FACEBOOK AS A DISCURSIVE SPACE FOR
GRASSROOTS ACTION:

Multimodal Affordances at Work on Michelle Obama's Facebook Site
During the Election Campaign of 2012

Master's Thesis
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Tiivistelmä – Abstract

Opinnäytetyön tavoitteena on tarkastella Internetin sosiaalisissa vuorovaikutusryhmissä tapahtuvaa toimintaa sekä analysoida yrityksiä rakentaa ja ylläpitää kansalaisidentiteetin representaatioita Yhdysvaltain presidentinvaaleihin vuonna 2012 nivoutuneissa Facebook-ryhmissä. Tutkimus edustaa laadullista tutkimusta: käytän havainnoivaa osallistumista puuttumatta itse osallistujana sivuston toimintaan. Tutkimuksen teoriakehyksenä käytän kriittistä diskurssianalyysiä (critical discourse analysis, CDA) ja sosiosemiotiikkaa (social semiotics), joiden kautta tarkastelen resurssien ja varantojen käyttöä monimediaisen (multimodal) verkkotekstin kriittisessä analyysissä. Teoriataustassa vaikuttaa Hallidayn systeemis-funktionaalinen kielitiede. Tutkimuksessa analysoidaan kirjoitettua kieltä ja kuvallista aineistoa kokonaistekstinä ja sivustoa tarkastellaan sosiosemioottisena entiteettinä havainnoiden myös teksteihin liittyviä sosiokulttuurisia ja diskurssikäytänteitä.

Aineisto on kerätty Michelle Obaman Facebook-sivustolta parin kuukauden ajalta Yhdysvaltain vuoden 2012 presidentinvaalien aikana, jolloin Barack Obama oli demokraattisen puolueen ehdokkaana. Kansalaiset keskustelivat Facebook-sivustolla vaaleista, jakoivat kommentteja ja kuvia rakentaen samalla toimivaa kansalais- ja ryhmäidentiteettiä tullakseen nähdyksi ja kuulluksi. Sosiaalisen median sovelluskäyttö ei vielä tuolloin ollut normalisoitunut kansalaisten julkisen tilan vuorovaikutuskanavana, vaan toteutuksen ja sosiaalisen vuorovaikutuksen käytänteet etsivät vielä väyliään ja muotoaan; käytänteiden muotoutumisen aluissa ja välitiloissa representaatiot saattavat ilmaista itsensä diskursseissa selkeämmin kuin merkitysten ja käytänteiden jo vakiinnuttua ja kiinnityttyä rakenteisiin.

Tutkimuksessa keskitytään Facebookin mahdollistaman vuorovaikutuksen arviointiin, erityisesti siihen, miten Facebook alustana määrittää vuorovaikutusta ja kielenkäytön ja sosiaalisen toiminnan käytänteitä tarjoamiensa resurssien kautta ja toisaalta, miten vuorovaikutus alustalla määrittyy sivuston verkkoprofiilin ylläpitäjän (Michelle Obama) ja hänen seuraajiensa välillä: kuka poimii ja määrittelee keskustelunaiheet, miten vuorovaikutus toimii, mitä identiteettejä ja rooleja Michelle Obama hyödyntää, miten ryhmä rakentuu ja miten se käytännössä toimii. Mitä merkityksiä ja identiteettejä postatut kuvat ja kommentit rakentavat? - Koska Facebook on suosittu kansalaisten ruohonjuuritason toiminnan alusta, on yhteiskunnallisesti tärkeää analysoida, miten Facebookin tarjoamat resurssit ja niistä avautuvat tarjoumat (affordances) kohtaavat kansalaistoiminnan tarpeet ja ketä sivustot lopulta palvelevat parhaiten: miten valta asemoituu tekstien tarjoaman näytön perusteella? Millaista keskustelu ja kommentointi monimediaisessa ympäristössä on: toteutuuko vuorovaikutus ja syntyykö yhteistä ryhmäidentiteettiä tehokkaaseen vaikuttamiseen; määrittävätkö sovelluksen toimintalogiikka, tarjoumat ja resurssit sivuston toiminnan tietynlaiseksi?

