IV show, these unemployment benefit and social welfare policies are changing even in old European welfare states, such as Germany. Therefore, the conclusions of van Leeuwen's work may apply to the German case because some of the discourse may be utilized in both countries.

A Finnish study was conducted by Pertti Vehkalahti and published as the article "To work, though it would be unprofitable. Critical discourse analysis on the publicity of "The Page of the Unemployed" in *Aamulehti*" in 2000. Vehkalahti's work concentrates on unemployment discourse in media texts, specifically *Aamulehti*, one of Finland's main newspapers that in 1993-95 dealt with unemployment from the points of view of the unemployed. The study shows that discourse in Finland places the unemployed in a victim's position, with policies and authorities presenting barriers to finding employment. Vehkalahti concludes that this discourse indirectly calls for

deregulation of the labor market.

In analyzing discourse from the point of view of the unemployed, Vehkalahti unwittingly conducts a more interpretive analysis. His study focuses on secondary sources, while I aim to analyze primary sources and focus on political discourse; hence this Finnish study cannot add much background information to my research.

Christian Albrekt Larsen's *Challenging the Hegemonic Discourse of Structural Unemployment* is based on a Danish panel study. Larsen studies the notion of "Eurosclerosis" and challenges the perception of structural unemployment by suggesting a business cycle/barrier perception instead. The working paper includes survey data of the Danish unemployed people to support this viewpoint. Larsen also concludes that there is serious discrepancy between the causes of long-term unemployment in the minds of policy-makers and the unemployed themselves. If little else, Larsen's paper provides an interesting alternative framework in which to place political discourse. It also identifies some rhetorical commonplaces that could prove to be a good starting point for the proposed study.

The only book found that at least in part studies German political unemployment discourse is Eva Kolinsky and Hildegard Maria Nickel's 2003 *Reinventing Gender: Women in Eastern Germany Since Unification*. Unfortunately, this book only contains one chapter on political discourse. The chapter analyzes several reports of the federal government on children, youth and family, as well as reports from political parties and *Länder*, that discuss the future of work. However, the chapter, like the remainder of the Kolinsky and Nickel's book, focuses on the gender gap in

unemployment. This is a very narrow channel through which to explore discourse, but the results can definitely add to this study.

The study that perhaps will influence my research the most is the 2002 “Discourses of Un/Employment in Europe: The Austrian Case” published by Ruth Wodak and Theo van Leeuwen. The authors conduct social actor analysis, legitimation and taxonomies on speeches by former Chancellor Klima and subsequent reports in the Austrian press. While appreciating the discourse work that has been done on the EU-level, Wodak and van Leeuwen point out that there are local differences in discourse as the EU suggestions have been reinterpreted by nation states.

The study shows, unlike the British discourse that is firmly rooted in economic legitimation, the Austrian discourse tends to focus on political and ideological legitimation. Klima’s speeches are more abstract than the British Chancellor’s; and Austrian newspaper coverage adds another level of abstraction, critique and legitimating points of view. By looking at internal as well as external discourse, the authors are able to pinpoint varying discourse to varying audiences.

Although Wodak and van Leeuwen’s study focuses on the issue of youth unemployment and policy in regards to apprenticeships and apprentice courses, it also offers invaluable rhetorical commonplaces, such as ‘right to work’, ‘self-reliance’ and ‘independence’ that could prove to be a good starting point for a German study. Additionally, I will attempt to emulate Wodak and van Leeuwen’s methodology as described in Chapter 3.

There is a rich body of literature covering every facet of unemployment. Some scholars place unemployment in a political or economic framework, many examine



it through a socio-psychological lens. Each of these studies, while pertinent in its own way, does not treat unemployment in the same empirical manner as a critical discourse analyst and therefore cannot answer my research question.

As this literature review has shown, there are definite gaps in the existing literature on unemployment discourse in European countries and at the European Union-level, not to mention countries outside of Europe. I am indebted to the existing critical discourse analyses on unemployment for offering a myriad of rhetorical commonplaces and taxonomies to look for. However, instead of specifically searching for gendered, youth-related or metaphoric discourse, this project will set out to include a broader range of unemployment issues. I will keep other scholars' findings in mind as I analyze German political discourse for rhetorical commonplaces and related legitimating of unemployment policy.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGICAL PLAN

In order to answer the research questions ‘What kinds of rhetorical commonplaces are being deployed in the policy development process regarding unemployment in Germany?’ and ‘How are those policies legitimated?’ I analyzed both internal and external political discourse on unemployment in Germany in a rigorous and scientific manner. I studied diverse materials of two types of political discourse: (1) transcripts of relevant sessions of the German parliament (*Bundestag*), which represents internal discourse among politicians, and (2) official brochures, communication and forms from a local *Agentur für Arbeit* [job agency], which represents external discourse to the unemployed.

#### Methods of Analysis

Political debates and official communication regarding new policy inherently contain a certain amount of legitimation. The mechanism for analysis of the legitimation struggle in parliamentary debates is borrowed in large part from P.T. Jackson’s article “Making Sense of Making Sense: Configurational Analysis and The Double Hermeneutic.” Jackson suggests a configurational approach to the analysis of social action in order to “preserve agency at the level of methodology and empirical

practice” (Jackson forthcoming). In other words, a critical study of political discourse needs to remain closely connected to the data so that the analysis will be empirical rather than conceptual.

At the center of Jackson’s research on postwar German reconstruction is the legitimation struggle of political figures. Politicians, then as now, have to “provide publicly acceptable justification for their preferred courses of action” (Ibid). This is central to my study as well. In order to legitimate the proposed unemployment legislation, *Bundestag* members and local job agencies need to deploy rhetorical commonplaces in a way that will describe other course of action of useless. Further, the legitimation struggle can have a significant “causal impact on social and political outcomes” (Jackson forthcoming).

Jackson proposes three steps to uncover legitimation struggle. The first step is the delineation of cultural resources, including patterns of rhetorical commonplaces used by the speakers/writers of discourse, through “textual ethnography”. Jackson suggests disciplined reading and recording of “field notes” similar to participant observation studies. This ensures that the conclusions are based on empirical data.

To be sure, one cannot approach any document in a totally unbiased manner, particularly after having prepared a proposal for a study and having surveyed the existing literature in the field. However, theoretical frameworks and initial guesses do not detract from the validity of the analysis, because the actual data may well shape one’s views of the rhetorical commonplaces and legitimation. It is important to keep in mind that a merely quantitative analysis of the discourse (i.e. counting the frequency of commonplaces; cf. Straehle et al) is not at all helpful in establishing the importance or the

line of argument of a particular symbol or theme. Another issue to bear in mind is the possibility that the same rhetorical commonplaces could develop in the discourse at opposite ends of the political spectrum (Jackson forthcoming).

The second step of Jackson's approach contains detailing of the specific history of those commonplaces through genealogical analysis. Perhaps the most challenging aspect of discourse analysis, this step requires tracing the use, misuse or abuse of a concept in the past to discover the historical connections on which speakers/writers drew in their discourse (Jackson forthcoming). Undoubtedly, numerous sources have influenced the discourse in the *Bundestag*, such as lobby groups, labor unions or perhaps the European Union institutions debating unemployment. However, the genealogical component of this study will remain secondary. While the evolution of discourse and rhetorical commonplaces is important, this study will only briefly acknowledge their history and instead focus on the implementation of the discovered commonplaces.

The third step requires tracing the use of the rhetorical commonplaces found. This again can be achieved through textual ethnography. Jackson suggests several conventional tactics as a starting point for this analysis, such as the use of specification (precisely defining a commonplace and its implications), which produces certain bargaining tactics. Politicians can threaten that the opposing party would be responsible for a worse outcome; or they can broker an alliance for the greater good of "Germankind." In essence, the deployment mechanism of rhetorical commonplaces is not happenstance; mechanisms are deliberately used in combination and sequence to achieve a certain outcome (Jackson forthcoming).

As a starting point for the categorization of rhetorical commonplaces, this study uses Ruth Wodak and Theo van Leeuwen principal methods of analysis in “Discourses of Un/Employment in Europe: The Austrian Case.” To identify key themes and show the specific local accents that unemployment discourse acquires in national context, Wodak and van Leeuwen use three principal methods: social actor analysis, legitimation and taxonomies.

First, social actor analysis focuses on the ways in which social actors are portrayed in political discourse. Firstly, social actors can be eliminated (e.g. killed). Secondly, they can be referred to in a personalized or impersonalized manner. Wodak and van Leeuwen point out that “[t]he choice between such alternatives almost invariably plays a highly significant role in the ideological construction of political discourse” (350). As this study focuses on the manner in which ‘the unemployed’ are referred to, social actor analysis will be a useful method.

Second, Wodak and van Leeuwen categorize legitimation in four different ways: authorization, rationalization, moralization and mythopoiesis. Authorization is legitimation by appeal to authorities, such as ‘expert opinion’, ‘tradition’, or ‘consensus’. In the case of rationalization, legitimation is achieved by appeal to theories or wise ideas. Moralization, on the other hand, legitimates by referring to societal values. Lastly, mythopoiesis is legitimation through the telling of cautionary stories or moral exemplars (Wodak and van Leeuwen 2002: 350). Legitimation will be another focal point of this study; hence these categories, *while perhaps not exhaustive*, offer important insights into the potential depictions of legitimation.

Third, taxonomies are the different interpretations of social actors/actions

in different sources. Taxonomies come about by the creation of several specific categories within a broad category of social actors. The example Wodak and van Leeuwen cite is that of the 'long-term unemployed' in Great Britain. In Chancellor Gordon Brown's Budget Speech in 1998, the long-term unemployed are placed into no less than eleven separate categories, such as 'those on long-term benefits' or 'men and women who have been unemployed for two years or more'. Taxonomies are likely to appear in the German discourse on unemployment as well.

It is probable that some of the concepts discovered using Jackson's techniques will not fit the neat categories of Wodak and van Leeuwen, in which case I may have to add categories of my own. Again, I will be using the Austrian study as a preliminary framework, similar to an initial guess, keeping in mind that my findings may differ from Wodak and van Leeuwen's and that their categories may not be exhaustive.

#### Gathering of Sources

The first type of discourse studied in this project is the internal political debate within the German *Bundestag*. These debates are critical for this study for two reasons: (1) They contain the discourse leading up to policy construction (including any commonplaces that may have influenced discourse from outside the *Bundestag*) and (2) They broadly center discourse to the task at hand (i.e. creating/amending German unemployment policies).

There were five different types of *Bundestag* sessions I found to be most useful for analysis. First, I gathered all debates that included readings of the Hartz-laws or the oppositions' counter suggestions for labor market reform. All of these debates are

from “typical” Bundestag sessions. I chose altogether four meetings that contain first readings and three meetings that contain second and third readings of a bill.

Second, I included two of Chancellor Schröder’s *Regierungserklärungen* [similar to US State of the Union address]. The Chancellor used one of those speeches to introduce Agenda 2010, and I assumed that much of the governing parties’ discourse might stem from his speech. For a third type of debate, I selected three “*Vereinbarte Debatten*” [predetermined debates]. Two of these debates focused on the economy and labor market, the other specifically discusses Hartz IV.

Fourth, I chose to include the debate from September 12, 2002, which is in essence a pre-election-debate. However, much of the speeches in this meeting include references to unemployment. A fifth type of Bundestag deliberation is the “*Aktuelle Stunde*” [Current Hour]. The parties can call for these debates to discuss pertinent “hot topics”. The two *Aktuelle Stunden* I chose to analyze centered on “reports of the highest April-unemployment since reunification, practicality of the Hartz concept...” and “immediate begin of structural reforms of the labor market...due to...dramatic unemployment numbers and violation of European Stability and Growth Pact.”

In total, I analyzed fifteen debates of the *Bundestag* within a span of two years (September 12, 2002 to July 2, 2004). Transcripts of all of these sessions and speeches of the German parliament can be found full-text online at <<http://www.bundestag.de/bic/plenarprotokolle/pp/index.html>>. After gathering the pertinent debates, the goal was to find rhetorical commonplaces and themes within the discourse, as further explained below.

The second type of discourse I studied was external political

communication at the local level. This was uncovered through study of *Agentur für Arbeit* (for in-depth discussion of these agencies cf. Chapter 6) communication or pamphlets. The idea behind this part of the study is to explore how the federal policies are legitimated, at the local level. A local assistant gathered these sources for me; he is unemployed and therefore has received official communication regarding Hartz IV from the *Agentur für Arbeit Stadtroda* on a regular basis. He also collected brochures and pamphlets that are displayed and/or available at the local job agency and subsequently mailed all the materials to me.

There are three different types of materials I analyzed for this part of the study. First, I looked at two letters from the local *Agentur für Arbeit Stadtroda* that explain changes in legislation to its unemployed clients. Second, I studied a 20-page form the unemployed must fill out to request welfare under the new legislation, as well as subsidies for heating and living expenses. Third, I looked at four brochures produced by the *Bundesagentur für Arbeit* to be displayed in local agencies to explain new legislation to the unemployed.

In sum, these diverse sources allowed me to address potential dichotomies between the internal discourse of the German Parliament (among parties) and the external discourse to the unemployed constituents (addressing potential voters). By using transcripts of relevant sessions of the German parliament (*Bundestag*) as well as official brochures and communication from a local job agency, I was able to cover a wide spectrum of official political discourse.



## CHAPTER 4

### ECONOMIC HISTORY AND POLITICAL FRAMEWORK

For any critical discourse analysis it is necessary to place speeches, debates and written communication in their proper economic and political context. This chapter will do just that. The same commonplaces used in different countries, before different audiences and at different times in history may have differing outcomes (Jackson forthcoming). The same symbols and themes can legitimate some legislation by one political party in one year and fail to legitimate legislation by another party in the next year. As Wodak and van Leeuwen show, similar discourse “caused Blair to win” and “Klima’s loss” (366). National accents require distinct discourse to implement the same policies. Austria’s Haider was able to do so successfully, where Klima failed (Wodak and van Leeuwen 2002).

To be sure, the discourse uncovered in this study was sufficient to legitimate passing of the Hartz laws in 2002 to 2004; however, it may not lend itself to extrapolation to other times in Germany’s history or future. The purpose of this chapter is to provide background information that will place the political discourse on unemployment in its appropriate framework. The chapter is divided into two sections. The first section will describe Germany’s economic development since the end of World War II as well as the general socio-economic philosophy. Section 2 will briefly illustrate

the German political system and its legislative process.

### Economic History

Beginning in 1948, German economic policy was guided by the concept of the social market economy. The system was developed and in large part implemented by Ludwig Erhard, who had a substantial economic background and who eventually became Chancellor in 1963. The central goal of the social market economy is to combine the market mechanism with certain social responsibilities. In essence, the task of the government is to provide the framework for competition while at the same time providing support for those members of society who cannot participate in the market economy (Peacock 1989, Soziale 2005).

Like many countries in Europe, the German economy was severely hurt after World War II. Experts contend, however, that Germany's industry had not been obliterated as much as one might think. There was an enormous loss of lives and living space, but the industrial locales had been widely spared (Kindleberger, Wolf 1993). The country was divided into two parts in 1945: the Western part turned capitalist under the guidance of the US, Great Britain and France; the Eastern part became communist following the lead of the former Soviet Union. Despite substantial losses in the world war, beginning in 1948, economic reconstruction in West Germany led to the so-called *Wirtschaftswunder* (economic miracle).

Fortunately, Germany had access to the three factors necessary for production: resources, labor and capital. The most important natural resource at the time was coal, and Germany had substantial deposits in the Ruhr area. Further, war refugees,

former soldiers and three million political refugees from East Germany in 1961 constituted the bulk of the eager to work labor force. Additional needs were filled with guest worker programs. The necessary capital to jump-start the economy was provided by \$1.5 billion of the Marshall Plan. Most importantly, perhaps, industrial profits were only partially used for consumption. Most of the money was reinvested into the economy. Bridges, the rail system and power plants were repaired. And as demand was high in these low-supply years, Germany saw and seized opportunities for exports. In fact, the country emerged as a leader in export, productivity and product quality. The country's reputation in the mechanical engineering sector is still alive today.

The *Wirtschaftswunder* was characterized by the dream goals of the social market economy: full employment, price stability, foreign reserves and economic growth. Erhard's program included limited flexibility for employers, protection of small businesses, removal of monopolies and trusts as well as payments to the victims of the war. Until the early 1970s, West Germany experienced steady economic growth, which began to decline only during the recession of the early 1980s (Peacock 1989, *Wirtschaftswunder* 1998). It is this successful history of the social market economy and the yearning for perhaps a second economic miracle that is reflected in debates regarding labor market reforms beginning in 2001.

