

Norway on a High in the North

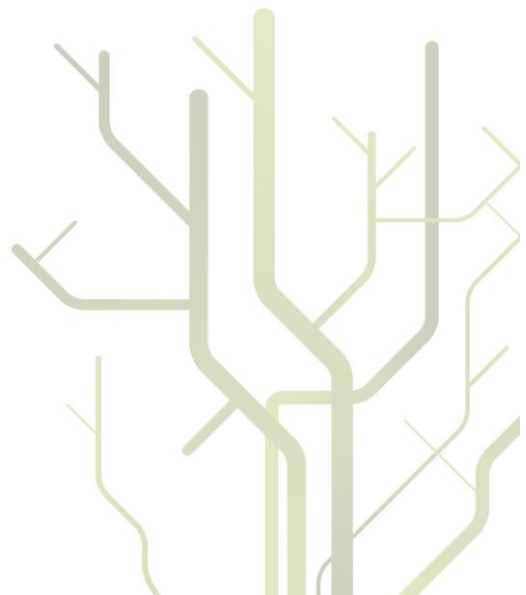
A discourse analysis of policy framing



Leif Christian Jensen

A dissertation for the degree of
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Contents

Acknowledgements	v
Introduction	1
What we know and how we know it	2
Bridging the gap	3
Outline	4
Five short stories	5
1 Framing the High North: Public discourses in Norway after 2000 By Leif Christian Jensen & Geir Hønneland Published in <i>Acta Borealia</i> 2011	5
2 Approaching the North: Norwegian and Russian foreign policy discourses on the European Arctic By Leif Christian Jensen & Pål Wilter Skedsmo Published in <i>Polar Research</i> 2010	6
3 Petroleum Discourses in the European Arctic: The Norwegian case By Leif Christian Jensen Published in <i>Polar Record</i> 2007	9
4 Seduced and surrounded by security: A post-structuralist take on Norwegian High North securitizing discourses Submitted to <i>Co-operation & Conflict</i> in May 2011	12
5 Norwegian petroleum extraction in Arctic waters to save the environ- ment: Introducing ‘discourse co-optation’ as a new analytical term Published in <i>Critical Discourse Studies</i> 2012 (December 2011 online edition)	15
Five short stories – one bigger narrative	17
Boiling down – or not	17
A tabloid distillation	18
National identity	20
Supressed regional and local identities	21
Discourse co-optation in practice	23
My hook-up to the world: Discourse analysis as theory and methodology in this project	25
A full package	29
Subjective science and relativism	31
This study as a case study	33
Generalization (im)possibilities	35

The <i>Narrative</i> as a way out	37
Authenticity and plausibility	38
Research setting	41
Newspapers as data	42
Primary texts as data	44
The sandwich method	45
Follow the data	48
A community of (co-)authors	49
The invisible author	52
References	55
Articles 1–5	

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Leif Christian Jensen

North

Look North more often.

Go against the wind, you'll get ruddy cheeks.

Find the rough path. Keep to it.

It's shorter.

North is best.

**Winter's flaming sky, summer-
night's sun miracle.**

Go against the wind. Climb mountains.

Look north.

More often.

This land is long.

Most is north.¹

Rolf Jacobsen (1993)

¹ The Norwegian Foreign Minister, Jonas Gahr Støre opened his lecture at the University of Tromsø, 29 April 2010, with this poem and explained his personal relationship to it: 'I would like you to accompany me on a journey through the High North initiative: the story itself, the one which was, which is and which lies ahead of us. A story that can be described by one of my greatest sources of inspiration, Rolf Jacobsen's celebrated poem with the line – Det meste er nord (Most is north), from his collection of poems *Nattåpent* (All Night Open) (1985), written at the age of 78, rich in experience, pensive in mood – where he urges us to do precisely what we are doing, and not just us, but a whole world: *Se oftere mot nord!* (Look North more often!)' (Støre, 2010).

Introduction

The Government regards the Northern Areas as Norway's most important strategic target area in the years to come. The Northern Areas have gone from being a security policy deployment area to being an energy policy power centre and an area that faces great environmental policy challenges. This has changed the focus of other states in this region. The handling of Norwegian economic interests, environmental interests and security policy interests in the North are to be given high priority and are to be seen as being closely linked (Soria Moria declaration 2005:7).

In the autumn of 2005, the Norwegian High North initiative was born. The overarching theme of my thesis is this political undertaking, understood from a post-structuralist perspective. There existed no such thing as a concerted, coherent Norwegian High North policy before 2005.² Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg broadens its description in his foreword to the Government's High North Strategy (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2006:5):

This is more than foreign politics, and much more than domestic politics. It's about our ability to continue the tradition of responsible resource stewardship, recognisable assertion of sovereignty and close co-operation with neighbours, partners and allies. But it is also about a broad, long-term mobilisation of our own capacities and resources to promote development of the whole of Northern Norway. This isn't just a project for the North. It is a project for the whole country and the most northern parts of Europe – of importance for the whole Continent.

With these words the Prime Minister captures some of the essence of what I have sought to grasp and examine in this thesis. It is precisely the complexity and highly ambitious, almost all-embracing content of the initiative that I strive to describe, illuminate and analyse here. The High North initiative is a political undertaking with a multi-generational horizon, according to the government, and 'will succeed if we can achieve the standard of cohesion that should inform the politics of the twenty-

² Norway certainly had a policy on the High North and it was very much alive before this point in time, but it was usually referred to and understood as 'Russia policy' (*Russlandspolitik*). *Nærområdepolitikk* was the usual term for 'policy relating to Norway's immediate neighbours', in contexts involving islands to the west like the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Iceland, in addition to Russia to the east. After the Arctic Council was established in 1996, the term 'international Arctic politics' was often used with reference to the activities of that body. The High North was obviously important in Norwegian foreign policy throughout the Cold War, but the term was seldom used as such. The official focus was on Norway's security, narrowly defined, in the north. Norway and the Soviet Union were on opposite sides in the Cold War; indeed, the Kola Peninsula in Murmansk *oblast* became one of the most militarized areas on the planet.

first century: the ability to see across sectors, the ability to work together, public and private, the ability to strengthen our relations with other countries, and to enter into new common ventures and partnerships' (Støre 2010).

What we are presented with in the High North initiative is a grand, sometimes almost grandiose narrative. But it is more than an intriguing story. Its discourses materialize through various forms of institutionalization and official policy documents, academic and non-academic journals. These discourses have very 'real' and political ramifications, in addition to being of academic and political interest in their own right.

I have found that the High North narrative is a story about who we are as Norwegians, who we should aspire to become and where Northern Norway and Norway fit in the wider world. The Norwegian government is seeking to 'update our mental maps, draw lessons from history – but also adjust our normal ways of thinking, where we have learned to read the signs, the good and the bad omens, so we see a friend where we once saw an enemy, a challenge where we saw a danger, an opportunity where we saw a problem' (Støre 2010). This initiative seems to be as much about how we view ourselves as Norwegians, how we view Russia and how the people of Northern Norway should perceive themselves.

What we know and how we know it

Much research has been published internationally – not least by Norwegian research centres – touching on the elements of the government's commitment to the High North. My contribution is sited primarily within this literature, which in different ways has informed and inspired this study. At the intersection of law and politics, concerns about the Arctic Ocean, Arctic shipping and particularly Svalbard-related issues have been raised and discussed by, i.a., Jensen (2008, 2010, 2011), Jensen and Rottem (2010), Pedersen (2008a, 2008b, 2009), Pedersen and Henriksen (2009). Moe (2006, 2010) is among those who have sought to explain Russia's petroleum ambitions in the North. Various questions arising from the international regimes on issues like protection of the natural environment, law etc. as it applies to the Arctic and northerly areas have been discussed by Stokke (2007, 2009, 2010, 2011), and

Stokke and Hønneland (2007). Hønneland (2012), among others, examines the joint Norwegian–Russian fisheries management regime, a system set up to deal with a matter of great importance in the Arctic. This literature encompasses a thematically expansive and crucially important area in a High North connection. It also provides many interesting empirical *explanations* and causal relations.

Kristoffersen and Young (2009) have considered the concept of ‘security’ in relation to energy in the High North, while Åtland (2008), Åtland and Pedersen (2008), Åtland and Ven Bruusgård (2009) have focused on securitization theory in relation to Russia and the European Arctic. I would place these latter contributions in a sort of intermediate category on a traditional positivist–constructivist continuum, tending towards constructivism, although their basic premise remains the rationalist perspectives common to most social science studies of the High North, where the political initiative is taken as given, forming the backdrop or point of departure for empirical studies.

Bridging the gap

It is my hope that this study can round out and inform the literature by providing insights and understanding of the High North initiative and ‘how we landed here’ (Neumann 2008:76–77). There is, then, a certain amount of literature on how Norway’s position on the North is affected by external forces, but as yet little has been written on the influence Norway itself brings to bear on matters concerning the North. How do Norwegian constructions of the North affect Norway, the North and the rest of the world? This is what I aim to show. I have sought to shed light on different aspects of this initiative through certain central nodal points of the High North initiative. These are identified through discourse and may be termed *security*, *Russia*, *environment* and *natural resources*. Each of the five articles presented here deals with one or more of these nodal points. They are all closely connected – often with clear intertextuality and interdiscursivity – and are all pieces of the larger High North puzzle and contribute to shape a fuller picture. At the same time, each of the articles tells its own, unique story and is a novel case study in its own right, uncovering and developing insights – both empirical and theoretical.

As to the dissertation's contributions in adding to both the literature on discourse analysis and securitization theory, articles four and five respectively (2012a, 2012b) are perhaps the most significant. On the other hand, even though these two articles may make the most visible theoretical contributions, all five also exist on a level above the empirical, seeking to add to the discourse literature either by 'testing' a theoretical aspect or empirically showing how a theoretical axiom may look empirically. For example, the first article (Jensen and Hønneland 2010) shows how discourses are traceable in history. In the second article, my co-author and I use discourse analysis to illustrate the power inherent in texts in their own right, and how an understanding of discourse is important for a fuller picture of how foreign policy is constructed (Jensen and Skedsmo 2010).

In addition, I have drawn on a relatively broad and varied literature from a range of disciplines in constructing the five articles as well as this introductory part of the dissertation. Most of this literature has not featured together before, at least not in this shape or form. The way I have 'made space for' and positioned this dissertation in the literature can also be seen as a sincere attempt at making a valuable contribution to opening up some new angles and perspectives within my own field, political science.

Outline

This framework chapter is a postscript written in order to position my study, give context to the articles and offer insight into the highly non-linear nature of the (almost any) research process. A summary of the five articles indicates how each addresses the five problem statements, their interconnectedness and how they all tell their own High North story while – when read together – contributing to the larger story about Norway and the High North. I then reflect on how they are connected and how they contribute both empirically and theoretically. Next, I step back and discuss in some detail the relevant theory and methodology issues, before elaborating on the research setting, including the choice, strengths and weaknesses of data. Finally, I share some of my experiences regarding the research and publication process.

Five short stories

The five articles should be read as ‘short stories’, each containing thousands of pages of invisible text. Confined within a very small space, and seeking to portray some kind of truth, these accounts are indeed non-fiction: subjective short stories that bring together events and actions to make them cohere into, or express some unity – in themselves and in relation to the larger story about how the High North initiative is framed and construed in official and public discourse in Norway.

1 Framing the High North: Public discourses in Norway after 2000. By Leif Christian Jensen & Geir Hønneland. Published in *Acta Borealia* 2011

The article carves out and presents an overview of the main public debates in Norway that have framed and defined the High North since the turn of the millennium. The data stem from a large corpus of texts retrieved through structured searches in the press data-base Retriever for the period 1 January 2000 to 31 December 2006. For the purpose of the study, Geir Hønneland and I undertook a systematic, chronological and extensive qualitative reading of 3,043 articles from four selected Norwegian newspapers *Aftenposten*, *Dagens Næringsliv*, *Klassekampen* and *Nordlys*. The discussion centres on what we identified as three overarching, interconnected narratives, each of which captures the essence of the public discourses in Norway on the High North in the years 2000–2006. We called these narratives *Fragments from the 1990s*, *The great narrative of the High North*, and *Mixing cold water with hot blood*. We provide a synopsis of the main public debates in Norway and how the newspaper pieces framed and defined the High North, discursively and politically.

In our discourse genealogy analysis, we found no mention at all of the High North as a discursive and politically coherent concept in the first half of the decade. The press used the term sparingly; when it did appear, it echoed the understanding of the 1990s, a clear case of what we took as interdiscursivity. These pieces in the print media, then, constituted the narrative *Fragments from the 1990s*. By 2004, the frequency with which ‘High North’ appeared in the press increased fivefold. It marked

the beginning of the wide-ranging but intense discursive mobilization under the banner ‘it’s happening in the North’, which crystallized into *The great narrative of the High North*. When the Russians decided in 2006 to shelve the Shtokman gas project by the Barents Sea, some Norwegians began condemning Norway’s environmental performance in northwest Russia, and public opinion followed suit. Trepidation replaced the sense of optimism created by the notion of an energy-rich North, prompting an exercise in collective soul-searching – similar to that of the early years of the decade, characterized in our third narrative as *Mixing cold water with hot blood*.

