SETTING THE MARKETING SCENE:
DISCOURSE AND IDEOLOGY IN MARKETING PRACTICE

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INTRODUCTION

Marketing and contemporary consumption society

This paper is an attempt to contribute to and enrich the understanding of marketing practice and its role in society. In contemporary society wherein consumption, it may be argued, has been allotted a central position and importance in the everyday life (see e.g. Featherstone, 1984; Klein, 2001), marketing practice, representing the link between production and consumption, may be said to represent a powerful force in society. It is my contention that marketing professionals, since the 1950s, have come to play a significant role in the creation, maintenance and/or reproduction of taste, dreams and aspirations (Ewen, 1976; Lasch, 1979), needs (Packard, 1957), identities (Willis, 1990; Kellner, 1992) and sign systems (Baudrillard, 1988). Featherstone (1984) has, referring to Bourdieu, situated the marketing profession within the group of “new intellectuals” of our time, and the marketer of contemporary society has, perhaps somewhat briskly put, assumed the role of the “philosopher-king of commercial culture” (Randall Rothberg quoted in Klein, 2001:7). The outcomes of marketing work very easily find its way into our lives, and few are these of us, I think it is rather safe to claim, not having experienced the difficulties of escaping marketing in our day-to-day lives, be it market researchers phoning in the evening or television commercials interrupting (and paying) the Sunday movie.

Representing a forceful institution of society, marketing practice and its various appearances calls for continuous critical investigation and research. This call has to some extent been acknowledged by, mainly, social sciences in general, and, to a lesser extent but growing in number, by marketing studies in particular. However, the majority of this work seems to have focus either upon the products of marketing practice, e.g. advertisements, the marketed product, stores and malls and so forth, or on how marketing output is received by, and influences, the members of society.

“Outside” (Brown, 1995:132)\(^1\) the area of marketing studies, among the most prominent critical voices directed towards marketing activities are probably the ones stemming from critical theory, and in particular those of the members of the earlier Frankfurt school (e.g. Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse). Critical theory formulated a sharp body of critique against consumerism and the elements therein. One of the main spokesmen of critical theory concerning this critique of consumerism, was Herbert Marcuse. In his book; One Dimensional Man (1964), Marcuse discussed how mass consumption provides a set of so called false needs that produce an one-dimensional world and human being. The needs are being shaped by powerful social agents (as for instance: marketing) and consumption is, according to Marcuse, to be regarded, not as a improvement of modern society, but as a degeneration that has produced passive, oppressed and superficial members of society. Although not exclussingly directed against marketing as such, Marcuse emphasises the constitutive character of the marketing function within the capitalist society. In other words, marketing is being conceived as a society agent acting upon, and not as an observer adapting to, society.

Another severe, albeit indirect, corpus of marketing critique is offered by Horkheimer and Adorno in their classic Dialectics of Enlightenment. In this book, the myth of enlightenment as emancipation is criticised and replaced by a counter picture that pictures the emergence of the enlightened and modern society in the colours of an increased suppression of the individual. Consider the following lines, which capture the essence of the market

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\(^1\) In his discussion of postmodern approaches to marketing, Brown (1995: 132 f.) makes a distinction between writings stemming from “outside” and “inside” the area of academic marketing studies. The “extra-marketing” body of literature comprises, according to Brown, contributions from sociology, anthropology, geography, linguistics, media studies, communication studies and cultural studies, as well as from general cultural commentators.
segmentation activity, an activity that is of great importance for marketing management reasoning.

“Market differentiations such as those of A and B films, or stories in magazines in different price ranges, depend not so much on subject matter as on classifying, organizing, and labelling consumers. Something is provided for all so that no one can escape; the distinctions are emphasised and extended. The public is catered for with a hierarchical range of mass-produced products of varying quality, thus advancing the rule of complete quantification. Everybody must behave (as if spontaneously) in accordance with his previously determined and indexed level, and choose the category of mass product turned out for his type. Consumers appear as statistics on research organization charts, and are divided by income groups into red, green, and blue areas; the technique that is used for any type of propaganda.” (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1947/1997:123)

Other sources of marketing criticism can moreover be found in contemporary commentators on consumption society. Baudrillard (1988), for instance, refers to needs and consumption in terms of “(…) an organized extension of productive forces” (p 43), and that “(…) the system of needs is the product of the system of production” (p 42). Other, more popularly written, contributions to the body of marketing critique include the critically acclaimed book No Logo (Klein, 2001), wherein the "branding of the world” and its consequences of this marketing practice are masterfully scrutinised and sharply challenged.

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Inside the area of marketing academic writings, the major part of the critically oriented research also seems to be directed towards the output and the consequences of marketing practice more than the process of marketing production. Examples, only to name a few, comprise studies of consumer experiences of marketing output (Thompson et al, 1989; 1990; 1994), advertisement content and consumer interpretations of advertisements (Grafton-Small, R and Linstead, S A, 1989; Stern, B, 1993), the social role of marketing output, e.g. products (Solomon, 1983), addictive consumption (Elliot, 1994).

The abovementioned research is in every respect important contributions to the endeavour of understanding the practice of marketing from a critical perspective. However, in order to gain a more elaborate and rich understanding of marketing practice and its role within society, in addition to research on marketing products and the consumption of these, some attention ought to be paid to the production side of marketing practice, i.e. to the process of marketing work. Some noteworthy contributions of this kind, however, are to be found in the plethora of social sciences and marketing literature. Lien’s (1995, 1997) and Prus’ (1989a, 1989b) ethnographies of the various marketing work are recommendable explorations into the world of marketing work and the production of marketing output.

This paper is an attempt to contribute to the critical understanding of marketing practice from a production point of view, by means of an exploration of the process and organisation of marketing production work. In order to accomplish this, a discussion as to the notions “marketing practice” and “marketing production” is needed.

The practice of marketing and marketing production
Generally speaking, the notion of "marketing practice” can, for the sake of the argument, be separated from the ”principles”, ”philosophies” and ”prescriptions” of marketing (Brown, 1995:46). "Marketing practice” will in this paper refer to the actions and deeds conducted by marketing practitioners or professionals working closely to these (e.g. the clients of an advertising agency). What kinds of actions constituting marketing practice are however not very easily framed in a simple definition. The American Marketing Association has proposed as a so called official definition of the practice of marketing the following words:

"Marketing is the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion, and distribution of ideas, goods, and services to create exchanges that satisfy individual and organizational objectives.” (Hunt, 1991:14)
In an almost identical fashion, the marketing practice is by seminal writers within the corpus of thoughts and writings that may be referred to as **mainstream marketing management theory**,² frequently described in terms of:

“(…) the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion, and distribution of ideas, goods, services to create exchanges that satisfy individual and organizational goals.” (Kotler, 2000:8),

and:

“(…) the art and science of choosing target markets and getting, keeping, and growing customers through creating, delivering, and communicating superior customer value.” (Ibid.)

Hence, marketing practice, within this stream of mainstream marketing thinking, talking and writing, is conceived of as comprising actions such as planning, strategy making, deciding, market researching, choosing, positioning, targeting, getting, keeping, delivering and creating exchanges and so forth.

However, it is my assertion that, *above* alluding to these activities, and perhaps first and foremost, marketing practice should be understood as discourse. “Discourse” is here, in accordance with e.g. Potter and Wetherell, (1987), Potter (1996), Fairclough (1992, 1993, 1995), van Dijk (1997), van Leeuwen, (1993), referred to as language use as a social practice, i.e. as language use as “form of action, as something people do to or for or with each other” (van Leuween, 1993:193). In employing the preposition “above”, I wish to draw attention to marketing as discourse not being situated *beside* marketing action of the kinds previously mentioned (e.g. strategy formulation, designing of market research, positioning etc.), but rather overriding and embodying the latter. Conceiving of marketing practice as discourse, i.e. as a language based set of activities, hence pays attention to the primary role of talk and writing in marketing work. This assertion of mine finds its roots in one of the insights that my field work observations of marketing work (within the frame of which this paper came into being) produced, namely that a considerable amount of the work commonly referred to as “marketing practice” was exerted in the format of interactional language use, e.g. in meetings, face-to-face conversations, email-correspondence and phone conversations. Boden (1994) has made similar observations, albeit in another organisational context. She for instance holds that:

“Organizations are people. When people come together in organizations to get things done, they talk.” (p 8),

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² What I here have labelled “mainstream marketing management theory” is the body of literature and ideas, dealing with marketing theory, that probably is to be regarded as the most dominant or hegemonic one at western business schools of today. Sheth, Gardner and Garrett (1988) refer to this body of ideas as the *Managerial School*, and argue that: "In fact, a strong argument can be made for positioning the managerial school as the most comprehensive school among the galaxy of marketing schools of thought. In summary, the managerial school has had tremendous influence on the marketing profession. Its central concepts continue to be utilised heavily by marketing practitioners in corporate offices and by marketing professors in academic classrooms.” Marketing research has for a long period, and to a considerable extent still is, predominantly driven from this marketing managerial perspective (Alvesson and Willmott, 1996; Morgan, 1992). The focus of the marketing management approach is the practice of marketing management and the decision making processes incorporated in this management practice. The perspective is a managerial one, and the knowledge interest is clearly a technical interest, that is, as touched upon above; the main purpose of the search for knowledge is to raise management’s skills in marketing management; in planning, leading, managing and auditing the marketing activities of the company. Notions such as marketing mix, product life cycle (e.g. Smallwood, 1973), market segmentation and marketing concept (e.g. Borden, 1964) are examples of the fruits of this approach of marketing studies.
“Studies of corporate executives and middle-level management suggest that such individuals spend a great deal of their daily routines engaged in some kind of talk, whether in meetings, office interaction or on the telephone.” (p 16)

Some of the marketing work, of course, may be said to be exerted individually, for instance as writing up reports and advertising campaign texts before the computer screen, and as thinking and individual problem solving at the bus, during the smoking pause or the lunch walk. Needless to say, these forms of marketing practice are difficult, if not to say impossible, to gain any insight into. Interviews with marketing practitioners, some may then argue, could provide information as to the individually conducted work. However, if one is to take seriously the criticism raised against the "romantic view of interviews", i.e. the treating of interviews as mere representations of a reality outside the interview situation (e.g. Silverman, 1993, Alvesson and Deetz, 2000), then interviews are not be considered as a solely unproblematic solution. As much as, if not more, being a product of external "facts", the statements and accounts produced in an interview are constituted by the institutional setting of the interview and various cultural prescription as to the modes in which one can and is expected to account for various experiences and activites. "An interview is a social situation (...)", Alvesson and Deetz (2000:72) write, "(...) a kind of conversation-and that which is said is far too context-dependent to be seen as a mirror of what goes on outside this specific situation, either in the mind of the interviewee or in the organization 'out there’ ” (Ibid.). I therefore find it more valuable to focus on the manifest social interactions wherein the major part of the marketing practice is executed and within which marketing production takes place.

What is then being produced in marketing practice? Aside from, or perhaps above, the outcomes touched upon above: plans, strategies, positioning charts, market research designs, brand conceptions, budgets and so forth, I will in this paper, drawing on social constructionist and discourse sociologist ideas, argue that the realm of marketing is one of the primary outcomes of marketing practice studied as discourse. “To speak is simultaneously to engage in world construction”, Gergen (1993:167) writes, and in and through the use of language, Fairclough (1993, 1995) holds, three kinds of discursive products are put into being: social identities, social relations and systems of knowledge and beliefs. In a similar vein, although unnecessarily restricted to talk, Boden proposes that:

“When people talk they are simultaneously and reflexively talking their relationships, organizations, and whole institutions into action, or ‘into being’. ” (Boden, 1994:14)

Hence, the objects constituting the various realms in which we live our everyday lives, are, as it were, intersubjective social objects, “(...) constantly changing as they are defined and redefined in interaction” (Charon, 1998:44). This classification work is a significant part of the ongoing construction work of the world we are living in, and marketing realm is by no means any exception from this. Marketing realm is, one premise of this study is, a continuously, within marketing practice and by means of social interaction and language use, produced, reproduced, negotiated and contested social object. This paper is concerned with this process, i.e. how marketing realm is discursively put into being in marketing work.

The ambition
More specifically, the aims of this paper are three interrelated ones. Firstly, I wish to contribute to the critical understanding of marketing practice by means of entering the phenomenon from a marketing production point of view, and thereby exploring the process and organisation of marketing production work.
In so doing, secondly, I wish to understand *how marketing realm is put into being* in this marketing production practice.

Thirdly, my aim is to explore the *ideological content* (see e.g. Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 1998) of this marketing realm; the latter by means of relating the discursive event of the meeting to broader, overarching structures and hegemonic conditions in society. Thus, in addition to the first two aims, this study is motivated and guided by an overriding ambition to render visible the, within mainstream marketing studies much neglected, non-neutral nature of marketing practice (Morgan, 1992).

**Empirical delimitations of the study**
The practice of marketing production is anything but *the* practice of marketing production. Several activities, some of which are touched upon above, may be included in this category of marketing practice, e.g. email-correspondence, informal conversations, phonecalls, formal and planned as well as unplanned face-to-face meetings. The discussion in this paper is based on an observation of one well-delimited meeting at an advertising agency, a meeting between a client and three agency representatives. There are primarily three reasons supporting this choice of empirical focus.

