

Bringing discourse theory into Media Studies

The applicability of Discourse Theoretical Analysis (DTA) for the Study of media practises and discourses

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When Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe published an elaborate version of their discourse theory in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (1985), they were met with fierce resistance by a unified front of traditional Marxists and anti-poststructuralists. The debates on post-Marxism dominated much of the book's reception. This focus, combined with discourse theory's rather abstract nature, its lack of clear methodological guidelines, and its more natural habitat of Political Studies, caused discourse theory to remain confined to this realm of Political Studies, despite the broad ideological definition of the political preferred by the authors. This article aims to revisit discourse theory and bring it into the realm of Media Studies. A necessary condition to enhance discourse theory's applicability in Media Studies is the re-articulation of discourse theory into discourse theoretical analysis (DTA). DTA's claim for legitimacy is supported in this article by two lines of argument. Firstly, a comparison with Critical Discourse Analyses (CDA) at the textual and contextual level allow us to flesh out the similarities — and more importantly — the differences between CDA and DTA. Secondly, DTA's applicability is demonstrated by putting it to work in a case study, which focuses on the articulation of audience participation through televisional practices. Both lines of argument aim to illustrate the potential, the adaptability and the legitimacy of DTA's move into media studies.

Keywords: Discourse Theoretical Analysis, DTA, Media Studies, audience, participation, ordinary people, and antagonism

1. Introduction

Though at first sight focused on reopening (and redirecting) the discussion on Marxist theory, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (HSS–1985) also contains the early development of the discourse theory (DT) of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal

Mouffe. Laclau and Mouffe's HSS remains one of the key works in the field of discourse theory, next to Foucault's theoretical elaborations on discourse — especially in the *Archeology of Knowledge* (1972) — and has significantly contributed to the 'discursive turn' in the social sciences (Critchley and Marchart 2004: 4). In the meantime, HSS has generated a considerable amount of secondary literature (e.g. Smith 1999; Torfing 1999; Howarth 2000) and a number of political scientists have made good use of the DT toolbox, as is for instance evidenced by the readers *Discourse Theory and Political Analysis* (Howarth et al. 2000), *Laclau, a Critical Reader* (Critchley and Marchart 2004) and *Discourse Theory in European Politics: Identity, Policy and Governance* (Howarth and Torfing 2004).

Laclau and Mouffe's HSS is a highly valuable but complex and hermetic work, which can be read on three interrelated levels. The first level — DT in the strict sense — refers to their social ontology (Howarth 2000: 17) and to the position they negotiate between materialism and idealism, between structure and agency. A second — and strongly related — level is what Anna Marie Smith (1999: 87) calls Laclau and Mouffe's political identity theory, which is tributary to conflict theory. Key concepts at this level are social antagonism and hegemony. Here, (more) attention is given to how discourses, identities and their nodal points are constructed and obtain fixity. Laclau and Mouffe's post-Marxist approach becomes even more evident at the third level, where their plea for a radical democratic politics places them in the field of democratic theory. Laclau and Mouffe (1985: 190) still situate themselves within the 'classic ideal of socialism'. At the same time they plead for a 'polyphony of voice' in which the different (radical) democratic political struggles — such as antiracism, antisexism and anticapitalism — are allotted an equally important role (Mouffe 1997: 18). In this sense, Laclau and Mouffe can be seen as key theorists in the democratic globalization movement.

This article aims to show the applicability of Laclau and Mouffe's DT within the realm of media studies. So far, DT has remained relatively absent within this field, in contrast to, for instance, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). In this article, it is contended that DT can provide useful support for media studies analyses. In other words, it is the ambition to show how DT can provide the 'little tool boxes' that Foucault (1996: 149) described: "If people want to open them, use a particular sentence, idea, or analysis like a screwdriver or wrench in order to short-circuit, disqualify or break up the systems of power [...] well, all the better". In order to do so (probably in a more modest version than Foucault suggests), first a brief overview of Laclau and Mouffe's DT and of the critiques that have been launched at it — and that need to be (at least partially) overcome — will be given. In order to sketch the potential of Laclau and Mouffe's DT for Media Studies, and to transform it into Discourse-Theoretical Analysis (DTA), their theory will also need to be compared to CDA, as this approach has generated a considerable number of

studies on mass media and the added value of DT for Media Studies needs to be ascertained. In the final part of this article, DTA will be deployed in a case study on audience discussion programs. This case study will be used to exemplify how Laclau and Mouffe's DT can provide the theoretical and analytical framework for an empirical research project.

2. A short outline of Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory

The theoretical starting point of Laclau and Mouffe's DT is the proposition that all social phenomena and objects obtain their meaning(s) through discourse, which is defined as "a structure in which meaning is constantly negotiated and constructed" (Laclau 1988: 254). In this — what they call — radical materialist position, the discursive component of reality is emphasized without equating discourse and reality. The concept of discourse is also described as a structured entity, which is the result of articulation (Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 105), which in turn is viewed as "any practice establishing a relation among elements^[1] such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice".

As the definitions above indicate, the articulation of discursive elements plays a vital role in the construction of the identity of objects, individual or collective agents. Identity is — according to Sayyid and Zac (1998: 263) — in turn defined in two related ways. First, identity is defined as "the unity of any object or subject". This definition links up with Fuss' (1989: ix) definition of identity as "the 'whatness' of a given entity". A second component of the definition of identity arises when this concept is applied to the way in which social agents can be identified and/or identify themselves within a certain discourse. Examples Sayyid and Zac (1998: 263) give in this context are "workers, women, atheists, British". Laclau and Mouffe call this last component of identity a subject position, and define it as the positioning of subjects within a discursive structure:

"Whenever we use the category of 'subject' in this text, we will do so in the sense of 'subject positions' within a discursive structure. Subjects cannot, therefore, be the origin of social relations — not even in the limited sense of being endowed with powers that render an experience possible — as all 'experience' depends on precise discursive conditions of possibility". (Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 115)

This last definition implies neither a structuralist nor a voluntarist position. In spite of Laclau and Mouffe's unanimity with Althusser's critique on the autonomous and completely self-transparent subject (which is a voluntarist position), they vehemently reject Althusser's deterministic working of economy in the last instance

(which is a structuralist position), as they think that this aspect of Althusser's theory leads to a 'new variant of essentialism' (Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 98):

"Society and social agents lack any essence, and their regularities merely consist of the relative and precarious forms of fixation which accompany the establishment of a certain order. This analysis [of Althusser] seemed to open up the possibility of elaborating a new concept of articulation, which would start from the overdetermined character of social relations. But this did not occur". (Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 98)

Their critical attitude towards Althusser does not alter the fact that Laclau and Mouffe borrow the originally Freudian concept of overdetermination from Althusser, though not without altering its meaning. Laclau and Mouffe see identity as a fusion of a multiplicity of identities, where the overdetermined presence of some identities in others prevents their closure. The multiplicity of identities will prevent their full and complete constitution, because of the inevitable distance between the obtained identity and the subject, and because of the (always possible) subversion of that identity by other identities. It is precisely the contingency of identities that creates the space for subjectivity and the particularity of human behavior. In this way, a structuralist position is avoided, and a poststructuralist stance is taken.