After reunification in 1989, the Western German *Länder* were faced with having to undertake the transition economy of the new *Länder*. Formerly communist East Germany had much to learn in areas of free market economy, privatization and competition. Due to financial help from the German government (that led to increasing budget deficits) and an extensive economic restructuring process, the East German

*Länder* are today equipped with improved infrastructure, a market economy and increased living standards. Yet, the equalization process between East and West has taken a significant amount of time and is far from complete. In the East, economic growth and productivity are lower, while unemployment in many places is more than twice as high as in the West. Transfer payments from the government are \$65 billion per year, more than four percent of GDP (Peacock 1989).

Today, the German government contends that the country is probably in the deepest post-war economic crisis. Economic growth in 2003 was  $-0.1$  percent, the lowest in ten years. The economy has therefore stagnated for three consecutive years. After the implementation of Hartz IV, unemployment has been redefined to include those long-term unemployed who were not registered in the past. While this definition differs from ILO standards, the German government finds it more transparent and more useful for a targeted labor market policy (Destatis.de 2005, SPD 2005).

According to the new statistic that allows for the “Hartz-IV effect”, 5.04 million people were unemployed in January of 2005 (Destatis.de 2005, SPD 2005). However, some of the government projects are “employing” people for 6 months through so-called “structural adjustment measures” [*Strukturanpassungsmassnahmen*] or “work creation measures” [*Arbeitsbeschaffungsmassnahmen*]. In addition, the statistic does not include early retirees, i.e. people who retire early because pensions are more profitable than ALG II. Thus, many experts believe that the true unemployment number is closer to seven or eight million (CDU/CSU 2005).

What accounts for this lack of economic growth and these staggering unemployment figures? Most experts blame internal structural factors. Over the past

fifty years, the social market economy has given rise to an inflexible labor market. Bureaucratic restrictions, such as strict firing laws, strict work hours and high employer contribution to the social safety net, present a disincentive for existing companies wishing to expand, and an even greater hindrance for new companies to start up (Peacock 1989). Additionally, Germany's well-established system of labor unions has the right to negotiate wage-minima for its members. In other words, the labor unions have the legal right to negotiate a minimum income with employers for employees that are union member nationwide. For some multinational companies, this may have been a disincentive to relocate production to Germany.

A second issue hurting the German economy is the changing age structure. Birth rates have been low, leading to ever more old citizens having to be socially supported by fewer young. A third concern is that globalization is exerting pressure for companies to move to cheap-labor countries (which Germany is certainly not). In turn, the secondary sector in Germany has shrunk, leading to a larger illicit economy and an even greater burden on the social safety system (Peacock 1989). While none of these factors alone can account for all of Germany's unemployment, all of them working together are hurting the economy today and in the long run.

At this point it is important to note that structural limitations do not provide the policy makers with a perfect solution to mass unemployment. The crisis only provides the government with an incentive to alter policy. To be sure, structural constraints are relevant in the decision-making process, but they "do not come with an instruction sheet" (Blyth 2003, 699). This is where discourse analysis derives much of its authority: structures and economic theories do not determine political outcomes alone,

but political actors, their ideologies and ideas contribute their share as well.

In addition to Germany's structural problems, the country now also faces supra-national restrictions of the European Union. To ensure a price stability, Germany demanded the implementation of the Stability and Growth Pact before the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) began. The objective of the Pact was to prevent excessive budget deficits in the member states of the EMU. The Pact is based on multilateral surveillance and the excessive deficit procedure, which is activated when a member state exceeds a public deficit of 3% of gross domestic product (GDP). The European Council, based on recommendations of the European Commission, may then levy fines to the transgressing member state (Stability 2003). (Kindleberger, Wolf 1993)

Yet the Stability and Growth Pact turned out to hurt Germany in the long run. The 3%-deficit limit leaves Germany, and the other EU member states, with less flexibility in fiscal policy to deal with high unemployment rates. However, the table below shows, that the government has nonetheless surpassed the reference value for national budget deficit for three consecutive years starting in 2002 (Stability 2003).

Table 4.1  
Germany's Budget Deficit

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Budget Deficit	1.5	1.4	2.8	3.6	4.2	3.9

Source: <http://europa.eu.int/scadplus/leg/en/lvb/l25057.htm>

In fact, the European Council made recommendations to Germany in 2002, after the budget deficit and the public debt exceeding their reference values (60% for public debt). The Stability and Growth Pact requires Germany to comply with the Council's recommendations. However, in the past, the German government has cited

extraordinary circumstances for the transgression, for example, excessive flooding in the Southern part of the country in 2002, as well as mass unemployment, and the Pact has been amended to allow excessive deficits in these situations (Stability 2003). Discourse in the Bundestag may show that the Hartz reforms were in part legitimated by EU fiscal criteria.

In sum, the German economy has witnessed a structural crisis for the past ten years. The German government saw a need for labor market reform in part because of the staggering unemployment figures. The situation can be explained by several factors, such as an inflexible labor market due to welfare-oriented labor market policies; the changing age structure; increased global competition as well as EU criteria. Additionally, Germany still has to support of the East German transition economy. It comes as no surprise, then, that the German government wants to implement some kind of reforms to stimulate the economy.

### Legislative Process

To better understand the policy-making process, this section provides a succinct description of the German party and legislative system. Similar to the United States, the governance of the German Democratic Republic is divided into three branches: executive, legislative and judicial. The *Bundestag* is the primary site of the legislative process. This first house has currently 603 elected members. The Bundestag is composed of *Fraktionen* (factions) of national parties, each of which has to gain five percent of the vote (or three direct mandates) in order to earn seats in the *Bundestag*. To guarantee a simple majority, it is typical for the governing party to align with another

faction. Similarly, to have more votes for its own legislative proposals, the opposing parties often align as well (Parlamentsdeutsch 2004).

Historically, coalitions have been made between the social democrats (SPD, currently 251 seats) and Bündniss 90/Die Grünen (currently 55) on the left and between the Christian democrats (CDU/CSU, currently 248 seats) and the liberals (FDP, currently 47) on the right end of the political spectrum. Intentionally, the parties are also seated on the right or left side of the plenary chamber according to their political philosophy. Currently, two *Bundestag* members do not belong to a *Fraktion* as they have gained seats in the parliament through direct mandates. These two women are members of the communist party (PDS). Because their party did not gain five percent of the seats, the women cannot initiate legislation, but they have the right to be heard (Parlamentsdeutsch 2004).

Also seated in the plenary chamber is the federal government, consisting of the Chancellor and the by him appointed *Bundesminister* (secretaries). The Chancellor is the chief executive officer and also determines the guidelines of policy within which the ministers lead their subject area independently. The federal government has the right to be heard during plenary sessions as well as the right to initiate legislation. Another group observing at *Bundestag* meetings is the *Bundesrat*, the second house, which consists of members of the *Länder* governments. Like the federal government, the 69 members of the *Bundesrat* also have the right to be heard and initiate legislation (Parlamentsdeutsch 2004).

There is another set of groups that participates in the legislative process: the *Ausschüsse* [committees]. In any given year there can be ten to forty of these



committees; in the period analyzed here there were 23. The *Bundestag* creates these committees as mirror images to the federal departments. Thus, they are organized according to subject area, for example, the sport committee, the finance committee or defense committee. These committees are comprised of fifteen to 45 members of the *Bundestag* factions; but here as well, the federal government and *Bundesrat* have the right to be heard. The committees do approximately 90 percent of the actual legislative work, such as preparation of decisions, internal debate of the proposal or perhaps even drafting of amendments. The committee that is of central interest to this study is the Committee for Economy and Labor. It has 42 members and is responsible for proposed legislation in areas such as industry, technology and innovation policy, services or the European economic policy. We will meet some of the committee members in the next chapter (Ausschüsse 2003, Deutsche Bundestag 2004).

There are several types of sessions that the *Bundestag* convenes in the plenary chamber, all of which contribute to the law-making process. First is the *Fragestunde* [question and answer session] in which each member of the *Bundestag* can pose two questions to the federal government. Second is the *Aktuelle Stunde* ['Hot topics' session] that can be requested by a faction, often in connection to a *Fragestunde*, to debate further a certain topic. Third is the actual plenary session, in which legislation is proposed, debated and voted on (Gremien 2003).

The *Bundestag* is site for several of the steps a proposal has to take before it can become a law. First, a proposal has to be initiated by either the federal government, *Bundesrat* or a faction of the *Bundestag*. It is then introduced and debated at its first reading. Subsequently the proposal will be discussed in the relevant

*Ausschüsse*. The conclusion and report of these committees will then be provided to *Bundestag* members before the second reading. The second and third readings are usually scheduled for the same plenary session. Here, the proposal is again debated and then voted on. If the law is passed, it is sent to the *Bundesrat*, where it will be debated. Eventually, if the law is passed in the *Bundesrat* it will go on for signing to the federal government and finally be announced by the President, who is in essence a representational figurehead (Gesetzgebung 2003).

As this section has shown, the *Bundestag* and its members are an integral part of the legislative process in Germany. Even if the federal government or *Bundesrat* proposed a law, it still has to be debated in plenary session by *Bundestag* members three times and at least once in relevant committees. Therefore, political discourse related to unemployment policy in Germany, regardless of how this discourse was formed, is the most intricate and most developed in *Bundestag* meetings, which makes these plenary sessions the opportune site for analysis.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCOURSE IN THE BUNDESTAG

At the second and third reading of Hartz III and IV, Johannes Singhammer (CDU/CSU) argued, “one cannot fight the cancer of unemployment with chamomile tea. [The SPD and Bündnis 90/Die Grünen] no longer have the strength to prescribe the effective medicine necessary for the healing process of the labor market.” Metaphors relating to disease are threaded throughout Bundestag debates. This chapter will show that while political discourse on unemployment in Germany is in part influenced by discourse in neighboring countries and at the EU-level, there is also a distinct set of commonplaces different from any previous scholarly findings. The chapter will begin by describing the discourse development process and the major actors involved therein. What follows is an empirical analysis of the discourse on unemployment in the German Bundestag.

#### Discourse Development

Discourse is not developed in a vacuum. We do not wake up in the morning with the same rigid set of words and semantics with which we go to bed at night. Instead, how we think about certain issues is influenced by conversations with friends, families and strangers, as well as what we read or see in the media. In much the same way, Bundestag members do not invent their discourse on unemployment independently.

There is no one set way to think and talk about unemployment. On one hand, politicians base discourse on the political and economic history of their country. On the other hand, the way Bundestag members think and argue about unemployment is determined by their day-to-day interactions.

First, members of the Bundestag are simultaneously members of a political party. Legally, parliamentarians cannot be forced to follow the opinions of their factions, especially concerning votes for proposed legislation (Deutsche Bundestag 2004). Nonetheless, politicians more often than not have a political philosophy or ideology that is based on the fundamental beliefs of their respective parties. For instance, a member of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) is unlikely to call for communist-style reforms.

Second, Bundestag members are elected officials. Thus it is probable that discourse reflects the interests and opinions of their constituents, the citizens (Deutsche Bundestag 2004). It is likely that a politician who lives in an area with high unemployment and whose family members are out of work thinks differently about necessary reforms than someone who comes from a region that is largely unaffected by the stagnant economy.

A third level of influence takes place in the hallways, offices and meeting rooms of the Reichstag in Berlin. On a daily basis, Bundestag members converse with experts and groups of visitors. Members have contacts with federal Departments and national organizations. Most labor unions, churches and other organizations have offices in Berlin that allow them to have connections to the parliament. There is a lively lobby and discussion of political issues in the Bundestag neighborhood. This allows Bundestag

members to hear diverse opinions in a short period of time and to make their independent decisions based on a wider argumentative basis. The parliamentarians also spend a great deal of time working on committees and meeting with their respective factions. Most of the internal work of the factions takes place in so-called working groups or working circles. These groups are created to reflect the *Ausschüsse*. Often, experienced Bundestag members lead these groups and they also serve as speakers on their areas of expertise in plenary sessions. While communication with experts and interest groups and internal committee work occurs outside the public view, these activities comprise a vast part of the parliamentary decision process (Deutsche Bundestag 2004).

#### Major Actors

As discussed above, many different parties and views shape the political discourse on unemployment. The actual discourse that is presented at Bundestag sessions has additionally been filtered through the political philosophy of the respective party. These ideologies are briefly presented in this section. Further, not all members of the Bundestag can give a speech on any topic they wish: their party has to 'nominate' them to the agenda of a plenary session. Those that are privileged to represent their party's views in the Bundestag were selected based on educational, political and social background, and perhaps based on their popularity and ability to convey an issue effectively. Before analyzing the data, here is a brief mention of those selected to speak on unemployment and labor market reforms.

The governing party since 1998 has been the SPD. Its members, the social democrats, stand for a society with decent work for all, in which income is justly

distributed, and social safety net remains reliable. The SPD was created out of the working class movement that demanded a new economic and social order, rather than repairs to the capitalist system, although the party has embraced capitalism since 1959. Basic values of democratic socialism include freedom, justice and solidarity. The executive leader of the current federal government is Chancellor Gerhard Schröder. Beginning in 1994, Schröder's political agenda focused on social justice and modernizing the economy. He has been the *Kanzler der Mitte* [Chancellor of the Middle] since 1998 (SPD 2005).

Schröder's leading man in the labor-sector is Wolfgang Clement, Secretary of Economy and Labor. Other recurring SPD members that are pertinent in a discussion on unemployment and labor are Doris Barnett, Karin Roth and Klaus Brandner. All three are members of the Committee on Economy and Labor. Since October 2002, Brandner has also been the speaker of the SPD's Working Group on Economy and Labor (SPD 2005).

The coalition party of the SPD is Bündnis 90/Die Grünen. This party is a coalition in itself; it is also a young and somewhat unusual party that is certainly unique to Germany. Bündnis 90/Die Grünen consists of the environmental party (Die Grünen) founded in 1980 and the civil rights movement of the former German Democratic Republic (Bündnis 90 [Alliance 90]). The party members share a commitment to the environment, peace and women's rights. In fact, the Bündnis 90/Die Grünen are the first German political party to have a quota on female officers and Bundestag members (at least half of all offices and Bundestag seats goes to women) (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen 2005).

There are three recurring members of the Bündnis 90/Die Grünen that stand out in the Hartz debates: Fritz Kuhn, Katrin Göring-Eckardt and Dr. Thea Dückert. Kuhn is the chairman of the nation-wide party and founding member. Göring-Eckardt is the chairwoman of the Bundestag faction and also a founding member. Dr. Dückert is the Deputy Chief of the faction, speaker on labor market policy and since 1999 also political coordinator of the Bündnis 90/Die Grünen's largest Working Circle, AK1, which is responsible for Labor, the Economy, Social Issues and Finance (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen 2005).

The strongest opposition party is the CDU/CSU. Its Christian Democratic members refer to their policy ideals as centralist, but the party has traditionally leaned toward the right end of the political spectrum. Basic tenets of the CDU/CSU are the peoples' responsibility before God and the resulting values of freedom, solidarity and justice. Chairman of the faction is Dr. Angela Merkel. Other members of the CDU that are important for this discourse analysis are Friedrich Merz, Johannes Singhammer, Dagmar Wöhrl, Karl-Josef Laumann and Robert Hochbaum. Merz was chairman of the faction from 2000 to 2002 and deputy Chairman from 2002-2004. Singhammer, Hochbaum, Wöhrl and Laumann are all members of the Committee on Economy and Labor. Singhammer is also Chairman and speaker of the Bavarian Working Group on Economy and Labor, Tourism and Research. Wöhrl has been speaker on economic policy issues of the CDU/CSU faction since 2002. Laumann has been Chairman of the faction's Working Group on the Economy and Labor since March 2000 (CDU/CSU 2005).

The coalition partner with the CDU/CSU is the Free Democratic Party (FDP). Its members, the liberals, focus on strengthening freedom and the responsibilities of the individual. Deputy chairman of the FDP Bundestag faction is Rainer Brüderle. He was federal Secretary of Economy and Transportation in 1987, a post he held until 1998. He is currently a member of the Committee on Economy and Labor as well as the faction's speaker on economic policy issues. Dirk Niebel has been the faction's speaker on labor market policy issues since 1998 and is also a member of the Committee on Economy and Labor. Dr. Heinrich L. Kolb is chairman of the faction's Working Circle III (social policy). He was undersecretary to the Secretary of Economy from 1992 to 1998. Today, he is the faction's speaker on social policy issues (FDP 2005).