I believe the type of discursive changes documented in this article really do reflect real changes of policy on the High North – and indeed on other policy areas that come under the scrutiny of intense public debate and appraisal, although that point is not in focus in the article – just as concrete policy steps constitute the discourses about those very steps. Discourse analysis allows us to investigate and chronicle how Norwegian public discourses on the High North are socially produced, framed and maintained while also remaining in flux and ready to take ‘new’ directions.

2 Approaching the North: Norwegian and Russian foreign policy discourses on the European Arctic. By Leif Christian Jensen & Pål Wilter Skedsmo. Published in *Polar Research* 2010

In this article, Pål Wilter Skedsmo and I identified the various official foreign policy discourses on the European Arctic in Norway and Russia, and how these governments perceived, understood, framed and presented the challenges in their respective countries. Applying a discourse analytical approach, we set out to discover how the Norwegian government framed its ‘High North’ strategy, and how the Russian government framed *its* approach to the European Arctic.

Our empirical data were obtained from a study of primary texts on both sides: white papers, official reports, speeches and strategies. The Norwegian approach to the High North was at the centre of a powerful official discourse that emanated from a robust and broad domestic discursive mobilization. New life was given to a certain

idea of the High North by a discourse revolving around the possibility that the Barents Sea could become a new and strategically important source of oil and gas. Evidence of that discourse was already present in nascent form in government documents before the High North was declared a top political priority in the autumn 2005, and this early discourse contained certain nodal points that helped to fix the emergent discourses.

Perceptions and discourses evolving around nodal points are embedded in the histories and political traditions of both Norway and Russia. From the empirical data, we identified four nodal points around which the Norwegian and Russian foreign policy discourses on the European Arctic evolved: these were energy, security, economy and the environment. They are perhaps not surprising in themselves, but by identifying them and how they were emphasized in the discourses, we felt we could shed fresh light on Norwegian and Russian approaches to the European Arctic.

As noted, central to the Norwegian approach to the High North is the powerful official discourse that resulted from a lively, wide-ranging domestic discursive mobilization. Norway's official messages were consistent in seeking to combine global status as a small state with energy-driven ambitions for the European Arctic. This dual role of small state and big player resulted in a foreign policy discourse that seemed to be as much about attracting the attention and support of friends and allies as it was about minimizing outside interference in what Norway saw as its sphere of interest. The government was keen to leave open as many options as possible, and its approach was coherent in the sense of subsuming everything associated with the North, from fisheries and indigenous peoples to the protection of endangered species.

The official Norwegian discourse surfed on an energy wave – on the idea of the European Arctic as the region's and even the world's new source of oil and gas: a petroleum province. Possessing highly advanced technology, but without further viable known reserves, Norway remained firmly committed to the pursuit of mutually beneficial relations with Russia.

The main feature of the European Arctic to both countries was its potential as a resource province, whereas the explicit emphasis on security varied. The discourses

in both countries, nevertheless, veered towards the protection of national interests, with the Russian rhetoric significantly more assertive than Norway's. Calls for collaboration in business development have certainly been an issue, especially when the much-debated Shtokman field is in the picture. But as Norway expressed fresh optimism after StatoilHydro was taken on board by the Russians, Norway still seem to have a problem with its image at home and abroad. The precarious nature of projecting a credible image as a global leader in 'environmental friendliness' while at the same time running an economy that has remained hostage to fossil fuels became particularly apparent regarding the High North. It was not easy to convince public opinion of Norway's credibility as a steward and protector of the fragile European Arctic environment while the country continued to reap sizable revenues from petroleum extraction in the very same region.

In Norway, the debate on whether to proceed with oil and gas extraction in the Barents Sea, and if so how, pitted economic development against protection. According to the argument for extraction, it would be better for the environment if Norwegian petroleum companies did the drilling, because they know more about environmentally-friendly drilling than their Russian counterparts. Indeed, the assumption that Norway is a better friend of the environment than Russia has remained largely unquestioned in the Norwegian public sphere, as noted in article number three, 'Petroleum Discourses in the European Arctic' (Jensen 2007).

Given that Norway and Russia share the same four nodal points, a natural question is whether their approaches are really so different after all. Both countries are producers and share complementary needs and assets. And whereas Russia admits to a lack of expertise drilling offshore in demanding conditions such as the Arctic, Norway is worried about the decline in viable petroleum fields in its own part of the Barents Sea. Because discursive and material forces are pulling from different directions, commitment to further bilateral co-operation would not necessarily be plain sailing.

3 Petroleum discourses in the European Arctic: the Norwegian case. By Leif Christian Jensen. Published in *Polar Record* 2007

My relationship to this article can best be described as one of ‘love–hate’, as the publishing process raised quite a few issues for me. Despite these, however, the article is in many ways the most crucial of the five, the ‘hub’ of this dissertation. Apart from its being my first scholarly article in a peer-reviewed international journal, it led directly to both the developing of the theory article (number five) and to the security article (number four), which I perhaps ‘love’ the most due to their originality and because of all the ‘lonely suffering’ they caused me during their genesis.

At any rate, in article three I set out to show how discursive expressions of Norway’s ambitions to exert influence in the field of energy in the North manifested themselves and sought legitimacy in the public eye. This involved, more precisely, studying how certain properties ascribed to Russia in the Norwegian debate were used to justify why Norway should begin producing oil in the Barents Sea ‘as soon as possible’.

The data came from an explorative, qualitative review of 1,200 articles in the Norwegian newspapers *Aftenposten*, *Dagens Næringsliv*, *Nordlys* and *Klassekampen* published between 1 December 2003 and 4 October 2005 (Atekst 2005). By aggregating the many aspects of the debate into two dissimilar but overlapping positions, I could identify two principal discourses. These two, referred to as the *pro-oil production* and *anti-oil production discourse*, were rivals for hegemony under a discourse order whose two pivots were Russia and the environment.

The most conspicuous thing about the pro-oil production discourse is its resemblance to a pro-environment discourse, but in reverse. Rather than cautioning against producing oil in the Barents Sea for the sake of the environment, the discourse urged starting as early as possible, because only then could we help the Russians improve *their* environmental performance. The first assumption here is thus that Russia intends to go ahead, with or without Norway. The second says that Russia’s offshore petroleum industry has neither the will nor the ability to comply

with sound environmental standards. It is crucial for Norway to take action now in the Barents Sea: Norway must get there first and set an example of environmental management for the Russians to follow. In my reading, this discourse is interesting for several reasons.

First, that anyone could think of urging Norway to start drilling for gas and oil in the Barents Sea precisely in order to save the environment, is striking in itself and difficult to fathom unless we know how the Norwegian public views Russia and its environmental record. Second, by using this line of reasoning, advocates successfully defuse the main argument of the opposition: that the only way to save the environment is *not* to conduct drilling. The article shows how a discourse in which oil production would, according to the argument, benefit both the environment and Russia basically outclassed the opponents of production by taking their argument and turning it on its head. By drawing on environmental discourses, creative discourse actors managed to defuse the leading argument of their opponents – and that is the basis of the development of the theory contribution in article five.

Using environmental safety arguments to speed up the start of oil production in the Barents Sea would work only if Russia could be seen as an environmental slouch. Interestingly, this view seemed to rely more on images showing dangerous nuclear waste on the Kola Peninsula, toxic ‘death clouds’ and ‘black tree stumps’ of the 1990s, than on factual information on Russia’s current offshore technology. In fact, Russian technology was hardly ever mentioned in the Norwegian debate, whereas connections were drawn readily and creatively between decontaminating nuclear waste and oil production. The idea of Russia as an environmental laggard was apparently taken at face value by participants in the Norwegian petroleum debate, and cannot have been based on first-hand observations of Russian oil industry, environmental standards or their enforcement. In the same debate, ecology played a key role in positioning Norway as a leader in environmental protection, and Russia as a country besieged by environmental problems and inadequate technology. Indeed, that general picture was widely accepted by opponents and advocates alike.

Russia, then, is central to the Norwegian petroleum debate, but mainly in partnership with the environmental argument. The combination of Russia and the environment also seems to have helped in creating what became a generally accepted logic according to which Norway should produce oil in the Barents Sea. Insofar as the *drilling for the environment* rhetoric made an impact on public opinion, the environment in terms of legitimacy and conceptual framework came to acquire a very different significance than its traditional sense of conservation of the environment.

What sort of impact might these findings have on today's debate in Norway on oil production in the Barents Sea? Judging from the anti-production discourse as I describe it in this article, the anti-production lobby is not likely to succeed, given both the successful appropriation of the environmental argument by the yes-to-drilling camp, and broad consensus on the environmental benefits to be reaped by Norway starting production as soon as possible.

Turning to the wider discussion on Norway's relations with Russia, according to my data, how we characterize Russia will continue to depend largely on the context. Our positioning of 'ourselves' and the Russians does not appear to have changed much despite Russia having something Norway would like to have – massive hydrocarbon deposits in the Barents Sea. Thus, certain actors, particularly corporate actors in Northern Norway and the petroleum industry in general, are beginning to use terms like 'energy partner', 'oil nation like us' in reference to Russia, rather than depicting it as a country in need of Norwegian help to run its offshore oil ventures without damaging the environment.

This is still only a slight change, and as yet it has not fundamentally changed our image of Russia (or ourselves as a consequence) or the part we let it play in our High North debate. But the discourse order is never completely cut and dried; there is a constant discursive struggle to 'own' the environmental argument relating to Russia's role in the petroleum debate.

While I was writing that article, my data seemed to indicate a new discursive shift in the genre of the Norwegian petroleum debate I had been studying. It was the

geopolitical or strategic dimension which had received attention during part of the analytical period, but had yet to mature into what we would recognize today as a full-blown discourse. I ended the 2007 article with these words: ‘It will be interesting to observe international politics in the Arctic regions led by US, EU and Russia and whether rhetoric and realpolitik might not facilitate the emergence of a new strategy discourse in the Norwegian petroleum debate as well’ (Jensen 2007:252– 253). That was what I set out to explore in the government and the public discourse; it eventually became article number four of this dissertation.

4 Seduced and surrounded by security: A post-structuralist take on Norwegian High North securitizing discourses. Submitted to *Co-operation & Conflict* in May 2011

Revised and resubmitted in April 2012 in accordance with the reviewers comments. Awaiting final decision from the editors as per June 2012.

I examine in this article certain discursive practices that gained traction in the wake of and arguably thanks to the Norwegian government’s 2005 High North Initiative: discursive practices on re-securitization. As explained in greater detail in the article, I apply a discourse analytical approach coupled with elements of the Copenhagen School’s securitization theory. I wished to illuminate discursive features ‘arising from an ever-stronger focus on and ever-widening conception of security’. Had Norway’s ambitious political undertaking of 2005, the High North Initiative, initiated discursive processes which re-focused attention on the security of the High North, and indeed led to its deployment within a growing number of policy areas?

With growing concern for the security of energy supplies, the High North again became a subject of high politics. This was a manifestation of what I believed to have discovered in the previous article (number 3 in this dissertation) back in 2007. If my assertion at the time was correct, what was happening would be in flagrant contradiction to Norway’s post-Cold War security and foreign policy and its stated objectives.

I also wanted to show, in line with discourse analysis and the project’s overarching objective, how current security perceptions are informed by the past, and

how conceptions and understandings of security are relational and ever-changing. More specifically, I have added to the recent debate on securitization theory by agreeing with and expanding on a post-structuralist analytical perspective, to enable us to understand the theory as describing a discursive process more than a speech act. In turn, this will recognize the theory's *audience* as something far more than mere passive recipients of a securitizing move understood as a one-way speech act.

To capture as much as possible of the 'collective' perception of security in the North, I grounded my analysis on empirical data derived from Norwegian primary texts and Norwegian media. These texts, a broad range dating from 1999 to 2010, helped me shed light on and document Norwegian discourses on security in the High North and how energy became a crucial element of security thinking. The documents include all government white papers published in the analytical period 2000–2010, along with other defence-related documents. I also examined all annual statements of the Minister of Foreign Affairs to the Norwegian Parliament between 2000 and 2010 and all Defence Minister's lectures at Oslo Military Society (Oslo Militære Samfund). These various statements, speeches and lectures provided an excellent survey of contemporary foreign relations and security thinking and assessments, in addition to the priorities of military policy.

As with Jensen (2007), Hønneland & Jensen (2008), Jensen & Hønneland (2011) and Jensen (2012), all of which discuss various aspects of the Norwegian High North initiative, I drew on Retriever's Atekst data-base for information on what I call the 'public discourse' on the High North. The four newspapers are the same as before: *Aftenposten*, *Dagens Næringsliv*, *Klassekampen* and *Nordlys*. My intention was to assess how well and in what manner the debates in the papers echoed and took issue with ministerial attempts at defining reality and setting the political agenda. I hoped these newspapers' various alignments and affiliations (see page 44 for more on this) – geographical as much as political – would provide more evidence of what can be called processes of one or more securitization discourses. The media debate data-set consisted of 1,133 articles, all containing variants of the search words 'High North' and 'Security'.

The evidence from my data analysis seemed to give rather mixed signals on the question of securitization. There was a stabilization mode; it dominated spatially and conceptually. But there was also the new ‘high politics’ issue of ‘energy security’, which occurred with increasing frequency in connection with matters relating to the High North. The question of energy was becoming politicized, in contrast to established approaches in Norway. The data revealed a rapid broadening of the concept of security.