In Laclau and Mouffe's DT, discourses and identities are thus not defined as stable and fixed: a discourse is never safe from elements alien to that discourse. There is always a surplus (or a residue of elements) — the field of discursivity² — that prevents the full saturation of meaning (Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 112). Later on, (mainly) Laclau will refer to the Lacanian concept of lack to theorize this structural openness. The overdetermination of discourses (and the impossibility to reach 'a final closure' (Howarth 1998: 273)) is also made explicit in the concept of the floating signifier, which is defined as a signifier that is "overflowed with meaning" (Torfing 1999: 301). Floating signifiers will in other words assume different meanings in different contexts / discourses.

At the same time, discourses have to be partially fixed, since the abundance of meaning would otherwise make any meaning impossible: "a discourse incapable of generating any fixity of meaning is the discourse of the psychotic" (Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 112). The points where the discourse is (partially) fixed are called nodal points, by analogy with Lacan's concept of points de capiton. These nodal points are privileged signifiers that fix the meaning of a chain of signifiers (or moments) (Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 112), and have a certain degree of rigidity. Nodal points are constructed on the basis of articulation:

"The practice of articulation consists in the construction of nodal points which partially fix meaning; and the partial character of this fixation proceeds from the

openness of the social, a result, in its turn, of the constant overflowing of every discourse by the infinitude of the field of discursivity". (Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 113)

When nodal points (and the discourses that lie behind them) (start to) obtain social dominance, Laclau and Mouffe refer to the concept of hegemony, as developed by Gramsci. Originally, Gramsci (1999: 261) defined this notion in function of the formation of consent, rather than as the (exclusive) domination of the other, without however excluding a certain form of pressure and repression: "The 'normal' exercise of hegemony [...] is characterized by the combination of force and consent variously balancing one another, without force exceeding consent too much". Howarth (1998: 279) describes Laclau and Mouffe's interpretation as follows: "hegemonic practices are an exemplary form of political articulation which involves linking together different identities into a common project". The objective of hegemonic projects is to construct and stabilize nodal points that are the basis of a social order, the main aim being to become a social imaginary, i.e. the horizon that "is not one among other objects but an absolute limit which structures a field of intelligibility and is thus the condition of possibility of the emergence of any object" (Laclau 1990a: 64).

Hegemonic practices suppose an open system, which makes articulation possible. In a closed system there would only be repetition, and nothing could be hegemonized (Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 134). Mere articulation, however, is not sufficient to be able to speak of hegemony. According to Laclau and Mouffe (1985: 135–136), antagonistic practices linking elements in so-called chains of equivalence are a prerequisite: "in other words, that hegemony should emerge in a field criss-crossed by antagonisms and therefore suppose phenomena of equivalence and frontier effects. But, conversely, not every antagonism supposes hegemonic practices". Antagonisms have (in a similar way as the concept of binary oppositions that is used by Derrida and Lévi-Strauss) both negative and positive aspects, as they attempt to destabilize the 'other' identity but desperately need that very 'other' as a constitutive outside to stabilize their proper identity. An example of an antagonism can be found in Howarth (2000: 106):

"Consider the emergence of the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa during the late 1960s and early 1970s [...]. In its formative stages, leaders of this movement constructed a series of antagonistic relationships with different groups within South African society. These included white liberals, the National Party and its apartheid project, as well as other anti-apartheid organizations — the exiled African National Congress and its allies such as the Natal Indian Congress and the Inkatha Movement led by Mangosuthu Buthelezi. Their discourse emphasized that the main 'blockage' to their identity was 'white racism', which systematically denied and prevented the construction and assertion of a black identity.

Their political project endeavored to link together all those who were opposed to apartheid and who identified themselves as black, rather than 'non-white' or 'non-racial', by instituting a political frontier dividing the South African society into two antagonistic camps organized around the black/'anti-black' division [...]"

When the question arises how antagonisms are discursively constructed, Laclau and Mouffe refer to the logic of equivalence and the creation of chains of equivalence. In such chains, different identities are made equivalent, and opposed to another negative identity. To put this differently: the logic of equivalence brings together a number of identities in one discourse, without however totally eliminating their differences: they "can weaken, but not domesticate differences" (Laclau 2005: 79). Howarth (2000: 107) uses as illustration the letters a, b and c for the equivalent identities (in which $a=b=c$) and the letter d for the negative identity. The logic of equivalence results in the formula: $d = -(a, b, c)$, of which the final result is the coming into being of two antagonistic poles. Laclau (1988: 256) gives an example of a possible chain of equivalence:

"For instance, if I say that, from the point of view of the interests of the working class, liberals, conservatives, and radicals are all the same, I have transformed three elements that were different into substitutes within a chain of equivalence".

Next to the logic of equivalence, Laclau and Mouffe also discern a logic of difference, which breaks existing chains of equivalence and incorporates the disarticulated elements in another discursive order (Howarth, 1998: 277). As opposed to the logic of equivalence, the logic of difference weakens existing antagonisms and relegates them to the margins of a society.

3. Critiques and replies on Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory

Laclau and Mouffe's DT has obviously not remained free of criticism. To develop a theory from a combination of poststructuralist and post-Marxist sources of inspiration is in many cases sufficient to be discredited. In these critiques, the term 'postmodernism' is used as a rewarding but unnuanced umbrella term in combination with the traditional modernist accusations of nihilism, relativism or eclecticism. Such critique is — ironically — summarized by Butler (1997: 249) as follows: "discourse is all there is, as if discourse were some kind of monistic stuff out of which all things are composed; the subject is dead, I can never say 'I' again; there is no reality, only representation". Geras (1990), for example, takes a critical stance that can be lumped under this type of critique, when he says that Laclau and Mouffe's DT lacks any foundation. For him, the resulting consequence is that their theory "slides into a bottomless, relativist gloom, in which opposed discourses or

paradigms are left with no common reference point, usually trading blows" (Geras 1990: 99). One refute of this critique can be found in the importance that Laclau (1996: 57) attaches to universal principles that "have to be formulated as limitless principles, expressing a universality transcending them: but they all, for essential reasons, sooner or later become entangled in their own contextual particularism and are incapable of fulfilling their universal function". The second — and more important — refute is that Laclau and Mouffe explicitly argue against both total contingency and total fixity of meaning. After all, Laclau and Mouffe posit that meaning is partially fixed, and introduce the concept nodal point to further theorize these partial fixations. In a similar way, the notion of hegemony allows theorizing the attempts of social actors to stabilize and fix the contingent social. At the same time, Laclau and Mouffe emphasize the situatedness and contextuality of their DT, which rejects "the rigid separation of facts and values" and accepts that "the discourse theorist and analyst is always located in a particular historical and political context with no neutral Archimedean point from which to describe, argue and evaluate" (Howarth and Stavrakakis 2000: 7).