First and foremost it is my contention that a significant extent of the marketing production work, conceived of as discourse, is exerted in face-to-face meetings. In meetings, ideas and project plans are put forward and discussed, clients are briefed, campaign proposals are presented and so forth. Boden (1994:81) refers to meetings as “(...) the essential mechanism through which organizations create and maintain the practical activity of organizing. They are, in other words, the interaction order of management”. I would like to translate this statement of Boden’s into the context of marketing practice, hence proposing that meetings are to be conceived of as *the* basic social site wherein the cornerstones of marketing production are put into place, and where the work of marketing management primarily is situated. Of course, as mentioned above, other kinds of marketing production work are conceivable. Individual work, such as computer processing, typing, drawing, phoning, thinking are but some examples. However, the products of this work must in a team based advertising agency be reported and negotiated publicly in a meeting of some kind, be it internal working meetings or client briefings. Thus, marketing meetings may, if access is granted, produce potentially fruitful empirical departures for the study of marketing practice *in situ*, as somewhat “naturally” occurring events in the day-to-day marketing work.

“Meetings are, by their very nature, talk. Talk, talk, talk and more talk”, Boden furthermore (1994:82) writes. In addition to this, written forms of discourse may be expected to occur at, and in close connection to, meetings, e.g. production of meeting agendas and reports. Language being a consequential element of meetings renders observations of meetings suitable when the object of study is language use in marketing practice.

The organisation and industry chosen as empirical sites, i.e. advertising agency and industry, may be said to represent a certain phase in the marketing management chain, a phase which according to me belongs to the most interesting one. This so since it at this stage that the work of marketing becomes, as it were, professionalised for the first time in the marketing chain, that is regarded as a matter and enterprise for external experts. The marketing departments of companies are also, of course, internally regarded as experts of marketing, but when the expert departments become clients of an advertising agency, then one step further on the marketing expertise ladder is climbed. Advertising agencies may hence be considered as one of the specialised edges of marketing practice within the marketing management process.
chain. Other examples of marketing practice edges include market researchers, media agencies and Internet communication experts.\(^3\)

**The structure of the paper**

The structure of the remainder of the paper is as follows. The next section is dedicated to an outline of the theoretical and methodological foundations undergirding the study.

In the third part, a rather minute close reading of a meeting between a client and marketing practitioners at a Swedish advertising agency is presented. The meeting is in this close reading interpreted as a discursive event, and the main focus of the interpretations will hence be upon the meeting participants’ language use and the various constructs that come into being during the meeting.

In the following section of the paper, the fourth, an effort of mine, to reconstruct the realm of marketing that somewhat fragmentedly is being constructed at the meeting is presented. In addition to this, in the last part of the paper, I will explore the ideological content of the marketing realm construct.

**THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS**

**Ontological position: The world as a social product**

As indicated in the introduction, this study is based upon and guided by an ontological stance informed by social constructions.\(^4\) Trying to trace the etymological constituents of the notion of “social constructionism”, constructionism, firstly, may be said to refer to some sort of building process wherein something (the construct) is put into existence by means of actors (constructors), employing some kind of resources, tools and means. Social, secondly, suggests this construction not being a one man’s occupation, but an endeavour that engages at least two people in interaction.

A as crucial as it is cumbersome question at this point is what should be considered as constructed in the world. Hacking (1999:21 ff.) points out three phenomena that in the social constructionist literature are claimed to be socially constructed: objects, elevator words and ideas. Objects refer to the very items in the world per se, and examples comprise people, states (e.g. childhood), actions (e.g. the act of throwing a ball in a baseball game) and social classes. Elevator words, according to Hacking, are notions operating at a higher level than the ones of ideas and objects, such as the words: “facts”, “truth”, “reality” and “knowledge”. Ideas are the notions, concepts, beliefs and categories by means of which the, what Searle (1995) refers to as “brute facts” of the world (e.g. bodies, mountains, rain etc.) are perceived, spoken, written and acted upon. This is a stance for instance embraced by van Dijk (1998), when he writes on the nature of socially held beliefs as to the nature and society:

“(...) we may also take a more active view of beliefs, and define them in terms of socially based, mental constructs that constitute the ‘facts’, typically so of social and cultural reality. I take this latter, constructive view of beliefs-representing the world, even the facts of nature, involves interpretation and understanding of that world in terms of socially acquired conceptual categories. In that sense beliefs constitute the world for us. This

\(^3\) Marketing production work is, as many other production processes, executed within a social network, by people collaborating to produce, and in various degrees influencing, the final outcome of the process. For an interesting discussion of collective production work in an art context, see Becker (1974).

\(^4\) It should be noted, however, that an ontological standpoint as to society and social life to a large extent, be it implicitly or explicitly, is affiliated with a particular, more or less clear, political standpoint. Hacking (1999:6), for instance, holds that a social constructionist perspective often involves a critical approach of the status quo, and hence embraces an urge to change the present situation. Conversely, it may be said, a static and realistic conception of society entails an acceptance of “how things are”.
obviously does not mean that the natural or social world does not exist independently of our beliefs, but only that people structure, understand and experience it (directly or through instruments) in terms of their beliefs.” (p 25)

My opinion is that a universal (Hacking, 1999:24), or radical, version of social constructionism, i.e. claiming that every object and entity of reality are products of social interaction, is somewhat misguided and may actually scare away readers, rather than raising their consciousness of the historical and social roots of everyday realm. In line with my own reading, Hacking (1999:25) points out that not even the seminal and frequently referred to text on social constructionism, by Berger and Luckmann (1966): *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, holds that everything is socially constructed. Inspired by, and rooted in, phenomenological aspirations to ponder on the phenomenon (the world as it is perceived), rather than the world *per se*, Berger and Luckmann’s main task was the one of exploring the modes in which the knowledge, beliefs and experiences of everyday reality incessantly are being socially constructed; externalised, objectified and internalised, and hence rendered “real”.

I am inclined to subscribe to this latter view of constructionism. Thus, when I in this paper utter “the construction of marketing realm”, I am referring to the active, social putting into being of the notions, ideas and constituents of the reality of marketing practitioners. In doing so, I do not automatically refute, for instance, the existence of “the consumers” in terms of people of flesh and blood, engaging in the act common sensical and socially and in history defined as the one of “buying things” and “consuming”. What is at stake in this study is the construction process of the commonly held conception of a marketing reality.  

However, if keeping with a Kantian distinction between the things themselves (*das Ding an Sich*) and things as the appear for us (*das Ding für mich*), the socially constructed world views, categories, beliefs and so forth, constituting the dominant common sensical knowledge, will have effects on the way in which human beings act towards the world and other people (cf. Lakoff and Johnson (1980). The constructions may, as above mentioned, be realised during the course of time in their consequences, as for instance in various institutions and practices. Human beings’ classifications and definitions of the world, by virtue of people acting and *interacting* in accordance with these classifications, may hence become “real” in their consequences. Consequently, the analytical distinction between objects and ideas that Hacking (1999) presents is not an altogether clear-cut and unproblematic one, but this paper is neither the right place nor of the proper format to elaborate on this problem. One assumption upon which my paper relies is thus that the marketing reality constructs explored in this study play a significant and forceful role in the marketing practitioners’ acting in and upon the world and people surrounding them, in that they structure (or determine) how the surroundings are perceived, sensed and understood. The marketing reality constructions point for instance out what are important marketing problems and what ought to be regarded as proper solutions to these problems.

In a succinct introduction to the corpus of social constructionist ideas, Burr (1995:5 ff.) puts forward seven features of social constructionism that I think frames this ontological standpoint rather well:

1. Anti-essentialism

5 Gergen (1985:266), for instance holds that: “social constructionist inquiry is principally concerned with explicating the processes by which people come to describe, explain, or otherwise account for the world (including themselves) in which they live.”

6 See for instance Ariès (1962) as to the construction of “childhood”, realised as “children”, and Foucault (1967) on the construction of “madness”, by means of the culturally and historically bounded discourses, which in turn enabled the emergence of certain institutions and practices such as psychiatric treatment and mental hospitals.

7 Moreover, it is highly uncertain that the author of this paper is the right person to pursue such an enterprise.
Thus, as pointed out by Burr, and briefly alluded to in the introductory section of this paper, a social constructionist ontological stance, among others, involves a primary focus on language use as a productive social practice, i.e. discourse (Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Potter (1996); Fairclough (1992, 1993, 1995, 2000c; van Dijk, 1997; van Leeuwen, 1993). In addition to conceiving of language use as action, the notion of “discourse” draws attention to the constitutive aspects of various kinds of language use (writing and talking). The use of language is in this body of thought thus comprehended as not merely representing and mirroring the speech object, but also, and more importantly, as an act of production wherein a variety of effects are accomplished or performed, e.g. persuasion, declarations, promises etc. This notion of discourse “(...) indicates that the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action-it is not normally thought of as just saying something” (Austin, 1962/1975:7).

These hallmarks of language make it the most important symbolic resource in social construction work (e.g. Mead, 1934). In and by means of language use (writing and talking), different versions of the world is constructed; the reality as we perceive it is rendered classified, somewhat ordered (or disordered) and intelligible. Language use is hence not only, it is claimed here, a passive effect or reflection of the world, but an active force working as a producer of the same world (Fairclough, 1992:63). Potter and Wetherell (1987:6) formulates this idea as:

“Social texts [i.e. language use and its products, my remark] do not merely reflect or mirror objects, events, and categories pre-existing in the social and natural world. Rather, they actively construct a version of those things. They do not just describe things; they do things.”

The reality construction resulting from language use is accomplished by, for instance, means of naturalisation processes (the rendering of certain versions of reality natural and self evident) together with mechanisms of exclusion of alternative versions of reality (Mills, 1997:12; Potter, 1996:146). Definitions and constructions of reality are thus always and continuously subjected to reproduction as well as challenge, and major societal changes often assume the form of an altering of language use (see e.g. Fairclough, 2000).

There are according to Fairclough three elements of the constitutive effect of discourse: (i) the identity function which refers to how discourse contributes to the construction of social identities and “subject positions for social subjects and types of self” (Ibid.); (ii) the relational function referring to the process whereby discourse produces the social relationship between people; and (iii) the ideational function which denotes how discourse constructs systems of knowledge and beliefs.

Conceiving of language as a social practice, however, furthermore brings about the acknowledgement of language use taking place in a certain social and historical context. Language use is hence not an isolated, decontextualised kind of action; on the contrary it is embedded in, shaped of, as well as shaping, the social structure. The play of language is constrained as well as enabled by social structures, conventions and power relations, and of

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8 Examples of other social practices are teaching, providing health care, doing justice (van Dijk, 1997:5) and government (Fairclough, 2000c:143). In other words, “social practice” can be thought of as more or less institutionalised interaction wherein something is being achieved or produced (Chouliaki and Fairclough, 1999)
what Fairclough (1995:134) terms “the state of hegemonic relations and hegemonic struggle”. In order to be able to speak or write on a certain topic, larger macro structures (narratives and discourses) must be drawn upon in order to secure sense making and legitimacy. Discourse is in the words of Fairclough (Ibid.) “(...) socially shaped, but it is also socially shaping, or *constitutive*”. Hence, a dialectical relation is here asserted between social structure and discursive micro events, such as a meeting, actually of a similar kind as the one presented by Berger and Luckmann (1966). Gee formulates this dialectical nature of language-structure relations as:

“Language has a magical property: when we speak or write we craft what we have to say to fit the situation or context in which we are communicating. But, at the same time, how we speak or write *creates* that very situation or context. It seems, then, that we fit our language to a situation or context that our language, in turn, helped to create in the first place.”(Gee, 1999:11)

To be able to take this dialectical feature of language use into account, a theoretical approach that navigates in the tension between structure and agency, text and context, local and environment, micro and macro levels, is called for. Critical Discourse Analysis is one fruitful theoretical route, and as such it represents one chief influence for me.

**Theoretical and methodological influences: Critical Discourse Analysis**

In research informed by critical discourse analysis, the ambition is, as suggested by Fairclough, to explore the dialectical relationships between “(...) discursive practices, texts and events and wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes, and investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power and to explore how opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony” (Fairclough, 1995:132 f).

The dialectical nature of language use is acknowledged within Fairclough’s critical discourse analytical framework by means of a three-dimensional view on discursive events as for instance a meeting, an informal conversation or a phonechat. Any specific discursive event can (and should according to Fairclough) be explored at three levels, focusing three different but mutually related aspects of discourse.

Firstly, the very text can be focused closely, and its inherent features such as vocabulary, grammar, text structure are some examples of the objects of investigation. Secondly, the text production, distribution and interpretation processes, i.e. the discursive practise, can be studied. The main foci of this second dimension are the various constraining forces, the tensions within which the production, distribution and consumption of text are exerted. One study object when the discursive practice is approached is for instance the *interdiscursivity* of text production, i.e. how one single text often is produced by means of combinations of discourses, the latter here conceived of as a *count noun* (cf. Fairclough,

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9 For the sake of clarity, some comments as to the terminology used in this formulation of Fairclough’s may be needed. “Discursive event” is here referred to, by Fairclough, as an “instance of language use”, conceived of as a social practice (Fairclough, 1993:138), e.g. a conversation, a meeting or an interview. “Discursive practice” should be understood as the various acts of “the production, distribution and consumption of a text” (Ibid.). A “text” is then to be conceived of as the product of a certain discursive event in the form of written and/or spoken language. As abovementioned “discourse” refers to the use of language as a social practice.