#### The Data: First Cut

Several things looked familiar during a first reading of the Bundestag debates related to unemployment. First, after reading critical analyses of discourse at the EU-Level, the commonplace *Kampf* [fight] stands out immediately, even in Bundestag debates. Speakers of all parties use the phrase *Bekämpfung der Arbeitslosigkeit* [fighting unemployment]. A variant of this phrase is *Kampf gegen die Arbeitslosigkeit* [the fight against unemployment]. In general, the audience gets the idea that unemployment is something undesirable; something the government may bear responsibility for and is determined to do something *against*. Federal Secretary of Economy and Labor Clement as well as Dr. Dücker (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen) use the idiom "*der Arbeitslosigkeit zu Leibe rücken*" [attack/have a go at unemployment]. This phrase personifies unemployment, but it also implies that the speakers are not afraid of it and are ready to



fight it. As demonstrated below, Klaus Brandner is the only Bundestag member to make extensive use of the struggle/fight-metaphor.

Example 1: Klaus Brandner (SPD):

It is completely clear that fighting unemployment is indeed the most important goal of society and polity.

...

Together, we should work on dismantling unemployment, instead of having to listen to your empty rhetoric on a regular basis.

...

With Agenda 2010 we have introduced the necessary steps. Part of it is an active social system, the concept “promote and encourage” as a general principle, the implementation of structural reforms that organize efficient social systems, even small cuts that are necessary because of demographic reasons. We are facing this responsibility. We are doing everything to surmount the growth and trust crisis. But you [coalition] are apparently trying everything to create the trust crisis. You are not helping any of the unemployed in this country. You should make yourselves aware of that.

This excerpt of Brandner’s speech on May 8, 2003 contains good examples of commonplaces relating to fight. Brandner is responding to the opposing coalition’s claims that the government’s reforms are not working. He insists that fighting unemployment is the primary goal of the federal government. In fact, many politicians use the verb “*abbauen*” to describe the process of fighting unemployment. *Abbauen* [dismantle], as opposed to *reduzieren* [reduce], is a more physical approach to the problem. Unemployment is thus presented as an object that causes problems and needs hands-on work to destroy. Brandner speaks of the need to ‘surmount’ the crisis. As a result, there is a vivid image that unemployment is a crisis that will not go away on its own. Instead, Germany’s society has to overcome it.

In the excerpt of his speech, Brandner clearly defines unemployment as a problem, a societal and political crisis that needs to be fought. This specification allows him to then bargain with members of the opposing coalition parties CDU/CSU and FDP.

In fact, Brandner blames the coalition for creating a worse outcome by saying they are not helping the unemployed. Brandner implies that the opposing coalition should help implement the government's reforms. As we will see later in the chapter, Brandner's tactics are unlike other SPD members'. He threatens the members of the opposing parties; other government officials, especially Clement and Schröder, encourage the brokering of alliances.

Continuing the analysis with the opposition's discourse, we find that speakers of the opposing coalition use derivations of the struggle/fight-metaphor in an effort to discredit the governing parties. For example, speakers of the opposing parties concede that the government may have developed a 'weapon' in the fight against unemployment, but the opposition does not think this weapon is very effective. The opposing coalition's discourse contains several plays on word, as is exemplified in the following excerpts.

Example 2: Vera Lengsfeld (CDU/CSU):

Das als Wunderwaffe angepriesene Hartz-Konzept entpuppt sich besonders in den neuen Ländern als Rohrkrepiere.

[The Hartz-concept was extolled as a miracle weapon, but turned out to be a backfire especially in the new *Länder*.]

Example 3: Rainer Brüderle (FDP):

Jedes Element des Hartz-Konzeptes wird als Wunderwaffe verkauft, aber dann wird doch nichts umgesetzt.

(Dirk Niebel (FDP): Hartzler Käse!)

[Brüderle: Every element of the Hartz-concept is sold as a miracle weapon, but yet nothing is implemented.

(Niebel: Hartz cheese!)]

The strategy utilized by the coalition could be described as derision for the government's actions. Lengsfeld and Brüderle refer to government-proposed legislation

as 'miracle weapon', Lengsfeld goes so far as to say 'it turned out to be a backfire.' Niebel compares the Hartz-concept to the extremely smelly Hartz cheese. This play on words with Hartz is also an idiom meaning 'tough luck'. The deployment of this mockery is an attempt to discredit the governing party's skill and expertise in developing effective unemployment policy reforms. In essence, the Bundestag should not vote to approve this legislation, because it will turn out to be ineffective, despite the promises made by the government.

At this point, it is interesting to note that Brüderle's attempt to mock the government's unemployment reform proposals is made during the First Reading of the Hartz III and IV proposals; we do not find it in the later readings. It seems the FDP politician uses the derogatory discourse to stimulate discussion in the Bundestag before the legislative proposals are passed on to the *Ausschüsse* for further debate and amendments. In essence, Brüderle and Lengsfeld urge their colleagues to truly contemplate the laws based on the Hartz-concept and their implementation before voting on Hartz III and IV.

Despite of the examples above, in the fifteen debates analyzed as a whole, political discourse relating to the struggle/fight-metaphor are few and far between. Even more importantly, the metaphor is not very intricately developed. Unlike unemployment discourse at the EU-level, in German political discourse references to struggle are not widespread. We can find traces of the metaphor, but other, particular German accents can be found as well. There is certainly an effort to avoid any rhetoric related to war, especially after World War II.

### Taxonomy

The majority of commonplaces relating to unemployment discovered during this critical discourse analysis can be categorized into a taxonomy. Members of all parties use no fewer than eighteen different ways to describe the various unemployed persons in the German economy. These categories matter especially when it comes to legitimating policies. Figure 5.1 lists the most prominent terms politicians use to categorize unemployed persons. To be sure, there is considerable overlap of some of the categories, for instance, some of the elderly are women who live in East Germany. The list is ordered so that similar categories are adjacent.

Figure 5.1  
Internal Taxonomy of the Unemployed in Germany

- |     |  |
|-----|--|
| 1.  | Ältere [elderly]   |
| 2.  | Langzeitarbeitslosen [long-term unemployed]  |
| 3.  | alleinstehende Arbeitslose [single unemployed]   |
| 4.  | ledige, jüngere Menschen [unmarried younger people]  |
| 5.  | arbeitsfähige Sozialhilfeempfänger [welfare recipients able to work]   |
| 6.  | junge Menschen [young people]  |
| 7.  | junge und gut qualifizierte Menschen [young and well-qualified people]   |
| 8.  | arbeitslose junge Menschen ohne Ausbildung [unemployed young people without training]  |
| 9.  | Geringqualifizierte [lesser qualified]   |
| 10. | Menschen, die Arbeitslosenhilfe oder Sozialhilfe erhalten ohne Berufsausbildung [people who receive unemployment benefits or welfare without apprenticeship] |
| 11. | arbeitsuchende Menschen [job-seeking people]   |
| 12. | erwerbsfähige Menschen, die Arbeit suchen und die arbeiten wollen [people that are able to work, who are looking for work and want to work]                  |
| 13. | erwerbsfähige Arbeitslose [unemployed able to work]  |
| 14. | Frauen [women]   |
| 15. | Ostdeutsche [people in East-Germany]   |
| 16. | Schwerbehinderte [extremely disabled people]   |
| 17. | Menschen die zumutbare Arbeit ablehnen [people who reject acceptable jobs]   |
| 18. | andere Arbeitslosen und Arbeitssuchenden [other unemployed and job-seeking]  |

Taxonomies are especially prevalent in speeches by the Federal Secretary of Economy and Labor Clement and by Chancellor Schröder. Both men bear the main responsibility in proposing, explaining and legitimating the new legislation. Certainly, other party members do their part to adopt the suggested discourse of the leading men, and in their own way present it to the Bundestag. However, if policy fails, the ultimate responsibility will be on the political leaders. Clement and Schröder use the taxonomies in a nonchalant manner. Instead of referring to all the unemployed persons as “*Arbeitslose*”, the men point out the minute differences between each category. Again and again, they speak of *Menschen* [people, humans] and *Schicksale* [human tragedies]. There is a definite effort to humanize the statistics. The following excerpts of two speeches, one by Clement and one by Schröder, show clear examples of the use of taxonomies when attempting to legitimate Hartz-legislation.

#### Example 4: Wolfgang Clement

Further, we want to move away from the inflexible system of the Labor Administration and move towards client-driven actions.

...

Beyond that, the unemployed have to be called to duty. We have to push people who are afflicted by unemployment to take the initiative. That is why, in this proposal, we demand a greater willingness to mobility, which we will fund. Mobility is expected especially when the marital situation allows for a change of location beyond commuting. This is especially true for single, younger people, of whom this can be demanded.

...

Oftentimes, it is about equalizing deficits in job training, finishing one’s trade or learning new qualifications when a formerly learned trade is no longer useful. That is why this is also about the funding of vocational development of the unemployed.

...

With that, I am arriving at another challenge we face, and that is the group of older workers, that once afflicted by unemployment, has special problems.

Clement includes three broad groups in his speech: the unmarried, unqualified and the older unemployed persons. He targets each group specifically and

shows how the proposed legislation would benefit each one. First, Clement suggests that by 'pushing' the single and young unemployed to relocate to areas where jobs are available, the government is helping them help themselves. In fact, the government will even provide relocation assistance to those willing to move. The truth is, however, that German people are often reluctant to move very far away from their *Heimat* (home, a nostalgic term that implies family and belonging). In March 2005, even after the implementation of the unemployment reforms, a survey conducted by Infratest/Dimap on behalf of *Die Welt*<sup>1</sup> showed that 63 percent of the representative sample (1000 unemployed) was not willing to relocate for a job. Fifty-four percent were also opposed to commutes of several hours. The government is fully aware of this cultural trait as shown by their offer to pay young unemployed persons to move, when it is seemingly in their best interest to do so in the first place.

Second, Clement asserts that one of the difficulties of reintegrating people in the labor market is their lack or mismatch of qualifications. In Germany, there is a strong tradition of apprenticeships. This national system teaches high school graduates a certain trade, such as plumbing, baking, auto mechanics or nursing. The instruction takes place both at a trade school and while working in a business. The result: workers with nation-wide accepted qualifications. Many of the long-term unemployed find themselves learned in a trade that no longer corresponds with the economy's needs. To remedy this problem, Clement suggests funding professional development.

Third, Clement addresses the older unemployed persons. Several of the speakers in these debates noted that people over fifty are rarely hired. This group, as

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<sup>1</sup> *DieWelt*. 29 March 2005.

Clement points out, has special difficulties reintegrating into the labor market. The solution of the Hartz-Commission is subsidizing over fifty-five-year-olds who accept jobs (which is risky) so that they would still receive half of their government benefits while earning additional income.

The categories of unemployed peoples are in themselves very specific, so there is little doubt what these commonplaces mean and who is included in each group. The legitimation technique deployed by Clement is threefold. On one hand, he appeals to the citizens' duty and responsibility to step up and do their part to change their economic situation. Clement also uses authorization, asserting that the government is dealing with the unemployment challenge, and because of its expert-status, can demand certain actions from the unemployed. Additionally, Clement focuses on the parts of the new laws that contain financial incentives for the unemployed. He is essentially explaining to the young, unqualified and the old that they could be self-sufficient if they took some risks, and the government is willing to support them in that endeavor.

Example 5: Gerhard Schröder, Chancellor

I don't accept that people who want and are able to work have to go the welfare department, while others, who are probably not even available to the labor market, receive unemployment benefits.

(Friedrich Merz [CDU/CSU]: That's why the statistics are changed now!)

I also don't accept that people, who are equally ready to work, receive benefits of different amounts. I think this cannot be successful integration.

...

In the future, nobody will be allowed to lean back while society carries the burden. People who reject acceptable work – we will change the criteria for acceptability – will have to face sanctions.

...

Of course it is a commandment of morality and solidarity that 'black labor' is socially ostracized; but it is also a commandment of social and economical reason. Through the Hartz-reforms we have already made legal employment more attractive.

...

We will limit the unemployment benefits for the under fifty-five-year-olds to twelve months, and for the over fifty-five-year-olds to 18 months. This is necessary to keep a grip on wage-related costs.

In his 'state of the country' address on March 14, 2003, Schröder introduced his Agenda 2010, a reform package that would entail changes in such areas as health, pensions and labor. The above excerpt is a short section of this speech. Schröder makes explicit use of the taxonomy of the unemployed. He starts off by crudely dividing the unemployed into those that want to work and those that do not. For those who are willing to work he proposes equal benefits across the board, which is a radical departure from the former unemployment insurance-based model. Those that do not want to work, he threatens with sanctions. The idea behind this distinction is the *Faulenzerdebatte* [work shirker-debate], which we will further examine below. Schröder is fundamentally opposed to those unemployed who live on the costs of society without being willing to contribute.

Second, Chancellor Schröder addresses the problem of illegal work. In the past ten years, Germany has seen a rise in unreported employment of citizens. Partly, this 'shadow economy' is due to the wage-related costs employers would have to bear; partly, 'under-the-table labor' is attractive to the unemployed because they can earn a little extra income while evading taxes and continuing to receive unemployment benefits or welfare. Some of the speakers in the Bundestag revealed that there are approximately three million jobs in the booming 'shadow economy'. Some say it is a €350 billion industry, with an annual growth rate of six percent (Singhammer January 30, 2003). Schröder states that the Hartz-reforms have laid foundations to make legal employment more attractive. The third group Schröder refers to is the long-term unemployed. The



Chancellor, like Hartz IV, divides this group into under- and over-fifty-five-year olds. Because of the difficulty to reintegrate the older unemployed, they benefit from six extra months of unemployment benefits based on prior income (ALG I).

Schröder uses a different method of legitimation than Brandner, Brüderle or Clement. Instead of specification, derision or authorization, the Chancellor deploys moralization. He calls on his constituents' sense of morality as well as their common sense. 'Black labor' is not only illegal, he says, it is also socially and economically unreasonable. It is difficult if not impossible to argue with morality. The Christian Democratic opposition, especially, will not want to argue with legislative measures proposed to combat illegal employment.

Clement and Schröder's use of the different categories of unemployed persons has a tremendous impact on the unemployment policy as well as its implementation at the local level. Discourse relating to the taxonomy of the unemployed is minutely reflected in the Hartz-laws which specify who is to receive benefits and under what conditions. Further, the two men's focus on this type of discourse and the development of an intricate taxonomy presents the regional and local agencies for labor with a toolkit for dealing with their clients. As we will see in the following chapter, the agencies publish brochures directly targeting one or more of the categories. The agencies also address the illegal workers and those unwilling to work in a similar manner as Schröder does.

There is also a prevalence of gendered discourse; women are a separate category of the unemployed population. In part, this stems from the incomplete equalization of gender as well as special family-related needs women face. We find

gendered discourse especially in speeches by two female SPD members of the Bundestag Committee on Economy and Labor. Doris Barnett stresses that the 'shadow economy' is mainly filled with women, whether it is women providing cleaning services, household managing or giving care to the elderly. Rather than condemning the so-called 'black labor', Barnett lauds the Hartz-laws that will attempt to legalize many of these employment situations. Karin Roth adds that special integrative measures are needed for women. As women are needed in the economy, but often hindered by discrimination or domestic responsibilities, Roth points out that the Hartz-concept addresses these needs, by providing better childcare opportunities for them.

Gendered discourse found its way into the Hartz-legislation as well. With the new legislation, women are eligible to receive support from the agencies for labor not only in finding a job but also in finding daycare for their children. Speakers of the opposing coalition do not stress gendered discourse, but the CDU/CSU faction was surprisingly adamant about making changes to Hartz IV that would additionally benefit women. For families raising a child under 3 years of age, the unemployed person may refuse an 'acceptable' job without fear of sanctions. The faction stressed that the duty to take a job must not interfere with childrearing. The redefinition of what constitutes an 'acceptable job' was in part influenced by the 'lazy-bum-debate', as discussed in the section on additional rhetorical commonplaces (Collm 2003).