Also from traditional Marxist positions serious objections were launched, since they found the decentralizing of the class concept and the rejection of economic determinism problematic. For example, Gledhill (1994: 183) calls Laclau "a disillusioned Althusserian Marxist of the 1968 new left vintage who now declares himself a post-Marxist". This critique actually touches upon the heart of the theoretical project of Laclau and Mouffe, which aims at de-essentializing Althusser's and Gramsci's work (and thus indirectly also the work of Marx and Engels). From a less traditionally Marxist point of view, the decentralization of the class struggle allows incorporating other relevant societal struggles and identities (for instance those related to ethnicity and gender) and thus correcting the traditional Marxist negligence of these areas (Torfing 1999: 291).

Next to critiques of the poststructuralist and post-Marxist points of departure of Laclau and Mouffe's DT, four additional critiques have to be mentioned. A first critique is oriented towards their so-called idealist stance (see for instance Woodiwiss 1990). Laclau and Mouffe (1985: 108) themselves already anticipated this critique in HSS, as they refused to have themselves locked into a realism-idealism dichotomy. Their plea for radical materialism as *'tertium quid'* (Howarth 1998: 289) does not alter their strong orientation towards the analysis of discursive components of reality, and more specifically towards the analysis of signifiers as democracy and socialism. This implies that in their specific analyses they will pay considerably less attention to material components of reality (for example bodies, objects, organizations or interactions).

A second critique is aimed at the so-called primacy of the political over the social, where Laclau and Mouffe interpret discourse and identity as political enti-

ties. This critique is partly refuted by indicating that social relations are formed by political struggle, but that they will eventually lose their contested political nature and become sedimented in social norms and values, which might be contested again later in history (Torfing 1999: 70). A more convincing argument is the Schmittian distinction introduced (mainly) by Mouffe between ‘the political’ and ‘politics’:

“By ‘the political’, I refer to the dimension of antagonism that is inherent in human relations, antagonism that can take many forms and emerge in different types of social relations. ‘Politics’ on the other side, indicates the ensemble of practices, discourses and institutions which seek to establish a certain order and organize human coexistence in conditions that are always potentially conflictual because they are affected by the dimension of ‘the political’”. (Mouffe 2000: 101, see also Mouffe 2005: 8)

In other words, ‘the political’

“cannot be restricted to a certain type of institution, or envisaged as constituting a specific sphere or level of society. It must be conceived as a dimension that is inherent to every human society and that determines our very ontological condition”. (Mouffe 1997: 3)

Thirdly, despite the energy Laclau and Mouffe have spent on defining the key concept of discourse, some of the other core concepts such as identity, ideology and power remain undertheorized. These concepts are in danger of becoming vague umbrella terms regarded as ‘black boxes’³, whose status spoils the theoretical elegance with which other key terms are developed. More theoretical elaborations on the tensions between individual and collective identities and their institutional and organizational sedimentations⁴, and of the tensions between idealist and materialist approaches — focusing on how discourses can be condensed into material structures — would also considerably strengthen the discourse-theoretical framework.

Finally, Laclau and Mouffe’s theory is also subjected to methodological critiques. For example, Howarth (1998: 291) states that:

“[...] Laclau and Mouffe need to lay down, however minimally, a set of methodological guidelines for practitioners, as well a set of questions and hypotheses (à la Lakatos) for clarification and development. Thus far, the only clear methodological rule consists in a ‘non-rule’: rules can never be simply applied to cases, but have to be articulated in the research process. [...] The lack of adequate responses to the epistemological and methodological questions poses significant problems for researchers working within discourse theory”.

As Derrida pleads for the singularity of each deconstruction, and Foucault at all times writes a specific 'history of the present' (Kendall and Wickham 1999: 4), Laclau (and Mouffe) plead for the articulation of theoretical concepts within each specific empirical research question (Laclau 1990b: 208–209). It is precisely the rejection of essentialism that pushes discourse theorists towards open-ended theoretical frameworks, which is said to hamper the methodological development and (again) the empirical application of the framework (Howarth 1998: 288). In spite of these difficulties, Foucault's archeo-genealogical method and Derrida's deconstruction do offer often-applied methodological points of departure, although also other methodologies, 'even' those that can be borrowed from the social sciences (as shall be illustrated below), can be put to good use. More importantly, by relating DT to the core principles of qualitative research, DT can be rearticulated as an analytical framework. Structurally speaking, this is achieved by using the concepts of DT as what Blumer (1969) has called sensitizing concepts, that simply suggest "what to look for and where to look" (Ritzer 1992: 365). This translation⁵ from a theoretical to an analytical framework, supported by a diversity of methodologies, provides us with the methodological-analytical arsenal to substantiate the development of Discourse-Theoretical Analysis (DTA).

4. Bringing DT to the realm of Media Studies

4.1 Discourse theory and the media?

Because of its clear focus on political theory, Laclau and Mouffe's DT has remained largely confined to the study of politics and the political. Despite the rather limited attention from discourse theorists for the realm of the mass media, a few authors have used elements of Laclau and Mouffe's DT for analyzing media and/or have discussed the potential use of DTA. An early example is James Curran's (1997) attempt to articulate a radical democratic (normative) theory of the media, which he distinguishes from the more traditional liberal, Marxist and communist theories. Although Curran does not explicitly refer to Laclau and Mouffe's work, a clear link with their radical democratic theory is present. A preliminary version of a research agenda can be found in Torfing's (1999: 210–224) chapter on DT and the media. He distinguishes three domains where DT can be put to work: (1) studying discourses *about* the media and their place and function in society; (2) focusing on discourses *of* mass media, i.e. on the form and content of the discourses produced by the media; (3) defining media *as* discourse. More specific examples are our own analyses of community media identities, audience identities and media professionals' identities (Carpentier et al. 2003; Carpentier 2004; Carpentier 2005).

On all occasions, Laclau and Mouffe's political identity theory is used as a theoretical framework to analyze media related identities.

From a discourse-theoretical viewpoint, media are seen not just as passively expressing or reflecting social phenomena, but as specific machineries that produce, reproduce and transform social phenomena. The media are not just one of the societal sites where discourses circulate, but also discursive machineries that can be considered — using Foucault's (1972: 37–38) concept — 'systems of dispersion' of discourses, with their proper and specific rules of formation. For this reason, Torfing (1999: 210–224) criticizes the classical sender-receiver-model, inserting a discursive dimension on each of the levels of the model, thus posing questions about the discursive nature of the meaning of the message, of the identity of real and would-be communicators, and of the identity of receivers. The signifier audience, for instance, cannot be understood in isolation from a number of discourses that attempt to construct the audience as consumers, citizens or masses. When 'ordinary people' are granted access to the media system and are allowed to feature in specific media products, these products depart from discursive representations of the audience. This resounds strongly with the position that Allor (1988: 228) takes when he comes to the following radical conclusion in a discussion on the audience as a theoretical construct: "the audience exists nowhere; it inhabits no real space, only positions within analytic discourses".