10 In an earlier text, Fairclough presents this three-dimensional framework as a bringing together three theoretical or analytical streams: **linguistics**, with its close up textual focus, **macrosociological** perspectives which purport to understand microsocial practices within social structures, and **microsociological** approaches, emphasising the active social agent (Fairclough, 1992:72). Another mode of formulating this ambition could be in terms of the attempt of relating micro and macro levels of analysis on the one hand, and agency and structure approaches on the other, by means of a dialectical study of language use.
"Discourse", according to this latter connotation, is understood as a corpus or system of related statements, tropes, and stories etc. that enables as well as constrains the modes wherein certain phenomena and events may be signified (talked and written about). In so doing, discourses are basically constitutive in its character as they constitute the boundaries for human thinking and action, and consequently construct the objects of which they speak and to which they refer). The discourse practice dimension of critical discourse analysis functions, according to Fairclough, as the mediating link between the micro text, on the one hand, and the overriding matrix of social structure on the other, the latter being the focus of the third dimension of discursive events.

The wider social, cultural, institutional, professional and so forth, context wherein the local text production, i.e. in the vocabulary of Fairclough: the discourse practice, is embedded should, thus, as the third dimension of the framework, also be scrutinised by the critical discourse analyst. The gaze of the researcher is then turned towards the broader and overarching social structures, relations of power in society and the ideological milieu, all of which related to the various situational, institutional, cultural, political etc. contexts wherein the discursive event may take place (Fairclough, 1993:137). It is hence the political and ideological aspects of language use that are subjected to the critical eye of the researcher at this level of analysis, and one of the assertions is that language use always is invested by ideology. Everytime, when uttering something with respect to society, human being, the state etc., ideology is put into use. Fairclough, following Althusserian thoughts subsequently developed by Gramsci, advances the idea that language represents a material form of ideology, perhaps even the most important ideological apparatus according to van Dijk (1998:6). As to this matter, Fairclough writes:

“A particular set of discourse conventions (e.g., for conducting medical consultations, or media interviews, or for writing crime reports in newspapers) implicitly embodies certain ideologies – particular knowledge and beliefs, particular ‘positions’ for the types of social subject that participate in that practice (e.g., doctors, patients, interviewees, newspapers readers), and particular relationships between categories of participants (e.g., between doctors and patients). In so far as conventions become naturalized and commonsensical, so too do these ideological presuppositions.” (Fairclough, 1995:94)

Elsewhere, Fairclough refers to the notion of “ideology” as:

“(...) significations/constructions of reality (the physical world, social relations, social identities), which are built into various dimensions of the forms/meanings of discursive practices, and which contribute to the production, reproduction or transformation of relations of domination.” (Fairclough, 1992:87)

In other terms, Critical Discourse Analysis aims at shedding light upon how ideology and discourse relate, and how accounts of “natural facts” are invested by, and how they conceal and reproduce, ideology (Fairclough, 1992:67). Moreover, in doing so, the execution of power through and by means of language is paid serious attention to (van Dijk, 1993:252).

In this text, I will refer to “ideologies” as certain representations and versions of the world, stemming from a particular perspective and power interest in society (c.f. Berger and Luckmann, 1966:141), that work as abstract foundations of more specific and detailed world

11 “Discourse” is in this paper thus, somewhat in accordance with Fairclough’s presentation, used in two fashions: (i) as referring to language use representing a social practice, and (ii) as a “way of signifying experience from a particular perspective” (Fairclough, 1995:138). The former version of “discourse” alludes to the action, or what van Dijk (1998:194) labels “communicative event”, of language usage, whereas the latter points to the symbolic resources which may be employed and that moreover constrain the use of language. Van Leeuwen (1993:193) refers to these two notions of discourse as respectively “discourse as the instrument of power and control” and “discourse as the instrument of the social construction of reality”, and further holds that a Critical Discourse Analysis ought to take both of these notions into consideration.
views and narratives as to various aspects of social life (see e.g. van Dijk, 1993, 1998). I thereby keep with what Geuss (1981:12 ff.) terms “ideology in the pejorative sense” and with what Fairclough (1995:17) labels a critical usage of “ideology”. The question whether ideologies are “true” or “false” in terms of mirroring an external reality is hence irrelevant from this point of view. A far more germane concern is the ways in which ideologies create reality by means of investing and supporting discourses and discursive practices, theories and narratives, i.e. the talking and writing about the natural and social world, and how they moreover support and naturalise power relations in society, i.e. how ideology reproduces dominance as well as subordination within society (Geuss, 1981:15).

Method
In order to achieve the aim of unmasking the relations between the social practice of marketing work and broader social structures, a marketing meeting, more specifically a meeting between a client and an advertising team is subjected to a critical close reading in this paper. The methodological approach may be referred to as “situational focus” (see Alvesson and Deetz, 2000: 201-207; Alvesson, 1996:27-37); a mode of constructing empirical material wherein “(...) a particular situation-a meeting, a job interview, a spontaneous encounter, an event, a decision process, a problem or a task delimited in time and space-rather than stable behaviour patterns, attributes or traits is the focus of study” (Alvesson and Deetz, 2000:201). When focusing upon a well delimited situation, in my case a single marketing meeting, micro and macro levels of analysis (Alvesson, 1996:30), social agents and structure (Alvesson and Deetz, 2000:201), text and context find their nexus. According to Alvesson and Deetz (2000:201-202), a situational focus involves that:

“The agent should, for example, be seen as partly formed by the scene (context) in which he or she acts, while the scene (for instance the organization or its environment) is affected by the agent(s) involved in their acts.”

Furthermore, when the research effort is invested into one well framed empirical situation, the possibilities enhance considerably for more deep and rich interpretations. More energy and time is thus spent on the interpretative and reflective research work than on the “collection” of vast amounts of empirical data, an allocation of research work that may enable the researcher to dig deeply into the object of study and explore different interpretation options. For a more critically oriented “unmasking” research endeavour, this proximity to the empirical material is probably imperative.

The language use enacted in everyday social practice being the primary object of study, further calls for rather well delimited and detailed empirical material. If the ambition is to study and understand marketing practice, everyday marketing work in its ordinary (“natural”) setting, is, it may be argued, is what ought to be observed. Qualitative research approaches are often, according to Alvesson and Deetz (2000:70), preoccupied with conducting and interpreting interviews. Notwithstanding the relevance of interviews in some circumstances, I do subscribe to the criticism formulated against the aforementioned naïve and romantic view of interviews as pipelines to experiences, feelings and social practices. There are thus reasons

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12 The conception of “ideology” is however a highly complex one, not least within Marxist theory, and I will not pretend to present any final definition of the term in this paper since it is beyond the scope as well as the possibilities of a paper of this kind to accomplish such a task. For a more elaborate discussion on ideology (as employed among critical theorists), I instead recommend Geuss (1981). As for the relation between discourse and ideology, see van Dijk (1998).
13 This can for instance be achieved by means of multiple interpretations of one and the same empirical material (see e.g. Alvesson, 1996).
14 Thorough examples of close up readings of a relatively delimited empirical material can be found in Rosen (1985, 1988).
to be sceptical as to what interview accounts can teach us about everyday marketing practice. As discussed before in this paper, the interview situation is to be conceived of as a social practice in its own right, and should therefore, consequently, be studied as such, rather than as a display of phenomena residing, as it were, “outside” the interview situation.

The meeting being focused in this paper is part of a larger field study of a Swedish advertising agency: A&B Advertising Agency, at the point of time employing some 40 persons. In total, my empirical field work at A&B comprised, firstly, an intensive two weeks period, during the course of which I was situated at the agency from eight a.m. until six p.m., Monday to Friday, carrying out meeting observations and interviews in addition to taking part in more informal conversations. This concentrated period was followed up by a six months more loose and intermittent contact with the agency, which resulted in some more observations and interviews. Altogether, I observed fourteen meetings (internal working meetings, client meetings and project leader meetings); took part in fourteen informal conversations, meetings and other social events such as an advertising and media industry bar evening and a seminar arranged by the agency; and interviewed five persons from the staff, including the founder of A&B. The purpose of the interviews was primarily to gain some amount of background knowledge regarding the organisation, its members, the current projects and so on. My hope and idea were that this background knowledge would make my meeting observations more fruitful and rewarding. Moreover, the interviews also often had a social function as they offered me a chance to get acquainted with the individual agency members, which, it later appeared, made it somewhat easier for me to gain access to some of the meetings taking place within the agency. The founder and CEO of A&B as well as the rest of staff were enormously generous and let me attend in any sort of meetings I wished.

The meetings that I observed were documented by means of rather extensive and detailed fieldnotes. As the clients as well as the agency experienced the meetings as dealing with sensitive and to some extent confidential matters, I was not allowed to record the events on tape. However, I soon realised that if the transcription of my fieldnotes was made within four to five hours from the point of time at which the meeting had ended, the level of details would increase dramatically. Often I was able to remember verbatim, word for word, what had been said at critical moments during the meeting.

Needless to say, in choosing a well delimited empirical situation which is to be subjected to close readings, a critical selection of what situation to focus on is inevitably involved. Several criteria of selection are conceivable, and I will here attempt to highlight and discuss some of the most influential ones in guiding the writing up of this text.

Firstly, since the paramount interest of this study is language use in marketing practice, one minimum demand is that people are using language at the meeting chosen. However, on the other hand, a language study that finds out that language is not used at all might be very interesting, especially in a circumstance wherein one would expect fargoing and elaborated discussions. Yet, in my case I have found that the meetings characterised by many and elaborate discussions and somewhat extensive sequences of talk were the social gatherings that to the greatest extent could contribute to the fulfilment of my research ambitions.

Secondly, and related to the previous criteria, the meeting that is opted for should (in my case that is) be of some sort of discussion or problemsolving character, i.e. often in the early phases of marketing projects. Some meetings I attended during my fieldwork, which appeared in the final stage of the project dealt with, were very technical and practical in their nature, and thus did not suit my research problem very well.

Thirdly, as suggested by Alvesson (1996:38), the chosen situation should be possible to present as close to totality as possible so that the reader may confront similar empirical material as the one the author has worked with. This is an insurmountable enterprise though due to the impossibility of entirely representing a multilayered and infinite social event in a
linear and closed (comprising a clear-cut beginning and end) text (cf. Sacks, 1990). Furthermore, as pointed out by Alvesson (1996:39), this is never fully doable, since the author and researcher holds some degree of understanding of the background and context of the delimited situation that the reader obviously is short of. The meeting chosen for this paper, however, lasted for one hour and was documented and transcribed relatively detailed. The transcribed text is in this paper presented in its entirety, i.e. as the very version I worked with during my interpretation sessions.

SETTING THE MARKETING SCENE I: A CLOSE READING OF A MEETING AT A&B ADVERTISING AGENCY

In this section I will invite you to an observation, or rather to my transcription of a meeting between an advertising agency team, A&B Advertising Agency, and its client. The meeting lasted for some 60 minutes and is, I would like to suggest, to be regarded as a good example of how a marketer-client meeting can look like. During my fieldwork period I attended 14 meetings all of which were of a similar form as the one focused in this paper. A&B is a Swedish advertising agency, at the moment of my observation employing some 40 persons, which is considered as rather a big staff within the Swedish advertising industry. The work at the agency was commonly exerted in the form of agency teams composed of one projectleader, one art director and one copywriter. The projectleader’s main responsibility was the overriding control of the project, monitoring and supervising the work conducted by the “creative” personnel at the agency. Moreover, keeping track of the timetable and that this was kept to properly, was included in the set of working tasks allotted to the project leader. Usually the projectleader had a degree in management or project leading and administration.

The art director was responsible of the visual aspects of the advertising project. In A&B, the AD worked very closely with the copywriter, the latter being in charge of the idea and concept development as well as of the writing up of the text. Often the AD and the copywriter worked as a subteam, as it were, within the project team.

In this section the observation transcription produced by me is subjected to a sequence of close up readings. So, welcome to the A&B advertising agency. It is a nice day spring day in March, and a meeting with a client is to take place.

Dramatis Personae

Sven, CEO of Gardening Inc., 35-40 years old
Victoria, projectleader at the advertising agency A&B, 45 years old
Anders, artdirector at the advertising agency A&B, 40 years old
Bill, newly employed copywriter at the advertising agency A&B, 27 years old

Today, a nice morning in late March, the CEO of Garden Inc. was to visit the agency for a meeting. Garden Inc., a company that produced, marketed and sold gardening machines and equipment of various kinds, had been a client of A&B’s for several years now. The company’s ambition was to approach both professional gardeners, such as municipals and private gardening firms, as well as private households with their product line. They were, at least according to themselves, well known for their craftsmanship and old fashioned production processes. Last year a set of advertisement material, such as brochures etc., was produced which were being distributed now, at the very borderline between winter and spring. Anders, the AD, had been the maker behind these

15 Sacks (1990:91) refers to this problem as “the etcetera problem”, i.e. that: “(...) to any description of a concrete object (or event, or course of action, or etc.), however long, the researcher must add an etcetera clause to permit the description to be brought to a close. Sociologist Lucy Suchman once, right to the point, referred to research as “the craft of constructing bounded stories out of unbounded events” (At the “International Colloquium on Organisation and Interaction”, King’s College, University of London, March 27th, 2001).
marketing products, and Bill, who was recently employed at the agency, was to experience his first “real” copyjob with a responsibility of his own. Today, the first meeting before the next year’s season was planned, a meeting that was to focus on the marketing of lawn mowers. Yesterday, Anders and Bill had had an internal working meeting wherein the broad guidelines for today’s client meeting were discussed and loosely determined.

The meeting had been planned to kick off at nine o’clock, and five minutes to nine Sven, the Garden Inc. CEO, entered the agency doors.