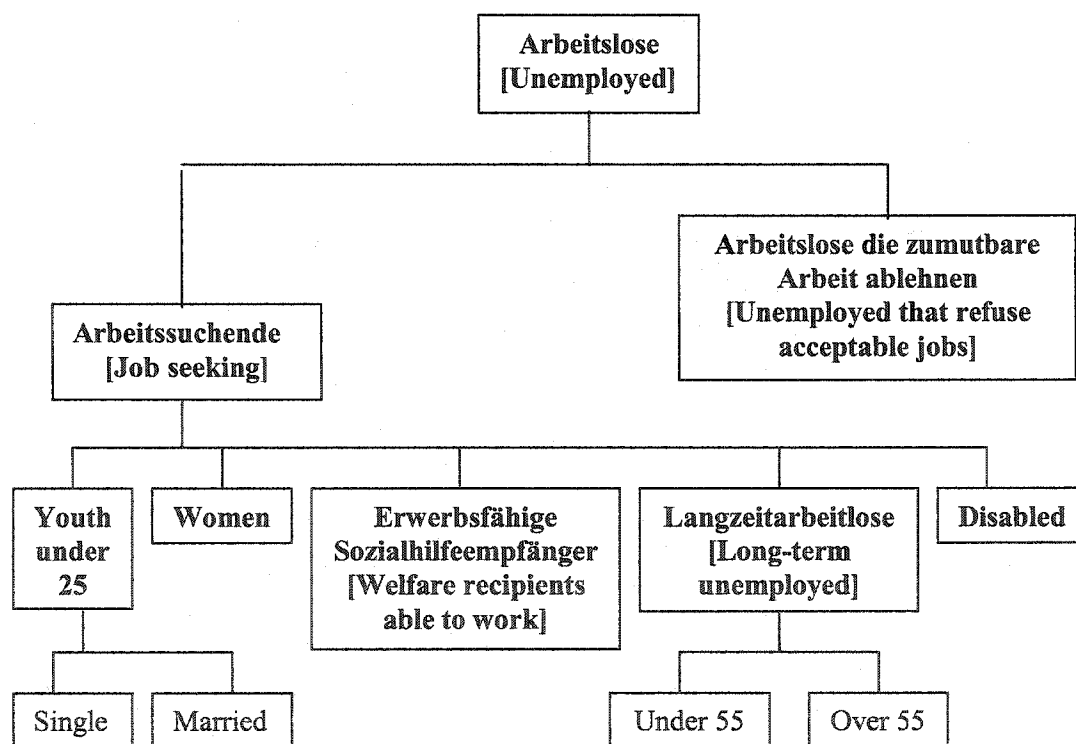
Legislative proposals from the opposing coalition were accompanied by discourse relating the East and West Germany. Friedrich Merz, for example, points out the East needs something different. Robert Hochbaum brings the matter to a point: "East and West is the issue: have you not noticed that Germany has two completely different

labor markets and two completely different economic structures? Apparently not, because one cannot find it in your proposals.” Hochbaum is referring to the fact that East Germany is to a large degree still a transition economy that has yet to catch up with West German productivity, consumer and investor behavior as well as focus on research and development. This has largely been a function of investment in these *Länder*, or lack thereof, for the past fifty years. Hochbaum laments that the mobility required by the Hartz-laws means migration that leads to a brain drain of the already weak foundation of the East German economy. Petra Pau (factionless) claims that the government “has no idea about the East of this country when [they] say that the existing system motivates the unemployed to free-load.”

Discourse dividing Germany into East and West was originally not included in the Hartz-legislation. The CDU/CSU faction was successful, however, in amending the proposal to reflect the structural differences throughout Germany. As a result, the agencies for labor must above all consider structurally weak regions when implementing active labor market policies. Hartz IV now includes that as long as the unemployment rate in a region is above the nation’s average (which is most often the case in the Eastern *Länder*), the use of ABMs (job creation measures) retains a “special significance.” In those regions specifically, ABMs should be created for those unemployed persons that are able to work and cannot find any employment (Hartz-Gesetze 2003). Interestingly enough, the law does not specify a difference between East and West Germany, but the distinction between structurally weak regions and those that lie under the nation’s unemployment average will often play out to dividing East and West *Länder* nonetheless.

In sum, all of the Hartz I-IV laws contain legislation aimed more or less directly at one or more of the taxonomies. We will become more familiar with the legislative innovations and how they apply to each group in the next chapter. To complete this section, Figure 5.2 helps visualize the different categories addressed by the Hartz-laws. There is some overlap of categories that is not reflected in this chart (for instance, there are ‘youth under 25’ who are also ‘long-term unemployed’). Additionally, distinctions such as ‘well-qualified’ or ‘untrained’ could be added to each subcategory.

Figure 5.2  
Chart of Simplified Internal Taxonomy of the Unemployed in Germany



By dividing the broad label ‘unemployed’ into specifically defined taxonomies, the governing party is able to present their reforms in a more easily digestible manner. Speakers of the SPD and Bündnis 90/Die Grünen alike refer to this

taxonomy as 'client-oriented measures' (Clement) and 'differentiated solutions' for the unemployed (Dr. Dückert). Chancellor Schröder and Secretary of Economy and Labor Clement use diverse legitimation techniques to explain and defend the Hartz-laws. By appealing to the citizen's sense of duty, morality and acceptance of expertise, the speakers defend the new legislation and the anticipated positive results as well as legitimating further actions by the agencies for labor.

### The 'German Disease'

While reading Bundestag debates on the topic of unemployment, one widely used metaphor became readily apparent: reference to disease, plagues, medicine or cure. Interestingly enough, all sides of the political spectrum utilize this metaphor to some extent, albeit in different ways and towards different ends. The line of reasoning, however, is largely the same: unemployment is the symptom of a disease in the economy → the unemployed cannot fight it alone → if we do not fight it, it will not stop → we have to find a cure. This section will explore the manner in which the governing parties (SPD and Bündnis 90/Die Grünen) and the opposition coalition (CDU/CSU and FDP) use the rhetorical commonplaces relating to disease.

Dr. Thea Dückert speaks of a '*Mittel*' [*Arzneimittel*, medicine] against unemployment. The Deputy Chairwoman of the Bündnis 90/Die Grünen faction also talks about releasing the unemployed from the intravenous fluids of the job agencies. Along the same lines, her colleague Oswald Metzger describes the entire issue of labor market and unemployment as a wound. Klaus Brandner asserts that qualifications are the best *Schutz* [protection] against unemployment. Further, Chancellor Schröder recognizes

that even foreign nations talk about the ‘German disease’, and uses this embarrassing fact to his advantage.

Example 6: Gerhard Schröder, Chancellor

All powers of society will have to do their part: businessmen and employees, self-employed workers and even retired people. We will have to undertake a powerful common exertion, to reach our goal.

I am thankful to those in the opposition and among the state secretaries, who have helped; [I am] truly thankful and will recognize that they had a part in creating an end to, according to the abroad – one should have a closer look at this – the talk about a ‘German disease.’

Rhetorical commonplaces used by Chancellor Schröder are ‘powers of society’ (which blatantly excludes the unemployed, yet includes retirees) and ‘German disease’. Politicians and media in various countries and in various languages have used the term ‘*Deutsche Krankheit*’ [‘German disease’] for several years. Commonly, the term, which refers to German labor market rigidity and the inability to deal with mass unemployment and lack of economic growth, is juxtaposed with globalization, a phenomenon that thrives on flexibility and reform. Some suggest a historical connection between the phrase ‘German disease’ and the notion of a German *Sonderweg* [special way], an earnest attempt to ‘normalize’ Germany after the atrocities committed during World War II and an attempt to cure the disease that led to the Holocaust. It seems German politicians, in the past as well as today, like to refer to societal or economic problems as a disease, enabling them to clearly define the issue and to propose mechanisms for change.

The disease rhetoric also suggests a somewhat nostalgic look back at the *Wirtschaftswunder* of the post-war era. There would be no mention of a German disease

if the economy were as vibrant and as successful as it was then. One characteristic of the German economy in the 1950s and 1960s was full employment, something Germany is far removed from in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. The political discourse on unemployment implicitly reflects the desire to return to the economic miracle and rid the country of mass unemployment and ridicule of foreign countries.

Schröder legitimates commonplaces relating to the disease-metaphor by brokering alliances through specification. In his 'state of the country' address in March 2003, the Chancellor encourages all forces of society to work together to reach a common goal, a goal he clearly defines in his speech. In essence, Schröder's rhetoric is aiming to unify the country behind his Agenda 2010. In a debate in December of the same year, the Chancellor applauds members of all parties that have supported the reform process. After an amendment process, the large majority of Bundestag members voted to approve all Hartz-laws. Schröder is giving partial credit to members of the opposition parties that the 'German disease' rhetoric will soon come to an end. This is a very effective legitimation technique. By brokering alliances, rather than blaming the opposition for taking too much time to agree or for criticizing the Hartz-proposals, the Chancellor can improve his status as a leader of a (united) Germany.

His Secretary of Economy and Labor uses similar language in his speeches to the Bundestag. Clement speaks of a schizophrenic system of unemployment benefits and welfare payments. He also says unemployment poisons the economy and the afflicted people need to be in *Betreuung* [care]. Clement also asserts that it is the government's task to return the unemployed to the labor market, implying that these persons cannot do it themselves. Following Schröder's example, Clement attempts to

unite the Bundestag factions behind a common goal. After specifying the problem, Clement can bargain with the opposition parties, in hopes of brokering alliances that will speed up the legislative process.

On the governing party's side, political discourse related to disease shows that a large part of the government's legitimation technique is portraying the unemployed as helpless individuals. The two leading men that have to face public accountability for mass-unemployment in Germany are Chancellor Schröder and Secretary of Economy and Labor Clement. It is in their best interest to unite the Bundestag behind their proposed legislation if they want to pass it in a timely manner. While it is true that the SPD and Bündnis 90/Die Grünen have a majority in the Bundestag, the opposition parties have a majority in the *Bundesrat*, which gives them some leeway to block legislation that is not to their liking.

By describing the economy as sick and the unemployed as helpless people, Schröder and Clement appeal to their colleagues to join in the healing process. The disease-metaphor places enormous responsibility and power on the political caregivers, i.e. Bundestag members. The men attempt to broker alliances rather than threatening the opposition factions. In turn those Bundestag members may be more amenable to work with the proposed legislation and draft minor amendments, rather than opposing the concept altogether. In fact, the Hatz IV proposal was passed by a margin of 581 to 16.

The opposition parties, however, use the disease-metaphor for their own agenda by blaming the continued spread of unemployment on failed government programs and the politicians' inability to improve the labor market and create new jobs. Dagmar Wöhrle (CDU/CSU) complains that too many unemployed are hidden from the



statistics. She refers to active labor market policies such as ABMs (job creation measures) and SAMs (structural adjustment measures) as labor market political *Beruhigungspillen* [sedatives]. Petra Pau (PDS, factionless) asserts that the Hartz-concepts' successes are merely positive side effects of an altogether negative medicine. Dr. Edmund Stoiber, President of Bavaria, points out that wide areas of Germany are suffering from a labor-market-'depression'. The so-called 'therapies' prescribed by the governing parties (Hartz I-IV), he continues, are not based on a solid analysis of the situation and therefore, the resulting reforms are unable to help the unemployed break out of the vicious cycle of the 'German disease.'

There is one CDU/CSU member in particular who intricately develops the disease-metaphor in his speeches, and that is Johannes Singhammer, member of the Bundestag Committee on Economy and Labor. The following example contains excerpts of two speeches Singhammer gave in the Bundestag in 2003.

Example 7: Johannes Singhammer (CDU/CSU)

All the remedies prescribed and extoled by the [The SPD and Bündnis 90/Die Grünen] turned out to be ineffective. The JUMP program – a flop. The Job-AQTIV program – an airbubble. The Hartz-concept, extoled as a broadband cure – without noticeable effect. (Dirk Niebel [FDP]: Placebo!)

...

Instead of freeing the people from the plague unemployment, joblessness is spreading in epidemic form into a wildfire.

-

One cannot fight the cancer of unemployment with chamomile tea. [The SPD and Bündnis 90/Die Grünen] no longer have the strength to prescribe the effective medicine necessary for the healing process of the labor market.

(Gerd Andres [SPD]: Goodness gracious!)

I say this without spite. We would be glad, if you would get and had gotten better results. But the bleached-out Hartz III- and Hartz IV-concepts are no more the right medicine against the raging unemployment than were all the other highly-praised cures from before.

....

The people in Germany have therefore lost their trust in all the prescriptions that you recently announced. Time is too precious to fight unemployment with new placebos.

...  
All your tonics have not led to a recognizable healing process in the labor market. It is time for a new polity that will create new trust in the people and create justifiable new jobs. It is not socially conscientious to speak about new jobs; it is socially conscientious to be able to prove that one creates new jobs. You have not reached this goal, and will not achieve it with this placebo law.

Singhammer recognized that the governing parties' discourse defined unemployment as a disease and appointed themselves responsible for curing it. Picking up on that theme during a Current Hour in May 2003, Singhammer asserts that the previous programs that were proposed to deal with unemployment were 'ineffective remedies'. Further, he points out that the government presented the Hartz-concept like a miracle medicine, a 'broadband cure', but it too turned out to be ineffective.

Singhammer goes on to compare unemployment to a plague that is spreading in epidemic form. In essence, he implies that members of the government perceive unemployment as merely a disease, and through their inability to cure it, have allowed the labor market illness to spread to epidemic proportions.

By framing his critique of the government in disease discourse, Singhammer is able to attack the proposals of SPD and Bündnis 90/Die Grünen with their own weapons. This is quite similar to the opposition's use of the fight/struggle-metaphor. The rhetorical technique deployed by Singhammer is derision or mockery. By using the disease-metaphor in this negative manner, he can discredit the government's skills and knowledge in a rather playful manner. Fully aware that another round of unemployment-related reforms will soon be proposed and debated in the Bundestag, Singhammer may want to attempt to plant a seed in the Bundestag members' minds. By

presenting the disease-metaphor in a way critical of the government, his speech asserts that the government's proposals are not working, and consequently, that politicians of all parties should not continue to pass similar legislation, that will in all likelihood turn out to be ineffective as well.

This derision becomes even more stinging during Singhammer's speech during the second and third reading of Hartz III and IV in October 2003. Here, the CDU/CSU politician compares unemployment to a quickly spreading cancer. Singhammer points out that the proposed legislation is a far cry from the recommendations made by the Hartz-Commission (in fact, Peter Hartz publicly distanced himself from the laws). Thus, he compares the Hartz-laws to chamomile tea or placebos, medicines that are certainly unable to cure cancer. Singhammer goes on to argue that the German citizens have tried the prescriptions and tonics of Hartz I and II, and found them unable to contribute to the healing process.

Aside from using mockery to discredit the governing parties' proposals, Singhammer also attacks the party at its fundamental tenets. With the phrase 'It is not socially conscientious to speak about new jobs; it is socially conscientious to prove that one is in fact creating new jobs' the CDU politician confronts the SPD at the core, as it is the party's primary claim to be a *social* democratic party and it is the party's primary goal to provide a new *social* order for people to live and work in and a *social* safety net to catch the unemployed.

Singhammer's use of rhetorical commonplaces relating to disease allows him to critique the governing parties' proposals and to dissuade Bundestag members from voting for the new laws or, if alternatively encourages amendments to the legislation.

Whether or not his discourse actually persuaded some of his colleagues to switch sides is hard to trace. After all, Hartz IV was passed with a margin of 581 to 16. Singhammer himself voted for the law. However, of the dissenting votes 12 were cast by members of the governing parties' coalition, two by CDU/CSU members and two from the factionless members. It is therefore certainly possible, that Singhammer's relating unemployment to a disease and describing the government as unable to deal with it has persuaded some of the members of the governing coalition to vote against Hartz IV.

#### Additional Rhetorical Commonplaces

To be sure, this chapter has not yet covered all the diverse political discourse on unemployment at the Bundestag-level. This final section will consider two additional legitimating trends emerging in Bundestag speeches: discourse relating to the EU and the work shirker-debate. While they will conclude this analysis of internal political discourse on unemployment in Germany, they are by no means exhausting all possible rhetorical commonplaces in the Bundestag. However, these are substantial trends that occurred in many speeches from different party-members. They also reflect the local accents of German unemployment discourse, some of which (especially the East-West debate) are unique to the country.