4.2 Critical Discourse Analysis and the media

While DTA has been used in very few studies of mass media, a significant number of valuable contributions to media studies can be found within Critical Discourse Analysis⁶ (CDA). Bell and Garrett (1998: 6) even see CDA as the standard framework for analyzing media texts within European linguistics and discourse studies, pointing to the high proportion of CDA dealing with media. Even the mere quantity of CDA-inspired media studies raises the question of the need of a DT-inspired approach for Media Studies. To provide an answer to this question, a brief overview of CDA of the media will be combined with a comparison between CDA and DTA.

In CDA, media are seen as important public spaces and media discourse is studied as a site of power and social struggle (Wodak and Busch 2004: 109–111). As is the case for CDA in general, the focus is placed on political issues such as racism, nationalism and gender (Blommaert 2000: 450–451; Wodak and Busch 2004: 108).

Some important CDA deals with media discourse specifically. Van Dijk (1988a 1988b, 1991, 1993) has developed a framework for analyzing news discourse, especially newspaper articles. His socio-cognitive account focuses on "the discursive

nature of the reproduction of racism by the press" (van Dijk 1991: 254; see also Jäger and Link (1993) for a collection of papers on racism and the media). Fairclough devotes a book (1995) to his version of CDA (1989, 1992) applied to media discourse, but draws on a range of media texts as empirical material in much of his other work. Other seminal studies on media language related to CDA are Fowler's (1991) and Bell's (1991) work on the language and structure of news.

The (written) news genre has been most prominent in CDA on media so far (Wodak and Busch 2004: 107). Apart from the examples given above, other well-known examples are Jäger and Jäger's (1993) account of newspapers and journals edited by right-wing groups, and Wodak et al.'s (e.g. 1990, 1994, 1999) studies of nationalism, antisemitism and neo-racism (see also Chouliaraki 1999). Also war-fare reporting has been analyzed from a CDA point of view (e.g. Hackett and Zhao 1994; Rojo 1995; Thetala 2001).

Although print media have traditionally received most attention (Wodak and Busch 2004: 107–108), some CDA has dealt with radio and television. For example, Chouliaraki analyzes television footage of the September 11th attacks (2004) and the Iraq war (2005), and Fairclough (1995) uses examples from British television and radio to illustrate his approach to CDA. Also, a number of authors have focused on (political) interviews (e.g. Ekström 2001) and talk shows (e.g. Gruber 2004) on television and radio from a CDA perspective.

Most critical discourse analysts acknowledge the importance of (audio)visual aspects of communication (see for instance Fairclough (1995: 6–7); Wodak (2004: 8)) and some authors (to a greater or lesser extent) incorporate the visual in their analyses (e.g. Chouliaraki 2004, 2005; Fairclough 1995; Gruber 2004). Nevertheless, the focus clearly remains on studying the linguistic features of media texts (Macdonald 2003: 3–4), and images are consequently often analyzed as if they were linguistic (Philips and Jørgensen 2002: 61). It should be noted that work associated with social semiotics (Kress and Hodge 1988; Kress and Van Leeuwen 1990, 1996, 2001) has managed to integrate the visual in the study of discourse (Blommaert 2000: 450). This makes it especially suitable for analyzing television (Fairclough 1995: 28), the visual dimension of printed texts (Bell and Garrett 1998: 14) and photojournalism (see for instance Van Leeuwen and Jaworski 2002).

4.3 Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Discourse-Theoretical Analysis (DTA) compared

When comparing CDA and DTA, it becomes clear rather quickly that CDA has quite a lot of common ground with DTA. CDA and DTA can both be labeled critical, as they "investigate and analyze power relations in society and formulate normative perspectives from which a critique of such relations can be made with

an eye on the possibilities for social change” (Philips and Jørgensen 2000: 2). CDA is motivated by emancipatory interests and intervenes in social life by supporting dominated groups in their struggle against racism, sexism and other unjust power relations (Fairclough and Wodak 1997: 258–259). In practice, this aligns quite well with Laclau and Mouffe’s radical democratic theory, in which they strive for the emancipation of all societal groups. In this fashion, both approaches draw strongly on the concept of hegemony. Titscher et al. (2000: 145) for instance state that CDA is tributary to a neo-(post-)Marxist focus on “cultural rather than merely economic dimensions [...] of power relations”. Quite similarly, but not without criticizing Gramsci’s essentialism, DTA uses the concept of hegemony (Barrett 1991: 63; Torfing 1999: 36–38) to theorize the dialectics of fixity and non-fixity of totalizing practices.

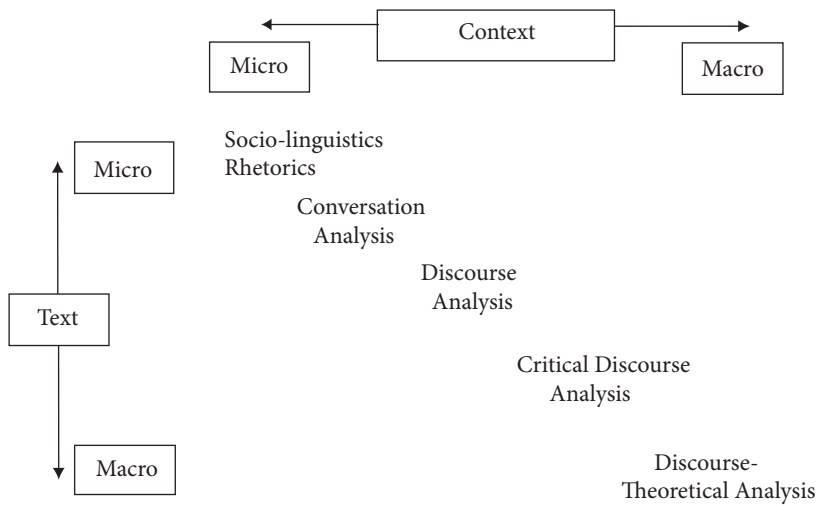
Despite these similarities, DTA distinguishes itself from CDA in its explicit poststructuralist and post-Marxist agenda, which remains absent within CDA. Laclau and Mouffe’s HSS has the explicit ambition to rethink and de-essentialize Marxist theory, by avoiding the privileging of class and workings of the economy (even in the ‘last instance’). DTA’s critical project is also focused on revealing the contingent nature of the social through analysis of the political, social and historical constructedness of discourses (Howarth 2000: 5).

