

### Descriptive content analysis: the development of social discipline in the 'Reichspoliceyordnungen' of the 16th century

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## HUMANITIES COMPUTING

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### Descriptive Content Analysis The Development of Social Discipline in the 'Reichspoliceyordnungen' of the 16th Century

*Heiner Ulrich\**

The program *metatext*<sup>1</sup> was developed out of an application for indexing large quantities of textual data regularly over a long period of time. It turned out to be necessary to reorganize the structure of the descriptors being used at any given time. In order to improve indexing and the retrieval it was therefore decided to detach that part of the program in which the indexing takes place from the part in which the structure of the descriptors is being handled. The result of this design is a powerful tool for the collection and interpretation of historical data.

The first **historical sources analyzed with the help of *metatext* were three examples of 16th century – legislation of the German Reich.**<sup>2</sup> The purpose of the thesis in progress is to analyze forms of social discipline in these sources as part of the early modern state formation.

The term **social discipline**<sup>3</sup>, first introduced by Gerhard Oestreich, integrates Weber's theory **of the development of modern society defined by reason and**

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<sup>1</sup> The program *metatext* has **been written by the author. The stand-alone program** (written in dbase and compiled **with the new Borland dbase-compiler**) requires an IBM-AT with 4 MB RAM **minimum. For further information please contact the author.**

<sup>2</sup> Römischer Kaiserlicher Majestät **Ordnung und Reformation guter Policey**, im heiligen Römischen Reich, zu Augspurg Anno 1530 aussgericht. Römischer Kaiserlicher Majestät **Ordnung und Reformation. guter Policey**, zu Beförderung des gemeinen Nutzens **auff dem** Reichs-Tag zu Augspurg, Anno **Domini** 1548, aussgericht. Der Römischen Kaiserl. Majestät **reformierte und gebesserte** Policey-Ordnung, zu Beförderung **gemeines guten** bürgerlichen Wesen und Nutzen **auf Anno MDLXXXViii zu** Franckfort gehaltenem Reichs-Deputation Tag, verfaßt und **aussgericht. Alle im: Neue** und vollständigere Sammlung der Reichs-Abschiede (...) samt den wichtigsten Reichs-Schlüssen Bd. 2 (4 Bde.), Frankfurt/M. 1747.

<sup>3</sup> Oestreich, B. (Hg.), **Policey and Prudentia civilis** in der barocken Gesellschaft von Stadt und Staat. In: **Strukturprobleme der frühen Neuzeit. Ausgewählte Aufsätze** (S.

Elias' thesis of a growing individual consciousness of social control in the 'process of civilisation' (Prozeß der Zivilisation).

In regard to the formation of state, social, economic and individual factors are gaining significance for the analysis of the Reichspoliceyordnungen. The subject of 'Policey', how it can be found in the three Reichspoliceyordnungen, refers to the policy of the state, its developing institutions, problems and general tendencies of the ways intended to establish the order. Regarding the aspect of social discipline, not only these 'institutional characteristics' have to be analysed. The focus of research is the interaction in the development of both, institutions and society.<sup>5</sup>

During my research, the specific groups of people and the regulations put upon them as well as the intended punishment for not submitting to these regulations have been described and newly structured for methodical analysis. In the process, certain indications for an interactive development of the institutions and in the society have been found and followed up.

### Components of the program

Increasingly historians use indices or create their own ones in historical research. An index consists basically of a reference to a certain information and a reference to the location where this information can be found. The first minor problem of indexing is that we do not want to repeat the full reference to the location in every index. Usually the material of research is in printed form, so the first element of the program stores full titles and their corresponding short titles or 'call numbers' for later use.

In the following, while using metatext, the reference to the location consists of the short title and (optional) number of page and line (of the beginning of the relevant part). The handling of the reference to the information is slightly more complicated but may also be more interesting.

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367-379), Berlin 1980. Dinges, Martin, Frühneuzeitliche Armenfürsorge als Sozialdisziplinierung? Probleme mit einem Konzept. In: Geschichte und Gesellschaft 1, 1991 (5-29). Jütte, Robert, »Disziplin zu predigen ist eine Sache, sich ihr zu unterwerfen eine andere« (Cervantes). In: Geschichte und Gesellschaft 1, 1991 (92-101). Neugebauer, Wolfgang, Otto Hintze und seine Konzeption der »Allgemeinen Verfassungsgeschichte der neueren Staaten«. In: Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung Heft 1, 1993 (65-96).