At the same time, the highlighted importance of energy and of Norway’s role as an energy superpower fuelled the escalating dynamics of the media debate. On the one side, more and more themes became the subject of what I called ‘securitizing discursive processes’ – as shown, for example, by the increasingly recurrent use in public documents of terms like ‘human security’, ‘societal security’, ‘energy security’, ‘environmental security’ etc. As the idea of High North security dilated and expanded, everything seemed to acquire significance in a security sense, not least in light of the safety dimension, helped in part by a linguistic peculiarity of the Norwegian language.³

To gain admittance and credibility in the discourse, participants had to be able to ‘speak security’ on all manner of subjects. The politicization of energy appears to have opened a door through which ‘security’ again could colonize the discourses. There was increasing concern for security in Western societies, especially after the events of 9/11, at the individual and aggregate level, and this resonated particularly strongly in Norwegian High North discourses. The collective sense of vulnerability created a sort of scholastic renaissance for realism and state-centrism. Indeed, as far as Norway is concerned, sustaining a sense of paranoia and general insecurity is

³ In everyday parlance Norwegian does not distinguish between what in English is ‘security’ (in the classic sense) and ‘safety’ (in the sense of search and rescue etc.). English, then, has two words whose customary connotations are ‘hard’ (military) and ‘soft’ (civilian), respectively. In Norwegian, all of this becomes ‘sikkerhet’. A pattern appears to emerge from the data, caused perhaps precisely by this lack of linguistic nuancing in Norwegian. The pattern is interesting in terms of theory, from a discourse-analysis perspective. To gain a hearing within a given discourse, one must follow a set of rules and norms. In the public post-2005 High North discourse, it has become nigh-impossible to be heard unless the word ‘sikkerhet’(‘security’) is uttered in the course of one’s reasoning and argumentation (article four; Jensen 2012b).

nowhere easier than in relation to the High North, where the country's national self-perception as a tiny, vulnerable land confronted by giant Russia, 'the radical other', is clear and simple, and easy to arouse in the 'collective Norwegian mind' – as articulated in the primary texts and picked up and refined in the media discourse.

As mentioned, article number four also has a theory ambition in arguing that a combination of securitization theory and post-structuralist approach through discourse analysis seems a fruitful way forward in shifting more focus towards the active and important role of the audience in securitizing processes. I argue that a discursive understanding will enable us to conceptualize and describe analytically phenomena in which something is lifted from a deliberative context and institutionalized, making discussion of the issue area ineffective or irrelevant, with a view to influencing a political outcome. For such issues too, the logic behind securitization theory should be highly relevant and fully applicable in combination with a post-structuralist perspective.

5 Norwegian petroleum extraction in Arctic waters to save the environment: Introducing 'discourse co-optation' as a new analytical term. Published in *Critical Discourse Studies* 2012 (December 2011 online edition)

The final article of this dissertation (Jensen 2012a) fulfils another major main theory ambition for the project. Here, in light of the findings presented in Jensen (2007) and further analysed and documented in greater detail in this article, I draw on the co-optation and discourse literature in introducing a new analytical concept for discourse analysis. In sociology, and perhaps particularly in organization theory, co-optation processes have been seen as a means of adjustment by which an authority can guarantee stability in the face of a threat (Selznick 1949; Bertocchi & Spagat 2007).

We can trace the concept of co-optation back to Robert Michels (1915). However, it is usually associated with Philip Selznick (1949), who used it in his study of the Tennessee Valley Authority project, where he analysed relations between the authorities and grass-root organizations. Co-optation is a process whereby outsiders

(generally the weaker party) are incited or persuaded to march in step with the insiders (usually the stronger party), the point being to get the outsiders' opinions in harmony with those of the authorities (Chan & Lee 1991:291).

Similar mechanisms, I contend in the article, were at work in respect of the Norwegian government's High North initiative. They can be used for analytical purposes at a more abstract, discursive level. In this article I used co-optation and co-opting processes to conceptualize the discursive phenomenon I have called 'drilling for the environment' (Jensen 2006a, 2007). Essentially, discourse co-optation means that a discourse penetrates the heart of its opposite number or counter-discourse, turns its logic upside-down and uses it to re-establish hegemony and muster political support. The discourse then profits from the acquisition of a new, powerful argument; the other is weakened by its loss.

With discourse co-optation I introduced a new concept which, in a society-oriented discourse analytical perspective, can describe little-understood things with greater precision. In a practical sense, I believe I have identified and conceptualized a particular type of *interdiscursivity* as defined by Fairclough (1995). It is something which, in analytical terms, may reveal powerful discursive processes at a more theoretical level but also how power is intrinsic to the discourse itself (Foucault 1972), outside the control and purview of any one individual or group.

Five short stories – one bigger narrative

What makes a contribution novel is not that no one in the field ever thought about a given idea but that the idea is articulated, organized, and connected in a way that suggests new directions for researchers who, hopefully, are already thinking about it' (Rindova 2008: 300).

An important concern in this thesis has been to explore and reveal the limits that determine which opinions, accounts of reality and future prospects are deemed 'legitimate' and possible to entertain. What is 'selected' to be included, and what excluded, given prevailing Norwegian conceptions of the High North? What is assumed as given and what is indexed as problematic? The point here is not necessarily what causes divisions and dissension. It might be more relevant to identify what is allowed to stand uncontested, unquestioned and taken as an indisputable premise for the ensuing discussion – and for political decision-making.

A key point of departure for this project in particular and discourse analysis more generally is that discourses are involved in determining actual behaviour by narrowing the definition of what counts as acceptable actions and utterances in society at a given point in time. Against this background, discourses can shed light on political practice by defining the scope for action and which options are taken as politically feasible.

The objective of this thesis is essentially to understand better how the High North initiative has been framed and construed in official and public discourse in Norway. To this end, the five articles deal with different aspects of this initiative from thematically different angles, and different sources of data depending on whether public or official discourses are under scrutiny, but from the same theoretical and methodological perspective.

Boiling down – or not

In this thesis – which can be described as inductive and where I have let the data lead the project in different directions – it has been a challenge to distil what I found to be of greatest interest and put it into the genre of the scholarly article. What have I actually found out? What is the most interesting aspect, and how should it be linked

to theory? How to perceive, comprehend and finally communicate the most interesting issues arising from my research has been one of the hardest problems to overcome. How to go about translating the significance of what I have done, its relevance and importance, in a way that makes sense to you as the reader? I am not entirely sure whether my answers are wholly satisfactory or to the point, but am reassured by Golden-Biddle and Locke who, while continuing ‘to grapple with these [such] questions, (...) now appreciate that it is just ‘the nature of the beast’ when (...) adopting a qualitative, unstructured approach to inquiry’ (2007:1).

While this study is able to yield certain kinds of rich findings, there are others it cannot provide. The nature of interpretive work as I understand it is that it may yield crucial insights but cannot generate theory of the positivist variety – testable hypotheses with distinct independent, dependent and moderating variables. Interpretive theory is contextual, processual and focused on individual sense-making and action. It aims to explain underlying patterns concerning social phenomena (Golden-Biddle and Locke 2007:104). Neumann has expressed this eloquently:

To the extent that a fuller understanding of where and how we landed here is helpful in getting us somewhere else, discourse analysis may be ‘useful’ for solving problems. But it is not your first choice in a tightly scripted situation, such as answering why state X went to war against state Y at point Z in time. Rational choice theory may be fine for that, even though the assumptions of the two different approaches are very different indeed. An analyst may use discourse analysis in order to study how structures produce agents, and then decide to ‘freeze’ agents at a specific point in time, for example at the outbreak of war (Neumann 2008:76–77).

A tabloid distillation

Despite the danger of oversimplifying and being too reductionist, I would say that the first article (Jensen and Hønneland 2011) offers insights into which public debates and political issues have framed and defined the High North, discursively and politically. This article is essentially an examination of the High North initiative itself, understood through both public and official Norwegian discourse. This article makes it clear that Russia plays a crucial role discursively, in relation to the Norwegian understanding of itself and its surroundings so to speak.

That leads us to the second article (Jensen and Skedsmo 2010), where the focus is on official policies and how the High North is framed through Norwegian and Russian foreign policy discourses, and what main themes these discourses evolve around. These themes or nodal points are shared by the two countries, and it becomes fairly clear that the region's natural resources are the main theme.

That brings us to article number three (Jensen 2007), which examines the Norwegian public debate in light of petroleum extraction and the environment. Also here, Russia emerges with a prominent place in the discourse, not least as an important reason why Norway should get its act together and start drilling for petroleum as soon as possible. Russia is our 'significant other' and defines Norway and the High North far more than is made explicit and problematized in my data-sets.

In the fourth article, the focus is on what used to be the 'elephant in the room' when it came to Russia and the High North after the Cold War: *security*. Here I aim to show how *security* is understood in Norwegian official and public discourse in light of the 2005 High North initiative, how it became part of the discourse again after years of de-securitizing discourses, and not least how security as a concept seems to be more in flux than ever before in relation to Norway's northern areas and even in relation to how we perceive ourselves as a nation – fundamentally *who we are*. As regards theory, I also rhetorically ask and answer the question whether a combination of a post-structuralist perspective and securitization theory can shed more light on how and when a political issue is moving towards or away from an endpoint of securitization. Such a combination, I argue, can assist securitization theory in particular and political science more generally in shifting the focus back to the active and crucial role of the audience or the public in shaping and framing important political issues.

The fifth article (Jensen 2012a) offers another contribution to theory. From the empirical findings in the third article I combine the literature on co-optation and on discourse analysis to fashion and introduce a new concept, 'discourse co-optation', to describe and better understand a certain form of interdiscursivity. Discourse co-optation describes how one discourse can burrow into the heart of a counter-

discourse, turn its logic upside-down and put it to work to re-establish hegemony and regain political support. The one discourse is strengthened by the addition of a new, powerful argument; the other is similarly weakened.

National identity

On an implicit, meta-level, the five short stories together can contribute to the academic discourse on understanding the concept of nation as an imagined community and intellectual construction in virtue of its focus on identity. As Phillips and Hardy (2002:2) point out, ‘the things that make up our social world – including our very identities – appear out of discourse.’ Thus, what we are talking about is not a ‘traditional view of identity as a stable, essential characteristic, but rather a fragmented, fluid and ambiguous identity’ (Phillips and Hardy 2002:41) that is always in flux, changes over time and appears through discourse.

A social constructivist (like a post-structuralist) conception of the nation as an imagined community de-naturalizes, contends Hall (1996: 612, cited from Li 2009:86), the traditional conception of the nation-state as a permanent, stable entity across history and different social regimes. Much closer to home, this project enters into direct dialogue with the Norwegian Foreign Ministry’s *Refleks* project, launched in 2006. The purpose of this project, according to Jonas Gahr Støre, is ‘to promote a comprehensive discussion of Norwegian interests in a changing, globalised world’ (Lunde et al. 2008:5-6). In the independent baseline report from the project, the authors say the following about ‘Images of Norway’:

Norwegian [foreign] policy interests are informed by ideas of who Norwegians are, what Norway stands for, and the role Norway plays on the international stage. Most people see Norway as an open, globalised, tolerant, peace-loving and equality-minded country. (...) It is easy to rest on self-righteous stereotypes and conventional opinions about what Norway looks like and how Norwegian authorities perform. If we want to understand what Norwegian [foreign] policy interests actually are, we have no choice but to take issue with these perceptions, or self-images if you like (Lunde et al. 2008:40).

It is precisely these impressions and self-images, these narratives, that I take issue with through the narratives which the articles in this project constitute separately and collectively. As Hønneland (2010:6) notes, narratives should be understood not only

as ‘reflections about the world, but rather [as] constitutive of the self’. Not only do narratives tell the outside world, ‘the others’, who we are – they also help make us who we are.

This idea, I think, is a fitting frame of reference for this thesis as well, and what it shows about Norway and its relations to the High North. Insofar as the articles that comprise this study construe the High North initiative in different ways, they also, although subtly, tell us that national *identity* is constructed, changed, subjected to internal and external pressures – and how a changed understanding of a ‘significant other’ (Hansen 2006) can result in cognitive dissonance that itself can erode or disrupt that self-conception. Identity uncertainty is discomfoting, at the personal as well as the national level. The five articles in this dissertation present several small national identity challenges and some identity crises of wider import, set in motion and propelled by discourses on the High North. For Norway, the ‘national cognitive dissonance’ involved in upholding a credible self-image as world leader and always best in environmental friendliness while at the same time running an economy heavily dependent on fossil fuels is one example of such challenges (see for instance Jensen 2007, Jensen and Skedsmo 2010). Another example would be the sense of paranoia and general insecurity, Cold War-style, which gets re-activated when Norway’s national identity as a tiny, vulnerable land is resuscitated whenever the Russian bear is perceived to be rearing its head in the High North (see for instance Jensen and Hønneland 2011, Jensen 2012b).

Supressed regional and local identities

Even though I too understand the High North strategy as something more than foreign policy, the main focus here is on the ‘high politics’ end of the continuum. I have shown how Norway’s High North Strategy is cross-sectorial and readable almost as a hegemonic discourse at the national political level. Also from a ‘high politics’ perspective, it soon became clear – especially after 2005 – that this would be a massive political undertaking, all-inclusive in articulating its domestic ambitions through the importance of bringing the ‘local’ and ‘regional’ into the ‘national’ High North political project.