DTA’s poststructuralist agenda results in one of the key differences between CDA and DTA, which relates to their definitions of discourse. Naturally, in both approaches, the concept of discourse is extensively used. CDA and DTA also both emphasize the constitutive aspects of discourse, in defining discourse as a practice that constructs the social (Philips and Jørgensen 2000: 1). Nevertheless, this common point of departure hides a fundamentally different approach towards the concept of discourse, as DTA and CDA are positioned differently on the macro-contextual/ micro-contextual and the macro-textual/ micro-textual axes that structure the field of discourse studies.

As Fairclough’s list of meanings illustrates, the field of discourse studies always has had to come to terms with a diversity of meanings attributed to the signifier discourse. Discourse can for instance be defined as “samples of spoken dialogue, in contrast with written text; ‘spoken and written language’; ‘situational context of language usage’; ‘interaction between reader writer and text’; ‘notion of genre’ (for example newspaper discourse)” (Fairclough 1992: 3). Using Van Dijk’s (1997: 3) definition of discourse studies as the study of “talk and text in context” as a starting point, this signifiatory diversity can be structured — and the difference between CDA and DTA explained — by distinguishing between micro and macro-approaches towards both text and context.

In micro-textual approaches the definitions of text (or discourse) are closely related to language. Again, Van Dijk’s (1997:3) definition provides us with a help-

ful illustration: “Although many discourse analysts specifically focus on spoken language or talk, it is [...] useful to include also written texts in the concept of discourse”. Macro-textual approaches use a broader definition of text, much in congruence with Barthes (1975), seeing texts as materializations of meaning and/or ideology. In these macro-textual approaches the focus is placed on the meanings, representations or ideologies embedded in the text, and not so much on the language used. Secondly, whilst in micro-contextual approaches the context remains confined to specific social settings (such as a conversation), macro-contextual approaches refer to the social as the realm where the processes of the generation of meaning are situated.



When comparing CDA and DTA, CDA's approach remains closely connected to linguistic textual analysis, witnessed by its focus on what Philips and Jørgensen (2000: 62) call discourse-as-language. The approach based on Laclau and Mouffe's work is more macro-contextual and macro-textual, as they do not regard discourse "merely as a linguistic region within a wider social realm", but offer a more encompassing conceptualization of discourse that "insists on the interweaving of semantic aspects of language with the pragmatic aspects of actions, movements and objects" (Torring 1999: 94). As Laclau and Mouffe (1990: 100) phrase it: "This totality which includes within itself the linguistic and the non-linguistic, is what we call discourse". Consequently, DTA uses an approach that can be defined as discourse-as-representation. These different approaches towards the notion of discourse also result in a different position in relation to human action. In CDA, discourse is "both a form of action through which people can change the world, and a form of action, which is socially and historically situated, and in a dialectical relationship

with other aspects of the world” (Philips and Jørgensen 2000: 62 — emphasis in original). DTA, in contrast, deals with practices in a very focused and Foucauldian sense, as strategies that generate or produce specific outcomes, namely discourses. Moreover, they deal with the representation of practices through discourse. In all occasions, de Certeau’s (1988) pre-discursive is of course excluded. The difference in scope towards the concept of discourse also leads to different methodologies, with detailed linguistic analysis of actual instances of discourse by CDA (Fairclough and Wodak 1997: 258; Titscher et al. 2000: 148) juxtaposed to a more general analysis of the discursive articulation of political identities.

An important epistemological consequence of this difference between discourse-as-language and discourse-as-representation is the position of the non- or extra-discursive. CDA views discourse as a dimension of the social that stands in a dialectical relationship to other dimensions, which do not function discursively (Philips and Jørgensen 2000: 19, 61). On the other hand, DTA “rejects the distinction between discursive and non-discursive practices” (Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 107). Although Laclau and Mouffe (1985: 107) (unrightfully) criticize Foucault for making such distinction, they are actually very much in line with Foucault and Hall by claiming that nothing meaningful exists outside discourse. Hall (1997: 44–45) constructs his own language game in order to make this point, and to avoid the critique of idealism:

“Is Foucault saying [...] that ‘*nothing exists outside of discourse*’? In fact, Foucault does *not* deny that things can have a real, material existence in the world. What he does argue is that ‘*nothing has any meaning outside of discourse*’ [...]. As Laclau and Mouffe put it: ‘we use [the term discourse] to emphasize the fact that every social configuration is *meaningful*’”. (emphasis in original)

DTA’s all-encompassing approach to discourse-as-representation, supported by its social ontology, has left it rather blind for the specificity of language and form, but has provided theoretical support for the in-depth analysis of the construction of political identities, embedded in the sociology of conflict and antagonisms. Within this area, CDA is not at its strongest, as Philips and Jørgensen (2000: 146) formulate it in their comparison: “we think that critical discourse analysis has the least developed understanding of self and identity”. DTA becomes especially valuable for analyses that are aimed at deconstructing the complex relationships between representations, practices and identities, and the way they contribute to the generation of (old and new) meanings. A necessary condition for its application remains the acceptance of a poststructuralist body of knowledge, from which DTA cannot be detached.

5. Jan Publiek or the articulation of audience participation

In order to illustrate the applicability and the strengths and weaknesses of DTA, the final part of this article deals with a specific case study, within the field of media studies. This case study is focused on audience participation in Jan Publiek, a Dutch-spoken North-Belgian audience discussion program that was produced and broadcast by the public broadcaster VRT. Whilst its first edition in the spring of 1997 still used a very traditional format, the next four editions — broadcast live in the fall of 1997, in 1998 and in 1999 — were built on the presence of a panel of 20 ‘ordinary people’ who participated for an entire series of 13 or 16 broadcasts.

This specific case study on the articulation of audience participation within the mainstream television system was not only chosen to illustrate DTA ‘in operation’, but also explicitly functions as a border case. As a case study it is not focused on studying the language of participation, but it aims to analyze televised practices. The case study looks at how the circular relationship between macro-context of the identities of media professionals and ‘ordinary’ participants, on the one hand, and their (micro)practices, on the other hand, generates a televisual discourse on participation. The main objective of this case study then becomes to illustrate the interaction between representations, practices and identities, and to show how the resulting power play leads to a macro-textual discourse on participation, in the absence of much on-screen discussions on (or languages of) participation itself.

5.1 Situating the Jan Publiek case⁷

Taking Laclau and Mouffe’s discourse-theoretical framework as a starting point, participation is seen as a floating signifier. In other words, participation is a signifier that has no fixed and unique meaning, but can be articulated in different discourses and can thus receive a diversity of meanings dependant on the articulatory specificities. In Jan Publiek, the construction (or temporary fixation) of the meaning of the signifier participation results from a complex process of interactions based on a wide range of subject positions within the symbolic reality of the audiovisual media. To put it simply, the participants (together with the members of the production team) define participation through their practices, supported by their identifications as audience members and media professionals, within the context of audience discussion programs on mainstream television.