Sven wore a bright suit and a colourful (yellow) tie, whereas the agency team was dressed more causally. Victoria briefly introduced me to Sven, describing me as researcher from the university doing research on marketing practice and market segmentation. Sven greeted me and allowed me to take part in the meeting. Together the four of us went in the direction of the meeting room. The room wherein the meeting was to take place had been prepared, by Ann, the girl in the reception, with breakfast consisting of sandwiches and coffee. The room was a relatively small conference room, tastefully designed and discretely furnished.

Sven sat down first, and Bill and Anders opted for the seats next to him, while Victoria sat down by the other end of the table. Victoria poured up some coffee to all of us, first to Sven and then to the other meeting participants.

Sven quickly unpacked his briefcase and placed his papers on the table area in front of him. After beginning to eat the sandwiches served to him, Sven kicked the meeting off by declaring how satisfied the board had been with the last campaign. Bill and Anders seemed very pleased with this positive judgement of their earlier efforts.

‘That was nice to hear’, Victoria stated while nodding in the direction of Anders, who displayed a face of agreement.

‘Anyway’, Sven declared. ‘This year’s campaign is all set so at this meeting we will deal with next season.’ Sven then started to present his own ideas. He spread the brochures that were to be distributed this year in front of him on the table, and explained that he was considering the dividing of one catalogue into two: one for consumers and one for professionals.

Anders conceded to this approach. ‘Yes. Then it is possible to speak different languages to different target groups.’ Bill seemed also to be of the same opinion. Sven proceeded. ‘I would like some outdoor pictures so you can feel the engines, the machines working.’

Nobody around the table seemed to disagree, so Sven followed up his presentation of his idea with a brief information as to changes in Garden Inc.’s assortment. He went through the entire catalogue that was placed in front of him at the table, continuously making remarks with regard to new machines and new features of the lawn mowers and the other machines belonging to Garden Inc.’s product line. ‘You see here’, Sven boisterously said, pointing at the colourful pictures of lawn mowers in the catalogue. ‘New aluminium control levers and new black cables here. We have to shoot some new photos of them. But these [he pointed at some other photos in the catalogue] we keep as they are, ok?’

In this mode, Sven guided the agency representatives through the old catalogue. A lot of talk was spent on how many pages that ought to be dedicated to which models and machines. Sven directed our attention to one of the more luxury lawn mowers in the old catalogue. ‘This is a teaser, ok?’ He explained. ‘Some pages will function as teasers, creating a desire to see some more, right? Like: “This is the best you can get if you want to put some effort into it”, ok?’

Sven then picked up some of the competitors’ brochures. ‘Look here’, he said, displaying his main competitor’s latest catalogue. ‘You can see how they have copied us. It is not very well done though.’ He pointed at one of the pictures in the competitor’s catalogue. ‘Not so much action, is it? And the thickness of the paper, the paper quality, you see what I mean?’

Bill received the piece of paper from Sven. He carefully weighed the catalogue in his hands and investigated the paper quality. The catalogue seemed rather light and somewhat fragile, and seemed to be produced of low paper quality. After this close up investigation, Bill looked up, nodded towards Sven and delivered his judgement in a serious tone of voice. ‘I see what you mean. A piece like this very easily ends up in the garbage can, don’t you think?’ He passed the catalogue on to Anders, who after some brief close up investigations delivered his consent.

‘But’, Bill wondered, ‘how many house owners are there in Sweden really?’

‘Some two millions’, Sven informed. ‘Quite many uhh. So it is important that we show that we are number one, right? Without being cocky, ok?’, he added.

Let us leave the meeting for a moment and turn to some possible interpretations of this first section of the event.

At the beginning of the meeting, the different roles of the meeting and the project in general are depicted. In declaring the board’s satisfaction concerning earlier accomplishments, Sven, as it were, pinpoints the expertise role of the marketing team. The
team is thus, from the very beginning of the meeting, constructed as legitimate and approved marketing experts that are endowed with the trust of the board. The client role is thus constructed as the novice or student in the relationship, as the one requiring the knowledge and experience of the advertising agency.

Moreover, however, the client (Sven) is in the meeting constituted as a sort of meta marketing expert in that a judgement of any activity demands a supervision of the actions undertaken, in this case the marketing activities. Hence, when announcing the satisfaction of the firm, the client, i.e. Sven, responsible as he is to the corporate board, is framed as an expert client, as someone able to order and evaluate advertising programs.

When Sven, in Anders emphasising the possibilities of speaking different language to different groups of people, receives the approval of the agency for his idea of dividing the print material into two versions, the first consumer construction is effected. The consumers are here presented as a category comprising heterogeneous subgroups, differing in terms of “speaking different languages”. This conception of consumers in need of individual adaptation of various kinds (e.g. communication content) is central to classic targeting marketing discourse and the market orientation doctrine. When talking about consumers in this mode, the marketer is consequently constituted as a member of somewhat an omnilingual profession, as an expert in the different languages spoken by consumers, and as a person enjoying the skills of symbol management. The acts of marketing is thereby put forward as an act of speaking to, and conversing with, the consumers.\(^\text{16}\) “Marketing as conversation”, hence, seems to be the metaphor being drawn upon in this section of the meeting. The relations between producer/seller on the one hand, and marketer on the other, and the consumer/buyer are here portrayed as an interactive conversation wherein the marketer assumes both the role of the speaker and the listener. In addition to this, albeit related, the consumers is constituted as someone else, which may perhaps appear as a somewhat trivial suggestion of mine. However, I contend that this construction theme is an important one since it is, which the reader will learn if continuing reading this text, incessantly contested during the meeting. The meeting epitomises, among a huge amount of other things, an ongoing alteration between the “consumer as someone else” and “the consumer as one of us” (or perhaps more accurate: “we as one of the consumers”).

Noteworthy, moreover, is the way that the marketing agent is concealed in Anders, instead of saying, for instance, “Yes, then we can speak different languages...”, employs the more cautious formulation “Yes. Then it is possible to speak...”. In so doing, he merely points out the possibility of a marketing action, without roping the act to the marketing actor. This is an important part of the work of the masking of marketing actions and marketing agents, which I will return to later in this discussion.

Another set of constructions is exerted when Sven, subsequently, reveals his wishes concerning the pictures in the print material that is to be produced. Firstly, the client’s (i.e. Sven’s and Garden Inc.’s) role as the one in charge is emphasised. “I would like to”, Sven starts his sentence, a start-up that composes the client, albeit the expert status of the advertising agency, as the superior part in the client-service provider relationship in terms of being the one that reaches the final decisions and, not to be ignored, being the one paying for the entire enterprise. The customer aspect of the client role is here hence underscored, whereas the abovementioned student aspect is downplayed.

The second construction theme that may be read out of this excerpt is what can be labelled “the marketer as symbol expert and symbol manager”, referring to the stress put on

\(^{16}\) At the meeting, which was carried through in Swedish, “to” was used, when Anders stated the words ‘Yes. Then it is possible to speak different languages to different target groups’, in the interactive sense of the word. The preposition “to” can be interpreted as conversing with as well as holding a speech to the interlocutors. The Swedish original line went like this: ‘Ja. Då är det möjligt att tala med olika målgrupper på olika språk’
the knowledge as to which symbols creating what kinds of responses. The usage of outdoor pictures is assumed to enable the consumers, their readers of the marketing if you will, to, as Sven formulates it: ”feel the engines, the machines working”. It should be noted, however, that I am not contesting that pictures of lawn mowers in work (presumably outdoors) can create a feeling of the power in the machines being portrayed in the pictures. It is nevertheless intriguing the way in which the symbol management or authorship aspects of the marketing profession is put into action here, and its consequences as to the mode wherein the “consumer” is constituted. In a realm wherein marketing is the management and handling of symbols the consumer is allotted the status of a somewhat passive symbol receiver and reader, whose symbol interpretation schemes are (possessed) objects of knowledge for the marketer.

A third possible interpretation of this statement of Sven’s is that it contributes to the construction of the marketer as “one of them”, or reversibly, the consumer “as one of us”, in that Sven, when using the pronoun “you” (in the meaning of the general third-person pronoun “one”), includes all of the meeting participants in his reasoning. The consumer, hence, is here assigned the status of being “one of us, sitting in this meeting room”.

A fourth interesting aspect that can be carved out from this small piece of empirical material, is how the creation of feelings enters the area of significant marketing tasks. One may possibly expect that a purchase of a lawn mower is, and, by lawn mowers manufactures, is conceived of as, grounded in a predominantly cognitive conviction as to the strengths of the machine. Nonetheless, Sven here introduces the emotional aspect of lawn mowing consumption. The lawn mower quality, according to his proposal, is not solely a matter for reason and cognition, but also a feature that can be felt, in this case by means of outdoor pictures.

Later, in the meeting section presented above, when Sven describes the catalogues from the last season, the moulding element of marketing actions is put into existence. “This is a teaser, ok? Some pages will function as teasers, creating a desire to see some more, right?”, Sven explains for the agency team. The choice of the verb “create” participates in the construction of marketing actions as proactive acts of creation, in this case creation of desire. Congruently with this construct of marketing actions, the marketer subject is constituted as a wo/man engaged in the act of business creation. The consumer subject is then constructed as a, to some extent, passive receiver of the signs and “teasers” provided by the marketer, and as a, in part, mouldable object or rawmaterial for a sculpture designed by “the marketer”. Furthermore, the consumers’ patterns of perception and interpretation are portrayed as rather an uncomplex chain of causalities, the knowledge of which is an important resource for the creative marketer. The character of the market knowledge, hence, is here implicitly, framed as highly instrumental, chiefly intended to enable control over the object of knowledge, i.e. the consumer and his/her perceptions and sense making.

In contrast to what I have attempted to illustrate above, when the different consumer languages were touched upon, the consumers in the next subsection of the meeting are constituted as a collection of individuals belonging to a homogeneous group of people that behave in a similar fashion. This construct is put into place when the thickness of the paper becomes the subject for the meeting participants’ discussion. A thin, low quality and flapping catalogue is assumed to “very easily [ending] up in the garbage can”, at least according to Bill, who does not face any protests from his interactors. My suggestion of an interpretation here is thus that the category of “consumers”, indirectly, is being constructed as a general category that allows for a standardised marketing approach. In the specific meeting in focus in this paper, the standardised marketing approach would be one of distributing nothing but catalogues of high paper quality. An alternative understanding of this matter may very well be that a greatly refined and processed kind of paper, more than anything else, calls attention to
environmental issues, such as an excessive use of energy in order to obtain an enhancement of the paper quality. Potential diversity as to consumer responses is however ignored within the construction of consumers as homogeneous and general.

Let us now return to the meeting.

‘But’, Bill wondered, ‘how many house owners are there in Sweden really?’

‘Some two millions’, Sven informed, ‘Quite many uhh. So it is important that we show that we are number one, right? Without being cocky, ok?’ he added.

Ann, the girl working in the reception, cautiously entered the room, bringing some fresh coffee. Victoria served us some new coffee while Sven brought up the eternal problem of recruiting sales persons. ‘These positions seem very attractive in the job advertisements. You know: “You will travel two hundred days a year”. But, what the ad does not tell is that all the travelling involves pulling a trailer with a lawn mower placed upon it. Then it is not so fun anymore I reckon.’

Victoria filled in. ‘It is hard really. It is indeed. Good sales persons are artists really.’

Sven nodded silently and exposed a hazy smile. After this micro coffee break, the group returned to business.

‘A survey has shown that nine of ten municipalities use Garden Inc. machines’, Sven made known for the agency team.

‘Great’, Anders called out. ‘That is something we definitely shall use.’

‘Yes’, Sven responded. ‘So that this can be transmitted to consumers too, ok? In some way or another we can use this. Another thing we must emphasise and use is….’. Sven was interrupted by the ring tone from his cell phone. He checked who the caller was. Having done so he turned back to his reasoning. ‘What we must emphasise is…it is eco-machines. We must emphasise our patent quite often. You know. It is unique, ok?’

‘Yes, of course we are going to make something out of that’, Anders assured Sven, who went on.

‘Well, anyway. The paper quality is very important in order to create this feeling you know.’

All the meeting participants acceded on the importance of using a high quality and roughed paper in the catalogue, and not, like the competitors had done: using a thin and gleaming one.

After having reached this consensus, they finally put the catalogues aside, and turned to the problem of presenting innovations for the customers.

During the short coffee break, the last pier of the harbour of marketing departments, i.e. the salespeople, becomes the matter of discussion. The sales work is by Victoria described as an art and the sales people as artists. What can this mean or implicate? One interpretation is that this, at first glance, relatively harmless and isolated remark of Victoria’s brings about a larger construction theme, namely the one of marketers as artists and marketing as an art, marketing, in this case advertising and sales, as a *techne*.

Also worthy of note in this meeting section is the mode wherein the marketing agent is unmasked and rendered visible when Anders, gladly, having learned that 90% of the Swedish municipalities use Garden Inc.’s lawn mowers, states “That is something we shall use”. If the marketer was concealed before (see above), s/he is here, in the dressing of “we”, constructed as a concrete first person plural pronoun, as persons made of flesh and blood, including at least the four people attending the meeting at hand. The anonymity of the marketing agent is thereby turned into concrete and physical presence.

Moreover, marketing people making use of existing social facts is put on the stage through this statement. This construct of marketing and marketer is thus somewhat different than the one put into presence in the first section of the meeting, where the marketing endeavours were portrayed as including more forward oriented actions such as innovating and creating. The combination of the introduction of a visible agent (“we”) and the recently discussed deferment of the pro-active aspects of marketing activity is quite an interesting feature of this meeting section, and there are therefore reasons to come back to this matter later in the paper.