The findings from this project document the need to look further into whether the High North Strategy, as a major national policy platform aimed specifically at Norway's northerly regions, is considered legitimate by local authorities and other stakeholders in North Norway. Such a study would enter into dialogue with and further expand on contributions such as Moldenæs (2006), where identity and identity constructions at the local level in Finnmark were in focus, and Angell et al. (2010), where a central theme is the 'onshore' part of the High North initiative and how it manifests itself as seen from the North. Are the same metaphors and narratives used at the national and local levels? The High North initiative, understood as an ambitious national undertaking, has the potential to cut across Norway's classic North/South and centre/periphery divides – at least in theory. My findings show that the local is talked and written into the official national discourse on the High North from the top down, through the High North strategy. Here we also need an understanding of some form of local presence in the national: how is the 'local' communicated in the national discourse?

The data from this project may also indicate a democracy deficit, as local (bottom-up) voices seem rather silent in the national High North discourse, relative to their importance to the political undertaking itself. Certain discrepancies perhaps indicate a co-optation of local discourses (discourse co-optation) by the national discourse. This merits further research. For the present, and rather hypothetically, at the *national level*, the term 'local' could be said to be filled with substance and meaning from the top down, so to speak. That should, in turn, make it harder to define the 'local' from below, i.e. at the local level itself.

Whether such a scenario would constitute discourse co-optation as a phenomenon or whether some other form of inter-discursive mechanisms are at play will be an empirical question I would very much like to clarify in a further study. By the same token, the use of the term 'High North' at the local level could itself indicate some form of discourse co-optation, in that it is constructed and filled with meaning 'from above'. It would be highly relevant for future research to examine how the

relationship between the official Norwegian High North discourse and local discourses on the High North manifests itself.

Discourse co-optation in practice

Observations made during this project indicate what could be a substantial discrepancy between national, politically initiated and local discourses. There seems to be a tendency for the ‘great narrative on the High North’ (article one; Jensen and Hønneland 2011) to co-opt other discourses: potential nuances vanish and critical voices are silenced. Fundamentally and to the extent that it is traceable in discourse, this could indicate a failure of the governance of High North policies to include local perceptions and needs sufficiently. And that might constitute a democratic problem.

If, on the other hand, there is no significant evidence of discourse co-optation, that too would also be an interesting find. If local voices can be shown to be articulated in the official national discourse, that could indicate a relatively strong, homogeneous national identity and identity building component, with the potential to build bridges across classical cleavage lines. On the basis of my relatively limited material I cannot offer any firm conclusions either way, but there is enough evidence in the material to suggest that something is going on which should be examined further empirically, perhaps also from different methodological angles.

This has ramifications also in terms of theory. It could provide a relevant case in point for further testing and developing discourse co-optation (article five; Jensen 2012a), as a particular form of interdiscursivity (Foucault 1972). The High North Strategy might well empower some actors while alienating others at the *local level*, where ‘imported national’ discourses could be used both to legitimize and to delegitimize perspectives and actors. Thus, the co-optation of national debates at the local level could engender support and/or vociferous opposition, depending on the relative strength of the voices involved – which in turn is also an empirical question. Such a study would make it possible to test and develop *discourse co-optation* as an analytical tool on new empirical data, to gauge its utility, in terms of theory and methodology, for revealing and describing important discursive (political) processes.

My hook-up to the world: Discourse analysis as theory and methodology in this project

Here I present my construction of the discourse literature that forms the framework for this project as a whole and serves as the platform on which all of the five articles are built. This section provides analytical context to the articles, showing how they are tightly connected in terms of both theory and methodology, and is therefore far from a generic description of discourse analysis and its basis. Phillips and Hardy (2002:11) describe discourse analysis as a ‘labour intensive’ and ‘time consuming’ method of analysis which has a ‘relative shortage of methodological writings and established exemplars to guide newcomers to the field’.

Considerable effort and frustration have gone into understanding and constructing a theoretical and methodological framework based on a large, diverse and often confusing, even conflicting body of literature, and as such this dissertation may also serve as a contribution to structuring, demystifying and, I hope, making discourse analysis more available, less frightening and thus more tempting to students and researchers from (especially Norwegian) political science and other social sciences still dominated and largely defined by the rationalist ideal.

The ‘linguistic turn’ in the social sciences has been exceptionally successful in attracting interest in what we might call the conditions for acting and the actions we understand as speech acts (Neumann 2002:627). The discursive framing of an issue-area or phenomenon affects whether arguments are admitted to the discourse as relevant, ‘legal’, or ‘normal’, or thrown out. My theoretical starting point, like that of Skånland (2010:34), sees discourses as productive: through them, we construct truth, meaning and knowledge.

In this project, the different discourses identified in the five articles become the lenses through which the world is perceived, and the ground on which thoughts and actions are built. Like many other theories, discourse analysis is preoccupied with power and interests and is as much a study of power as of language – but it looks at power in a certain way. There are reasons why some ideas and views predominate and are reproduced, while others are marginalized.

Discourse framing is basically about the power to define a set of circumstances or a situation – the power to define what the discourse will engage with – and it advances or retreats through the political struggle for power. It is also about getting others to accept one's own definitions, obliging them to formulate reality in the terms of the given set of premises, becoming implicated in a given set of decision-making formulas, in light of which they develop a given set of duties and responsibilities (Græger 2007).

Discourse does not explain why things are what they are, but it does tell us that the study of power cannot be divorced from the way language works in society. Discourses are constructed as a result of colliding strategies, and this struggle to entrench a given conception or understanding of a theme, problem or issue involves the exercise of power. This power can be conceived as a tight net of ubiquitous relations and processes where the balance of strength is changed by constant battles and confrontations. In article number two (Jensen and Skedsmo 2010), for instance, we showed how foreign policy in Norway and in Russia was framed in relation to the High North, with certain topics being included and others excluded in the foreign policy discourses of the two countries (ibid.:440–441).

Opinions are many and varied about what *discourse analysis* is and should be. *Discourse* has become almost trendy, a concept referred to without necessarily defining or specifying the meaning intended. This has severely diluted the content of the concept. Different disciplines use 'discourse' differently – be it linguistics, anthropology, psychology, sociology, political science etc. – and there are also significant differences among those who use and define it within one and the same school or tradition.

There is one name in particular to be reckoned with whenever *discourse* is to be defined and understood. Michel Foucault and his seminal *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972) are natural places to start when tackling the field of discourse analysis. Foucault gives 'discourse' a relatively wide definition: to him, the term covers more than speech, writing and text. This in contrast to, for instance, Van Dijk (1988), Fairclough (1995), Mathisen (1997) and Gee (2005), who are arguably far

My hook-up to the world: Discourse analysis as theory and methodology in this project

more text-centred in their methodologies and more ‘linguistic’ in their approaches than Foucault.

For many, perhaps linguists in particular, ‘discourse’ has often been defined as ‘everything beyond the sentence’; for others, the study of discourses can be defined and described the ‘study of language in use’ (Schiffrin et al. 2003:1). Discourse can also be understood as ‘a broad conglomeration of linguistic and non-linguistic social practices and ideological assumptions’ (ibid.). When we talk or write, we adapt whatever we have to say to the situation in which we say it. At the same time, the way we write or talk creates that very same situation. We adapt language, then, to a situation which that very language has helped create (Gee 199: 10).

The ways in which we express ourselves, say Jørgensen and Phillips (1999:9) do not reflect our surroundings, our identities and social relations neutrally or objectively, but play an active role in creating and changing them. The central contention of discourse analysis is that we, as interpreting subjects, have no direct access to an objectively existing phenomenon: access to our various realities is always mediated by language. The overriding purpose, according to Neumann (2001:38), is to analyse meaning as part of the general social setting in which meaning is formed. Language, texts, utterances – they are what we look at first, because while other social practices generate meaning as a by-product, the principal task of language itself is precisely to generate meaning. The verbal terms and concepts we use to describe the world are exactly what allow us to understand the reality surrounding us. Language defines, in this sense, the limits to what we can think and express, and is therefore a tool that provides the necessary resources from which descriptions of reality are constructed (Ball 1988:15).

The five articles in this dissertation seen together contribute to such an understanding because I have analysed both public discourse through newspapers, and official discourse through primary texts over time, showing such ‘dialogical’ traits – and, on an even more abstract level, showing the constitutive nature of discourse. Policy documents have framed the issue in a certain light and approached the High North from a certain angle, which have let us to understand it, talk about it and act in

a certain way. On the other hand, the documents and the public deliberations have reinforced, cultivated and shaped one another. The documents have given rise to opinions, so the public discourse has in turn shaped the next policy document, and the converse (Jensen 2007; Hønneland & Jensen 2008).

In virtually all versions of discourse analysis, irrespective of discipline, Foucault is a person to engage with, discuss, modify, criticize and generally quote – not least because most discourse analytical approaches originate in his thinking, even if practitioners may condemn various aspects of his theory (Jørgensen and Phillips 1999:21). For the type of analysis conducted in this dissertation, in which the objects of analysis and conclusions are on more of an aggregate level than that of isolated texts or events, a socially-aligned discourse analysis as advocated by Foucault (1972) would seem eminently apposite and useful. There is a set of rules, Foucault (1972) maintains, which decide whether a statement is to be taken as true and meaningful in a given historical period. He defines discourse in the following way:

We will call discourse a group of statements in so far as they belong to the same discursive formation (...) it is made up of a limited number of statements for which a group of conditions of existence can be defined (Foucault 1972:117).

Given a Foucauldian conception then, discourse entails prohibition insofar as it makes it impossible to raise certain questions or argue on behalf of a certain position. Here we should note that prohibiting expressions arising in the text in connection with discourse and discourse analysis should be understood in a non-literal, non-legal sense. Such rules and prohibitions should be taken as normative constraints or codes assumed to be shared by the actors in question within a given discursive field – a ‘constitutive outside’ (Laclau and Mouffe 1985:111). Discourse also entails a system of exclusion insofar as only a select number of individuals are seen as entitled to participate. It also enables forms of internal discipline, ensuring the survival of the discursive order.⁴ Finally, there are rules regulating when and under what circumstances it is permissible to capitalize on a specific discourse (Hajer 1995:49).

⁴ ‘Discursive order’ denotes a cluster of discourses proceeding in the same social field (Fairclough 1995).

Foucault can be challenging, especially when it comes to operationalizing his ideas. In this framework chapter I employ the following general definition of discourse: ‘Discourse is an interrelated set of texts, and the practices of their production, dissemination, and reception, which brings an object into being’ (Parker 1992:3). This definition is completely in line with a Foucauldian conception, but is slightly more concrete and therefore also more operational. Discourses exist and are enacted in many different texts, but the main point is that the *discourse* lies ‘somewhere above’ the individual texts that comprise it. The individual texts, under a Foucauldian conception of discourse, are not analytically meaningful in themselves. It is only through their ‘interconnection with other texts, the different discourses on which they draw, and the nature of their production, dissemination, and consumption that they are made meaningful’ (Phillips and Hardy 2002: 3–4).

Discourse analysis offers a range of different approaches to data, and – perhaps more importantly – an even wider range of theorizing around these data (Wetherell et al. 2001). Neumann has summed this up nicely:

Because discourse maintains a degree of regularity in social relations, it produces preconditions for action. It constrains how the stuff that the world consists of is ordered, and so how people categorize and think about the world. It constrains what is thought of at all, what is thought of as possible, and what is thought of as the ‘natural thing’ to do in a given situation. But discourse cannot determine action completely. There will always be more than one possible outcome. Discourse analysis aims at specifying the bandwidth of possible outcomes (2008:62).

A full package

Discourse analysis can be seen as a dynamic set of theories and methods for investigating language in use and language in a social context.

Although discourse analysis can be applied to all areas of research, it cannot be used with all kinds of theoretical framework. Crucially, it is not to be used as a method of analysis detached from its theoretical and methodological foundations (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002:3–4).

It reveals alternative ways and approaches in the study of meaning. It gives us an alternative angle for understanding and investigating the dialogues and debates that constitute social acts, and gives us patterns of the signs, symbols and representations that constitute culture.

I have not sought to get *behind* the discourse to find out what people really mean, or to discover how reality is *actually* constituted on the other side. The basic premise and reason is simple: we can never reach reality by circumventing the discourses, which is why the discourses per se become the objects of analysis. There is no way for me as a discourse analyst to determine whether a particular characterization of social context is *really* accurate, because that question presumes what I as a reflexivist and a monist (to use Jackson's (2011) terms), must deny: namely, that 'it is sensible to refer to an object as existing outside of all possible references to it' (Jackson 2011:173). It is the discourses themselves which create the conditions for change and define the premises under which it is natural to think and speak in relation to a given subject or thematic field.

I have been working with what has actually been recorded in writing or expressed by other means in relation to Norway and the High North, looking for patterns in the statements, and the different and always subjective social consequences to which discursive construals of reality may give rise. Since I as a researcher will always inhabit a certain position relative to what I am studying, this position will partly determine what I can see, and, in consequence of what I see, can present as findings or results.

There will probably always be other positions from which reality assumes a different complexion. How then can I maintain that my representation of the world is better or more accurate than other representations? Indeed, that question cannot be posed if we accept the reflexivist premise that it is a condition for all knowledge that my representation is merely one in a world of many possible representations. But that does not mean that all research results are equally good. Accountability, transparency and theoretical consistency in combination with an explicit, reflexive attitude towards the project should in themselves bestow legitimacy on scientifically produced knowledge, according to discourse analysts Jørgensen and Phillips (1999:31–33).