By analyzing Jan Publiek, we will focus on a talk show (sub)genre that is often considered in Media Studies literature as one of the most important forms of audience participation. Characteristic of this format is that the studio audience plays an active role, as Leurdijk (1999: 37 — our translation) puts it: “the studio audience [...] participates in a discussion on social, personal or political problems under the

guidance of a host". Livingstone and Lunt (1996: 19) refer to 'ordinary people' or "citizen-viewers" that are "seen as participating, potentially at least, in democratic processes of the public sphere". From this perspective, the 'collage' (Leurdijk 1999: 134) of diverging opinions and experiences without any final closure is seen as the symbolic annihilation of the homogeneous audience/ public/ people/ mass, that instead becomes represented as a diversity, "a mass of competing interest groups" (Fraser 1990: 59).

This emancipation-enhancing approach strongly emphasizes the role of the audience within these programs. In contrast, a series of authors highlight the manipulative or pseudo-participatory nature of the programs. Especially⁸ the inability to criticize the existing power imbalances — in and outside the program — is considered problematic. McLaughlin (1993) writes that despite the diversity of statements and opinions, these programs also include and strengthen a series of dominant discourses on gender and power. Also, the presence of this diversity of statements is fiercely criticized, as the lack of a rational discussion that results in a critical consensus (à la Habermas) risks the trivialization of the presented statements (Priest 1995: 17). Tomasulo (1984: 8–9) refers to "an unstable debate full of contradictions in an illusory atmosphere of free speech", which keeps the illusion of popular participation intact. Even Livingstone and Lunt (1996: 175) — who emphasize the emancipatory potential of audience discussion programs — suggest the same possibility: "it remains problematic that giving voice may not affect real decision making and power relations in society, but only give the illusion of participation". More importantly in the context of this article, other authors focus on the role of the media professional to criticize the power imbalances within the programs themselves. Leurdijk (1997), White (1992), Tomasulo (1984) and Gruber (2004) all describe how participants lose control over the narration of their own stories because the production team aims to orchestrate, canalize, structure or stage-manage the debate. Priest (1995: 17) refers to the US talk show Donahue to illustrate the power imbalance between host and participants: "[...] the host rarely discloses and the audience [at home] demands [from the participants] answers to the most intimate of questions".

5.2 Constructing the overviews of the discursive fields of the audience and the media professional

In contrast to the more common combination of discourse theory (DT) with Foucault's archeo-genealogical method or Derrida's deconstruction, the re-positioning of discourse-theoretical analysis (DTA) as a proper analytical toolbox is preferred here. Through this translation, DTA can be used for both reanalyzing and restructuring theory, and as a proper methodological toolkit to tackle empirical data. This

second option does not preclude the use of other specific methodologies that are considered alien to DT.

In order to analyze the articulation of the signifier participation and the identities of the actors in Jan Publiek, all these methodological options are activated. First, the core concepts of DT (such as subject positions and antagonistic and hegemonic identities) are used to analyze Jan Publiek. Secondly, additional support is provided by a discourse-theoretical analysis of two concepts crucial to media theory: the audience and the media professional. This part of the DTA — oriented at deconstructing media theory — will generate a set of additional sensitizing concepts, which will be utilized (together with the selected core concepts of DT itself) for the analysis of the discourse on participation in the talk shows. Additional support is found in the use of qualitative (and quantitative) content analysis techniques.⁹

The earlier discussion on audience discussion programs already illustrated the centrality of the audience and the media professional within the literature on audience discussion programs. It is especially through their interactions — fed by their subject positions — that these audience discussion programs construct the discourses on participation. At the same time, the contingency of these two subject positions needs to be taken into account, as they are highly ideological and far from stable and univocal. For this reason, a discourse-theoretical analysis is used to map the diversity of possible articulations of these two subject positions. The resulting (per definition incomplete) maps of potential meanings that can be attributed to the identities under scrutiny provide us with overviews of both discursive fields.¹⁰ These overviews are then used as sensitizing concepts to analyze the practices and interactions of these actors in Jan Publiek, and the way these interactions construct a discourse on participation.

The starting point for the mapping exercise of both discursive fields is a literature review of academic discourses within the field of journalistic theory and audience theory. In the next phase, these (theoretical) fields are refined by confronting them with the identificatory articulations that originated from participants and media professionals. For this reason, 9 members of the production team and 20 panel members of Jan Publiek were interviewed. These interviews allowed checking and expanding the theoretical devices that served as sensitizing concepts.

Although both discursive fields are elaborately discussed elsewhere (Carpentier, 2004; 2005), a brief summary remains necessary here. In the analysis of the discursive field of the audience, it is contended that two dimensions structure this discursive field: the active / passive and the micro / macro dimension. The key notion of the active audience was introduced by early reception theories such as Hall's (1980) encoding / decoding model, and emphasized interpretatory capacities of audiences. Perversely, this model also lead to the reduction of the

active / passive dimension to processes of signification, excluding more materialist forms of human practices or activities, for instance related to active citizenship, or media activism or participation. For that reason the traditional active/passive dimension needs to be complemented by a public/private dimension, allowing to (better) theorize public actions. The second key dimension that structures the discursive field of the audience is the micro/macro dimension. Micro-perspectives articulate the audience as an aggregate of individuals, whilst macro-perspectives see the audience as mass or market. By deconstructing this dimension, it becomes possible to uncover the community/society dimension that lies hidden within the micro/macro dimension. Especially the meso-level, which articulates the audience as organized, remains absent from the hegemonic audience articulations (Carpentier 2004).

The analysis of journalistic theories and journalism reform projects results in an overview of the discursive field of the (media)professional's identities. Four hegemonic nodal points are identified — objectivity, autonomy, management of resources, and employee/employer relations — in combination with their counter-hegemonic articulations — subjectivity, dependence, partnership (or gate-openers), and representatives of the public. This combination results in four dimensions (such as the objectivity/subjectivity dimension), out of which the discursive field is composed. It is contended that the four hegemonic nodal points play a crucial role in the construction of the identity of the media professional, as they fix their identities to an extensive degree. But at the same time, the specific identifications of media professionals cannot be reduced to these four hegemonic nodal points. Identifications and practices are situated within the discursive field composed out of all four dimensions. They cannot be reduced to one extreme of one dimension. In order to understand the complexities of the media professional's identifications and practices, the entire model (or discursive field) is required (Carpentier 2005).

5.3 Subject positions in Jan Publiek

The above-described subject positions structure the identifications, practices and interactions of participants (representatives of the audience) and media professionals, without totally engulfing them or annihilating their subjectivity. The interaction is not limited to a series of isolated gatherings, but will obtain a social-constitutive function because of its mediated character. As mentioned before, the media act as discursive machines that transform interaction into discourse.