After this interpretative effort, the time has again come to returning to the meeting happenings at the A&B-agency.
After having reached this consensus, they finally put the catalogues aside, and turned to the problem of presenting innovations for the customers.

Sven expressed the difficulties related to the introduction of new products. ‘Very few people actually take the time to read the arguments in the catalogue. Most of them only look at the pictures, ok?’ He paused for a short moment. ‘Anyway, this is a way in which we can present the different product lines.’ He started to draw up some sketches on a blank paper sheet in front of him. The overriding idea was the aforementioned distinction between consumer and professional buyers.

Anders interrupted his presentation. ‘Yesterday, Bill and I talked about having some clues for the consumer; what kind of lawn mower you are in need of.’

Sven presented a sceptical face. ‘Well, we want to avoid specifying too much. We want to lift them up, to a higher assortment level. Then we make more money, right? It is a trick you see? We don’t want to lower them to a lower assortment level, like: “Ok, then I don’t need more than this”.

Bill, however, proved himself assiduous. ‘Yes, but the most important is what kinds of needs you have, isn’t it?’

‘Yes, that is right’, Sven said; ‘look at this for example.’ He pointed at the brochure produced by the competitor. ‘They are segmenting from the product viewpoint, not from the customer’s.’ He continued. ‘It is a totally different thing if you have someone confirming that you have made the right decision. What I also want to put forward is that Garden Inc. is a domestic company.’

‘I think it is possible to go even further than that’, Anders said. ‘We can let the person that has made the particular lawn mower sign some kind of note that we attach to the machine: “This is made by Nils”.’

‘Quality’, Bill filled in.

Sven had some ideas of his own. ‘We could take some photos of the factory. Well, first we have to clean it up a bit and so of course. But some pictures of the factory floor. That could be something. Then we could reinforce this thing about high-tech, and at the same time emphasising genuineness. It must not be “high tech-ready to-deliver-to-the-factory”. It must be handmade, right?’

‘Yes, it is part of our nature’, Anders agreed, ‘that one thinks that what is handmade is of higher quality.

After a short period of silence, Victoria entered the discussion and suggested an analogy to the car industry and Volvo. ‘Volvo has succeeded in having a non-ancient language of form: “craftsmanship—but still not ancient”. What kind of argumentation is being used here?’

‘One knows that all cars have the same engine; nevertheless you choose certain brands’, Anders said.

‘Volvo has managed to preserve the sportyness in spite of the security: “one should be able to drive in 240 at Autobahn with your family in the car”, ok?’ Sven further developed the discussion.

Anders: ‘The thing is that those who have started to buy Garden Inc. lawn mowers continue to do this, isn’t it?’

Sven: ‘We must turn “it is expensive” into “security and durability—that they [the lawn mowers] last for a long time. After all, Garden Inc. lawnmowers are 15-20% more expensive than other lawn mowers.’

Anders: ‘Yes, we could use that; that you cannot produce a good lawn mower cheaply.’

Bill: ‘We could also use that you don’t want your lawn mower to break, I mean, use it in order to keep higher prices. We shouldn’t try to emphasise that it is fun to cut your lawn.

Anders: ‘The only fun is that guys like this.’ [he pointed at a picture in a catalogue picturing the kind of lawn mower that you can sit upon and drive]

In the initial part of this transcription piece, Sven shares his observations regarding consumers in general. ‘Very few people (...) read the arguments (...)’, he says, thereby, once again, framing the “consumer” as a member of a general and homogeneous category, as a collection of individuals acting in somewhat identical ways. The buyers (potential as well as actual ones) are by Sven depicted as too busy for a careful and attentive reading of, and reasoning about,
the written arguments, the latter most likely thought to contribute to what marketers refer to as the cognitive impetus of consumption. The conclusion being drawn at the meeting is that innovations are best marketed in the format of quickly processed and emotionally charged pictures of, as previously suggested by Sven, lawn mowers working outdoors. No study or market research is presented in order to support his statement. It is hard for me, as an external observer, to draw any conclusions from this. Maybe, Sven is here implicitly referring to a market study executed earlier, and of which the advertising agency team is aware of, but this was not my impression when I conducted my observation. I take it that this event is one of several declarations and theories, that refer to some body of common sensical consumer behaviour knowledge, and that are probably quite frequent at meetings like this. They may fulfill the function of providing the reasoning taking place at the marketing meeting with more or less stable islands of shared knowledge, upon which more daring and wild brain storms can rest. They can naturally be more or less important for the final outcome of the discussion. Their significance, however, for the discursively constructed categories produced in the meeting at hand is, my conviction is, vast. In that they indirectly allude to common sense, these kinds of statements work as strong reproductive forces in the objectivation (Berger and Luckmann, 1966) of social realm.

However, interestingly enough, Sven’s proposition does not pass without dissent. Anders challenges this view of the consumer by means of proposing the idea Bill and he had discussed the day before, namely the idea of presenting some choices and alternatives to the consumer, based on the diverse needs that one may expect is present regarding lawn maintenance. The possible needs of the consumer thus enter the scene for the first time at the meeting. Introducing consumer needs, Anders puts the construct of “the consumer as individual” into action, which becomes an opponent to Sven’s previously suggested general nature of the consumer. The reply from Sven is not late. When explicating the aims of Garden Inc, i.e. to “avoid specifying too much” and to “lift them [the consumers] up”, Sven places the agency team in the seat of naïvety, thus constituting the three advertisers as somewhat ignorant as to business logic; “Then we make more money, right?”. From this perspective, the consumer in general appears in part as business pragmatic categorisation. In order to make money the consumer choices should be delimited, is the message Sven directs to the advertising team. Bill further challenges Sven’s initial suggestion in presenting a well spread marketing mantra. “(...) the most important is what kinds of needs you have”. Once more, hence, the individuality of the consumer is invoked and enacted. Sven finally, albeit a bit laconically, displays his agreement. After doing so he hastily leaves the matter of discussion in abeyance.

My suggestion is that this episode exemplifies the kind of discursive struggles that may appear in meetings such as the one studied in this paper. This time, the struggle concerned the conception of “the consumer”, but irrespective of the object of challenge, these struggles, taking place in discourse, seem to fulfill an important function in the ongoing, everyday construction of the marketing realm among marketing practitioners. Moreover, it is my contention that these struggles draw attention to what may be conceived of as critical matters of marketing practice. This suggests that one critical marketing issue is the one of whether “the consumer” is to be understood as a general category, or as an assemblage of individuals with different needs, likely to arrive at different choices.

Another aspect of this part of the meeting, worthy of note and briefly touched upon above, is that the client (Sven) here assumes the role of the insightful teacher, whereas the advertising agency representatives are allotted the status of the novice and naive students. This teacher-student turnover sheds light upon another kind of struggle enacted in and by means of discourse, viz. the struggle for knowledge superiority and thus, for the right to dictate the agenda of the meeting. One interpretation of what takes place at the meeting
studied, is that a process of incessant subject positioning, depositioning, and repositioning is prevalent in the course of interaction.

Furthermore, in presenting his protest as to the suggestion made by Bill, Sven reactivates the marketing agent, i.e. the marketer. “We want to avoid specifying too much. We want to lift them up, to a higher assortment level. Then we make more money, right? (...) We don’t want to lower them to a lower assortment level (...)”, he says. Whether or not “we” here refers to Garden Inc and A&B, or solely Garden Inc., is really not the most interesting issue. More important is that there actually is a “we” present in Sven’s account, i.e. that marketing action is subjectified and unmasked.

In the next episode of the meeting, Anders presents his idea of letting a factory worker sign the manufactured lawn mower and, in doing so, the craftsmanship of lawn mower production is to be put forward. This episode may be interpreted as part of the constitution of the marketer as symbol manager, and of marketing practice as symbol management. The implicit assumption here is that the personification of the product (the lawn mowers), by means of the manufacturer’s signing of the individual machine, causes a consumer experience of high quality. This point is further underscored in that Anders refers to human nature as the link between the managed sign and consumer experience. Once more it is important to clarify that I do not argue with the idea that these experiences may (or even, for that matter, that they do) appear as partly a consequence of the personal signature and the factory pictures. What I merely wish to point at here is the emphasis placed on the symbol managerial aspect of marketing work, and that the relation between signifier and signified is treated as rather an unproblematic piece of knowledge.

When Anders expresses his (and the rest of the group’s) theory regarding the nature of human beings, he employs the possessive determiner “our”. This is an important aspect of the marketing language use as it includes in the reasoning the persons sitting in the meeting room. The “consumer”, thus, is rendered more familiar, more present, and less exotic and reified; constructed as a category comprising marketers too, or to put it differently: a marketer is also a consumer.

The final section of the transcription excerpt presented above is, I think, an illustrative example of how a collective version of marketing realm is put into existence by means of social and discursive interaction. First, based on the success of Volvo brought up by Victoria, Sven utters a task for the marketing mission: “We must turn ‘it is expensive’ into ‘security and durability’ ”. Here, hence, the marketing endeavour, once more, is constituted as a practice of managing signs and symbol. “Turning” something into something else is a highly proactive intervention, and the statement of Sven’s is very much, I would like to argue, a vain cry for marketers’ omnipotence as to symbolic management. It can, at the very same time, be conceived of as an expression of an ideal marketing world, a world wherein the power and ability of transforming relations between signifiers and signified are totally in the possession of the marketing people.

An interesting piece of Sven’s statement is when he presents as brute facts his products being more expensive than the competitors’ offerings. The higher price is thus presented as uncontrollable and fixed. The Garden Inc. machines are more expensive, according to Sven’s say-so, and what is left to manage are the connotations. An alternative solution, of course, would be a price reduction, and why this is not considered by Sven as a suitable solution is a query for speculation. One suggestion is that price competition is regarded as cheap and trivial marketing practice. In some of the interviews I conducted in connection to the meeting discussed in this paper, the price was described as one of the means of competition that pertained to the taboo area of marketing. This makes sense if one ponders on the potential consequences of price competition; price competition would result in the end of days for the
marketing world and the marketing profession. Marketing practice is thus, my suggestion is, here constructed as a bundle of acts above and beyond the price dimension.

The rest of the meeting group does not contest Sven’s proclamation as to the goal of marketing. The absence of protests may represent an act of silence, which functions as an important and highly efficient element in the interactive construction process. The silent contribution to the construction work is, my suggestion is, given by means of reinforcing what previously has been stated through silent compliance. Furthermore, Anders, aside from not protesting, gives his approval in the next line, and in doing so, the construct of “marketing as symbol work” is further fortified.

In the next line, that of Bill’s, the limits of marketing work as symbol management is depicted: ”we shouldn’t try to emphasise that it is fun to cut your lawn”, a statement that, in the next comment uttered by Anders, is being reinforced. Here, the symbol manipulation faces the constraints of the brute “reality” of lawn mowing. The omnipotence of the marketer, initially proclaimed by Sven, is thus refined and somewhat balanced by means of confronting it to the external and inescapable reality to which marketing actions in part must adapt.

In these four lines, a collectively negotiated version of the nature of marketing work and the competence of marketing practitioners is put into place. Marketing is here constituted as the management of symbols and connotations, i.e. as manipulation of the relation between signifier and signified. This work is however, according to the construct, not to be regarded as the limitless play of signs, but is constrained by an external and “real” reality outside the symbol factory.

Let us return to the meeting again.

Anders: ‘The only fun is that guys like this.’ [he pointed at a picture in a catalogue picturing the kind of lawn mower that you can sit upon and drive]

New coffee was served, and Sven contemplated some on the future of business. ‘There are now easy victories, are there?’

Anders, Bill and Victoria nodded solemnly, and having made this clear, Sven wished to discuss, in more concrete terms, the kinds of advertisements that were to be employed in next year’s campaign. ‘We must have direct mail advertisements.’

The rest of the table occupiers offered their consent, but suggested daily newspapers as a potentially fruitful and efficient communication channel. ‘We can keep the full pages advertisements in gardening magazines, but I think this should be complimented with newspaper ads’, Anders said, turning towards Sven, who looked somewhat dubious and concerned.

‘Then’, Sven said, ‘we cannot have any full pages. That would be unreasonable. Too expensive. I don’t have that kind of budget.’

Victoria broke into the discussion. ‘Well, we can try to find an environment in the sports section or the like.’

Bill gave his support to Victoria. ‘Yes, it is important not to pick the wrong neighbourhood.’

‘One should choose where to be very carefully’, Victoria added to her former suggestion.

One problem as to the gardening magazines, however, according to the meeting participants, was that women are the ones reading the gardening magazines, not the men.

‘It is the right target group, but the wrong people, isn’t it?’, Sven asked the team.

Anders, Bill and Victoria nodded calmly.

Sven went on. ‘We will select a couple of products as campaign products, and then we let go of all consumer gardening magazines since the readers of those are mostly women.’

Bill: ‘It is probably as you say; the actual buyers do not read these magazines.’

Sven: ‘I would rather have evening papers and repetition instead.

Victoria: ‘Being interested in gardening does not mean you’re interested in lawn mowing, does it?’

Sven: ‘No. That is the way it is.’