By dismantling the artificial academic divide between theory and method, and in so doing dissolving the hierarchy between these two concepts, it becomes possible to elucidate the methodological implications inherent in every theory (Neumann

My hook-up to the world: Discourse analysis as theory and methodology in this project

2001:13–14). Consequently I choose to use the expression *discourse analysis* whether we are talking about the theoretical perspective, the methodological approaches or their implications. Any discourse analysis represents a theoretical and methodological whole – ‘a complete package’: ‘In discourse analysis, *theory* and *method* are intertwined and researchers must accept the basic philosophical premises in order to use discourse analysis as their method of empirical study’ (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002:4).

Thus we are compelled to accept the uncertainty that comes with questioning the distinction between reality understood as physically given and reality understood as social representation, and must start work by investigating the tensions surrounding the divide. ‘The key fissures in overall debates about science concern, first, what kind of hook-up the scholar has to the world’ (Neumann 2011:xii). ‘Within the broad umbrella of science, researchers make a variety of different commitments, or wagers, about the “hook-up” between the mind and the world, and these wagers demarcate different ways of doing science’ (Jackson 2011:196).

This is what all this really boils down to: ‘Am I a constitutive part of the world, or do I follow Descartes in thinking about my mind as radically cut off from the (rest of the) world? In the former case, I am a mind-world monist. In the latter case, I am a mind-world dualist’ (Jackson 2011:196). This project is firmly positioned within the former, and that will have consequences for the kind of methodology that is suitable for doing research (Neumann 2011: xxii).

Discourse analysis, then, is a tool eminently suited for investigating phenomena empirically and shedding new light on the assumptions and premises inherent in political practices. If we can know these assumptions and premises, we will also be in a position to extend and deepen our understanding of specific political actions.

Subjective science and relativism

Understanding can be achieved only by refining an object of analysis in whose construction we ourselves have been involved. There are no hard and fast methodological rules that can help us to reveal the world as it ‘really’ or ‘objectively’ is. Nor

can we in a narrower sense falsify theories, and thereby fuel a cumulative progress which could ideally bring us ever closer to reality – something a classical, idealized Popperian perspective, for example, might take as a basic assumption. As Hansen (2006:25) notes, ‘there is no “extra-discursive” materiality that sets itself forward independently of its discursive representation – which to reiterate, is not to say that the material has no importance [or does not exist], but rather that it is always discursively mediated’. She further notes that, ‘for facts to become politically salient and influence the production and reproduction of foreign policy discourse there must be human and discursive agency; individuals, media, and institutions who collect, document and distribute them’ (ibid.: 32).

In grounding my perspective in a discourse-analytical premise, I am also endorsing the view that holds there is no way of deciding whether our perceptions of the world are true in the sense of corresponding with the ‘factual state’ of given phenomena, or with other objective criteria that positivists believe can be established. This is because when we speak of the world, we employ statements which can be compared only with other statements about the world – never with the material or constructed world in itself (Hansen et al. 2005). This and similar contentions do not necessarily lead to cognitive scepticism, because we are in fact able to relate meaningfully to the world and generate systematic knowledge about discourses and the connections of which they are part. Discourse analysis as a theory and method focuses on the terms by which we relate to the world.

One corollary of this is that also science can be construed as discursive. In that sense, then, we cannot hope within the discourse to rise above or in some way place ourselves outside our cultural or historical contingencies. As Jackson aptly puts it:

...to say that scientific knowledge is socially constructed is to say that the knowledge that we presently have is not the knowledge that we inevitably would have had in all possible worlds; contingencies can be identified, branching-points at which alternate pathways could have been taken – alternative pathways that would have led, perhaps to alternate *but equally valid* forms of physics, chemistry, geology, IR, and so on. It is not, however, to say that physicists, chemists, and so on, would or should assent to this claim; ‘scientific knowledge is socially constructed’ is a proposition of the philosophy and sociology of science, not a proposition of the specific sciences under investigation (Jackson 2011:2002).

Discourse analysis speaks to the processes which create, stabilize and change the discursive context of our utterances, thoughts and deeds. The context is more or less coincidental and in constant flux because various forces are constantly attempting to negotiate and redefine the discursive field. Whether they concern palpable disputes or attempts to stabilize a discursive context, they are about policy in one sense or another, which in turn involves the exercise of power in one form or another (Hansen et al. 2005).

The world, from a discourse-analytical vantage point, cannot have a definitive structural meaning, as, for instance, Marxism assumes. On the other hand, the generation of meaning cannot be traced back to the human subject's personal interpretation of the world. There is, quite simply, no ontologically privileged position from which to understand the creation of meaning and signification. Meaning is mounted and constituted in specific historical contexts with mutually constituting elements of signification called discourses. It is a tenet of discourse analysis that social structures and identities are formed by discourses, which thereby become the axes around which the determination of meaning revolves.

This study as a case study

Understanding and treating this project, in terms of methodology, as a discourse-analytical case study, firmly anchored in a part of the case-study literature, has made it easier to work within a scientific paradigm in which a strong positivist bias continues to prevail both in form and substance. My insights and results should emerge as 'easier to read' because they come across as more immediately relevant and interesting without any need for me to compromise discourse analysis as analytical approach and the 'irreducibility of the narrative'.

With hindsight, I can say that my attitude to the case study as a strategy was relatively unreflected, not least my rejection of it as yet another variant of a more or less positivistic theme. I now see that the *case study* is conceived and defined far more broadly and, surprisingly, more transparently in the literature than I had realized. It appears to be sensitive to and contain much of the pluralism that obtains

within social studies, and is willing to discuss pragmatically these differences and look for solutions where other parts of the literature simply make a dash for the trenches.⁵

But what constitutes a case study? What we need here is a sort of lowest common denominator for case studies as a research strategy. What is it that unites them? The main reason, it seems to me after having read various contributions from positivists, constructivists, post-structuralists and critical realists, for adopting the case study as a research strategy is to achieve ‘deep understanding of particular instances of phenomena’ (Mabry 2008:214). This basic conception could easily have been used to describe in simple terms the overarching purpose of discourse analysis. I am left, then, with a wide and general understanding of the case study as a research strategy, and can certainly be criticized for lack of precision. The primary qualities of this definition – apart from its simplicity and immediacy – seem to be its focus on ‘understanding’ (in contrast to explaining) and its ability to illuminate with precision ‘particular instances’ of a phenomenon, which in itself encourages the formulation of precise research questions and awareness of what one specifically wants to illuminate.

Hammersley maintains that the case study is more than just a method: ‘The case study as a research strategy involves very different assumptions about how the social world can and should be studied’ (2004:93). This statement could well have appeared in an introductory book to discourse analysis. The various assumptions to which Hammersley refers follow the classic cleavage in the social sciences, with positivism lined up against constructivism. This cleavage and also the tension between *explaining* and *understanding* can be traced all the way back to Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911) and Max Weber (1864–1920), who ‘shared the conviction that our knowledge of human society is in need of methods different from, although by no means inferior to, those of the natural sciences’ (Bergstraesser 1947:92).

⁵ See, for instance, Østerud’s (1996, 1997) attack on postmodern interventions in IR theory and Smith’s (1997) and Patomaki’s (1997) response.

But although the logical positivists formulated some criteria for doing science during their heyday in the 1950s and 60s which large swathes of the social science community neither heeded nor in the event were able to meet (Guneriussen 1999:17), the rationalist ideal continues to prevail, especially in political science. That notwithstanding, the need for alternatives to rationalism slowly dawned on social scientists (Flyvbjerg 1991:70). My modest contribution in offering an alternative is this dissertation.

Researchers who apply the case-study technique while simultaneously insisting their work is ‘descriptive only’ or ‘a-theoretical’ are denying or under-communicating, Mabry (2008:224) argues, their own conceptualizations of the phenomenon they are studying. In sitting down and formulating a research question, an underlying personal theory about ‘the nature of the phenomenon’ has to be implied (ibid.). The case study as a research strategy seems to embody ‘respect’ for the intrinsic complexity of social phenomena, and the context is a central aspect of the case’s dynamics and complexity (Mabry 2008:217). Here it is not difficult to see the compatibility with a discourse-analytical perspective, and what Mabry goes on to say serves to strengthen that assumption: ‘case study researchers recognize that cases are shaped by their many contexts – historical, social, political ideological, organisational, cultural, linguistic, philosophical, and so on’ (ibid.).

Generalization (im)possibilities

The scholarly discussion over the possibility of generalizing research findings proceeds apace in many of the social sciences. A clash of opinions tends to encourage the fringes of the traditional constructivist–positivist spectrum. As Flyvbjerg (2007:393) points out, the most substantial and destructive argument against the case study as a scientific method is precisely that a single case does not allow generalization. That attitude, Flyvbjerg continues, would be typical of an idealized notion of natural science, where a universal, statistical generalizability, independent of space and time, merely represents an extreme position.

But should discourse analysis address the positivists' methodological critique of these analyses? The exercise is probably impossible, and frankly nonsensical if it has to be done under the terms of a logical, rationalistic scientific paradigm – but it becomes entirely possible and even desirable if the criterion is not to find universal regularities existing independently of the societies and persons that constitute them.

This generalization debate could in my opinion also be seen – if we ignore the most eccentric positions at either extreme of our imagined positivism–constructivism scale – to be a question of semantics, with the conscious or unconscious interspersal of pseudo or spurious arguments caused by lack of an established understanding of the concept of *generalization*. By implicitly distinguishing between formal and informal generalization, Flyvbjerg does much to clarify the field: 'That knowledge cannot formally be generalized does not mean that this knowledge cannot be included in the collective process of knowledge accumulation in a certain field or society as a whole' (2007:394). 'Formal generalisation,' he says further, 'is overvalued as a source of scientific development, whereas 'the force' of example is underestimated' (2007:395).

Even purely empirical studies with absolutely no pretensions whatsoever to generalization can clearly be of value, according to Flyvbjerg, in a process of accumulating knowledge such as this. The researcher must work with what has been written down or verbalized in some form or another in order to establish patterns in the statements, as well as the likely social impact of different discursive representations of reality.

In this perspective, it is neither possible nor particularly interesting to discover social laws and find out how things are 'in reality'. It is the discourses themselves which define the conditions of change and the boundaries of a given thematic area or field within which it is natural to think and talk. My study is located in the vicinity of Flyvbjerg's reasoning here.

The *Narrative* as a way out

Under the heading ‘The irreducible quality of good case narratives’, Flyvbjerg (2007:399) disputes whether it is often ‘...desirable to summarize and generalize case studies. Good studies should be read as narratives in their entirety’ (Flyvbjerg 2007:402). A narrative (story) tends to be understood as a spoken or written text which explains an event or deed or sequence of events/deeds that are linked chronologically (Czarniawska, 2004: 17).

That is the definition I use in this dissertation. The narrative approach in the social sciences should not, according to Czarniawska (2004: 136), be seen as a method in a conventional sense; it is rather a loose collection of ideas, sleights of hand and techniques for acquiring knowledge and achieving understanding. As an approach it gives a wide berth to ideas in which rigid procedures and methods are pursued with the aim of generating ‘verifiable’ results. The objective can be said in many ways to be inspired, and inspiring, writing (Rorty, 1992 cited in Czarniawska, 2004)

Social science needs to carry greater weight in contemporary society. We need to reach readers outside our own rather hermetic inner circles. Rather than questioning *reliability* and *validity*, we should ponder whether the matter at hand is interesting, relevant, even beautiful (Czarniawska 2004: 136). Still following Czarniawska, I need to enter into a dual contract with you, the reader, by, on the one side, appeasing your sense of doubt and aiming to *please you*, while at the same time causing that same doubt to flare up by my intention to *instruct you*.

I analyse texts that constitute different representations, storylines and narratives on how to understand the world around us. The *case* is Norwegian policy on the High North, and the *units of analysis* are official and public discourses on Norwegian foreign policy on the High North. The analysis is anyway in its turn as a new narrative in a way, in which textual extracts (data) constitute the cornerstone of yet another narrative on reality (the researcher’s narrative, which is by nature subjective). A successful narrative makes it irrelevant, says Flyvbjerg, for the reader to ask ‘so

what?’ after reading it: the narrative has already provided the answer before the question is put – ‘The narrative is itself the answer’ (2007:401).

I hope you will consider this case study of the High North to be relevant, at some level, to your own context, although – following Flyvbjerg (2007:400–401) and Mabry (2008: 219–220) – the final results cannot be summed up neatly in bullet points or in the form of concrete policy recommendations. To the degree that we accept Flyvbjerg’s and, to some degree, Mabry’s narrative concepts without completely losing faith in the possibility of doing science, dismissing generalizations in the narrow sense is not only possible, but almost unavoidable: The job of ‘generalizing’ is taken from me as a researcher and handed over to you as the reader. First of all, as Jackson (2011:153) points out, ‘it is critically important not to conflate an analytical general claim’, as I do when introducing ‘discourse co-optation’ as a new analytical term, with an empirical generalization, neo-positivist style. He further notes that:

The ‘generality’ of an analytical claim means that its logical form is devoid of specific references to particular instances, but this emphatically does *not* mean that the relations and characteristics that it instrumentally posits have the same epistemic status as a generally valid empirical law. Keeping these two kinds of claim separate, would, for example, clear up the muddled thinking that characterizes the often-heard claim that ‘interpretive’ scholarship cannot ‘generalize’: if this means that interpretive work focused on specific contexts of social meaning cannot produce empirical generalizations, than the statement is quite true, but if this means that such interpretive work cannot utilize or contribute to the formation of analytical ideal-types, then the statement is quite false (Jackson 2011:153).