#### European Union

As a (founding) member of the European Union, Germany has certain economic and political responsibilities emanating from the treaties of the EU. Germany has to follow broader guidelines provided by the European Commission. Most significant here, however, is the adherence to the Stability and Growth Pact. Friedrich

Merz (CDU/CSU) strategically uses this buzzword to remind the government that supra-national objectives are at stake: “Germany is in last place in the EU, both with economic growth and with dealing with high unemployment. You are endangering the Stability and Growth Pact.” Merz is overtly placing blame on the government for violating EU guidelines and their lack of success in dealing with unemployment. Chancellor Schröder dismisses the legitimating value of alluding to the Pact by asserting that mass-unemployment is really a German problem: “reference to the Stability and Growth Pact and the European responsibilities cannot be used as an excuse to do nothing here.” This is quite an effective rebuttal that nullifies Merz’s argument.

But aside from political and economic responsibility, there is also the sentiment that Germany has a duty to be the ‘motor’ of European integration and growth. Secretary of Economy and Labor Clement points out that without Germany the EU cannot advance and that the EU is waiting for positive signals from Germany. In fact, he continues, it is Germany’s responsibility to become the motor of the European economy again. Instead of blaming the German unemployment problems on European guidelines or the Stability and Growth Pact, Clement uses the supra-national requirements as a motivating factor to implement the Hartz-reforms.

Overall, discourse referring to the European Union, whether as supra-national political and economic authority or as ideological guideline, is fairly sparse. Apparently, EU arguments by themselves are not sufficient to legitimate reforms in the unemployment system in Germany. Bundestag members as well as government officials acknowledge that they are not operating in a political vacuum. Yet, rhetorical

commonplaces related to the EU do not occupy a major position in political unemployment discourse in Germany.

### Work Shirkers

Sections of Hartz-IV allow federal and local agencies to implement certain sanctions for the unemployed who refuse to take an 'acceptable' job offered by the Agency for Labor. This change in unemployment law has spawned quite a debate, some of which has taken place in the Bundestag. Secretary of Economy and Labor Clement asserts that the unemployed have to try harder to find a job and they will have stronger duties after the Hartz-reforms are implemented. Brandner takes a more direct approach when saying, "we cannot allow [the unemployed] to lie down in a hammock." Thea Dückert and Thomas Sauer try to blame the coalition parties for the laziness-debate, including rhetorical commonplaces such as 'lazy bums' and 'social hammock', but Dirk Niebel and others quickly interject that it was indeed the chancellor who 'invented' the terms. The shirker-debate is a divide-and-conquer technique of the government in which the lazy unemployed are stigmatized as the 'others,' those that do not deserve aid and those that only pretend to be victimized. The benefits of the Hartz policy are not intended for 'those people.'

The whirlwind began with Chancellor Schröder's interview in *Bild* on April 6, 2001, in which he publicly laid out the direction certain reforms would take. The chancellor argued, "Those who can work but don't want to cannot count on solidarity. There is no right to laziness in our society. This means concretely: Those who are able to work but reject a decent job, can lose part of their benefits." This interview announced a

new rhetoric of individual responsibility that experts already knew from the Blair-Schröder-Paper from 1999. The new political direction emphasizes that citizens not only have rights, but also duties. This ideology made its way into the Hartz-legislation and therefore laziness-discourse was introduced into the Bundestag.

The legitimating technique deployed by the social democratic government is part moralization and part rationalization. On one hand, the use of rhetorical commonplaces relating to laziness allows the government to blame some of the people affected by policy changes. The discourse changes the relationship between constituents and politicians. The government appeals to the societal value of the Protestant work ethic, which places some of the responsibility of fighting unemployment on the unemployed themselves. On the other hand, the government uses its expert status to introduce its new political agenda. As Schröder and Blair worked on the concept together, their authority status as leaders lends legitimating force to the use of 'social responsibility' in framing unemployment discourse.

Some members of the opposing parties are outraged by discourse referring to the unemployed as lazy. Petra Pau (factionless), especially, argues that unemployment is not the serious problem it is today simply because the previous system of unemployment benefits encouraged "being lazy and free-loading". There are other causes for the ailing economy. Similarly, Robert Hochbaum (CDU/CSU) asks whether the government really believes "the tale that the majority of east-German unemployed are unwilling to work?"

Members of the CDU/CSU faction did not agree with the government's laziness discourse and were successful in passing amendments to Hartz IV, softening the

impact of sanctions for those unemployed persons that are ‘not willing to work.’ Originally, the unemployed could only refuse jobs they considered immoral. Weeklong debates in the *Ausschüsse* finally forced the governing party to redefine ‘acceptable jobs’, knowing they could not get the law passed without certain changes. For one, the amendment states that women with children under 3 years of age cannot be forced to choose between work and sanctions. More importantly, the unemployed can refuse to accept work that pays wages below local standards and regional wage floors without having to fear sanctions. The CDU/CSU’s emphasis that mass unemployment is not caused by lazy people lying in hammocks had a direct effect on the new unemployment policies. Not good enough for Robert Hochbaum, apparently, as he still voted against Hartz IV.

Whether or not sanctions levied against unemployed persons who refuse and ‘acceptable’ job will lead to real improvement in the German economy remains to be seen, as many of the jobs offered to the unemployed are federally subsidized short-term positions. Further, the end of the lazy-bum-debate is not in sight yet. We will return to the laziness-discourse in the following chapter.

### Conclusion

This chapter showed that there is a distinct set of rhetorical commonplaces relating to unemployment that are unique to Germany. Political discourse is based in part on the political and economic history of the country as well as the interactions of Bundestag members. This includes the political ideologies of the parties; interests and opinions of constituents, experts and interest groups; as well as the internal work of the



factions. Additionally, much of the new unemployment discourse is shaped by the SPD philosophy of a successful society. Schröder has recently been elected for a second term, which allows him to be more assertive about radical reforms.

A first look at the data revealed that some of the Bundestag debates related to unemployment include the fight/struggle-metaphor used at the EU-level. Governing party speakers as well as speakers of the opposing coalition use derivations of those rhetorical commonplaces. However, German political discourse references to struggle are not widespread or intricately developed.

Second, most widely used in internal discourse relating to unemployment are those commonplaces that can be categorized as taxonomies. Bundestag members of all parties use many different categories to specify the various unemployed persons. Taxonomies are especially prevalent in speeches by the Federal Secretary of Economy and Labor Clement and Chancellor Schröder, perhaps because those men bear the main responsibility in proposing, explaining and legitimating the new legislation. Categories of the unemployed include youth, the elderly, the long-term unemployed and those that refuse to accept amenable jobs; there is also considerable overlap among those groups. Dividing the 'unemployed' into specifically defined categories allows the governing parties to present their reforms in a more easily digestible manner. In sum, all of the Hartz-laws are aimed at one or more of the taxonomies.

Third, the metaphor used most extensively in the Bundestag debates on unemployment is a reference to disease, plague, medicine or cure. All sides of the political spectrum employ this metaphor, though in different ways and towards different ends. For example, Clement asserts that it is the elected officials' task to return the

unemployed to the labor market, and he attempts to unite the Bundestag factions behind a common goal. Speakers of the opposition parties use the disease-metaphor in a derisive manner to blame the government for the ongoing high rate of unemployment.

Fourth, there is some unemployment discourse in the Bundestag that refers to the European Union, whether as supra-national political and economic authority or as ideological guideline. However, like the fight/struggle metaphor, rhetorical commonplaces related to the EU are not very prevalent in political unemployment discourse in Germany. Finally, Bundestag discourse reflects the laziness-debate spawned in part by Chancellor Schröder. Rhetorical commonplaces like 'social hammock' and 'lazy bums' are used by the SPD and Bündnis 90/Die Grünen to legitimate change in unemployment law that allow federal and local Agencies for Labor to implement certain sanctions for those unemployed people who refuse to take an 'acceptable' job offered by the agencies.

In addition to the diverse set of rhetorical commonplaces, German Bundestag members also use a variety of legitimating techniques. Clement and Schröder prefer deploying bargaining tactics like brokering alliances with opposing party members. Both men also use moralization and authorization. Brandner, speaker of the SPD's Working Group on Economy and Labor, is more inclined to use threats to legitimate the new legislation. The opposition's use of the same rhetorical commonplaces is frequently one of derision and mockery, aimed at discrediting the government's expertise.

To be sure, this chapter has not covered *all* of the political discourse on unemployment at the Bundestag-level. Nor was that its intention. It is not possible or

even necessary to provide an exhausting analysis of internal political discourse on unemployment. The goal of this chapter was to uncover major discursive and legitimating trends in the Bundestag. The analysis shows that there are certain local accents of unemployment discourse that are unique to Germany.

CHAPTER 6  
DISCOURSE AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

Page 12 of the brochure *Basic Security for Jobseekers* reads,

“Fundamentally, your personal interests have to take second place compared to the interests of the general public.” Some of the official communication to the unemployed in Germany is written in this moral, utilitarianist style. But there are fine differences in tone depending on the intended audience of those brochures. This chapter will continue the analysis of political discourse on unemployment in Germany by focusing on external discourse regarding the Hartz-laws.

The question now is how the legislative changes will be communicated to the constituents. In other words, will the public relations department of the Federal Agency for Labor use the same rhetorical commonplaces that were developed in the Bundestag? Additionally, will the PR department deploy similar legitimation techniques? Or will we see a different, more sensitive approach to the unemployed people about their benefit cuts, potential sanctions and agency restructuring? The chapter will begin by describing the discourse development process and the economic background of one German city affected by the Hartz-laws. What follows is an empirical analysis of the external discourse on unemployment produced by the Federal Agency for Labor and one of its local counterparts.

### Discourse Development

To be sure, official discourse at the agencies for labor is not developed in a vacuum. The employees cannot randomly choose what to write in their brochures, what to publish and distribute. While brochures and letters may be considered to be external political discourse, they are still part of *political* discourse. As such, external discourse is to a large degree dependent upon rhetorical commonplaces and themes already developed at the internal level in the Bundestag. One would expect the discourse on unemployment produced by the *Bundesagentur für Arbeit* [Agencies for Labor], both federal and regional, to be ideological and factually based on government rhetoric and legislative changes.

To clarify, however, there is no direct transmission belt between the Bundestag and the *Bundesagentur*. The Agency is an autonomous tripartite body, housing representatives of business, trade unions and the government. And while the government appoints the director of the Agency, it has its own, independent sources of funds and budget capabilities. Nonetheless, the Agency has to work within the statutes which are law and consequently adopts much of the same discourse developed at the Bundestag-level (Silvia, forthcoming).

Further, discourse used by the local agencies is by no means independent from discourse at the federal or regional level. The local agencies may be able to add a personal touch to their correspondence; however, it is more probable that letters informing the unemployed of legal changes are based on templates provided by the federal or regional agencies for labor. To be sure, the brochures displayed at the local agencies are not produced locally; thus the local staff has absolutely no input on their

contents. The only way to alter local discourse is refusal to display certain publications.

Nonetheless, the legitimation techniques deployed by the agencies' staff could prove to be rather different from those deployed by members of the Bundestag. The agencies have some leeway to decide in which way they would like to justify and explain the Hartz-laws to their clients (i.e. the unemployed). Specifically, the agencies can decide whether to broker alliances with their clients or whether to use threat to convey the new legislation. We will pay particular attention to the legitimating choices made by the producers of external political discourse on unemployment.

#### Stadtroda – A Sample City

Labor market reform strategies cannot have a homogeneous effect on all the cities and villages in a given country, because the causes for the ailing economy are not homogenous for all parts. The reforms can aim to address what appears to be the general, overall issue with the labor market that leads to unemployment and thereby hope to positively affect large sections of the country. But as we learned in the previous chapter, there is some consensus that Germany still consists of two different labor market structures. Even within one *Land*, there are industrialized areas, villages that are mainly agricultural as well as towns that are not attractive or conducive to new investment. So what to do with five million unemployed persons when job openings are scarce and the majority of the unemployed is reluctant to move?

To better place the external discourse on unemployment in the local context, I have selected one German town, if for no other reason than I could procure a research assistant there who was willing to do the field and legwork for me. Stadtroda is not meant to be a 'typical' city; there are thousands of others that could have filled its

place. But I am offering the economic background of this town to better illustrate that the new legislation affects real people in real cities. Certainly, the external discourse was not created with specific cities or villages in mind, although perhaps it should. Framing this analysis of unemployment discourse in the case of Stadtroda allows us to examine how one particular group of people might react to and be affected by communication regarding the Hartz-laws.

Stadtroda is a quaint, picturesque town nestled in the 'Green Heart' of Germany in the *Land* Thüringen. Its history can be traced back to the ninth century, and it has had town-status for almost 700 years. Until the 1940s, Stadtroda was a renowned spa location because of its clean air and beautiful natural baths. But the end of World War II marked the end of that era, by not only bringing refugees but also occupation by the Russian army. Stadtroda subsequently became part of the communist German Democratic Republic (Stadtroda 2005).

The town has never experienced real economic growth, in part because its geographical location is not favorable to large-scale industrialization, though the privatization of the 1990s opened doors for many businesses of the *Mittelstand* (mid-size economy). Largest employers since reunification are the specialized hospital (approximately 400 employees), the furniture factory (125 employees), the concrete factory (80), the electronic company (60) and the brewery (20 employees). The service sector in Stadtroda is not widely developed because of the lack of demand for lawyers or accountants, etc., as most of the businesses are not big enough to need or be able to afford them. The majority of businesses in Stadtroda are small shops, such as bakeries or butcher-shops (Stadtroda 2005).

Population was 6,834 at its highpoint in 1991, but has been constant at 6,500 since 2000. Most of the inhabitants, therefore, have to commute to nearby cities to work. The unemployment rate for the region the *Agentur für Arbeit Stadtroda* is responsible for was 16.5 percent in February 2005, up two percent from 2004 (the rates were 19.4 percent for Thüringen and 12.6 percent for the country in January 2005) (Arbeitsmarkt Jena 2005). While this high unemployment cannot have a direct effect on the development of external discourse, per se, it will influence the way certain legislation affects the unemployed people.

#### Taxonomies

Brochures and letters published by the agencies for labor clearly specify what they mean with certain descriptive terms. They also verbally establish a definition of unemployment before using unemployment statistics and explain labor market reform legislation. It is this definition that becomes crucial to understanding the implications of the Hartz-laws as well as to understanding what unemployment figures really mean (i.e. who they include and exclude). According to the German Federal Agency for Labor, “unemployed are those who are jobless (work fewer than 15 hours per week), are looking for work, are available to the labor market and are registered at an Agency for Labor” (Arbeitsmarkt 2005).

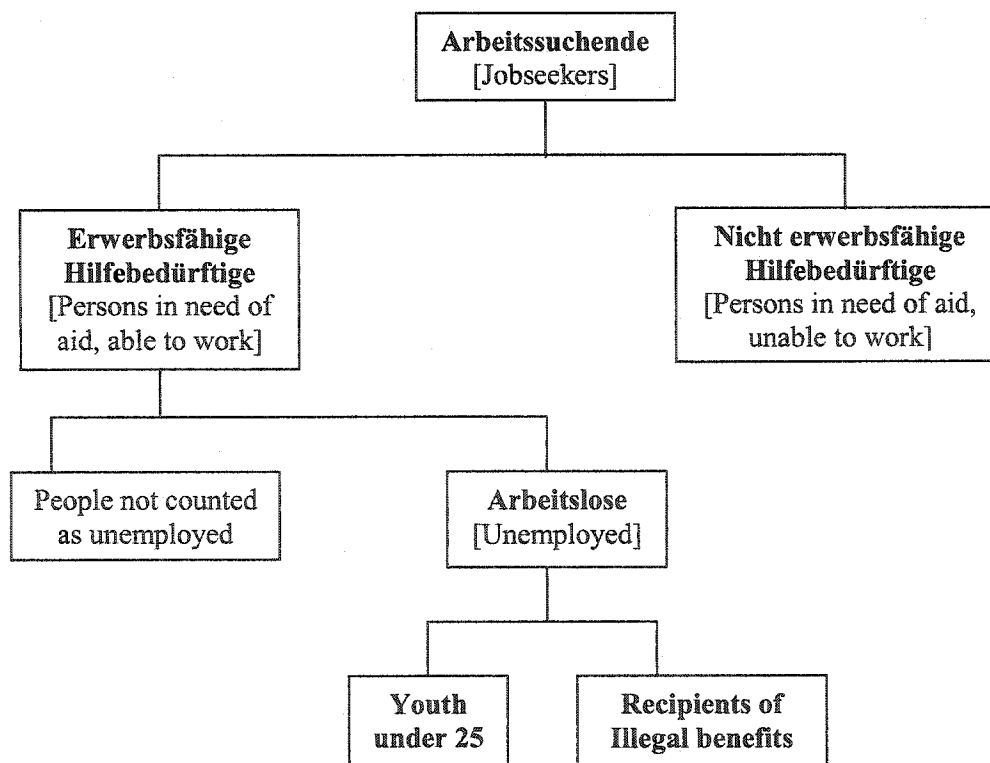
Taxonomies are highly prevalent in external political discourse on unemployment. The discourse categorizes the unemployed in a very straightforward and practical manner. Figure 3 on the following page explains how. Since the implementation of Hartz IV, jobseekers are now divided into those able to work and those unable to work. Those persons that have been unemployed for a year or less still



receive ALG (benefits based on their prior income); Hartz-legislation does not affect these persons per se – they are not at the center of this discourse and we will exclude them from further scrutiny (Arbeitsmarkt 2005).