Tekstianalyysi osoitti, että kansalaisten ja vallanpitäjien vuorovaikutus sivustolla oli yksisuuntaista ja se kanavoitui lähinnä ylhäältä alaspäin, vallan keskuksista osallistujiin päin. Sivustosta tuli kampanjoinnin väline, jota kampanjakoneisto käytti omiin tarkoituksiinsa. Irrallisten kommenttien ketjuissa toisteltiin samoja ilmaisuja ja Michelle Obama nähtiin enemmän fanittamisen kohteena kuin muutosagenttina. Sivusto ei pystynyt kanavoimaan kansalaisaktivismiaan muutoksen voimaksi. Verkon sosiaaliseen ryhmään kuuluminen näyttäytyi itsetarkoituksena, jossa yksilö hetkellisesti ja rajattuja varantoja hyödyntäen tuli nähdyksi ja kuulluksi, jos sopeutui sivuston määrittämiin rajauksiin. Sisällön ja vuorovaikutuksen laatu oli yksipuolista. –Toisaalta näkyviin tuli myös se, että pelkästään näyttäytymisen areenoitakin tarvitaan maailmassa, jossa kaikki eivät ole yhtäläisesti osallisina siinä, miten diskurssit ja representaatiot rakentuvat.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION

Social action and interaction, and formation and maintenance of identity within a particular socio-cultural domain are core themes in the present study investigating various resources and practices at use on online social platforms. Within this frame, I aim to investigate what theoretical approaches can be employed in investigating social media as a vehicle for construing personal and group experience, and also, the enactment and performance of social roles attached to that. I am also interested in the multimodal dynamics on social networking sites (henceforth referred to as SNS) and online social networks (henceforth OSN)1. Through chosen samples of data on Facebook, I wish to illustrate the general practices at work on the site, and to describe and interpret discourse practices emerging, and being employed, in a defined social media context, that is, on a site with a defined political affiliation.

The site I am investigating is Michelle Obama's Facebook site, portraying the grassroots movement there initiated during the presidential campaign of 2012 in the US. I examine the site as a representative space for potential active citizenry, and the formation and practices of such activity when it is proclaiming itself, like the examined site, as a grassroots movement for interaction. Most importantly, I aim to investigate the multimodal and interactive affordances available thereon. The study aims thus at exploring the ways in which meanings and representations are constructed, and reconstructed, in a cultural space manifesting and advocating a citizens' campaign.

Through Michelle Obama's Facebook pages, we may approach the setting of grassroots action sideways, cast an indirect lighting on one discursive setting; the source of data here has an indirect affiliation to the campaign itself, which might attract more genuine grassroots discourse into my data, not pure campaign promotion material as such. The setting, nonetheless, composes a staging of political influencing where social media is employed as a strategic platform in utilising a set of 'moves' in the action: in conducting and orchestrating events, and in raising attention. The site is, on the surface at least, performing the role of 'citizens' voice' rather than being a direct advocate for a political party, or for the campaign onto whose periphery it settles itself. For the participants, it strives for the construction of individual and group identities, and hence also for political citizenry formation.

As I will, first and foremost, investigate the Web as a platform for genuine discussion, the underlying framework will be that of discourse analysis, wherefrom also the majority of the concepts introduced in the study derive. Discourse analysis has evolved into a multidisciplinary effort, and in the present study the interdisciplinary field of social

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1 Networking sites vs. networks are interchangeably used terms, with slight distinctions in meaning relating to the primary function on and of the sites discussed; emphasis being, respectively, on 'forming relationships' vs. 'platform or phenomenon'.

constructionist discourse analysis will be grasped from a multimodal and critical angle, based theoretically on an approach known as Critical Discourse Analysis (hereafter, CDA), introducing prominent scholars in the field, such as Norman Fairclough and M.A.K. Halliday. Research on multimodal semiosis, based on the work of Günther Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen, will also be examined.