Having arrived at this conclusion, the discussion now entered a more concrete level in Sven, Anders and Bill discussing the possibilities of initiating some kind of pedagogic forum: a “book of grass”, perhaps situated on the Internet.
This excerpt starts off with Sven making clear the absence of “easy victories”. I do not want to overinterpret, to make use a cumbersome notion, this single statement of Sven’s, but I nevertheless think it could be worthwhile to discuss, albeit somewhat openly, the possible consequences this kind of uttering can have in a meeting as the one in focus here. Several interpretations are possible. I will bring up but one for discussion in this section.

One possible reading is that Sven, by means of this utterance of his, activates a metaphor of “marketing as warfare”. “Victories”, thus, alludes to the triumph at the battle field, upon which the marketers and producers are the warriors, the competitors are enemies, and the products, advertisements and other marketing tools employed are the arms used in the battles. On the battlefield of the market, the consumers become the trophies and awards resulting from a well managed and fought war. The interesting point here, I contend, is that, within a war metaphor, the *conflictual* element of marketing is emphasised, whereas the within mainstream marketing textbooks otherwise so hailed consensus idea of the market and marketing is downplayed.

What one may ponder on here is what kind of conflict that is being alluded to when Sven speaks of “victories”. Who is won over? The war metaphor would suggest, in the first hand, the competitors. Marketing work is then warfare against competing forces on the marketplace and marketing mix toolbox is the arsenal at hand. On the other hand, in addition to being the war trophy, “the consumer” embodies a force that is to be conquered in order to win the grand market battle. Accordingly, marketing strategies are designed for the purpose of overcoming of purchasing barriers such as lack of interest, unawareness, insecurity and so forth. The battle against the consumer does not exclude the battle against the competitors, as winning (against) the consumer consequently could result in the competitor’s loss of the very same consumer.

When Sven subsequently, as a response to Anders’ suggestion to have full page advertisements, expresses his concern as to advertising expenses (‘we cannot have any full pages. That would be unreasonable. Too expensive. I don’t have that kind of budget.’), the client (Sven and Garden Inc.) once more is constituted as the insightful and knowledgeable part in the client-marketer relationship. The client assumes here the role of the “reasonable” (“that would be unreasonable”) businessman forming the economic boundaries around the playground within which the creative advertising work is allowed to take place. The client, thus, is here casted as the balancing force, the counterweight, in various degrees, wild creativity of the advertising agency. The A&B-employees are thereby constructed as, if not naïve, so as somewhat unaware of the hard truths of business reality. Victoria adopts the role of a negotiator, a bridge, between the hard business logic represented by the client and the patos and creativity of the advertising agency. She plays this role by pointing out the need for a careful (and rational) choice of environment wherein the advertisement should be placed. Hence, marketing is by means of Victoria’s negotiation efforts portrayed as a set of actions subsequent to, and determined by, careful planning, investigation and analysis.

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18 “Overinterpretation” is according to my experience a label often used, in reviews and other academic fora for criticisms of research, for designating readings of empirical material that import too much of the researcher in the understanding or sense making of the material. The problem with this notion is that it, firstly, presumes a fixed level of interpretation which is situated somewhere between over and underinterpretation, and, secondly, that the “true” interpretation has its roots in another perception than the researcher’s, e.g. the interviewee, the people observed, the public common sense (intuitive truths). This is not the place to present my comments on this discussion, but tentatively, it may suffice for me to position myself as an opponent to this use of the notion and act of interpretation. According to my view, interpretation is what research primarily is about as well as the main contribution offered by the researcher. The interpretation may or may not, later on, of course, be disputed on grounds such as triviality and lack of interesting points, rather than on the basis of its position (over and under) in the interpretation scale.
Furthermore, and deserving some attention, the potential “neighbourhoods” of the advertisements are referred to as being either “right” (implicitly) or “wrong” (explicitly) ones. What does this mode of talking do? My suggestion is that here a framing of marketing takes place, constructing marketing as a set of actions that are rather exact and minutely calculated in its character. One alternative would be marketing professionals guessing and being inclined to lead merely by hunches. In the meeting participants’ refusal to fall prey to guessing, marketing is here indirectly put forward as a kind of exact science wherein results can be assorted under one of the two categories “right” or “wrong” which are not too different from the couple “true” and “false”. What is unclear, however, or at least not outspoken at the meeting, is what constitutes a “wrong” (and consequently a “right”) neighbourhood in the newspapers that are being discussed. Some suggestions are given by Victoria (“Well, we can try to find an environment in the sports section or the like.”), a proposition whispering that a “right” environment is a spot in the paper assumed to be frequently read by the target group, i.e. the lawn mower purchaser (men interested in (reading about) sports). An alternative interpretation is that a “right” environment is a place in the paper carrying similar symbolic connotations as the ones that the meeting participants assume adhering to the lawn mowers manufactured by Garden Inc (e.g. strong, male, long lasting and so forth). What constitutes a right environment is however less important than that such is presumed to exist. The marketing expert is so in this meeting section constructed as a wo/man in possession of the knowledge and skills of finding, more than creating, the right way (or rather “the non-wrong one”) in the media terrain. This can be interpreted as an aspect of marketing world that highlights the need for adaptation to a more or less fixed environment, in this case: the media environment. Moreover, the lack of control of the surrounding reality is to some extent incorporated in the reasoning, as the marketing task becomes the one of looking, finding and carefully choosing “where to be”.

Now, in one final round, let us turn the gaze towards the meeting room at A&B.

Having arrived at this conclusion, the discussion now entered a more concrete level in Sven, Anders and Bill discussing the possibilities of initiating some kind of pedagogic forum; a “book of grass”, perhaps situated on the Internet.

The book of grass, the idea was, would be designed as a basic introduction to lawn caretaking.

‘I think that at least 80 percent of the men that mow their lawn want to feel satisfied with their work’, Sven proposed. ‘You know; sitting there, in front of the lawn with a cold beer, just being satisfied: “Damn, how nice”. That is what one wants, isn’t it?’

Once more, the agency group offered its collective consent to Sven, who then turned to the other kinds of marketing activities that he had initiated himself. He told the agency team about a radio ad spot that he had developed on his own. He also revealed that he had entered an engagement in sponsoring and advertising in the popular television game show “Bingolotto”. One of the engagements involved the viewers being able to win a Garden Inc. lawn mower as one of the prizes in the bingo game. ‘It hard to find out funny things you know’, Sven made clear. ‘But this thing, Bingolotto, might be one of those I think. In this mode, being a part of this show, we will be able to bang it into people minds.’

Victoria agreed that Bingolotto might be a proper forum in order to reach Garden Inc.’s target market. Sven continued. ‘Yes, it is in accordance with our target group. I think most of the viewers of Bingolotto live on the countryside. And they also have the largest lawns, right? And then, the name; Garden Inc. It is a good name; it provides good associations, right?’

Anders seemed a bit reserved, perhaps even reluctant, regarding Sven’s own initiative. He nevertheless nodded gently and interested, when Sven elaborated for us his own ideas as to marketing activities.

Bill also listened patiently until a pause emerged. ‘Actually’, he then said, ‘I have never watched Bingolotto. I don’t know what kind of programme it is really.’

‘I have actually watched it once, only once though’, Victoria brought to light.

‘Well’, Sven then concluded, ‘now you have got a reason to watch it at least once, haven’t you; to get a glimpse of our commercial. Well, you don’t really see the brand name Garden Inc. in the commercial, but the

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19 “Bingolotto” is a popular, Swedish TV-show, designed as a traditional bingo session wherein large sums of money and valuable things can be won. Every week the show attracts millions of viewers and players.
The red colour was systematically used by Garden Inc. on their products, and Sven and his colleagues like to, in a similar mode as Ferrari, conceive of “red” as the Garden Inc. colour.
However, this soft aspect of marketing entertainment is subsequently sharply contrasted with a more aggressive tone. Sven explicates and motivates his initiatives by referring to the possibilities of “banging it into people minds”, which can be said to represent rather an aggressive and violent metaphor of marketing. The marketing message is thus narrated as something quite similar to propaganda in need of repetition and continuous exposure, all in order to overcome the resistance and get, by means of force, into the mindsets of the audience. Moreover, this mode of talking about marketing activity depicts consumers as to some extent resisting and impeding opponents of what marketers try to achieve. Here, thus, consumers are, in a spirit of *conflict*, constructed as hindrance or obstacles that must be overcome by the marketer. Sven’s suggestion of a strategy to conquer the consumers is the violent path of “banging it [the marketing message] into” the minds of the television show viewers.

The following discussion as to Bingolotto and the meeting participants’ personal experiences of the show, brings to the fore, as has been done earlier at the meeting, a version of “the consumer” narrated as another, and fairly exotic, kind of people. At this point of the meeting, it seems as if it is important to display one’s lack of familiarity with the Bingolotto show, and one of the effects of this discussion may be the construction of the “otherness” of the consumer, or perhaps better: the *exotication* of the consumer. S/he (“the consumer”) is portrayed, not as one of us in the conference room, but as someone outside, in some sense thinking and acting differently. However, the tone is not a neutral one. Rather, “the other” seems to be put forward as subordinate, as inferior. The Bingolotto people, so it is assumed, live on the countryside; they are not urban and enlightened people; in short: they are presumed to be neatly manageable.

**General reflections on the meeting**

The meeting coming into presence is an interesting aspect on its own right when the object of study is the construction of the realm of marketing. I will therefore let some more general interpretations of, and reflections upon, the meeting conclude this part of the paper.

The whole setting, i.e. the meeting actually taking place in the first place, occupying time, space and efforts, frames the topic of the meeting, the future campaign and the gardening market, as a matter important and worthwhile to discuss. The alternative mode of conducting marketing work would be to let one be guided by hunches and guessing, perhaps intuition. This choice of marketing conduct is however, at least superficially so, disqualified by the group I have studied. The primary disqualification of “marketing by guessing” is constituted by means of dedicating one hour of time and 50 square meters to the pondering on, discussing and planning of the next year’s advertising campaign as to Garden Inc.’s lawn mowers. Marketing is thus, by virtue of the mere existence of the marketing meeting observed and discussed in this study, constituted as a matter of careful reasoning, talking and investigation.

The setting of the meeting, *per se*, further explicates the conception of the consumers as situated *out there* worth spending time, money and words on. Most important, however, is that the consumers, their driving forces, their perception patterns, their symbol interpretations and choices are being talked *about*. In this mode, the taking place of the meeting may be interpreted as an articulation of, and foundation for, the construction of marketing reality. The meeting, and other meetings of this kind, hence, in other words, may function as a productive ritual wherein the first brick in the topic of construction is put into work.

In setting up a meeting of this kind, moreover, the advertising professionals are initially constructed as a group of experts possessing the essential knowledge as to markets, consumer behaviour and market communication. This construction reinforces the status of the marketing profession as a member of what Featherstone, with Bourdieu, refers to as “the new intellectuals” in contemporary consumption society (Featherstone, 1994:23). This group of
“new intellectuals”, working with marketing, advertising, fashion, design etc., is according to Featherstone specialised in the production and distribution of symbols, taste and ideal lifestyles. The first premise of the meeting, hence, is that the knowledge is in the possession of the advertising agency, more specifically among its employees. More to this, it is assumed that the client-producer relationship between the novice Garden Inc., who is in demand of knowledge, and A&B Advertising Agency is consequential if an efficient marketing campaign is to be planned and exerted.

SETTING THE MARKETING SCENE II: AN ATTEMPT TO RECONSTRUCT THE REALM(S) OF MARKETING

As made evident in the previous section, what I throughout this paper have referred to as the marketing realm seemed to be highly fragmented and assumed a vast array of forms at the meeting studied. This suggests that instead of one single marketing realm, what seems to be at hand is a set of several marketing realms. The argument I am to build and push forward in this last part of the paper is twofold.

Firstly, at the meeting dealt with in the previous section many marketing realms were put into being. Rather than as a unison and homogeneous construction, the setting of the marketing scene should thus be conceived of as a multivocal set of marketing realities, i.e. discursively produced ideal types fragmentedly activated and put into presence during the meeting.

Secondly, I will argue that this discursive variation is a result of what Fairclough terms the “interdiscursivity” of the discursive event, i.e. “(...) the normal heterogeneity of texts in being constituted by combinations of diverse genres and discourses” (Fairclough, 1993:137). My suggestion is that the discursive heterogeneity that characterised the advertising meeting reflects a drawing on, and consequently a reproduction of, different overarching discourses of the market. In the meeting participants’ drawing on market discourses of various kinds, the latter do not exist merely “out there”, as abstract and vague social structures, but are rendered concrete and manifest in the micro setting, in the meeting as a social practice.

Important to note is that I am not, by any means, under the conviction that what I here label marketing realms are separated from social reality in general. On the contrary, I think it is of importance to stress marketing practice’s membership and active part taking in the construction, maintenance and revolution of society. As stressed earlier, when I here use the term “marketing realm” I wish to emphasise the various ways in which the professional scene, the marketing scene, is made intelligible and rendered sensible for and by marketing practitioners in social interaction. My contention, moreover and as abovementioned, is that this marketing realm construction work in marketing practice is exactly one of the ways wherein marketing practice is closely affiliated to society en masse.

Four overarching discursive themes, under which the various constructs as they were put into existence at the advertising meeting may be sorted, will fulfil the purpose of structuring the subsequent discussion. My suggestion is that these four themes function as the constituents of marketing realms. They represent, as it were, marketing reality’s basic
ontological elements, its very bedrock, and comprise the discursive constructions of (i) subjects, (ii) relations, (iii) activities and (iv) knowledge.\textsuperscript{21}

The \textit{subjects} of marketing world, as they were present at the meeting above, are basically three: marketers, clients and consumers. They make up two levels of \textit{relations} at which the meeting operates and that represent two simultaneously present markets. At the first level, the relation between manufacturer/marketer, on the one hand, and the end consumer of lawn mowers, on the other, is discursively present. This relation is thus the primary and outspoken object of discussion, the reason, as it were, why the meeting was set up in the first place. At the second level, the meeting in itself embodies a producer-consumer relation, constituting a relation between the marketing advice producer (A&B Advertising Agency) and the consumer of marketing competence, i.e. the client (Garden Inc.).