Using the discourse-theoretical concepts, in combination with the discursive fields of the identities of the audience and the media professional, as sensitizing concepts, the discourse of participation that emanates from Jan Publiek is analyzed.

Additional support is provided by a qualitative and quantitative content analysis of 16 Jan Publiek-broadcasts that were broadcast from September until December 1997 on a weekly basis. The analysis focuses on the dominant (televised) articulations of the identity of the 'ordinary' panel members, vis-à-vis the media professionals. These panel members are 'ordinary' participants that are (carefully) selected to participate in the 16 broadcasts. As a group of 20, they are positioned as representations (and representatives) of *the* audience. The analysis also looks at other participant-groups (such as members of the political elite, experts or celebrities) whose identities become alternately aligned with the 'ordinary' panel members' and with the media professionals' identities.

The analysis shows that in these programs, a series of emancipatory subject positions can be discerned. The starting point here is that the panel members effectively gain access to these programs. The panel members — articulated as 'ordinary people' — are considered important enough to access a sphere that is usually restricted to members of diverse societal elites or celebrities. The table below — which summarizes the results of a quantitative content analysis of the 16 broadcasts of Jan Publiek — shows that the group of 'ordinary' panel members makes 27% of all interventions, and claims about 35% of the total speaking time. Despite a series of restrictions, such as the obligatory briefness of the interventions (on average panel members have about 10 seconds speaking time) and the size of the group of panel members (20 people, all of which were usually given the opportunity to speak), these 'ordinary people' still are very present in the talk show broadcasts.

Table 1. Number of interventions and speaking time in Jan Publiek

	Number of people		Number of Interventions		Total speaking time		Average speaking Time per turn	
	Indivi- dual	Presences	N	%	Total	%	Average	Std
Host	1	16	4521	50	15889	22.5	3.5	6.5
Panel	20	318 ^a	2446	27	24678	35	10.1	10.4
Celebrities	11 ^b	64	446	5	5454	8	12.2	11.7
Other guests	101	101	1471	16	14470	20.5	9.8	11.6
Additional footage			206	2	10079	14	48.9	65.6
Total	133	499	9090	100	70751	100	7.8	15.0

^a Two panel members were absent because of sickness during a broadcast; this has reduced the number of presences.

^b During each broadcast, four celebrities ('Famous Flemings') are present, selected out of a pool of 11 people.

One of the main articulations of the audience that originates from this position is the articulation of the audience as active. During their presence these 'ordinary people' (as a group) are granted the opportunity to take the floor for a relatively long period of time, where they can formulate opinions, narrate personal experiences, engage in debate and dialogue, question and judge other participants (including members of different elites, such as politicians) and hold them accountable. Their presence validates the opinions, questions and experiences of 'ordinary people'. The polyphony (or 'cacophony' as Masciarotte (1991: 86) puts it more critically) they produce signifies the complexity and diversity of the social.

Furthermore, the validation of 'ordinary people' is supported by their relatively egalitarian alignment with the representatives of different societal elites and with celebrities. All are (in relatively similar ways) submitted to the management of the production team, and the host often consciously applies equalizing strategies. Moreover, the 'ordinary' participants are enabled to judge and criticize the opinions and positions of members of political and/or intellectual elites. On some occasions, 'ordinary' participants can even take on a critical interviewing role. In the fragment below, one of the panel members (Rudi De Kerpel) questions a member of parliament (Louis Van Velthoven), on his proposal to ban tobacco advertisements:

- (1) "Jan Van Rompaey (host): Yes, Rudi.
Rudi De Kerpel (panel): I think that ... if mister Van Velthoven really, if he really wants to protect our youngsters, he should ban beer. There are more youngsters that drink beer than that smoke [...]
Louis Van Velthoven (guest): Yes, but a next initiative could be ...
Rudi De Kerpel (panel): No. That should be aimed at beer commercials, because it incites youngsters.
Louis Van Velthoven (guest): I need to be brief here, so ...
Jan Van Rompaey (host): Yes, he is going to answer.
Rudi De Kerpel (panel): Yes or no?
Louis Van Velthoven (guest): I would be very pleased if every ad for beer would be accompanied by 'overdoing it is harmful' ...
Rudi De Kerpel (panel): No, I mean banning it!
Louis Van Velthoven+: (continues) Or 'drink wisely'.
Rudi De Kerpel (panel): (together) No, be consistent, mister Van Velthoven.
Louis Van Velthoven (guest): Why? Because a pint of beer, or a glass of wine isn't harmful.
Rudi De Kerpel (panel): Yes, it can lead to addiction; it can also lead to ...
Jan Van Rompaey (host): (gives the floor to another panel member) Roel, Roel ...

Rudi De Kerpel (panel): (continues) I've seen that in the army, mister Van Velthoven". (Broadcast 35 – 4 December 1997 — Start 57:39 — Stop 58:31)

Despite these egalitarian subject positions of the audience as active, other audience articulations are simultaneously present. The egalitarian position of the 'ordinary' participants vis-à-vis elite participants, where the latter are sometimes even placed in a reactive and unequal position, is of course only temporary and slightly artificial¹¹. More structurally, the identity of the 'ordinary' panel members is placed in an antagonistic relation towards the identity of other participants-groups (such as members of the political elite, experts or celebrities). This results in the articulation of 'ordinary' panel members as plurality or mass (versus the individual elite members), as powerless (versus the 'powerful' political elite), as holders of fragmented opinions (versus the knowledge of experts), and as unknown (versus the fame of the celebrities).

Secondly, it is difficult to ignore the power inequalities that do simultaneously characterize these programs. During the broadcasts, the participants are subjected to highly visible forms of management by the production team that is legitimized by the professional identity of the editorial team members. These media professionals define themselves as autonomous, as fully responsible for the broadcast and as managers of all the relevant resources, including the participants. In practice, this implies that the media professionals decide on the concept, select and categorize the panel members, draft the house-rules, structure the debating space, select the topics for discussion and the extra guests to be invited, produce additional footage, prepare and pre-structure the debate, moderate it, implement its pre-prepared structure, and interview and question the participants. In an interview, the executive editor of Jan Publiek explains the position (and identity) of the 'ordinary' panel members:

"They are 20 people chosen from the audience, and that is their strongest point. And you should keep that strongest point, you shouldn't start to mould them, you shouldn't model them, as you do with a host, or counsel them, as you would counsel an expert because he has a specific function. Their function was to be themselves. It was important to have [...] them play the same role".

The editorial management leads to the strong presence of the articulation of the managed audience within the produced discourse on participation. More specifically, the participants are subjected to a series of disciplining (and to a lesser degree also confessional) technologies, aimed at the normalization and effective accomplishment of the objectives of the production team. In a relatively limited number of occasions the participants resist these disciplining techniques, but in the majority of cases they accept them, as they are deemed unavoidable.