All of the remaining ‘jobseekers’ receive the same amount of benefits (ALG II, which is a flat rate); however, not all of them are counted in the unemployment figures. The definition excludes persons that are in need of aid but unable to work. It also excludes people, who receive ALG II due to insufficient income and those that receive ALG II although they are not available to the labor market due to childrearing or taking care of an elderly person (Arbeitsmarkt 2005).

Figure 6.1  
External Taxonomy of the Unemployed in Germany



The different taxonomies emerged during the analysis of several brochures and letters published by the Agencies for Labor as well as the application for ALG II. Three of the brochures contained information addressed to *Arbeitssuchende*; and one each was addressed to 'young people under 25' and 'illegal benefit recipients'. Discourse, tone and legitimation techniques varied considerably among the different publications.

The taxonomies may apply to the entire country; however, the percentage distribution of certain categories varies. In a report on the labor market compiled and published by the regional agency responsible for Stadtroda, the statisticians measured the categories discussed above, as well as some other categories of the unemployed, such as women, disabled, foreigners or long-term unemployed. In February 2005, 43.7 percent of the unemployed persons in the Stadtroda area are women. At the same time, the categories including the largest number of unemployed persons that were measured in the Stadtroda area are the long-term unemployed with 39.3 percent, the over fifty-five-year-olds with 27.8 percent and the youth under 25 years of age with 12.9 percent (Arbeitsmarkt 2005).

Grouping the unemployed into a taxonomy allows the local agencies to directly target their clients. This discourse is very pragmatic in its descriptive nature, leaving little room for the unemployed persons to wonder who belongs to which group. The agency staff utilizes the new commonplaces in all of its publications, whether it is brochures, pamphlets or personal letters to the unemployed. Using the specific categories enables the agencies to specifically address and deliver messages to selected clients.

Some of the themes developed in connection to the taxonomy in unemployment discourse are explored below.

### Themes Relating to ‘Jobseekers’

One rhetorical commonplace uncovered in external political discourse on unemployment in Germany is *Arbeitssuchende* [jobseekers]. What unites those ‘jobseekers’ is receipt of ALG II. The category includes all persons over 15 and under 65 years old, who generally live in Germany. Jobseekers are also referred to as *Antragsteller* [applicant] or *Mitglied der Bedarfsgemeinschaft* [members of the household in need]. Hartz IV created the current definition of the rhetorical commonplace ‘jobseekers,’ by combining recipients of the former unemployment aid and welfare. Brochures and letters informing the public of the new legislation are often directed at the ‘jobseekers’ in general.

On the back cover of one of those brochures, the agency simply stated, “with the Fourth Law for Modern Services in the Labor Market (Hartz IV) it was decided to combine unemployment aid and welfare to a new benefit, the so-called unemployment benefit (ALG II)” (Wichtige 2004). The following excerpt is taken from a letter that the local agency overseeing Stadtroda mailed to its clients to inform them of the legislative changes.

#### Example 1: Letter from the local Job Agency

Dear Madam, dear Sir,  
 You are receiving unemployment aid. Surely you have heard, that these benefits will be replaced on January 1, 2005, by the basic security for jobseekers, the new ALG II for persons in need of aid that are able to work. Legal basis for that is the SGB II. You have to apply for the new ALG II, even if you are currently receiving unemployment aid. Please fill out carefully the enclosed application and the necessary enclosures...

The letter was sent in August 2004. It does not contain a personal greeting to the unemployed person, nor is there a name for a contact person, much less a signature. This is additional support for the suspicion that the letters sent to the unemployed nationwide are actually based on a template provided by the Federal Agency for Labor. The letter closes with 'Sincerely, your Agency for Labor.' In the first paragraph of the letter, the writer uses the new commonplace 'jobseekers' in its new usage. The casual utilization of the term thus informed my research assistant and other recipients that they are now part of the category 'jobseekers.' Formerly, they were referred to as 'unemployed'. The first paragraph of the letter also tells the reader what it means to be a jobseeker: one is a person in need that is able to work.

The legitimization technique deployed in this letter is legalization. In this case, legalization is defined as achieving legitimization by appealing to legal texts. Legalization is similar to authorization in that it refers to higher authorities; it is different, however, because it is not operating on the basis of someone's expert opinion, but instead based on actual printed law. This technique allows the Agencies for Labor an easy way out of potential squabbles; the agencies are able to use the government as a scapegoat in case some of their clients should complain. Agency employees can respond by saying "the agencies did not decide these changes, the national legislature did." To lend the argument greater credibility, a copy of important information regarding the new law is enclosed with the letter.

In general, the letter is very matter-of-factly in letting the 'jobseekers' know about the changes that will take place. The tone of the letter is extremely formal and impersonal. There is widespread use of passive voice: the word 'we' is used only

once in two pages, a stark difference from the brochure aimed at the youth, which we will examine below. Additionally, the writer uses euphemistic phrasing when saying that unemployment aid will be replaced by ALG II. In most cases, this means a reduction in benefits. The actual amount that the unemployed will receive in benefits is omitted in the letter. In fact, a disclaimer at the top of the first pages asks the reader for understanding regarding the brevity of the letter, due to administrative costs.

The letter was accompanied by the twenty-page application for ALG II. The last page of the form lists a summary of important information regarding the Hartz-laws. The selection of paragraphs the Federal Agency decided to include in this list of important legislative changes focuses on duties and potential sanctions. Here is an excerpt:

Example 2: Important Information Regarding Your Duties – Application for ALG II

**Active Participation**

Benefits of basic security for jobseekers require that you as a person in need of aid that is able to work, as well as the dependents that live in your household of need, exhaust all possibilities to end or reduce your need for aid.

As a person in need of aid that is able to work, you must actively participate in all measures towards your reintegration...

**Acceptability of work for recipients of benefits who are able to work**

As recipient of benefits of the Social Law Book II (SGB II) you are duty bound to *accept any job* to which you are psychologically, morally and physically capable (unless one of the legal exceptions exists, e.g. raising a child under 3-years-old or caring for a relative). Duty violations for which you cannot give an important reason, lead to a reduction of ALG II! (Emphasis in original) ...

In addition to using the rhetorical commonplace ‘jobseekers,’ the new laws also have given rise to addressing the unemployed as ‘persons in need that are able to work.’ This is a very clear specification and as such it brings about several accompanying commonplaces. First, Agency communications frequently include the

word *Pflicht* [duty] in one or more forms. There is, for example, the *Mitwirkungspflicht* [duty to participate] or the *Meldepflicht* [duty to notify]. The section above tells the applicant, that he is required to exhaust all possibilities and he is duty bound to accept any job he can. In essence, not only is the unemployed encouraged to engage in his reintegration in the labor market, he is legally bound to do so.

As in the letter we analyzed above, the legitimation technique utilized by the Federal Agency for Labor is legalization. The agency does not have to rationalize the need for implementation of the new law like the government and coalition Bundestag members did. The agency does not have to justify the importance of the new law and what it might mean for the labor market and the German economy. The agency simply has to explain the new law and what it means for its clients. A nonchalant reference to the legal texts suffices to establish credibility and it legitimates the new rules to the 'jobseekers.'

Second, the information page introduces the concept of 'active participation'. The jobseeker is required to participate in getting a job or take part in some sort of professional development, such as language training. However, the concept of 'active participation' is not very clearly defined. This vagueness allows both the agencies and the unemployed some leniency in its execution or the prosecution of its violation. Again, 'active participation' is new in the sense that it is now anchored in the legal texts.

Third, there is an increased occurrence of the theme 'sanctions', 'reduction of benefits', 'criminal act' or related commonplaces. The excerpt above, for example, informs the applicant that violations of the announced duties lead to reduction of benefits.

The sanction theme is also new and was introduced by the Hartz-laws. With it, the burden of proof was shifted to the unemployed. In essence, it is no longer the task of the federal agencies to supply jobs, but rather, it is the responsibility of the 'jobseekers' to prove, why certain jobs may not be acceptable to them. Again, the meaning of 'important reason' is not defined. Similar to 'active participation', this vagueness allows the agencies some leeway in this new regulation. As the unemployed did not have to provide 'important reasons' before, the agencies cannot know what to expect. The vague label allows them to deal with these issues as they arise.

Part of the reason for introducing 'active participation' and 'sanctions' can be traced back to lazy-bum debate in the Bundestag. Government and coalition party speakers argued that the unemployed can no longer be allowed to receive benefits without proving that they are willing to contribute to society with work. The problem with this assumption is that in various places in Germany, and Stadtroda is a prime example here, do not have enough jobs to accommodate all of the unemployed registered at the agency for labor. Even if all the 'lazy' unemployed persons took jobs below their skill level (such as cleaning positions) there would still be numerous 'jobseekers' without positions to take. As a result, those people who are offered positions they do not really want will be forced to accept that employment to avoid benefit cuts. On the other hand, the majority of people will probably not have to make the "take undesired job or loose benefits-decision" because of the lack of jobs available.

The 'sanction'-theme also offers a second legitimation technique for the agencies for labor: threat. In the brochure *Basic Security for Jobseekers*, the agency continues the elaboration on the theme when it clearly specifies actions that are

considered duty violations. Those violations include refusing to accept an 'acceptable' job, missing personal appointments at the agency or continued profligate behavior. The specifications provide the agency with bargaining tactics like threatening. In the past, sanctions were to a large extent non-existent or comparable to a frown. Now, the agencies have a bargaining chip: sanctions that allow them to reduce the violators' benefits by 30 percent for a period of three months.

The potential benefit cuts introduced by Hartz IV are perhaps the most powerful tool given to the agencies for labor with the Hartz-legislation. If the 'jobseekers' are unimpressed by the new law and potential changes for their lives, they will be impressed by the enforcement mechanism attached to their duties. Rhetorical commonplaces relating to 'sanctions' allow the agency staff to clearly warn the unemployed and inform them of potential punishments, something the agencies were not able to do before. In addition, themes such as 'duties', 'responsibilities' and 'active participation' leave little doubt as to what is expected from the 'jobseekers.' With the shifting of the burden of proof, the agency staff is now able to demand more from their clients and the staff is able to better control and to sanction them. Again, the fact that the government, and not the agencies for labor themselves, created the 'threat' allows these agencies to place blame on the scapegoat 'government' and justify the sanctions simply by saying "we're just doing our job."

One of the brochures available at the local agencies for labor specifically lists the changes in welfare and unemployment benefits. The 63-page booklet titled *Basic Security for Jobseekers* discusses definitions of categories of the unemployed with specifications regarding who is included and excluded. The brochure also lists the



'jobseekers' responsibilities and duties before elaborating on sanctions. The booklet even contains a table with the Euro-amounts the 'jobseekers' are eligible to receive. The following is an excerpt of pages 6 and 12. Much of the language used in this sample has similarities to discourse we uncovered in the Bundestag speeches. Perhaps this is an example of the dependence of the agencies on prior political discourse.

Example 3: Basic Security for Jobseekers

The basic security for jobseekers aims to contribute to your ability to provide for you and your dependents, independently from this basic security and with your own means and your own strength. The primary goal is therefore the reintegration in the labor market and the taking of a new job.

...  
Fundamentally, your personal interests have to take second place compared to the interests of the general public... Notice Section 13 in this brochure (Sanctions).

As in the letter to the unemployment benefit recipients, the writers of this brochure also use the term 'jobseekers' in its new meaning. The excerpt also includes some familiar concepts. First, the primary goal is the reintegration in the labor market. As the direct audience of the discourse is the unemployed persons, the principal goal is no longer the abstract 'fighting unemployment' but rather the personal 'reintegration'. The theme, however, remains the same.

Secondly, the authors speak of strength. This brochure, though indirectly, tells the unemployed that they need to use their own strength to provide for themselves. The excerpt implies, however, that without the aid of the agencies for labor, the unemployed would be hard-pressed to achieve this goal. In essence, the discourse tells them, that at this time they do not have the strength needed to become independent from unemployment benefits.

Third, the writers of the brochure refer to the 'interests of the general public.' Refusing to take an acceptable job, the 'jobseekers' are told, is contrary to that interest. This is a new theme in unemployment discourse. Perhaps the utilitarianist approach is more appropriate when addressing the constituents directly, rather than debating legislation in the Bundestag. Additionally, the utilitarian theme is rooted in the governing party's political philosophy. As discussed in Chapter 5, the basic tenets of the SPD's democratic socialism include freedom, justice and solidarity. In general, the social welfare state Germany is based on these principles as well. The writers of the brochure simply clarify those beliefs.

The three rhetorical commonplaces 'primary goal', 'strength' and 'interest of the general public' are repeated throughout this brochure, which gives rise to a new set of bargaining tactics and legitimation techniques. Especially the appeal to the unemployed to place their own interests behind those of the common good is an example of moralization. The authors legitimate the new laws by appealing to the 'jobseekers' sense of morality, solidarity and social accountability. Further, the writers' use of 'strength' and 'principal goal' allows them to propose the brokering of an alliance with the 'jobseekers.' In essence, the agencies are offering their help to the unemployed and inform them, that they (hopefully) share the same goal: finding a way out of unemployment and back into the labor market, which will lead to independence from unemployment benefits for the 'jobseekers'.

### Recipients of Illegal Benefits

A brochure that specifically addresses those in violation of the new legislation is *Leistungsmissbrauch* [*Benefit Abuse*]. The pamphlet is directed at employees that did not inform the agency for labor of new position they might have taken, which made them no longer eligible to receive ALG. It is also aimed at persons who are no longer available to the labor market, for example because of childrearing, and should therefore receive ALG II, instead of ALG. The main flow of illegal benefits goes to people in the 'shadow economy'. The discourse of this brochure, however, does not reflect that. The discourse does reflect, however, some of the same themes, rhetorical commonplaces and legitimation techniques we have previously uncovered in letters, forms and brochures.

#### Example 4: Benefit abuse

Benefit abuse is behavior that does not reflect solidarity and that burdens the honest payers of contribution. Those who receive benefits from the Federal Agency of labor must fulfill certain duties

...

Those who falsely receive unemployment benefits must repay it and count on a fine.

This brochure reminds the recipients of unemployed benefits of their duties. The writers speak of 'certain duties', the 'duty to notify' and the unemployed being 'duty bound.' The key to the brochure is the term '*Leistungsmissbrauch*' [benefit abuse]. In addition to abusing government funds, this commonplace includes the idea of illegal employment, i.e. employment that is not known to the federal agencies so that the employer avoids having to pay required social contributions. As Bundestag speakers demonstrated, the 'black economy' is a booming industry in Germany, with annual profits upwards of €350 billion.

It can be said with some certainty, then, that this is an important issue for the agencies that pay benefits to the unemployed. Surprisingly, the sanctions are very vague ('count on a fine'). Further, the legitimization technique legalization is not used in this case. Instead, the writers deploy moralization by appealing to the readers' sense of solidarity, honesty and duty, as we uncovered in the brochure *Basic Security for Unemployed*. It is doubtful that someone employed in an illegal position could be swayed by the moralist approach and vague threats. The brochure concludes with a list of ten different agencies collaborating in the fight against illegal recipients of unemployment benefits. But, again, stating the amount of the fine might have been more convincing, similar to announcing the 30 percent cut of ALG II as a sanction for duty violations.