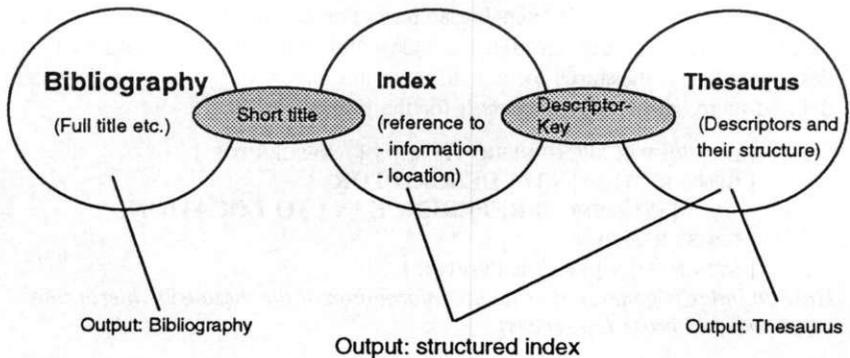
<sup>4</sup> M. Raeff, The Well-Ordered Police State: Social and Institutional Change in the Germanies and Russia, 1600-1800, New Haven 1983, S. 56-69.

<sup>5</sup> G. Oestreich, Strukturprobleme des europäischen Absolutismus. In: Geist und Gestalt des frühmodernen Staates. Ausgewählte Aufsätze, Berlin 1969 (S. 179-197): 'Die innenpolitische Absolutismus-Forschung blieb beim Werden der Bürokratie stehen, bei der Geschichte der Behördenbildung und des Beamtentums, bei den neuen staatlichen Institutionen und ihren antiständischen Kämpfen.' (S. 180).

In this second element of the program the information of the source is described. This description could be located on various levels of interpretation or abstraction of the original text<sup>6</sup> and is, of course, strongly related to the researcher's hypothesis. The reference of information is separated in two parts: a single term (in the following called 'descriptor') and - optional - a line of more detailed description. This information is stored together with the reference to the location and represents the main part of the index.

### Managing the index with the use of a thesaurus

During the progress of research we learn more and more about our topic, even might have to modify the research concept we started with. Usually this is in a way not appreciated because one has to 'go back' to a certain point of the analysis and start again (if this is possible). The use of predetermined descriptors was in this context widely discussed and criticized<sup>7</sup>.



**Figure 1**      *The three basic elements of the program metatext and how they work together*

<sup>6</sup> — Or any other type of source: Unlike many other programs used for content analysis, metatext doesn't analyze the source, but helps to organize, structure and present the researchers' description or interpretation of it. There is no dependence in any certain kind of source. (Instead of the page and line number used in our context one could use the meter of a tape recorder, coordinates of a picture etc.).

<sup>7</sup> See G. Breyer, N. Finzsch, J. Schaefer (...): Computer-Aided Content-Analysis and 'Soft Data' in Historical Social Research. An Attempt to Find a Pragmatic Solution, in: Historical Social Research 15,3 1990, p. 206-213, p. 209.

The descriptors being used for the description of the Reichspoliceyordnungen have to be defined before they can be used for description, but it is necessary to provide an easy way for later changes of spelling and / or structure. In our context, predetermined means not ultimate - predetermined means: define, modify, erase descriptors *during* the research. This is the third element of the program metatext: the handling of a thesaurus. The descriptors, their synonyms and the their structure (hierarchies and cross references) which are used in the index are managed in the thesaurus. Not the descriptor itself is stored in the index, but a reference in form of a numerical key. If e.g. the spelling of a descriptor is changed in the thesaurus, the change becomes (at once) effective for all parts of the index which use this descriptor.

As examples of interpretation given later show, the explicit use of an thesaurus is not only the reason for faster and easier description of the source, but also the tool for reorganizing these descriptions following the researchers hypothesis which gets more and more specific during the research. Fig. 1 gives an overview of the three basic elements of the metatext program.

Not only the spelling of a descriptor can be changed in the thesaurus to become effective for the index. Synonyms can be defined, references between descriptors ('see also ...'), and hierarchies. For the output of the structured index, the program runs through the index and looks up the structure of the descriptor in the thesaurus for constructing the hierarchies and / or references defined there, and finally formats it for the printer:

```
| [ DESCRIPTOR SEE GENERIC TERM [ S ] / DESCRIPTOR ]  
| [ GENERIC TERM [ S ] / ] DESCRIPTOR  
| [ COMMENT , ] REFERENCE [ s ] TO LOCATION  
| [ CROSS REFERENCE [ S ] ]  
| [ SYNONYM [ S ] SEE DESCRIPTOR ]
```

*How an index is generated using the information of the thesaurus (hierarchies, synonyms and cross references)*

'Generic terms' are also descriptors, but express a hierarchy between them; references can exist between descriptors or from synonyms to descriptors. Terms in '[' ]' are optional. References are only constructed if there is an item to refer to in the actual index.

Collection and interpretation of data At the beginning of the research, I described and restructured the information in the Reichspoliceyordnungen. When the analysis of the forms of social discipline started it was not possible to tell in advance which facts would be relevant. At the end, after several runs, about 500 elemental descriptions have been made to describe the significant information in each source. As pointed out before, special attention has been given to

- the regulations and / or their intended realization
- the social groups and professions the regulations refer to
- the intended punishment

Information of the first two kinds was grouped in word fields or concepts like 'military', 'religion', 'jurisdiction' and 'economy' (with subgroups). Also the intended punishment can be divided in at least five or six different groups, varying between warning or request and death penalty. Later the three sources were compared by these concepts.