Although rare, these forms of resistance are important. They articulate the audience as resistant towards unequal power relations, which again supports a more emancipatory interpretation. In the last example, which is rendered below, one of the panel members (Damien Besard) is confronted with the opinion of a viewer (shown to him on a large TV-screen in the studio), who calls him embittered. When the host tries to question him on this matter, the panel member repeatedly declines to answer (going against all 'house-rules') until the host gives up, and moves to the next speaker.

- (2) "Jan Van Rompaey (host): Yes, (inaudible), ..., yes, yes. Damien, you, you were, ..., uh, what was it you were?
Damien Besard (panel): Embittered.
Jan Van Rompaey (host): Embittered?
Damien Besard (panel): Yes, that's correct.
Jan Van Rompaey (host): Are you embittered?
Damien Besard (panel): That's correct.
Jan Van Rompaey (host): Yes.
Damien Besard (panel): No more.
Jan Van Rompaey (host): Yes but come on, tell us now ..., really? Is that true?
Damien Besard (panel): That is true.
Jan Van Rompaey (host): Why are you embittered?
Damien Besard (panel): No further questions.
Jan Van Rompaey (host): No, OK".
(Broadcast 37 – 18 December 1997 — Start 1:02:11 — Stop 1:02:11)

6. Conclusion

The use of DTA has provided ample theoretical and methodological support for a Media Studies oriented analysis, and it has allowed a different — but equally relevant — type of analysis of media content and practices than could have been performed by reverting to CDA. In this specific case, DTA allows defining participation as a floating signifier, avoiding the need to preliminary fix its meaning as the *true* meaning. In contrast, the articulation of participation can now be seen as the outcome of a series of interactions based on subject positions that circulate in this specific media sphere. The outcome of this process is a discourse on participation that stresses the importance of 'ordinary people' in the media system, that places them in relatively egalitarian positions towards elite participants, but that also (questionably) signifies the absolute necessity of the management of a host (and an editorial team).

The construction of a series of discursive fields supports the analysis of the complex roles of these subject positions that often oscillate between fixity and unfixity, between contingency and rigidity, and between hegemony and counter-hegemony. Human subjectivities and the practices they perform remain unique, but they are nevertheless structured by a diversity of subject positions, some of which are hegemonic within the media system in general. In the case of this audience discussion program, media professionals still define themselves as professionals that have the authority and final control, which legitimizes the management of voices and the use of confessional and disciplinary technologies, which in turn supports the articulation of the managed audience in the television discourse on participation.

Especially the notion of antagonistic identities proves to be vital in the analysis. Building on the active audience subject position and on their antagonistic relationship with the media professionals, all participants resist to the various types of professional management, but only on a small scale. In most cases, the participants accept the rigid structure they are placed in. The 'ordinary' participants also find themselves locked into the category of 'ordinary people', which implies that their identity becomes partially articulated through the antagonistic relationship with other participant categories (experts, politicians and celebrities). Because of this structural position, their 'mere' opinions become juxtaposed with 'real' knowledge, and they become articulated as unorganized, atomized and unknown.

Finally, the case study exemplifies that it is possible to use 'non-traditional' qualitative (and even quantitative) research techniques in combination with a discourse-theoretical analysis. The case study also illustrates the potential of DTA for Media Studies in general, but at the same time it shows the adaptability of DTA towards the specific needs of a case study. Moreover, it shows that through the practice of research, a number of conceptual and definitory problems have at least become more manageable. Both the notions of floating signifier and nodal point can be put to good use, which also renders their theoretical and empirical meaning more clear. But most importantly, this case study shows that it is possible to move DTA beyond the confinements of political theory and analysis, and enter the realms of cultural analysis and Media Studies. Analyzing the identities of media professionals and audiences, the interactions of people drawing on the related subject positions and the resulting media discourse on participation, hardly belongs to the natural habitat of DTA. Nevertheless, DTA (together with CDA) has a role to play in this area, especially as this case study also shows that the cultural cannot be seen in isolation from the political.

Notes

1. Laclau and Mouffe see elements as differential positions, which are not (yet) discursively articulated. Moments are differential positions, which are articulated within a discourse.
2. Differences in interpretation arise on the question whether the analyzed discourses are part of the field of discursivity or not. In this article, the first interpretation is preferred (in contrast to Phillips and Jørgensen 2002: 56), so the field of discursivity is defined here as the combination of actual and potential articulations.
3. Latour (1987) uses this term — inspired by cybernetics — to describe situations in which complex components are present in an argumentation, but without fully developing or representing this complexity (also see Kendall and Wickham 1999: 73).
4. See Howarth (2000: 119–120), although later for example Mouffe (2005) did address the question of democratic institutions.
5. From a methodological perspective, this is not different from the way CDA translates its theoretical model into an analytical framework (see for instance Fairclough 1992).
6. It should be emphasized that CDA is not a clearly defined discipline and that significant differences between authors exist. Fairclough and Wodak (see van Dijk 1997) identify seven approaches as members of the broad critical discourse analytical movement: Fairclough's CDA, van Dijk's socio-cognitive analysis, Wodak's discourse-historical method and Hodge, Kress and Van Leeuwen's social semiotics, French structuralist discourse analysis (Pêcheux), reading analysis (Maas) and the Duisburg School (Jäger). Not all of these identify themselves as critical discourse analysis (Philips and Jørgensen, 2002: 92–93). Blommaert (2000: 454) identifies a 'core CDA', associated with Fairclough, van Dijk and Wodak and peripheral related approaches such as social semiotics, discursive psychology (Potter and Wetherell), systemic functional linguistics (e.g. Lemke) and political discourse analysis (e.g. Paul Chilton).
7. The data for this case study were gathered in collaboration with Sonja Spee (Center for Women's Studies in Antwerp/ Belgium). An extensive (but Dutch) version of the analysis of this case study can be found in Carpentier (2001).
8. Critics will also point to the commercial context of these audience discussion programs and the related processes of commodification (see for instance Tomasulo (1984) and White (1992)). They will also argue that these programs are apolitical, because of the emphasis on the individual and the personal to the detriment of the structural and the social (see Peck (1995) and Steenland (1990)).
9. Following Wester (1995a and 1995b), we here refer to the distinction between qualitative and quantitative content analysis, where the first form is explicitly situated within the area of the qualitative or interpretative research tradition. This qualitative methodology — which supports this case study to a high degree — has been extensively described by Wester (1987 and 1995a).
10. The notion discursive field here refers to Laclau and Mouffe's field of discursivity.
11. This situation can even be interpreted as hiding the 'real' (unequal) power relations. It is important to notice that judging or questioning a politician will not automatically incite huge

policy reform. But showing a politician being judged or questioned by 'ordinary people' will nevertheless support a more egalitarian and participatory discourse.

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