#### Fit for Job

There are radical changes in tone, style and legitimization techniques between brochures addressed to jobseekers in general and to youth under 25. For one, the title of the brochure for the youth is *Fit for Job* – in the English language. The title of one of the brochures directed at 'jobseekers' is *Important New Regulations Starting on January 1, 2005: Unemployment Benefits During Unemployment and Professional Development*.

Secondly, the youth-brochure is glossy, colorful, bound and it contains photographs of attractive, happy and successful young people, while two of the 'jobseeker' brochures were simply a multifold and the third was printed on recycled grey

paper. But the differences between the brochures do not end with externalities. The following is an excerpt of *Fit for Job*.

Example 5: Help for Taking a Job

Your next goal is an apprenticeship and you would like to prepare for it? We help you to make best use of the meantime – with measures that are tailored to your needs. We teach you the necessary theoretical foundations and practical skills, further educate you and improve your teamwork abilities. If needed, we place you in a prolonged internship or increase your chances for an apprenticeship with language courses.

...

Turn to us – we help you find the appropriate job. Further, we contribute to your application costs and will cover the costs for your trips to interviews. You just started work? We support you financially in case your funds are insufficient. For example, for your living expenses until your first pay or for necessary work apparel and equipment. Is your job located farther away, we pay the costs of the first trip. In case you have an apartment beforehand we will also cover the moving expenses.

Unlike that letter from the regional agency for labor, this brochure is written in the active voice. The tone of the text is much friendlier and more encouraging. Instead of warning the youth of sanctions and informing them of their duties, the brochure's writers center the text on opportunities, possibilities and strategies to obtain professional development or an appropriate job. The common theme developed in all the entries of this brochure is that of support. First, the agency offers general support through the agency staff's advice and expertise. They promise the youth assistance in finding an internship or further improving the youth's skills and knowledge.

Second, the agency offers financial support. The new laws allow the agencies to pay for the youth's application process, trips to the job site for interviews, work clothes, relocation assistance and living expenses. The brochure also informs the youth that they can apply for funds to help them open a business and become independent. The theme of support is evidenced by the multitude of phrases that were

used throughout *Fit for Job*. Figure 6.2 lists the phrases grouped by general support and financial support.

Figure 6.2  
Phrases Used in Youth-Oriented Brochure

- we have a solution
- we support you
- we help you
- we teach you
- we place you
- turn to us
- we are glad to help you
- we are glad to answer your questions in a personal meeting
- we contribute to your costs
- we support you financially
- we sponsor
- we pay for

These groups of phrases centered on the support-theme give rise to a set of legitimation techniques. For the first group, general support, the agency for labor workers are appealing to the youth with authorization. In other words, the agency is presenting the options for the youth by referring to the staff's knowledge and expertise in job, internship and apprenticeship placement as well as their resources in the areas of professional development and language training. For the second group, financial support, the writers are using specification. They clearly specify what items and situations are eligible for financial support. The specification allows the agency workers to broker alliances with the youth, by suggesting working together. The agency for labor is offering a relationship that is beneficial to the youth, but for which the youth has to provide no material things in return.

This encouraging approach and the novel discourse relating to support enable the agency staff to use new methods when dealing with the young unemployed persons. At least statistically, the young 'jobseekers' have a better chance of reintegrating into the job market, so it is understandable that the agencies focus on the youth. By providing professional development opportunities and apprenticeships, the unemployed will gain qualifications needed to become even more competitive in the job market. The discourse developed in respect to the under 25-year-olds allows the agency staff to approach the youth in a friendly, cooperative manner that all but guarantees a positive response from the youth. By using the support-discourse instead of sanctions and threats, the staff may convince the youth to utilize some of their opportunities and thereby help them reintegrate into the job market.

In sum, the brochure addressed to the youth under 25 years of age is in many respects radically different from other external political discourse on unemployment we have analyzed. The writers are using a more positive, almost inspiring approach to informing their young clients of their new opportunities. The brochure fails to include information on sanctions that await those youth who fail to accept certain apprenticeships or jobs that they are placed in. In addition, the writers do not use legitimation techniques like legalization or threat, as we uncovered in communications to the general 'jobseekers'; instead, the writers utilize the brokering of alliances with their clients as well as authorization.

### Conclusion

This chapter analyzed external political discourse on unemployment in Germany. The rhetorical commonplaces deployed in external discourse are much less colorful and diverse than those we encountered in Bundestag speeches. Yet, the themes developed in communications published by the Federal and regional Agencies for Labor are still sufficient to explain the new legislation to the unemployed constituents. External political discourse takes most of its content from the legislation itself. The agency public relations staff does not invent the material it publishes. It is ideologically and factually based on the Hartz-laws. I want to stress again that the external discourse on unemployment developed by the agencies for labor bears obvious resemblance to discourse used in the Bundestag. The agencies, especially the local agencies, do not act independently of overarching political system. That being said, there are still a few novel concepts and legitimation techniques deployed by the agencies that we have not seen in Bundestag discourse.

A first look at the material revealed that many of the rhetorical commonplaces in external discourse are related to taxonomies. The specification of these categories allows the agencies to address a specific clientele. There are six frequently used categories in external political discourse on unemployment, including 'jobseekers', 'persons in need able to work' or 'youth under 25 years of age'. However, most of the brochures, letters and forms analyzed for this study were directed at the overall category of the 'jobseekers'. Prevalent in this discourse are words like 'responsibility' and 'duty' on one hand and 'sanctions' or 'fine' on the other hand.



Legitimation is less of a priority for the agencies for labor. Unlike politicians that are attempting to pass new legislation, the agencies do not have to rationalize the need for implementation of the new law. Nor do they have to justify the importance of the new law and what it might mean for the German economy. Still, the agency is responsible for informing its clients of the new law. Perhaps the most powerful tools for the agencies for labor to legitimate the new legislation to the unemployed are legalization and threat. A nonchalant reference to the legal texts suffices to establish credibility and it legitimates the new rules to the 'jobseekers.' By expanding on the theme of sanctions, the agencies can use threat to sway those people not convinced by legalization. The sanction-theme and emphasis on duties are repeated in the brochure addressed to illegal recipients of unemployment benefits. Yet the legitimation techniques deployed in this specific brochure are surprisingly vague.

There is a completely different set of commonplaces and legitimation techniques deployed in external political discourse on unemployment addressed to the youth under 25 years of age. Writers of the brochure *Fit for Job* use themes related to general support and financial provisions to inform the youth of their new opportunities. The public relations staff responsible for the brochure did not use legitimation techniques like legalization or threat, as they used with the general 'jobseekers.' Instead, the writers attempt to broker alliances with their clients. They also appeal to their expertise through authorization.

Certainly, this chapter has not covered all of the political discourse on unemployment at the local level. As the director of the Stadtroda agency for labor informed my research assistant, much of this external discourse is still in development.

Changes in legislation are implemented in phases – the next one begins January 1, 2006. Therefore, the agencies and their staff are still solidifying political discourse. It is not possible to provide an exhausting analysis of external political discourse on unemployment. But a complete analysis is not necessary to uncover major discursive and legitimating trends in local discourse. This chapter has done just that. The analysis reflects the attempts of the agency staff and public relations personnel to present and legitimate the Hartz-laws.

## CHAPTER 7

### DISCUSSION OF SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

Up to this point, we have considered internal and external discourse on unemployment independent from each other. Especially in the case of political discourse this is an inappropriate way to analyze the data. As discussed at the beginning of Chapter 6, internal political discourse deployed by members of the Bundestag and the federal government has a vast influence on external discourse produced by the federal, regional and local agencies for labor. This chapter will combine the empirical results of Chapters 5 and 6 to explore the similarities as well as differences of internal and external political discourse on unemployment in Germany.

#### Similarities

Scholars that conducted critical discourse analysis on texts from the European Union summits discovered that the primary commonplace in that setting was one relating to fight or struggle. This is the first similarity of internal and external political discourse in Germany. There are traces of the struggle-metaphor throughout German political discourse on unemployment as well. Bundestag speakers refer to the *Kampf gegen die Arbeitslosigkeit* [fight against unemployment], clearly implying that unemployment is undesirable and needs to be destroyed or fought. We find a recurrence

of the struggle/fight metaphor in the brochure *Basic Security for Jobseekers*. The writers of the brochure encourage their clients to use their own strength. Internal and external discourse alike refers to unemployment as something one must use strength to overcome. Internal and external discourse alike thinks of the unemployed as too weak to fulfill this task. Fighting unemployment is a struggle, as discourse at the EU level has suggested, and the unemployed people in Germany – according to Bundestag members and the agencies for labor – are too weak to fight it.

During the Hartz-debates, government leaders such as Secretary of Economy and Labor Clement and Chancellor Schröder were sure to point out that fighting unemployment is the primary goal of the German government. Similarly, the publications from the Federal Agency for Labor posit that the primary goal of the new legislation is the reintegration of the unemployed in the labor market. Thus, a second commonality of the internal and external discourse on unemployment is the attempt to emphasize the importance of the goal, the significance of the work towards that goal and the value of potential successes. The reason for stressing the primacy of legislation to reduce unemployment is perhaps different in the two settings. In the Bundestag, speakers will use the urgent phrasing to speed along the passing of the legislation. In the local setting, emphasis on the ‘primary goal’ tends to encourage the unemployed that something is being done and urge them to contribute to this effort.

A third similarity discovered during the analysis of internal and external discourse on unemployment is the widespread use of taxonomies. In fact, in both settings, the majority of commonplaces referring to the unemployed are descriptions or labels of categories of unemployed persons. Taxonomies allow the speakers to point out

minute differences between groups and clearly include or exclude certain persons. In the case of Bundestag discourse, taxonomies allow the speakers to fine-tune legislation, while in the local setting, the categorization also gives rise to separate legitimation techniques. Interestingly and surprisingly there is not much overlap between the categories chosen to describe the unemployed in the Bundestag and in regional publications. We will discuss those differences in legitimation and categorization in the next section.

Fourth, the Bundestag debates regarding the Hartz-legislation included some reference relating to East and West Germany. Petra Pau, a member of the PDS, and Robert Hochbaum (CDU/CSU) made several remarks regarding the uniqueness of the East German labor market situation. The East-West discourse was sparse in the Bundestag, and it is sparse in the external publications as well. But there are faint traces of the discourse that acknowledge the difference between East and West. For one, the amount of ALG II in the East is slightly lower than in the West. On the other hand, however, the young unemployed in the new *Länder* and areas with especially high unemployment receive additional financial support if they are unemployed for more than three months (Fit for Job 2004).

It is interesting that the East-West discourse found its way into the legislation and the external discourse on unemployment at all. Government speakers and Bundestag members of the governing coalition do not use this rhetoric in their speeches at all. It is always members of the CDU/CSU and the factionless members that appeal to the Bundestag, that East Germany needs 'something different.' Perhaps the opposition parties were able to amend the legislation to reflect those differences. What is more

likely, however, is that the governing parties are aware of those differences but attempt to keep this discourse out of the speeches for other reasons. For example, Chancellor Schröder is determined to unite the country behind Agenda 2010. This goal would be harder to achieve if he continually divided the country into East and West Germans. Perhaps to his dismay, this division has already occurred on another level: chairwoman of the CDU/CSU faction Angela Merkel points out that there is a social cleavage between the unemployed and the working population. According to Merkel, this barrier is the ultimate social question of the German society. For all Bundestag members the goal of the labor market reforms, therefore, is to overcome social cleavages and create a level playing field in the German society.

A fifth, and very prominent, commonality between internal and external discourse on unemployment in Germany is the reference to work shirkers or people that are unwilling to 'bear their share of the social burden'. The Hartz-legislation clearly addresses those 'people in need of aid that refuse an acceptable job' offered by the Agency for Labor. The discourse related to laziness began with Chancellor Schröder's interview in Bild, in which argued, "There is no right to laziness" in Germany. "This means concretely:" he continued, "Those who are able to work but reject a decent job, can lose part of their benefits." This article announced a new rhetoric of individual responsibility that emphasizes that the unemployed not only have rights, but also duties. This ideology made its way into the Hartz-legislation and subsequently, albeit indirectly, into the external discourse on unemployment. To be sure, the publications from the agencies for labor never directly address the unemployed as 'work shirker' and they surely do not tell the 'jobseekers' to get up out of the 'social hammock'. The brochures

do, however, inform the unemployed that they are required (1) to actively participate in the search for a job, (2) they must take acceptable positions offered by the agencies for labor and (3) they will be sanctioned if they refuse to fulfill those duties. Previously, the burden of proof was on the side of the Agency. Now, the unemployed are required to justify why they cannot accept or perform a certain job offered to them.

The laziness discourse fundamentally changes the relationship between the unemployed and the politicians/agency staff. Not only did Hartz-IV shift the burden of proof from the agencies to the recipients of unemployment benefits, the new discourse also eliminated any potential compassion that the unemployed were once awarded. Short of directly blaming the unemployed for the bad labor market and economic situation in Germany, the laziness discourse indirectly accuses the unemployed for contributing to the weak economy by not carrying their fair share of social costs. Both internal and external discourse includes references to the duties the unemployed have, and how these duties will be enforced with the new legislation.

Along the same lines, both types of discourse address the illegal economy, i.e. people who work without paying social contributions. The Bundestag speeches analyzed in this study quite often refer to the 'shadow economy' or 'black economy'. As a result, the internal discourse regarding illegal employment is also reflected in the external publications. In fact, the Federal Agency for Labor published a pamphlet dedicated to just this issue. Recipients of illegal benefits are warned that they may be fined if they are caught.

The similarities in internal and external discourse emanate large due to the new legislation. In other words, the commonalities uncovered during the analysis of both

types of discourse can be traced back first to the Bundestag speeches and second to the agency publications. It is a fact that the federal and regional agencies take their discourse from the legal texts, enabling the writers to utilize a certain legitimation technique, which we will explore below.

### Differences

With all those similarities, there are also several rhetorical commonplaces and themes that did not find their way into the external discourse on unemployment. For one, there is absolutely no evidence of gendered discourse in external publications as there is in the German Bundestag. None of the brochures and letters analyzed in this study contained any reference to the distinctiveness of women. Certainly, the labor market statistics break down the unemployment rate into male and female, but none of the legislation explained in external discourse includes any measures, sanctions or opportunities unique to women. Perhaps the agencies want to avoid discourse that could trigger discriminatory feelings among the unemployed.

Secondly, discourse referring to guidelines or treaties of the European Union is distinct to Bundestag debates. As Chancellor Schröder emphasized, the EU regulations should not be used as an excuse not to work on the cause of the unemployment situation in Germany. Perhaps it is due to this message that EU discourse is kept out of agency for labor publications. What is more likely, however, is that commonplaces regarding EU policy are simply not the most effective choices to be made when composing texts to legitimate the Hartz-legislation.

As mentioned above, there is not much overlap between the categories



used to specify the groups of unemployed in the Bundestag and in regional brochures and letters. This is the third difference uncovered in this study. For one, the taxonomy developed in the Bundestag is far more elaborate than the one used in the local discourse. We uncovered approximately eighteen different categories in Bundestag speeches and only five in the external publications. Additionally, the categories developed in the two settings do not completely match, and the specifications are somewhat incongruent. In the Bundestag, the general population of unemployed persons is referred to as *Arbeitslose* [jobless]. Remember, Chancellor Schröder crudely divided this population into those that are looking for jobs [*Arbeitssuchende*] and those that refuse to take acceptable jobs. In external discourse, however, the overarching category is that of *Arbeitssuchende* [jobseekers] and *Arbeitslose* are simply a subcategory of those in need of aid that are able to work. Whether or not the *Arbeitslosen* refuse to take a job is tertiary in the external taxonomy, perhaps because the sanctions will help keep this group small.

These differences would probably not be apparent to the every-day citizen unless they are studied under a microscope. The specifications only become significant in regards to benefits paid. In this aspect, the local discourse is much more precise in grouping their clients into categories. It seems that Bundestag speakers prefer to use the colloquialism *Arbeitslose* just as many Germans still speak of prices as Marks instead of Euros. There has, however, been an attempt by the Federal Secretary of Economy and Labor to ‘rename’ the unemployed as jobseekers, a slightly more positive term he discovered in British discourse.