The significance of each concept and its development in the three Reichspoliceyordnungen could be expressed by the number of indices in each word field or concept per text (the counting is done by the program, of course). Table 1 gives an example what this could look like. Even bar charts could be used to give a first impression of such a development in consecutive sources (Fig. 2).

During the research, the index began to replace the original texts. The program supplies effective tools for completing and modifying the index, and they have been used a lot.

Analyzing the social groups and professions the regulations refer to, one could observe certain developments: In the beginning, new professions or emerging social groups were integrated into - or excluded from- existing social classes. Later they are defined by their function, responsibility or other regulations concerning their profession<sup>8</sup>.

The indexing of the intended degree of punishment was a first step of analyzing more general elements of social discipline. The sanctions regulated in the sources are predominantly arbitrary. In the beginning this could be interpreted as a reflection of the relationship between Kaiser and Reich: The chances that the regulations were followed were of course better if the sanctions were not fixed. While the indications referring to institutionalizing of official functions and to the concept of control increase and become more specific, the area of regulations without specific sanctions are either of marginal interest to the state or regulated in a different way. These regulations might be dealt in other legal sources of the time, or they developed into a system of customs which did not have to be explicitly mentioned in the source. The later would be another point for the development of social discipline.

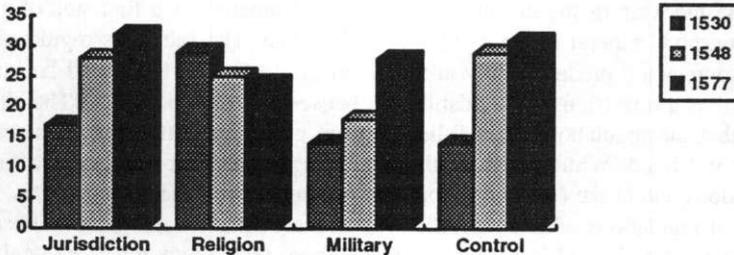
Social discipline could be seen as a reaction - or part of - the process of modernisation. The Reichspoliceyordnungen are reflecting this process and establish the (new) role of the developing institutions and their ruling in the interest of the state in strong interaction with other developments in society.

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<sup>8</sup> This observation relates to the discussion of the quality of regulation through the state, 'Sozialregulierung' or 'Sozialdisziplinierung'. See: Winfried Schulze, Gerhard Oestreichs Begriff 'Sozialdisziplinierung in der frühen Neuzeit'. In: Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung 14 (1987), 265-302. S. Breuer, Sozialdisziplinierung. Probleme und Problemverlagerungen eines Konzepts bei Max Weber, Gerhard Oestreich und Michel Foucault, in: Soziale Sicherheit und soziale Disziplinierung, ed. by Ch. Sachsse and F. Tennstedt, Frankfurt (M.) 1986;

|                                     | 1530      | 1548      | 1577      |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Jurisdiction                        | 1         | 4         | 4         |
| Judges**                            | 7         | 7         | 7         |
| Courts'                             | 3         | 9         | 9         |
| Related Professions^                | 4         | 7         | 9         |
| Penology                            | 2         | 3         | 3         |
| <b>Word Field:<br/>Jurisdiction</b> | <b>17</b> | <b>28</b> | <b>32</b> |

**Table 1**      *The development in the world field 'jurisdiction' in the 'Reichspoliceyordnungen' 1530, 1548 and 1577*



**Figure 2**      *The development of the concepts 'Jurisdiction', 'religion', 'military' and 'control' in the 'Reichspoliceyordnungen'*

Communication, presentation of results, team work

The index in its printed form naturally could be used by other people to help them finding relevant passages in the texts. If someone e.g. is only interested in facts related to the social status of groups like women or jews, or maybe facts related to textiles, the index would be a good point to start at. The index could also be used to prove or falsify the results of this research in comparing them with other sources.

For this kind of research, a thesaurus of 260 descriptors (nearly half of these are professions) with 80 synonyms and more than 400 references between them

(also hierarchies) had to be created. A certain subset of these could be used in any other research using this method.

Especially the managing of the thesaurus has features to support team work. There is a text field for each descriptor for usage to be commented or definitions to be fixed for all users. There is also the possibility of subdividing the thesaurus in subsets of special responsibility for each user. In this research, professions and products were such subsets (unfortunately without the help of other users to look after them). The output of the structured index could be limited to such subsets (or a short title or a descriptor) for special analysis.

In a way the index displays the steps of reasoning. This is most helpful for the researcher in discussing his conclusions during research or presenting them in a final thesis.