The theme of \textit{activities} refer to what marketing actions are considered as important, morally compelling and/or forbidden.

The \textit{knowledge} theme, lastly, alludes to what kind of information and insights that are needed in order to perform marketing activities in the different marketing realms.

Through the lens of these four discursive themes, I will in this section explore six different realities of marketing, all of which put into being at the advertising agency meeting discussed above, and accordingly all of which being parts of the setting of the marketing scene.

I. The Marketing Realm of Science and Control

Within the world of science and control, the \textit{subject} of the marketer assumes the character of the scientist, engaged in careful and systematic research work and dedicated to, as it were, empirically grounded marketing management. The marketer moreover belongs to an exclusive group of professionals in possession of expertise knowledge and skills as to consumers’ inner nature, consumer languages, market communication and research. The marketer is also an active woman who firstly investigates the state of facts and subsequently takes actions. Once and then at the meeting, this activity aspect of the marketer came to the fore in various unmaskings of the marketing agent (e.g. “we want to lift them up”).

The \textit{subject} of the client, in this case Sven and Garden Inc, on the other hand, or perhaps consequently, assumes the position of the novice, of the one in need for the somewhat esoteric knowledge possessed by the marketing expert. Garden Inc. is the part in the relation marketer-client that initiates the interaction, coming to A&B advertising agency, and at the early start of the meeting these two roles are allocated. The \textit{relation} between client and marketer in the marketing realm of science and control, hence, is the one of the layman visiting the sage, the former asking questions and presenting problems whereas the latter providing answers and solutions. Marketing \textit{knowledge} is thus partly put forward as expert knowledge, starkly demarcated from the corpus of common sensical everyday knowledge. During the course of the meeting, these definitions of the client-marketer relation and marketing knowledge were revisited as well as subjected to several discursive challenges and attacks. For instance, Sven’s revelation of his own initiatives at the very closure of the meeting, can be interpreted as a challenge of the initially put forward layman-expert definition of the relation.

\textsuperscript{21}To some extent, these themes correspond, albeit not exhaustively, to the identity, relational and ideational constitutive effects or functions of language use that Fairclough (1992, 1995) discusses. They also show some resemblance with what van Dijk (1998:69 f.) puts forward as the structure of ideologies, namely membership, activities, goals, values/norms, position and group-relations and resources. Van Dijk holds that these categories work as a co-ordinating force for social groups of various kinds, pointing out and constituting the group’s identity (whatever this is) and its interests. If marketing practitioners were to be considered as a social group, marketing realm and its constituents may function in a somewhat similar way, i.e. as a co-ordinator and identificational scheme for marketing professionals.
The consumer subject in this world of science and control is positioned as the object of research and control. Furthermore, the consumer is conceived of as an exotic and "other" category of people, be it in terms of speaking different language (which is known by the marketing expert), or of watching (and enjoying) game shows on television. Representing an exotic study object and a member of "the otherness", the consumer and its nature or essence is rendered researchable for the marketing scientist. "The otherness" of the consumer, however, is by no means a value neutral labelling. In the social context of the meeting, it, on the contrary, connotes the marketer’s and the client’s superior position vis-à-vis the consumer. An example is provided when Sven made known the urge of his to "lift them up" instead of "lower them down". Thus, the consumer being another kind of people, appears as observable, possible to grasp and understand, and henceforth, manageable. The consumers and their destiny are here, as it were, literary in the hands of the marketers. The relation between marketing practitioners and consumers in the science-control realm thus assumes the form of a highly asymmetrical interaction between controller (the study subject) and the one being controlled (the study object), between the manager and the managed.

This relation definition adheres to one of the characteristics of knowledge in this realm of marketing, viz. the expectation that knowledge of the environment (e.g. as to regarding the nature of the consumers), chiefly serves the purpose of enhancing the possibilities to control and manage the objects of study. The predominant knowledge interest is thus of the sort Habermas (1972) names "instrumental" interest, i.e. knowledge conceived of as an instrument by means of which increased control over the world is achieved.

The activities taking place in this version of marketing realm are consequently of two kinds: research and control. The careful and systematic investigation upon which subsequent marketing decisions and actions rely are of significant importance. As already briefly touched upon, the meeting coming into being in the first place may be interpreted as a manifestation of this refraining from a conception of marketing as purely, or predominantly, guided by guessing and intuition. In addition to the conducting of research, the control and management of the environment, e.g. the consumers’ perception patterns, association nets, aspirations and buying behaviour, on the basis of the carefully induced and valid knowledge are consequential activities in the marketing realm of science and control.

II. The Marketing Realm of Artistic Creation

More than as merely an observer and researcher of the environment, the marketer subject is in what I have labelled the realm of artistic creation portrayed as a creative agent, as a creator of something hitherto non-existing, e.g. feelings, associations and desires ('the desire to see more', Sven as the reader may recall says). The activities prevalent here are thus of a proactive and fabricating nature; the environment is not but controllable, but in various degrees creations of forward directed marketing work.

The creative work of marketing is furthermore artistic in that the creation endeavours are not of common sensical character, but deeds done by experts, performed by marketing artists (for instance recall the definition of Victoria’s, of salespeople in terms of “artists”). The consumers’ particular feelings, associations and desires are however not the only products of the creative work, the pieces of art as it were, of marketing. The art of marketing may, for instance, moreover involve the creation of exchanges and brand awareness, as well as the marketing art piece par excellence: the creation of the consuming (or at least the consumable) consumer. The latter creation is offered to the client of the marketing practitioner. The relation between client and marketer is then highly asymmetrical in terms of artistic skills, experience and estectical taste. The marketer is by definition the master of the marketing techne, whereas the client assumes the position of the novice customer formulating the goals and aims of the marketing enterprise, entrusting the creative and artistic efforts to
the marketer. However, this definition of the power balance characterising the marketer-client relation was anything but silently conceded on at the meeting. Sven once, for example, assumed the role of the rational and experienced business man, representing the counterweight to the, in his eyes perhaps, somewhat naïve and excessive playfulness and artistic aspirations of the marketing artists. The creative marketing activities, thus, find their constrains in the brute logic of business, budgets and long term strategies represented by the client. The client-marketer relationship then carries resemblance with the one between parent and child, wherein the former sets the rational limits (logos) within which the latter is sanctioned to perform its his/her creative play (patos).

The creativity aspect of the marketer subject was moreover raised in some of the interviews I conducted during my fieldwork. A&B was in these frequently referred to as a "creative agency" as opposed to, as I took it, more administrative, systematical and scientifically and management oriented agencies. For instance, the CEO of A&B, when telling me the company history, emphasised his ambitions to preserve the advertising agency as primarily a site for creative work, and to let his advertisers, first and foremost, remain creators:

Anyway, we became 75 employees and we continued working, and we were in somewhat in agreement as to us being a creative group, and stick to that. So we actually did not have any project leaders; we had no administration, we were our own slave drivers, our own project leaders. We became rather good at this, yes; broad in competence albeit not very sharp. We were a bunch of "mädchen für alles". Then the entire industry’s character changed. We started to go towards larger business units, high demands on administrative power. Eh...the advertising agency was no longer a place you came to in order to drink ideas, but it became a partner in the whole market communication. This was a different situation than before. And this resulted in us starting to grow and employing educated project leaders, you see. And this is worthwhile to emphasise. From a complete lack...at both the sides of the table...since the industry was in need of employing people with marketing knowledge, so...actually the way it should be...which was the arrangement we had we some of our clients -is that the project leader is situated by the client, whereas the agency continued to be the creative group. That is perhaps logical. But this development was driven by the large agencies. We were by no means lonely.

A related version of the marketer subject as creator is him or her representing a bricoleur (Lévi-Strauss, 1966), which may be thought of as somewhat a softer variant of the creative marketer subject. The marketer is then still a creative agent, but being so within the boundaries of the material already present, by means of which a permutation, a new combination, of the presumed social facts at hand, such as e.g. the share of municipalities using Garden Inc. lawn mowers, is created. The marketing activity is then confined to the, still highly ingenious, enterprise of making use of and recombining what is presented as facts.

An intriguing aspect of the invocation of the bricoleur marketing subject is that its entry at the meeting, as the reader may remember, coincided with an explicit unmasking of the marketing agent ("That is something we definitely shall use"). One interpretation is that this suggests an interdependence between the (discursive) visibility of the marketing agent and the degree of marketing creativity. In marketing practice’s strive for social acceptance, when being engaged in utmost proactive and creative work, the marketing agency may have to be downplayed, and the agent of marketing, that is to say the marketer, be concealed and obscured. On the other hand, when portrayed as bricoleur, the marketing agent can be somewhat safely unmasked.

The subject position of the consumer becomes in the marketing realm of artistic creation the one of the homogeneous audience, predisposed to react (feel, perceive, act etc.) towards the products of marketing in similar ways. The creation of something calls for insight into the cause and effect relationship between action and reaction. The knowledge, accordingly, relevant against this background, thus orbits around the patterns of the consumer responses to various creations and the causality of the interpretative processes of the consumers.
III. The Marketing Realm of Simulacra

The notion of "simulacra" is adopted from Baudrillard (1988) who employed it in order to fathom the modes wherein the distinction between sign and reality has become obsolete. Today, signifiers of reality, according to Baudrillard, stands no longer in a referential relation to the "real" world, but exist on its own right, as a selfreferential system without origin, as a "hyperreality" (Baudrillard, 1988:167). In the marketing world of simulacra, the marketer *subject* is allotted the role of symbol expert and manager. The marketer in this world has been given the task of directing and controlling the referential web of signifiers and signifieds, or in effect the web of signs, within this system of selfreferring symbols. The marketer is thus here put forward as partly engaged in the work of transferring use value of the product into sign value (Baudrillard, 1988:58) and in so doing, detaching the products from the system of symbols.

The product, in this case the lawn mower, becomes secondary whereas the control, direction and management of connotations attributed to the product are delineated as the primary marketing *activity*. For instance, at one point during the course of the meeting, the aim of transmuting the symbol of "expensiveness" into "security and durability" was put forward.

However, the possibilities of symbol management are in this realm not fully unlimited, but in some degree constrained by the brute facts of life, such as the essential dreariness of lawn mowing and the price. Recall Sven making clear at the meeting that: "After all, Garden Inc. is 15-20% more expensive than other lawn mowers". The price of the product is a fairly fixed dimension and should not be touched and manipulated by marketer hand. Price competition pertains to the taboos of marketing work within the marketing realm of simulacra.

The consumer *subject* is in this realm a more or less passive symbol reader, the knowledge of whose interpretation processes represents valuable and instrumentally motivated marketing *knowledge*. If knowledge about the modes wherein consumers work as interpreting people can be obtained, then the manipulation of the web of signs and symbols can be exerted more efficiently, resulting in the wanted responsive effects (e.g. consumption). A second important area of knowledge for the symbol-managing marketer comprises some amount of insight as to the relations between symbols. Some of these relations were spoken on at the meeting as essential and universal. Anders, for instance, once talked about the natural link between "handmade" and "high quality". At another point, Sven assumed the essential connection between outdoor picture and the symbol of "hard working and durable machines". What is more, knowledge as to the symbol environment and media also belongs to crucial marketing knowledge in this realm.

The *relation* between the marketer and the consumer is thus characterised of an asymmetry in terms of the former possessing knowledge about, and controlling, the latter by means of the manipulation of symbols. An interesting dispute as to the nature of the consumer appears in this realm, namely with respect to whether the consumer is an exotic "someone else" or "one of us". "It is part of our nature", Sven once proposed at the meeting, thereby

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22 In this section I allow myself to draw fairly loosely upon Baudrillard’s ideas. I am however well aware of the potential problems related to the combining of the thoughts of Baudrillard’s and ideology concerns. For instance, Baudrillard refutes the relevance of "ideology" in an analysis of contemporary society, since "ideology only corresponds to a betrayal of reality by signs (...)" (Baudrillard, 1988:182). Furthermore, it is the contention of Baudrillard’s that "it is always a false (sic!) problem to want to restore the truth beneath the simulacrum" (Ibid.). However, this critique of ideology is firstly based on a classical Marxist conception (a conception refrained from in this paper) of ideology as forms and systems of false beliefs. Secondly, in labelling ideological analysis "false", Baudrillard himself, it may be argued, falls prey to a dichotomy of "true" and "false" problems residing outside simulacra.
including himself as well as the advertising team in the same group of people as the consumers. On the other hand, the consumers were once and then during the meeting treated as "the others" of whom knowledge is obtainable and control is possible. When the television show "Bingolotto" was discussed in the final part of the meeting this stance is clearly illustrated.

The client subject, finally, in the marketing realm of simulacra, takes on the role of the novice, and the relation between marketer and client accordingly becomes the one of expert-layman.

IV. The Marketing Realm of Conflict and War

The realm of conflict and war is a place where various forms of struggle and fighting activities are prevalent. The relations are chiefly characterised by conflicting interests, power exercise, violence and tension, and the marketer subject is involved as a warrior in an eternal war, first and foremost against the competitors, the main enemies. The marketing task within the world of conflict and war is to achieve absolute victory. The only alternative in the long run, within a world founded upon the bedrock of the win-loose dichotomy, is perishing and withdrawing from the market.