Particularly surprising are two commonplaces that are excluded in external discourse: ‘long-term unemployed’ and ‘unmarried young people’. Nowhere in the

brochures, letters and forms analyzed in this study could a reference to 'long-term unemployed' be found. This is astounding as ALG II was specifically designed for long-term unemployed, i.e. those that have been jobless for over one year. In fact, the brochure *Basic Security for Jobseekers* not once mentions the term or the time span in its requirements for receiving ALG II. Yet, the labor market statistics still measure the group separately. Perhaps there is an attempt to eliminate this commonplace from the external discourse because of the stigma attached to it. In much the same way, the emphasis on expecting more mobility from the single youth that was developed in the Bundestag finds no reflection in the external discourse. The *Fit for Job* brochure, especially, would have been a good channel to communicate these expectations to the youth. Instead, the brochure emphasizes financial incentives without mentioning that unmarried young people may be sanctioned if they do not accept positions that require relocation. In their case, the 'important reason' for declining the job is much harder to establish.

A fourth difference uncovered in this analysis is the discourse relating to unemployment as a disease or plague and to the new legislation as a medicine or cure. This metaphor was elaborately used in Bundestag speeches on both sides of the political spectrum, as it allowed speakers to explain the unemployment situation in a visual manner that would encourage parliamentarians to act, or pass the legislation designed to cure the malady. One reason for the lack of the rhetorical commonplace in external discourse might be that the unemployed would take offense to being referred to helpless people. Another possibility is Chancellor Schröder's intention to rid international discourse of the 'German disease' rhetoric.

In general, the discourse developed in the German Bundestag is far more intricate and colorful than external discourse published by the agencies for labor. In a way, the majority of explaining and compelling takes place in the Bundestag, where politicians present legislative proposals and hope to persuade their colleagues to pass certain laws. The purpose of external discourse is merely to present those legislative changes to the unemployed and explain what they mean. There is less of an emphasis on justifying the new laws or elaborating on why and how they came about. This allows the producers of external discourse to be more pragmatic and straightforward in their selection of rhetorical commonplaces.

#### Legitimation

Aside from the similarities and differences of the rhetorical commonplaces themselves, this discourse analysis also uncovered distinct legitimation techniques used by the actors in the two discourse settings. There is considerable overlap in the use of legitimation. Bundestag members and agency staff alike utilize specification. They clearly define unemployment as a problem, a societal and political crisis that needs to be fought and distinctly group the unemployed into categories that allows specific strategies to target each group individually.

Additionally, Bundestag members and agency staff alike use authorization. They address their colleagues and the 'jobseekers' appealing to their technical know-how and professional expertise. This is especially prevalent in speeches of Secretary Clement as well as the brochure *Fit for Job*. Further, Bundestag members and agency staff alike utilize moralization. They refer to the parliamentarians' and

citizens' sense of duty and responsibility to step up and do their part in finding a solution to mass-unemployment. As a result, Bundestag members and agency staff alike use legitimation techniques such as brokering alliances or threat to compel their audience to pass legislation or comply with the new laws.

The distinction occurs in two ways to legitimize that are unique to each discourse setting respectively: derision and legalization. Derision or mockery occurs at the Bundestag level when members of the opposition coalition (CDU/CSU and FDP) use rhetorical commonplaces developed by the governing parties and attempt to tweak their meaning with the goal of discrediting the government's expertise. Obviously, this technique would not be used in external discourse that is in large part influenced by the government. Legalization, on the other hand is unique to the external publications, letters and forms. This technique cannot be deployed until the legislative proposals have in fact become laws. The agency for labor staff is now able to explain and justify the new legislation by referring to legal texts.

## CHAPTER 8

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

#### Summary

This study has analyzed internal and external political discourse on unemployment in Germany. We approached the data with critical discourse analysis and were able to uncover rhetorical commonplaces and nuances of meaning developed during Bundestag debates and speeches related to unemployment reforms as well as brochures, letters and forms published by the federal, regional and local agencies for labor. Placing the discourse into the proper economic and political framework adds to the understanding gained from the empirical analysis.

Political discourse is not developed in a linguistic vacuum. Economic history, social factors and a diverse set of national and international actors exert tremendous influence on the rhetorical commonplaces and legitimation techniques used in the Bundestag and in external publications. Ten years prior, the unemployment discourse did not include terms such as 'jobseekers' and 'sanctions'. Ten years in the future, terms like 'long-term unemployed' and 'German disease' may well have disappeared from the linguistic continuum, in part because the current government is placing some effort on doing so.

The data analyzed in this study show that rhetorical commonplaces

discovered in other European countries and at the EU-level are different than those used in Germany. To be sure, there is a widespread use of taxonomies in all settings, although the categories used are somewhat different. As in Austria, there is an emphasis in Germany on youth unemployment and the need for assistance in that area. Similar to the EU discourse there is some reference to the struggle/fight metaphor in the Bundestag. But political discourse referring to unemployment as a disease; discourse stressing the difference between East and West Germany; the lazy-bum debate and discourse relating to duty and sanctions are unique to the German case.

### Conclusion

Analysis of the German data leads to several conclusions. First, there are a lot of commonalities between political discourse in and outside of the Bundestag. This can be traced back to the fact that external political discourse takes most of its content from the Hartz-laws themselves. The agency for labor staff does not have to invent the material it publishes. It is ideologically and factually based on the new legislation. Therefore, external discourse on unemployment bears obvious resemblance to discourse developed in the Bundestag. The agencies, especially the local agencies, do not act independently of overarching political system.

Concurrently, there are fundamental differences between internal and external discourse. This is the second conclusion. The rhetorical commonplaces we encountered in Bundestag speeches are colorful and intricate. Parliamentarians on both sides of the debate go to great lengths to humanize statistics and describe the unemployment situation in an easily digestible manner. There appears to be a need for

this elaborate discourse when proposing new legislation that may meet widespread opposition. The discourse developed in external publications, on the other hand, is more pragmatic and straightforward. The new legislation allows the writers of agency for labor brochures and letters to merely refer to legal texts, rather than explaining the changes from scratch.

Third, unemployment discourse in Germany is in part similar to that of other European countries and that of the EU. Studies have shown that political speakers in Great Britain use a diverse taxonomy. In fact, German politicians may have borrowed the commonplace 'jobseekers' from this country. Similar to Germany, discourse in Austria includes emphasis on the unemployment situation of the youth. There is also proof that Bundestag members use the discourse developed at the EY-level, where presidency conclusions at EU summits used the struggle/fight metaphor to legitimate policy recommendations. German politicians, not acting in a political vacuum, have indeed adopted some of this rhetoric.

A fourth conclusion is that Germany, nevertheless, has its own unique set of rhetorical commonplaces. Special recognition should be awarded to the disease-metaphor. None of the literature reviewed for this study focused on rhetorical commonplaces relating to disease. Additionally, German political discourse is primarily characterized by the lazy-bum debate and resulting discourse relating to duties and sanctions. Further, discourse addressing the difference between labor markets in East and West Germany are unique to German discourse.

Fifth, and finally, we can conclude that external discourse on unemployment is radically different when addressing the general 'jobseekers' and the

'youth under 25'. The brochure *Fit for Job* explains the legislative advantages for the young unemployed in a positive, encouraging tone. The writers deploy a completely contrasting set of commonplaces and legitimation techniques. While recipients of ALG II are informed of their duties and responsibilities as well as potential sanctions and fines, the youth learns about opportunities. In addition, the public relations staff responsible for the brochure did not use legitimation techniques like legalization or threat, as they used with the general 'jobseekers.' Instead, the writers attempt to broker alliances with their clients and appeal to the expertise of the agency staff through authorization.

#### Suggestions for Future Research

The EU leadership is alarmed by weak economies in many of its member states. Mass unemployment, especially in its largest country (by population and GDP), can only have long-term negative effects on the Union as a whole. Further, common policies cannot have the same desired effects in nations as diverse as Germany and Cyprus. Ideally, then, scholars should conduct critical discourse analyses in each of the twenty-five EU member states, concluding the project with an overarching comparison study. This set of studies could help EU leaders understand unemployment policies in the member states and perhaps aid in developing and legitimating a European model of the welfare state.

It is more important, however, to expand the scholarly literature on non-EU countries, especially the United States. Political discourse on unemployment is liable to be very different in this country. As the US is a world leader in many aspects, and also a principal ally of the EU, it can only be to the benefit of EU leaders to understand the



fundamental differences in each other's approach to labor market policies.

Pertinent to this study, however, I want to stress that discourse on unemployment, whether political or social, has gone understudied in Germany. This project is an attempt to fill this void. It would be interesting to replicate this study with data from the four Christian-democratic Kohl-administrations, with special focus on the reunification years, and then compare those results with discourse from the current social-democrat administration. I also suggest to repeat this study in several years time to explore whether rhetorical commonplaces such as 'disease' and 'long-term unemployed' have truly disappeared from the discourse – something the current government seems intent on doing.

Additionally, because unemployment discourse in Germany has been understudied, this study has had to focus more on the characterization of rhetorical commonplaces and somewhat less on the interaction of those commonplaces in internal debates and external discourse. With the results of this study, therefore, other scholars should now conduct studies of interactive debates and strategies to further explore the interaction of rhetorical commonplaces in political discourse on unemployment in Germany.

## APPENDIX A

### SPEECH TRANSCRIPTS IN THEIR ORIGINAL LANGUAGE

#### **Example 1**

**43th Session of the Bundestag; 8 May, 2003**

**Klaus Brandner (SPD):**

Völlig klar ist doch, dass die Bekämpfung der Arbeitslosigkeit tatsächlich das wichtigste Ziel in der Gesellschaft und in der Politik ist.

...

Wir sollten gemeinsam daran arbeiten, die Arbeitslosigkeit abzubauen, anstatt uns regelmäßig Ihre Sprechblasen anhören zu müssen.

...

Mit der Agenda 2010 haben wir die notwendigen Schritte eingeleitet. Dazu gehören ein aktiver Sozialstaat, das Konzept "Fördern und Fordern" als generelles Prinzip, die Durchführung von Strukturreformen, die effiziente Sozialsysteme organisieren, wie auch geringe Einschnitte, die aufgrund der Demographie notwendig sind.

Wir stellen uns der Verantwortung. Wir setzen alles daran, die Wachstums- und Vertrauenskrise zu überwinden. Sie aber setzen scheinbar alles daran, die Vertrauenskrise erst herzustellen. Damit helfen Sie keinem Arbeitslosen in diesem Land. Das sollten Sie sich bewusst machen.

#### **Example 4**

**8th Session of the Bundestag; 7 November, 2002**

**Wolfgang Clement**

Außerdem wollen wir weg von dem starren Amtsapparat der Arbeitsverwaltung hin zu einem kundenorientierten Handeln.

...

Darüber hinaus müssen Arbeitslose verstärkt in die Pflicht genommen werden. Wir müssen stärker auf die Eigenbemühungen von Menschen drängen, die von Arbeitslosigkeit betroffen sind. Deshalb verlangen wir mit diesem Gesetzentwurf eine größere Bereitschaft zur Mobilität, die wir auch fördern. Mobilität wird besonders dann erwartet, wenn die familiäre Situation einen Wechsel des Wohnortes über den üblichen Pendlerbereich hinaus zulässt. Das gilt vor allen Dingen für ledige, jüngere Menschen, denen dies abverlangt werden kann.

...

Oftmals geht es darum, Defizite in der beruflichen Bildung auszugleichen, einen Berufsabschluss nachzuholen oder sich neue Qualifikationen anzueignen, wenn ein einmal erzielter Berufsabschluss keine Verwendung mehr findet. Deshalb geht es auch um die Förderung der beruflichen Weiterbildung Arbeitsloser.

...

Ich komme damit zu einer weiteren Herausforderung, die sich uns stellt, und zwar zu der Gruppe der älteren Arbeitnehmerinnen und Arbeitnehmer, die, wenn sie von Arbeitslosigkeit betroffen sind, besondere Probleme haben.

**Example 5**

**'State of the Country' Address of the Chancellor: Mut zum Frieden und zur Veränderung  
32. Session of the Bundestag; 14 March, 2003**

**Gerhard Schröder, Chancellor:**

Ich akzeptiere nicht, dass Menschen, die arbeiten wollen und können, zum Sozialamt gehen müssen, während andere, die dem Arbeitsmarkt womöglich gar nicht zur Verfügung stehen, Arbeitslosenhilfe beziehen.

(Friedrich Merz [CDU/CSU]: Deswegen wird jetzt die Statistik geändert!)

Ich akzeptiere auch nicht, dass Menschen, die gleichermaßen bereit sind zu arbeiten, Hilfen in unterschiedlicher Höhe bekommen. Ich denke, das kann keine erfolgreiche Integration sein.

...

Niemandem aber wird künftig gestattet sein, sich zulasten der Gemeinschaft zurückzulehnen.

Wer zumutbare Arbeit ablehnt - wir werden die Zumutbarkeitskriterien verändern -, der wird mit Sanktionen rechnen müssen.

...

Natürlich ist es ein Gebot der Moral und der Solidarität, Schwarzarbeit gesellschaftlich zu ächten, es ist aber auch ein Gebot der gesellschaftlichen und ökonomischen Vernunft. Wir haben bereits durch die Hartz-Reform legale Beschäftigung attraktiver gemacht.

...

Wir werden das Arbeitslosengeld für die unter 55-Jährigen auf zwölf und für die über 55-Jährigen auf 18 Monate begrenzen, weil dies notwendig ist, um die Lohnnebenkosten im Griff zu behalten.

**Example 6:**

**32nd Session of the Bundestag; 14 March, 2003**

**84th Session of the Bundestag; 19 December 2003**

**Gerhard Schröder, Chancellor**

Alle Kräfte der Gesellschaft werden ihren Beitrag leisten müssen: Unternehmer und Arbeitnehmer, freiberuflich Tätige und auch Rentner. Wir werden eine gewaltige gemeinsame Anstrengung unternehmen müssen, um unser Ziel zu erreichen.

-

Ich bin denjenigen in der Opposition und unter den Ministerpräsidenten, die mitgeholfen haben, durchaus dafür dankbar und will anerkennen, dass auch sie einen Anteil daran haben, dass es nicht zuletzt auch nach dem Urteil des Auslandes - man sollte sich das einmal genauer anschauen - vorbei sein wird mit dem Gerede über "German disease", die "deutsche Krankheit" also.

**Example 7**

**43rd Session of the Bundestag; 8 May, 2003**

**67th Session of the Bundestag; 17 October, 2003**

**Johannes Singhammer (CDU/CSU):**

Alle von Rot-Grün verabreichten und angepriesenen Heilmittel haben sich als wirkungslos erwiesen: das JUMP-Programm - ein Flop, das Job-AQTIV-Programm - eine Luftblase, das als Breitbandtherapeutikum angepriesene Hartz-Konzept - ohne erkennbare Wirkung,

(Dirk Niebel [FDP]: Placebo!)

...

Statt die Menschen von der Seuche Arbeitslosigkeit zu befreien, weitet sich die Beschäftigungslosigkeit in epidemischer Form zum Flächenbrand aus.

-  
Das Krebsgeschwür der Arbeitslosigkeit bekämpft man nicht mit Kamillentee. Rot-Grün hat nicht mehr die Kraft, die notwendige wirksame Medizin für einen Gesundungsprozess des Arbeitsmarkts zu verabreichen.

(Gerd Andres [SPD]: Donnerwetter!)

Ich sage das ohne Häme. Wir würden uns freuen, wenn Sie bessere Ergebnisse erzielen würden und erzielt hätten. Aber die weich gespülten Hartz-III- und Hartz-IV-Konzepte sind ebenso wenig die richtige Arznei gegen die wuchernde Arbeitslosigkeit wie alle anderen zuvor von Ihnen angepriesenen Arzneimittel.

...

Die Menschen in Deutschland haben deshalb das Vertrauen in all Ihre Rezepte, die Sie jetzt wieder neu ankündigen, verloren. Die Zeit ist zu kostbar, um mit neuen Placebos die Arbeitslosigkeit zu bekämpfen.

...

All Ihre Rezepte haben nicht zu einem erkennbaren Gesundungsprozess am Arbeitsmarkt geführt. Es wird Zeit für eine neue Politik, die bei den Menschen wieder Vertrauen erzeugt und die nachprüfbar neue Arbeitsplätze schafft. Sozial ist es nicht, wenn man nur über neue Arbeitsplätze spricht; sozial ist, nachprüfbar neue Arbeitsplätze zu schaffen. Dieses Ziel haben Sie bisher nicht erreicht und werden es auch mit diesem Placebogesetz nicht erreichen.

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