This should firmly refute claims that studies based on this conception have less to offer the cumulative development of knowledge – indeed, according to Flyvbjerg (2007); the opposite is the more likely case.

Authenticity and Plausibility

To continue within the realm of storytelling as a way of communicating research, instead of trying to defend some sort of validity or reliability, perhaps Martin (2001) provides the solution, in referring to *authenticity* and *plausibility* as alternative benchmarks. According to her, we can construe authenticity as the capacity of a text

to describe daily life in the field so as to convince you, the reader, that we, the authors, have indeed 'been there'. This, unlike the expression 'accuracy' or 'validity', does not contain an implicit truth-claim.

An authentic presentation attempts quite simply to represent, as well as the author is capable, what he or she has observed. Martin's (2001) discussion of the concept of plausibility focuses on what she calls the relationship between the 'community of readers' and the world as drawn in the author's rendition. It is, she continues, important to avoid coming across as too familiar or too detached from one's readers. While I do not wish to write an account which contains nothing new, on the other hand, it is important to engender a sense of recognition so that a relationship with my readers can be formed and sustained.

The rhetorical devices I have used to establish this relationship include the deliberate use of intertextuality, metaphors, pictorial language, and straightforward examples with which the reader can readily identify. It helps, says Czarniawska (2004), to make use of the possibilities of language by appealing to the right half of the reader's brain – by 'painting' a reality with words, giving the text a better chance to represent the world around us in a meaningful way.

An inclusive and immediate language can also raise the level of plausibility of a text. Words like 'you' and 'we', for instance, can create a sense in the reader of belonging to the same body of professionals and experts as the author. If the reader can feel part of the author's circle, it should be easier, Martin (2001) surmises, to persuade him or her to go along with the conclusions that the author draws.

Research setting

In this section I go through some aspects of my practical approach which had to be left out of the individual articles. After reading all five articles, I believe you will have a good idea of my methodology; I made a conscious decision to include complementary items of theory/method in each article precisely to create an essentially unified whole. All the same, certain things were left out, for various reasons. Here I will try to make good those deficiencies.

I also intend, given the reflexive ambition of this project, to present part of the ‘unofficial story’ – or what we as researchers are often more than ready to leave out with a view to instilling a sense of authority in what we write and an illusion of linearity and chronology. A few examples from the publication phase of the various articles should illustrate how editors and reviewers can become virtual co-authors through their responses and their powers. They have helped shape the project, and for that reason they deserve mention.

Additionally, I will describe how I went about selecting sources, collecting data etc., although this necessarily entails a certain amount of duplication with things discussed in the articles. This information should make the accounts of procedures and approaches in the five articles clearer; it should also be easier to see the articles themselves as parts of a coherent story, connected by a consistent approach to the data.

My account of how I applied theory and method in practice will be comparable and therefore directly transferable from article to article, despite variation in the empirical focus or theory ambition. One point that may strike some readers is the ‘absence’ of living human beings in this project. I began with definite ideas about who I would interview and what I wanted to discuss with them. Would it be possible to have a chat with Foreign Minister Støre? What about the leader of the environmental organization Bellona, Frederic Hauge? Perhaps the director of Statoil could share some of his views off the record. Or the people of Hammerfest – what do they think about the High North initiative, and locating of a receiving terminal in their town?

The questions were many and interesting, but it gradually dawned on me that I would have to find a way of ‘freezing’ an on-going political issue such as the High North initiative if I was to avoid chasing endlessly after moving targets. The decision not to use interviews as a means of acquiring information was initially a purely pragmatic one, but was taken with a portion of cynicism, given the time available for completing the project.

In retrospect, I am glad that I chose a Foucauldian approach to analysing large corpuses of texts. By letting the media represent the public sphere, I believe I have captured much of the dynamic which could have been lost if the range of interviewees had been too top-heavy.

At the same time I believe I have discovered and given expression to matters that otherwise might have passed me by – although I am painfully aware that the media too face some of the same issues in representing those who perhaps need representing most. That is a point I shall not discuss in the dissertation because it is more of a structural question, better suited for analyses of the media per se.

I believe I have covered some of the ground that a ‘chat with Støre’ would imply by reading what he and others in positions of power write in the media or give authority to policy documents which are as close to a political intention to act as we can get. When I speak about the ‘absence of people’, I mean people in the sense of *primary sources of data*. I am fortunate to be working together with some of the leading experts on Norwegian relations with Russia and policy on the High North, people with whom I regularly tussle over empirical and not least theoretical issues. I have attended many meetings and conferences and spoken with a wide range of interesting, knowledgeable people from the world of politics, industry, academia and the media. All this has provided valuable background material and invaluable insights not available from documents alone.

Newspapers as data

In this project I have examined how meanings of national identities are constructed in newspaper discourse and in texts of power. ‘As an important social and linguistic

site, newspapers have played a particularly important role in imagining the nation and creating nationalism' (Anderson, 1991; Billig 1995, cited from Li 2009:86). For the purpose of this project I read several thousand newspaper articles dealing with the High North printed in the Norwegian papers *Aftenposten*, *Dagens Næringsliv*, *Klassekampen* and *Nordlys*.

The newspapers were chosen on the basis of their slightly different profiles and focus areas, which, I hope, improves the quality and broadens the scope of the analysis. At the risk of being a bit simplistic, even tabloidal, in my broad categorizations, I would describe *Aftenposten* as the 'national and mainstream newspaper', *Dagens Næringsliv* as the 'business and financial newspaper', *Nordlys* as the 'regional northern newspaper', and lastly, *Klassekampen* as 'radical and leftist'.

I found the articles by means of search strings entered into the sophisticated Retriever data-base; carefully constructed search strings can result in highly specific hits. Although procedures and search strings are explained in the different articles, a significant part of the preparatory work of acquiring data-sets was to begin with general searches and with reading, improving the precision of the searches and hits as the most efficient or accurate search strings were gradually discovered. The final searches were all relatively open. This was done to minimize the risk of missing anything of importance during the data collection stage.

For instance, the final search string in Jensen and Hønneland (2011) was *Nordområde**, which gave me every article containing a variant of the term *nordområdene* (= High North, lit.: 'the northern areas') – policy, initiatives, issues, minister, optimism etc. – with any relation to the High North. In comparison, the final search string in Jensen (2012) was *Barentshav* AND (Petroleum* OR Olje* OR Gass*)*.⁶ The addition of the Boolean operators AND and OR improves the precision of the search string and, consequently, the hits. AND means that both or all of the words must feature in the article, whereas OR means that at least one of the terms must occur. The operator ANDNOT requires the term to the left of the operator to occur in the newspaper article, but not the term to the right. I used the

⁶ = Barents Sea* AND (Petroleum* OR Oil* Or Gas*).

wildcard character * to obtain every variant of the terms. By entering *petroleum**, I obtained hits including the terms *petroleumsutvinning*, *petroleumsforekomster*, *petroleum*, *petroleumsdebatt* (= petroleum extraction, petroleum deposits, petroleum, petroleum debate). I applied the same logic and approach to all the data consisting of newspaper articles.

Primary texts as data

In addition to the newspaper articles which quantitatively make up the bulk of the data, a large number of public documents were of central importance (see for instance article two; Jensen & Skedsmo 2010 and article five; Jensen 2012b). Discourse analysis gives epistemological and methodological priority to the study of primary texts like presidential statements and official policy documents (Hansen 2006). These ‘monuments’ or primary texts are often created in the context of an ongoing discursive battle and have, at least in theory, formed, absorbed and grasped the strongest representations.

The following three criteria are central to the selection of primary texts: texts should clearly articulate identities and policies; they should be widely read and attended to; and they should have the formal authority to define a political position (Hansen 2006). In my view, the texts chosen for this dissertation score high on all of these criteria, and can therefore with relative confidence be termed ‘primary texts’ or ‘monuments’. And equally important, all these texts have been articulated by formal political authority – a crucial point, as they are intended to represent Norwegian approaches to the High North.

The texts can also have or acquire power by repeating, confirming, strengthening and/or qualifying a certain ideological position, and by their context-specific appearance. They both have power and generate power by being perceived as relevant and important enough to participate and take centre stage in such major discourses (Berge 2003). Primary texts set the agenda and shape the issues at hand, and they frame and produce representations of foreign policy. The actors, empowered by their roles as institution or as president, have a certain authority and power to define

how reality should be perceived (Berge 2003; Hansen 2006). In addition, the texts enjoy official prestige and authority as speech acts (Searle 1969). In addition to serving directly as data in two of the articles, primary texts have provided crucial background information, functioning as correctives and as a basis for my own cultural competence (Neumann 2001, Jensen 2012a) throughout this project.

These texts have enhanced and deepened my understanding of the High North as a political project. I have read every Norwegian statement, official government report and strategy document dealing with the High North. I have also read a large number of defence policy documents of the same type, examined numerous speeches by defence ministers and foreign ministers in the period under analysis. Direct references to and descriptions of the sources along with considerations of the methodology challenges related to the thesis can be found in the individual articles.

The sandwich method

I have also spent considerable time considering how to present and discuss the large amount of data in the individual articles. My aim has been to bring the readers as close to the 'field of action' as possible, and I believe I have succeeded in giving them the chance to see with their own eyes what was written, by inserting accurately transcribed passages from the articles and documents. But it is not enough simply to let the 'data speak for itself and inform us of its importance': the literary critic Wayne C. Booth (1961:114, quoted in Golden-Biddle & Locke: 2007) draws a distinction between 'showing' and 'telling'. 'The accumulation', he explains, 'of accurately observed detail cannot satisfy us for long; only if the details are made to tell, only if they are weighted with a significance', will they keep a hold on our attention.

I have therefore seen it as part of my mandate to show the data and, not least, talk about what the data mean, in my view. In writing qualitative research articles, there are several ways to construe the data as 'proof' (Golden-Biddle & Locke, 2007:69). The approach used here is described by Golden-Biddle & Locke (2007:53) as 'telling, showing, and telling', or more expressively, the 'sandwich method'.

I present the kernel of what the cited passages express, before reproducing those passages or quotations. I then proceed to tell in more abstract terms what the passage just showed the reader and what it indicated. As a visual technique, I use indentation on either side of the quoted text, single-spacing and smaller font size to separate these textual excerpts from the body text in the articles. Below is an extract from one of the articles (Jensen and Hønneland 2011:44–45) to illustrate:

44 L. C. Jensen and G. Hønneland

sense of enthusiasm towards the Barents cooperation. It sounds like an echo from the 1990s when Svein Ludvigsen (member of the Storting for the Conservatives) writes: “Now’s the time for a new push in Norwegian policy on the Barents. [...] If the Pomor trade could be resuscitated it would create completely new opportunities for the northernmost Norway” (*Nordlys*, 17 July 2000). Comments made by Rune Rafaelsen (of the Norwegian Barents Secretariat) look somewhat more to the future: “The enormous deposits of oil and gas in the Barents region, especially in the Russian areas, will turn what we have today of Barents cooperation upside down” (*Nordlys*, 4 February 2002).

Where politicians were wont to visit northern Norway or the Barents region, foreign minister Jonas Gahr Støre travelled to the High North whether the destination was Kirkenes, Murmansk or anywhere else (onshore or offshore) north of the Arctic Circle (located at a latitude of 66° 34'). High North policy was the new buzzword for Cold War security policy, policy towards Russia in the 1990s and the Barents cooperation. It was a timely designation signalling optimism and vitality, largely personified by foreign minister Jonas Gahr Støre, with his professional confidence and dynamic manner. The expression won a place in the debates on domestic policies as a “cool” variant of northern Norway stimulus packages smacking of rural policy and provincial melancholia. We believe we are on solid ground in our claim that the High North was “talked and written into existence” in the sense of Neumann’s (1994) *region building approach*.⁸ The new High North policy is the story of “it’s happening in the north”.

The great narrative of the High North

For this is a story that is beginning to be told as we near the cusp of election year 2005; more than anything, it is a story about where northern Norway fits in the wider world. The white paper promised by the Government following the Orheim Inquiry report (NOU, 2003) had been postponed several times. It was scheduled first for the spring of 2004, but appeared a year later. In terms of concrete proposals it can hardly be described as anything but disappointing. Steps should be taken to continue talking with our allies on matters relating to the High North (= the High North Dialogue) and strengthen collaborative mechanisms with Russia. This notwithstanding, something was beginning to happen. About a year later, influential figures in the north exploited the burgeoning political interest in the High North to add to the narrative “it’s happening in the north”, with an “it’s happening *now!*” In extension of this, the High North became *the* foreign policy issue of the autumn 2005 election campaign.