The consumer subject is twofold. On the one hand, the consumer (and his/her purchases and loyalty) assumes the guise of the war trophy, the reward of a properly carried out battle. On the other hand, however, the consumer in this marketing realm represents one of the enemies and hindrances to be conquered by the marketing warrior. An illustration of the latter consumer subject construction is provided when Sven at the end of the meeting in somewhat an aggressive tonality displayed his ambitions to "bang" the marketing message "into peoples’ minds". The consumer is then, due to basic conflicting interests in the relation between supply and demand, production and consumption, conceived of as a bundle of barriers (disinterestedness, unawareness, lack of attentiveness, doubt etc.) that are to be overcome by the marketer, the latter being well informed as to the weakest Achilles spots of the consumer.

The connection between the client and the marketer is the least discordant relation in the marketing realm of conflict and war. Client and marketer may be said to form an alliance, combating on the same flank of the battlefield, co-operating in order, on the one hand, to conquer the competitors, and on the other, to surmount the resisting consumer.

V. The Marketing Realm of Harmony and Conversation

Insofar as the previously discussed marketing realm involved conflict and struggle, consent and piece reign in the realm of harmony and conversation. The relation between the marketer and the consumer is the one of a symmetrical and equal conversation aiming at a final state of consensus. The marketer and the consumer subjects thus play the roles of interlocutors engaged in the mutual activities of talking as well as listening. In the incessant conversation in this marketing realm of harmony, the individual and unique consumer’s needs and the marketer’s adaptation to these are at stake. The consumers are here conceived of as belonging to a heterogeneous group of active and sovereign people whose individual needs are to be detected and satisfied by the marketer, the success of the latter resulting in a win-win situation.

The knowledge relevant for the marketer in the harmony and conversation realm concerns the different languages spoken by the consumers. The symmetry as to the relationship between marketer and consumer is hence somewhat ambiguous in that it is coloured by some idea of the marketers being superior to the consumers in terms of the former mastering the various languages of the latter. Overall, though, and perhaps primarily,
the marketer-consumer relation is in this realm of marketing to be regarded as a highly symmetrical and equal one.

The client-marketer relation is again the one of the novice meeting the expert. The marketer is in this relationship conceived of as a, in various degrees surely, knowledgeable and skilled consumer conversationalist, i.e. an expert in marketing communication, whereas the client is assumed to be in great need of this competence.

This realm of harmony and conversation is a pervasive and overarching theme within mainstream marketing theory and textbooks, succinctly articulated in the very cadre or “the cornerstone” (Kohli and Jaworski, 1990) of the idea of market orientation (see e.g. Levitt, 1960), namely the marketing concept. Marketing concept has according to Christensen (1995:655) become the “(...) dominant ideal of management, fundamental to organizing theories and practices in both private- and public sector organisations”, and is by Kotler and Armstrong (1994) defined as:

"The marketing concept holds that achieving organizational goals depends on determining the needs and wants of target markets and delivering the desired satisfactions more efficiently than competitors do." (Kotler and Armstrong, 1994:13-14)

Furthermore, the marketing realm of conversation and harmony is the ontological bedrock of the accounts of marketing practice commonly referred to as “relationship marketing” and “service marketing management”, wherein the interactive and, in part, conversational aspects of marketing are heavily stressed (see e.g. Gummesson, 1999; Normann, 1991; Grönroos, 1990).

VI. The Marketing Realm of Education

In the marketing world of education, the pedagogical responsibilities of the marketer subject are emphasised, and his or her relationship to the consumer bears clear resemblance to the way in which the teacher relates to the student. At the advertising meeting, this realm of marketing came into presence most explicitly when the introductory book on grass was brought up.

The consumer subject is framed as the apprentice craving for enlightenment concerning the possible as well as preferable needs and consumption preferences that correspond to the supply being offered. Teaching and learning are in this realm actions included in the set of chief marketing activities, the former on part of the marketer and the latter consequently of the consumer. The significant knowledge is here of two sorts. Firstly, the paramount idea is that the consumer is to gain as much knowledge, concerning his or her demands and preferences, as needed in order to engage in well calculated and rational consumption behaviour. Secondly, the marketer must possess some amount of insight as to the "knowledge gap" of the consumer, as well as some knowledge of the consumers’ learning abilities and patterns.

The client and the marketer are here co-operating parts in the marketing curriculum venture. The client provides the content of the education, the cognitive matter as it were, whereas the marketing practitioner represents the pedagogical connoisseur, skilled in the art of teaching.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF MARKETING REALMS AND MARKET DISCOURSES

“The market” is an important notion within the field of marketing as well as in the political and societal debate as a whole. “Markets”, as shown by for instance Carrier (1997), are far from solely described systems of production, exchanges and consumption; it has, according to
Carrier (Ibid.), become an important and prevalent cultural construct, that can and should be studied as an important artefact of Western culture. Moreover, “the market” is, Carrier holds, to be regarded as a part of a public language, as a set of rhetorical resources, as a set of discourses serving as a provider of:

“(...) the vocabulary and conceptual equipment that make it relatively easy to define certain sorts of things as problems and relatively hard to define other sorts of things that way. Just as it influences the sorts of problems that can be addressed, so it influences what is likely to appear as an acceptable, plausible solution.” (Carrier, 1997:51)

As mentioned already, it is my contention that the manifold set-up of the marketing scene stems from the employment of a variety of discourses of the market. The marketing realms constructed at the meeting, that is my point, are rooted in, collect their rhetorical impact from, and are constrained by different market discourses.

What is more, by means of the market discourses undergirding the marketing realm constructs, ideology, I contend, enter and become manifest in the language use at the advertising agency. This is the case since particular version of “the market” to a great extent is affiliated with a certain view, a certain representation of how the society in its entirety is, and should be, organised. In political debates, for instance before parliament elections, a central issue often is the relation between the market and the state. Consequently, the discourses of the market are, as it were, heavily ideologically charged. They are therefore germane to study in order to grasp the ideological content of the setting of the marketing scene.

In this final section of the paper my ambition is to briefly explore the discourses of the market that can be said to ideologically invest, support as well as delimit the various marketing realm constructions put into existence at the advertising meeting studied in this paper. Three types of market discourses are here proposed as the rhetorical resources activated, and being simultaneously present, at the meeting. I refer to these as: the neo-liberal discourse of the market, the managerial discourse of the market and the anti-market discourse of the market. The point I wish to make is that all three of these discourses of the market are present, albeit at different points of time, simultaneously, and thereby give rise to an ideological tension and struggle at the meeting.

I. The Neo-liberal Discourse of the Market

Neo-liberalism is that political ideology, in the world of today that, according to Fairclough (2000a), has gained a position of hegemony in left as well as right political movements, and figures as an essential element in the new, global order.23 Manifested in this dominating public discourse of “the new order of economy”, the neo liberal “utopia” is naturalised and presented as an inescapable destiny of Europe (Bourdieu, 1998). The emerging European common market in addition to the breakdown of the former communist block further increase the common sensical nature of market economy and neo-liberalism.

This dominating neo-liberal ideology resides chiefly in a strong belief in the free market forces, and in the idea that the market defines the supply. The hailed lasse faire doctrine is thus a paramount theme in the neo-liberal discourse of the market. As many obstacles to free monetary flow as possible must be removed in order to achieve highest efficiency and wealth, and governmental interventions should accordingly be abolished. Insofar as liberalism conceived of capitalism and free markets as the only way to organise a modern society, neo-

23 See also www.uoc.es/humfil/nlc/LNC-ENG/lnc-eng.html.
liberalist discourse presents market freedom as the salvation from poverty, oppression, and as a route towards democracy.\textsuperscript{24} Bourdieu writes on neo-liberalism:

\begin{quote}
“(…) the return to a kind of radical capitalism, with no other law than that of maximum profit, an unfettered capitalism without any disguise, but rationalized, pushed to the limit of its economic efficacy by the introduction of modern forms of domination, such as ‘business administration’, and techniques of manipulation, such as market research and advertising.” (Bourdieu, 1998:35)
\end{quote}

The marketing realm of "Harmony and Conversation" and the one of "Education" are informed and invested by this neo-liberal market discourse. The marketer in both of these realms assumes the role of an intermediary, operating as a link between supply and demand, between production and consumption, all in order to maintain a high degree of market efficacy.\textsuperscript{25} The harmony and piece is a prevalent theme in neo-liberal discourse, wherein the free market resulting in some sort of Pareto optimum, i.e. the most efficient allocation of resources, is stressed. In the former realm the marketer is the social and conversational link between what is offered and what is needed. The neo-liberal market calls for free speech and transparent information flow, and the conversational aspects of the marketing work may be considered as crucial in this context. The stress put on the individual consumer and his/her needs is another aspect of this realm of harmony and conversation that draws from a neo-liberal market discourse. In a society founded on the bedrock of neo-liberalism, the consumers’ agency and sovereignty are regarded as imperative. The basic lack of control from the point of view of the marketer is hence a fairly prominent theme in the neo-liberal discourse of the market; the listening to the consumers are of great importance.

In the latter realm the marketer is to provide the information/knowledge needed for rational consumption decisions on the part of the consumer. Another educational task, perhaps the most basic one, for the marketing practitioner may be to teach citizens \textit{to consume}. The enlightenment of the consumers, and the offering of full information upon which consumption decisions can rely, is thus one of the chief goals that the marketer as educator faces, a goal the reaching of which is a prerequisite for an efficiently working neo-liberal market.

II. The Managerial Discourse of the Market

The marketing realms of “Science and Control”, “Artistic Creation” and “Simulacra” all in some respect collect legitimacy and strength from what I refer to as the managerial discourse of the market. The marketer’s ability to manage and to control the consumers and other elements in the market environment is one of the common themes as to these three marketing reality constructs. In the “Science and “Control”-world of marketing, this is striven for by means of scientific work emanating in instrumentally useful knowledge that renders the hitherto wild environment controllable. In the realm of “Artistic Creation” the act of creating is heavily accentuated. When (if) creating exchanges, desires, consumers and so forth, controlling is replaced by producing, and hence the very utmost degree of management is obtained. In marketing world as “simulacra” the management aspirations is directed towards the handling of the web of symbols.

\textsuperscript{24} The opposite result is however not unlikely. For instance, Fairclough (2000b) writes that: “Neo-liberalism has been adopted in fact if not in theory by social democratic as well as conservative political parties, so that one effect of the current scenario is, in the absence of really distinct political policies, a weakening of democracy, a closing down of political debate. States enter an intense competition to succeed on terms dictated by the market. This has led to radical attacks on social welfare and the reduction of those protections which welfare states provided against the negative effects of markets (…)”.

\textsuperscript{25} This is an elaboration of an argument presented in Svensson (2000).
What I have here labelled the managerial discourse on the market delineates the market as overall a potentially controllable area. If the free market and the sovereign and active consumer were emphasised in the abovediscussed neo-liberal market discourse, within the managerial discourse of the market, the taming and constraining of the events taking place on the market are put forward as the paramount objective.

III. The Anti-market Discourse of the Market
By “anti-market” market discourse I mean a signification of the market that to a considerable extent criticises and negates prominent themes in the two market discourses discussed above. It may seem paradoxical that marketing practice employ a discourse that denies markets. I will try to show in this section that this does have to be the case.

The anti-market discourse of the market represents the countervoice, as it were, to the two abovementioned ones. It does so, first and foremost, by questioning, for instance from the position of Marx, the very morality of commodity exchange (see e.g. Kahn, 1997:76). The anti-discourse of the market is thus very much a moral castigation of the market creation. Kahn (1997) holds that anti-market discourses originate from early criticism of Western modernity and enlightenment, more specifically from critique of enlightenment chief ideas such as instrumentalism and strong reliance on human rational thinking. The possibilities of controlling and mastering the objects of research, by virtue of careful, empirical investigations, are strongly questioned in this discourse.

The realm of “war and conflict” is the marketing reality employing this anti-market discourse, and do so in stressing the absence of harmony and the presence of violence and dissent on the marketplace. Moreover, the somewhat sophisticated management techniques of rationalistic, scientific research; artistic creativity and symbol management are here replaced with violence and propaganda. “The market”, understood as either the free area wherein sovereign consumers act, or as a territory to be controlled and managed, is thus in a sense refuted by the anti-discourse. In that an essential conflict between producers and consumers is assumed, the market, conceived of as “a means of communications between consumers and producers” (Carrier, 1997:3), is nullified.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS
The plurality of marketing realm constructions and the interdiscursivity characterising the marketing meeting gives way, as mentioned before, for discursive as well as ideological struggles. My suggestion is that, simultaneously at the meeting focused in this paper, six different marketing realms and the three market discourses being drawn upon, clash and thereby enters a struggle for hegemony. Thus, macro structures (ideological tensions and struggles) are rendered manifest and observable in micro practices, such as a meeting conceived of as a discursive event. In this text I have tried to illustrate and explore how these ideological manifestations are enacted within a marketing practice. I also hope to have been able to show how one, rather small and narrow, discursive event (the marketing meeting) can embody the putting into being of several different reality constructs, the latter in turn affiliated to, and drawing upon, several ideologically invested market discourses. This indicates that marketing practice is anything but a neutral and technical set of activities. On the contrary, marketing practice should be looked upon as an arena for continuos ontological and ideological struggles.
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