We at the newspaper [*Nordlys*] have long been urging the political parties-of all hues-to bestir themselves and look at the north. Because if they do, they’ll see the Norway of the future, land of opportunities. It’s along the coast and in the north this future can be created by adopting a pro-active coastal and High North policy. The next petroleum Klondike will unfold in the High North, and it is in the north we have an enormous potential for economic growth and value generation. (*Nordlys*, 4 February 2005)

Our vital national interests lie in the north. This should be the target of Norwegian foreign policy over the foreseeable future. We stand on the brink of the greatest foreign policy challenge of the post-WWII era. (Thorbjørn Jagland, chair, Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, to *Nordlys*, 16 June 2005)

There had already been an extensive debate over the prospect of commercially extracting the oil and gas reserves under the Barents Sea. Oil and gas deposits under the Russian Barents Sea were sporadically referred to as very significant. Around the mid-2000s, the potential reserves under the Russian shelf were increasingly mentioned by participants debating Norwegian commercial exploitation, and indeed, in connection with the wider discourse on the High North per se. The ensuing story line was partly visionary, though based on a relatively conservative assessment of the interests of the different states. (Hønneland & Jensen, 2008: 94–95) “Shtokman will be one of the world’s biggest gas fields when it finally comes on line. The Russians will need foreign technology and capital to develop the field, and Norwegian companies stand a good chance. The ripple benefits will be highly significant for northern Norway.” If we include the interests of the great powers, the story line is filled out as follows: “The US is interested in Russian gas, and Norway will have to take care not to be marginalised by an international partnership in the High North”.

A more diffuse and nervous sounding story line was mixed in: “The Russians have already started. We haven’t a second to lose.” And in the great power variant: “The Americans are already involved. Them too.” The origin of these assumptions is unclear, but that many do in fact believe that the Russians have been extracting oil and gas from the Barents Sea for some time – which is not the case per 2010 – is in our view incontrovertible. Here are a few examples from the media. “The Russians are already well under way with installing an oil industry in the High North” (*Nordlys*, 14 March 2003). “For every passing day, the pace of petroleum activity in the north is turned up a notch for Norway and Russia” (*Nordlys*, 17 June 2005). An increase in the transportation of Russian oil (produced on land further east) down the Norwegian coast since 2002 may have created the “well under way” impression. Whatever the reason, that the Russians were poised to begin work on production is viewed as a near certainty by many. What sort of response the story line prescribes is not entirely clear. It was often used in connection with more general arguments concerning the High North, in attempts, for example, to underscore the importance of the High North and the necessity of some course of action or other, such as the appointment of “a dedicated minister of High North affairs”. It became politically incorrect (against the rules in discourse terminology) to express “anti-High North” opinions. Simply talking about the High North without a sense of optimism and confidence was considered bad manners – it would, in accordance with discourse theory, represent an unwelcome challenge to the dominant discourse, which has achieved this status after “a lot of discursive work” (Neumann, 2008: 70).

This procedure represents what, according to Golden-Biddle and Locke (2007:69), the researched object has said and done, and provides evidential information for the storyteller’s interpretations and conclusions. I believe this way of bringing the readers to my data offers a better chance of assessing the soundness of my assessments and conclusions, while also enabling the readers to make their own, alternative judgements if necessary.

Follow the data

As with the writing process, the research itself was far from an unwavering, linear process. My original project outline was to explore in depth a given discursive tendency, one I believe I had discovered while writing my Master's thesis in political science (Jensen 2006). My data had revealed what appeared to be mounting concern over energy security, strategy and high-level politics. This discovery led me to ask *how, why and under which circumstances* energy in the High North becomes a security issue, and, not least, *which mechanisms are involved when issues are included in or removed from the political agenda on security policy*.

To this end I formulated the following research questions: In what ways and to what degree does the assumed securitization of the High North find expression in the Norwegian debate? In what ways and to what degree is Norwegian foreign policy on the High North affected by the growing international concerns about energy security? Is the main concern connected with (Norway's) extraction of petroleum in the High North becoming less how to balance the demands of economic growth and environmental protection, and more about security?

In the event, the final project represented a considerable departure from those original propositions, although those questions could not be ignored. This PhD project has been funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Defence under an arrangement whereby calls for proposals alternate among the three main Norwegian foreign policy institutes, NUPI, PRIO and FNI. Although the funds come with no strings attached thematically and no formal constraints from the Ministry of Defence, and applications are considered only by the academic leadership at the respective institutes, I felt it was both relevant and sensible to don my 'security glasses' when I penned the application and designed the project proposal.

The background to the original research questions consists of at least three components. First, I had discovered things while writing my Master's thesis which I believed would be both interesting and relevant to pursue further in the context of doctoral work. Second, I wanted to ensure thematic relevance – if somewhat widely interpreted – in relation to the ministry. It was important in relation to my employer,

FNI, and indeed to myself, to remain within the thematic areas of resources/environment, as these comprise our core studies. Finally, it was crucial to give the entire process a scientifically sound and original grounding, not least in respect of the University of Tromsø, which would have to approve the scholarly part of the project so that I could be accepted as a PhD student.

Looking back at the whole research process from start to finish, I can certainly say that I ‘followed the data’ conscientiously, wherever they led. The project has travelled some distance from the original draft. At a meta-level, we might say that my original prejudices and conceptions were corrected through the data, because what I had as my main focus proved to match poorly with what I found in the data.

In that sense, this thesis is an argument for – and a further contribution to – the open approach and explorative research design: I came to realize what the pertinent questions were only after analysing the data. If that means that the challenge is to assess whether I have also succeeded in answering or illuminating the data, so be it.

A community of (co-)authors

The social dimension of writing journal articles is relevant in a methodological context because my manuscripts have been exposed to and commented on by various members of the wider researcher community. As Golden-Biddle and Locke (2007: 108) note, it is ‘through their reactions, challenges and suggestions [that] colleagues, reviewers, and editors participate in the re-writing of the manuscript’. Through this system of ‘co-authorship’, the final outcome has been significantly strengthened, becoming something more and better than the initial ideas created in my own head.

On the other hand, there is no denying that the reviewing process has been both demanding and at times frustrating. I found it a particular challenge to comply with as many as possible of the reviewers’ suggestions without letting the articles turn into something other than what I had intended. Here is an example from one of the reviewers in relation to Jensen (2012a):

Review 1

The paper deals with an interesting phenomenon – the way that an oppositional discourse appears to be co-opted within the topic of drilling in the context of Norway. The issue of co-

optation is not particularly new – the author acknowledges the literature on this, although oddly it comes after the presentation of his/her own data, rather than being part of a literature review.

This comment led me to revamp the manuscript, so that the literature on co-optation comes early in the article. I have also included my answers in the cover letter to this reviewer's next two comments:

- 1 – 'The phenomenon in question is how a discourse in a discursive battle enters the core of the opposing discourse, turn its logic on its head and turning it into a core component of its own make up' – reword – this is grammatically odd. I'm also a bit uneasy about the way that the author here seems to imply that a discourse is a living thing with agency – it's humans who are using discourse to achieve this goals.

[Leif Christian Jensen: This is now rectified throughout the article – it should now be clearer that I too acknowledge human agency in discourse.]

- 7–8 'I might also add that I have observed the discourses from the outside, hopefully with sufficient cultural competence to grasp the dynamics, but still distant enough to avoid what anthropologists call 'home blindness' (Neumann 2008).' From the outside of what? The concept of the neutral unbiased researcher is something of a fiction, as most discourse analysts acknowledge. I think you need to state more clearly what the point of looking at this topic was. Was it something you were particularly interested in, or was the point of this paper more about identifying the phenomenon of discourse co-optation and in a sense, any data which contained this phenomenon would have sufficed.

[Leif Christian Jensen: I agree with the reviewer that it is confusing (because it is basic stuff and therefore pretty trivial) in the context of the CDS journal which I assume is read mainly by people familiar with the basic premises of constructivism and DA. This paper was originally written for an audience (a Norwegian paper for Norwegian political scientists) who by and large is unfamiliar with DA applied to empirical cases and in general sceptical towards social constructivism as an analytical perspective. I can now see that several of my 'pedagogic' terms and sentences are quite unnecessary, confusing and has basically no place in an expert journal like this. Thanks to the reviewers, the paper manuscript should now be clearer and more to the point because a lot of the 'basic stuff' is cut out or re-written.

The whole paragraph is removed from 'It would clearly be...']

The next examples of substantial changes to the initially submitted manuscripts can be seen below, where I have added a few of the comments from reviewers in relation to the fourth article (Jensen 2012b). In the cover letter to the editors I have also included my descriptions on how I have interpreted their comments and what I have done to accommodate them:

Recommendations of referee A:

1. Is the suggested discursive shift real, or simply an artefact of the worldwide terminological shift toward using the term security in conjunction with almost every issues? Now, we have environmental security, energy security, social security, and even human security. Much of this is more a matter of terminological fashion than a real shift in discourse. How can we be sure that the case at hand represents anything more than that?

[Leif Christian Jensen: I interpret this comment as a matter of central importance in both reviews. I think it is mostly due to a lack of clarity on my part – a communication problem – which is mostly down to my poor choice of terminology and partly due to me insufficiently grounding and communicating my theoretical vantage point: I can now see that my use of the term ‘discursive shift’ can be read as some sort of radical change in discourse, even implying some sort of causality in policy changes. This was not my intention and not something I meant to claim. I have therefore tempered my rhetoric somewhat, and substituted ‘discursive shift’ for ‘discursive change’, ‘discursive tendency’ etc. (see for instance pages 2, 3, 4, 17). I have also strengthened the post-structuralist/discursive focus of the article theoretically (pp. 6–8) and by emphasizing that such discursive trends or changes are interesting in themselves although only history can tell us what, if any, ‘practical consequences’ they might or might not have (see for instance pp. 3, 7). I now argue that ‘discourse matters!’, and that this is down to more than ‘a matter of terminological fashion’ (the ‘securitised’ discourse has reached central Norwegian policy documents, which is as close as we get to ‘action’ without actually seeing it so to speak), even though the practical implications may be undetectable at this point – after all it is an emerging (but important) trend in the official Norwegian (foreign policy) discourse and indeed the public discourse which I document and analyse.]

Recommendations of the referee B:

- a) The notion of ‘securitization’ is accepted without any due recognition of its limitations or indeed the contestation surrounding it. For certain, the paper would need to examine the recent special issue in *Security Dialogue* in 2011 considering these issues. In addition, the discourse analysis section is also very reference light giving the reader the impression that the paper is not fully immersed to the level that should be expected for publication in *Cooperation and Conflict*. Again, these implies that the limitations of Discourse Analysis as approach and what it can contribute to understanding of policy change are not really discussed in sufficient depth.

[Leif Christian Jensen: I have taken this comment very seriously indeed, and updated the paper with what I believe I can say are the latest advances in securitization theory. I have also re-read the key critiques of the theory and made reference to the ‘contestations surrounding it’ (see page 8). I also suggest that the article can hopefully be read as a modest contribution to a post-structuralist attempt at expanding securitization as a an analytical concept, based on the latest developments in the recent special issue of *Security Dialogue* and particularly Lene Hansen’s contribution to that issue (see p. 8). The section on discourse analysis is also completely rewritten, and is now hopefully better integrated with securitization theory and more robust reference-wise. Regarding discourse analysis and policy change, see my response to comment #4 by reviewer A.]

Although the review processes involved a lot of work, as seen in the few examples above, I cannot say that any of these articles have changed fundamentally. I do believe, however, that the inductive, constructivist approach and the reviewing processes have combined to take the articles in slightly different directions than planned. But that, I would say, has not been to the detriment of the thesis – the contrary in fact, as I think the last example shows. The shifts and turns of the review processes have revealed alternative stories and ways of understanding each article and the overarching project.

The invisible author

I have also spent some time while writing this thesis nudging and prodding the academic tradition of communication into which I, as a social scientist, have been

socialized. Both as a reader and writer I have felt a certain discomfort at the anonymized tribal language where ‘one concludes that’ and where it is the ‘data’ which ‘tell us’ this, that and the other. This abstract, and in my opinion artificially passive approach to communication, closes the researcher (we are people, after all) off from the text and makes the writing and reading of academic texts both circuitous and somewhat indigestible (Golden-Biddle & Locke 2007:10–11). I have tried to avoid this by being more visible in first person in the text, although this has not always been readily accepted in my academic surroundings.

To cite just one instance, in the text that I sent to the journal *Polar Record*, I was present in the first person singular more or less throughout (Jensen 2007). In the final, published version (the third article in this thesis), I have virtually redacted myself out of the text altogether, urged by one of the reviewers and encouraged by the editor (not so strange or surprising, given that journal’s bias towards the natural sciences). Take for example the passage on page 253, which read originally: ‘In relation to the wider discussion on Norway’s relations with Russia, *I believe we will see more of the same*, in that the way we characterize Russia will depend largely on the context.’ That same passage now reads: ‘In relation to the wider discussion on Norway’s relations with Russia, *the author’s data suggest continuity*, in that the way we characterize Russia will depend largely on the context.’

I was politely told that textual presence in the former sense was a breach of the professional code according to which I had to write ‘in the disembodied voice of scientific demonstration’. I had to learn to write myself out of the texts, and ‘let the findings speak for themselves’. I was extremely uneasy about bowing to these strictures – but otherwise the article might not be accepted for publication. We need, after all, ‘to appear in guises that establish recognizable characters that are regarded as credible by our readers’ (Golden-Biddle & Locke 2007:63).

I had failed to do this on this occasion. If I had a chance to revisit my decision, I would argue more forcefully for my choice of ‘authorial character’ (ibid.) and risk rejection, because I believe that what the article tries to say has suffered because it stakes its authority on an objectivity which, as I see it, cannot exist in respect of the

article's subject matter and theory vantage point. (With hindsight and increased academic self-esteem, I also feel the theory/methodology section in the 2007 article ended up far too defensive and apologetic after the reviews – but that is also another story.) The point is precisely the debate per se, the subjective in the political and how certain representations gain ground and inform our conceptions of reality and perceived room for manoeuvre, while others lose out and fade away.

As that article now stands, I feel it gives too much of an impression of confident certainty and objectivity for which there are no grounds. I also feel the text suffers structurally and is harder to digest. If the writing of scientific texts is not something that comes naturally, then it is not so strange that reading them comes even less naturally, and may perhaps partly explain why such texts often have so little appeal to a potential readership outside the confines of the scientific community – which is indeed a pity.

After the slightly unpleasant but highly enlightening experience with this first article (number three in this dissertation; Jensen 2007), I was determined to engage more decisively with my role as storyteller. For as Booth (1961) and Golden-Biddle and Locke (2007:62) have noted, we as authors can never choose to remove all trace of ourselves from the text: we are limited to choosing the disguise in which we want to appear. I hope by writing this thesis in the way I myself have chosen, in form and substance, it can also contribute to the ever on-going academic debate on how we can better communicate with our readers, and how we can make our texts more attractive to a broader audience.

Yes, discourse matters!

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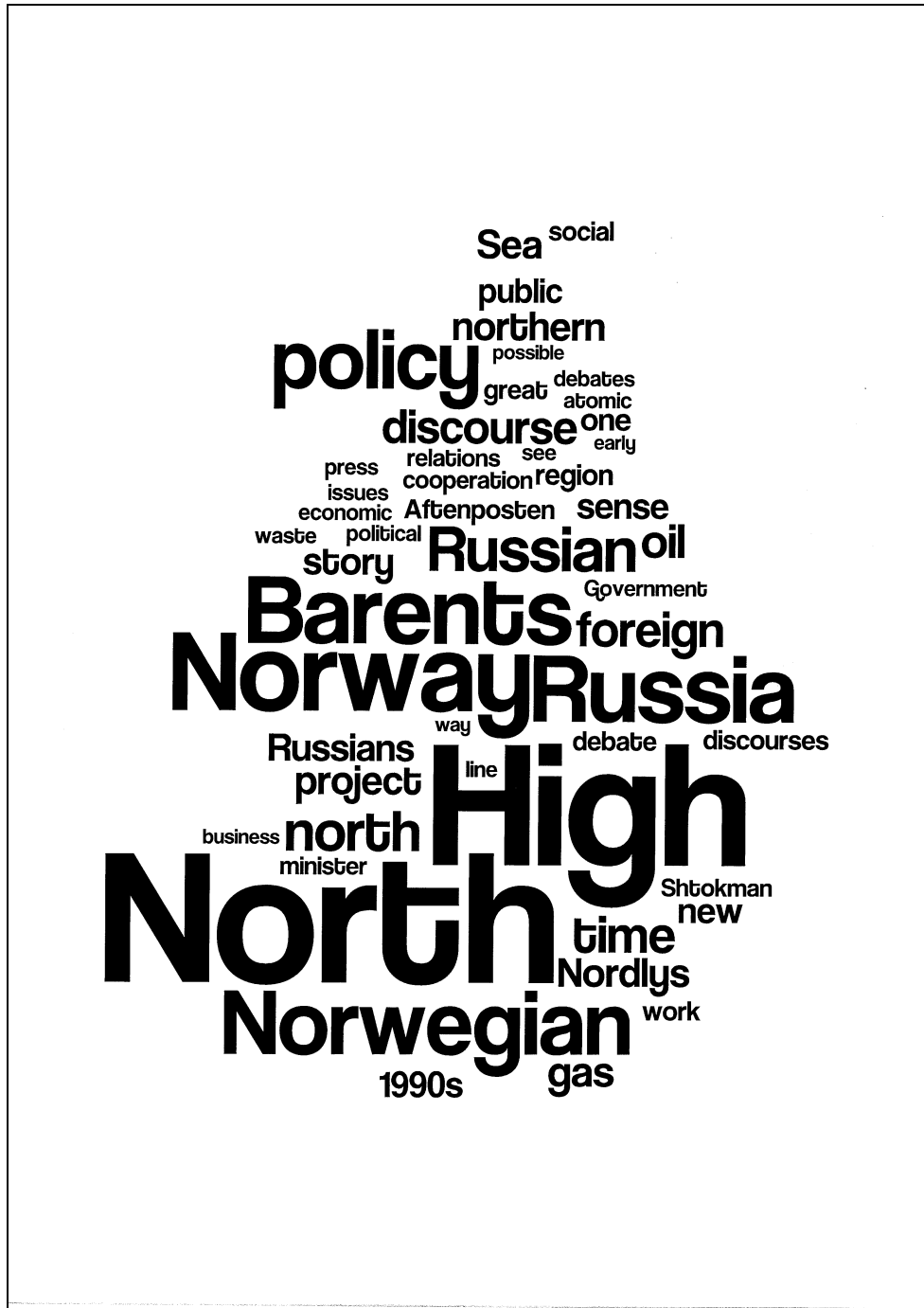
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Article one:

Framing the High North:

Public discourses in Norway after 2000

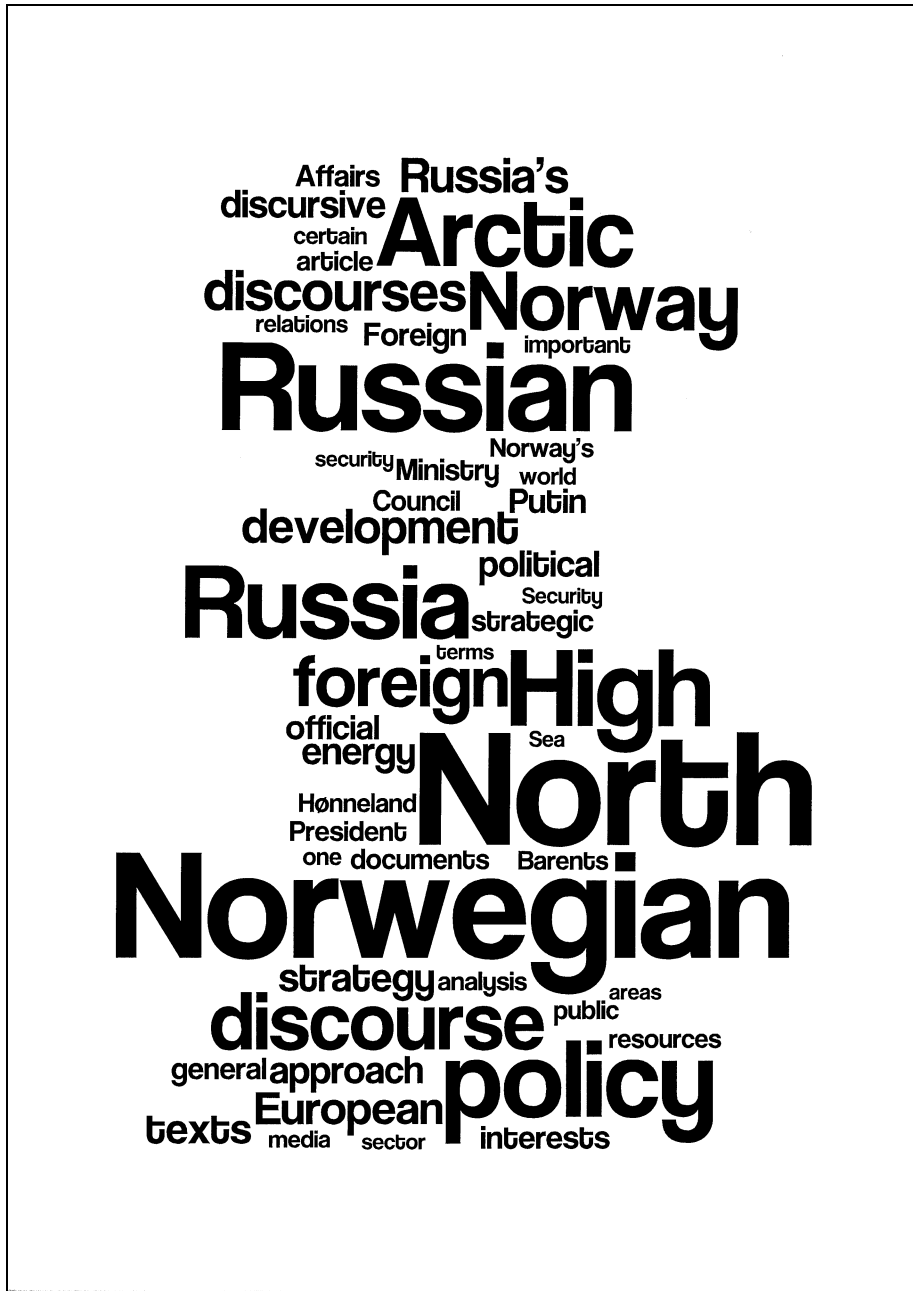
(published in *Acta Borealia* Vol. 28, No. 1, 2011, pp. 37-54)



Article two:

**Approaching the North:
Norwegian and Russian foreign policy discourses
on the European Arctic**

(published in *Polar Research* Vol. 29, No.3, 2010, pp. 439-450)



Article three:

Petroleum discourse in the European Arctic:

The Norwegian case

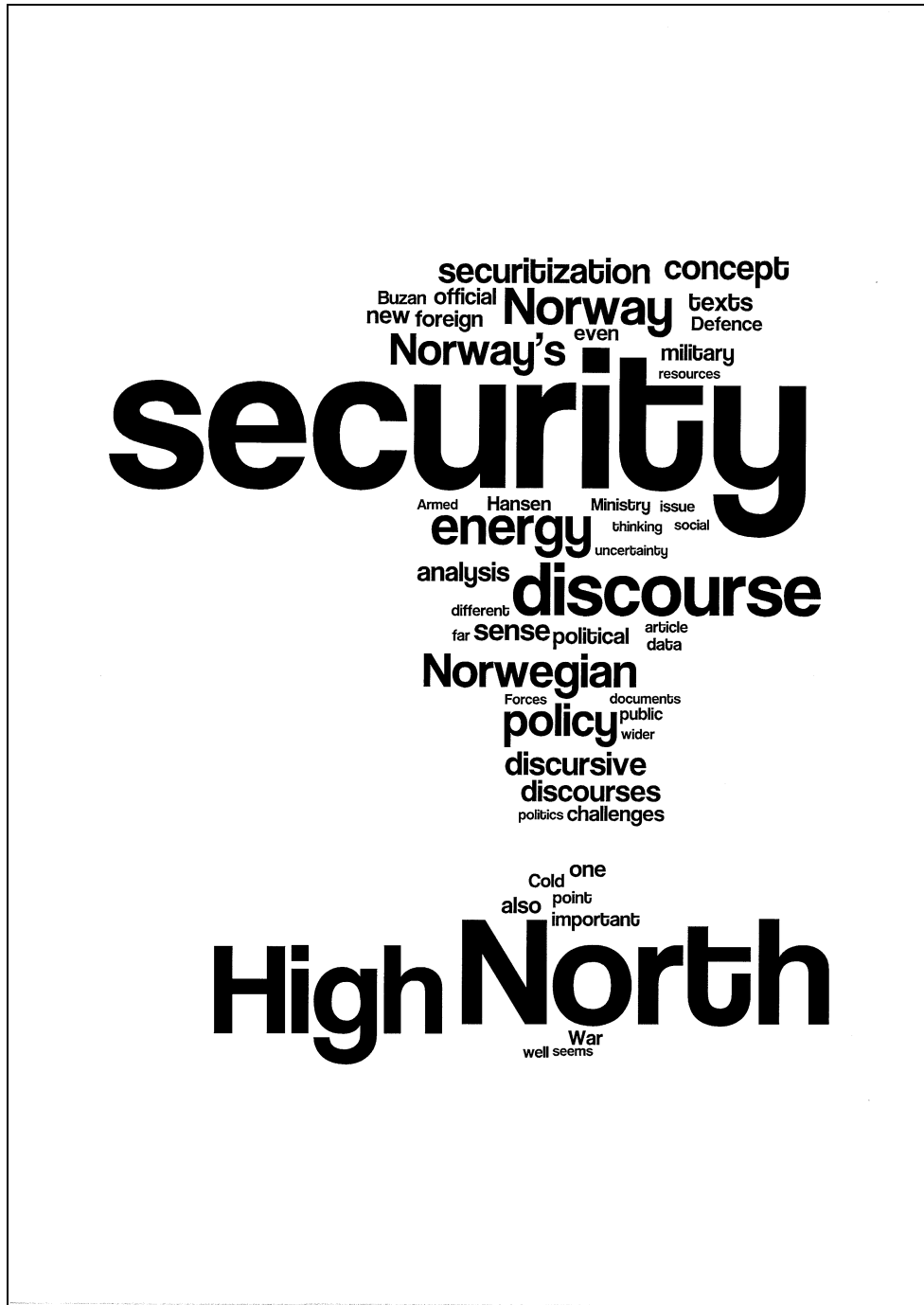
(published in *Polar Record* Vol.43, No. 3, 2007, pp.247-254)



Article four:

**Seduced and surrounded by security:
A post-structuralist take on Norwegian High North
securitizing discourses**

(first submitted to *Cooperation and Conflict* in May 2011. Revised and re-submitted after review in April 2012. Awaiting final decision from editors as per June 2012)



Article five:

Norwegian petroleum extraction in Arctic waters

to save the environment:

Introducing ‘discourse co-optation’ as a new analytical term

(published in Critical Discourse Studies Vol. 9, No. 1, 2012, pp.29-38)