Further, political discourse in the frame of presidential elections is bound to draw, besides studies on discourse, also on social theory; therefore, to some extent, also relevant sociological theory providing useful insights into the macro-sociological issues related with the topic will also be introduced. The work of social theorists, especially Michel Foucault, Jürgen Habermas and Pierre Bourdieu, is of importance in expanding the outlines of the concept of 'discourse'. Even if Foucault's theory does not introduce a methodology for an analysis of specific texts, it provides, nonetheless, tools for analysing social practice.

The main issues raised here concern the ways in which social media resources designed for social action and interaction are employed as part of social involvement targeted at political activity among private citizens, and how the collaborative creation of social reality, identity and communality is being negotiated online. Further, it is interesting to take note of whether interaction is functioning as a vehicle for genuine debate and action, or whether it is more an instrument for persuasion and argumentation in order to merely create 'flashy sound bites' into the goings-on of daily politics. It is also interesting to find out what multimodal means are utilised in the construction of grassroots platforms for socio-political action.

My main concern, to begin with, was whether social action on social networking sites, such as Facebook, is truly able to empower people in fulfilling their social and political aspirations; that is, whether Facebook as a platform is capable of encouraging genuine social participation. The concern regarding the matter has proved itself justified as time passes. As online social interaction has opened up the world of thoughts and ideas, spreading content around the world as never before, it has also shown signs of cynicism as well as pure manipulation. Research, and far beyond the scope of the present study, is needed to demonstrate what is currently taking place beneath the surface. The theoretical frame accompanied with resulting analysis will hopefully shed some light on other, similar social sites on the Internet functioning as a space and platform for 'acting out' socio-political citizenry.

Applied linguist Norman Fairclough's approach of discourse analysis is an effort to combine textual analysis within the field of linguistics in a way that would reveal connections between texts and social purposes in society, which is also the angle where M.A.K. Halliday's input becomes vital. The functional (Hallidayan) approach to semiotics has inspired CDA due to its capacity to bring out functions of socially prominent and influential texts, such as political and media texts. In order to unravel ideologies, and to display ideological positions present in the discourse patterns, the study is therefore guided by the theoretical constructs originating in the framework of Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG).

Systemic Linguistics is introduced as the underlying theoretical basis for distinguishing the different ongoing functions in the text. The thoughts introduced and initiated by M. A. K. Halliday lay out a frame functioning as a basis for social semiotics and the later multimodal research, which has been further investigated by scholars such as Robert Hodge, Günther Kress, and Theo van Leeuwen. Text understood as complex textual arrangements on a Web page, consisting of images, sound, and written language can be dealt with from within the fundamental premises of Halliday's work on the meaning potential, reaching beyond its linguistic origins, and turning to Halliday's thoughts regarding functional choices being made in a socio-cultural setting for certain purposes. How readers perceive things in text, how ideology is discovered underneath the mere wordings at the level of discourse is what interests Halliday; he beat a path in which researchers today may follow through the complex arrangements of multimodal texts and discourse.

On the Facebook pages investigated here several aspects become awakened: the construction of a public brand or image for the candidate, for a political movement and for action. Further, the interaction between the perspectives of emerging voices, on one hand, and the hegemonic power on the other, becomes awakened; also, the affordances for action as the two perspectives intertwine, effect on one another on the Facebook discussions, is a matter investigated here. The discursive construction of interactive identities, both from a citizen's/user's and from a politician's point of view, is crucial here: the usage of the persona of Michelle Obama as a mediating interface, a surface through which discoursal negotiations become written on.

On sites such as the investigated site, *perception* matters over everything else. Social literacy, a framework for a set of social skills needed in order to perform collaborative social action and interaction, entails mastering social literacy skills beyond reading and writing. What becomes as mutually accepted goals for the development and management of these skills, and who regulates the access for the channels, is a matter that governs all interaction. It is also a matter embedded in social power.

The cultural production of 'political imaginary', the collaborative construction or construing of a political figure or agent, is interesting, as its relevance into the dimensions of citizenry and into the identity of the participants presenting themselves on the pages. How a multifaceted public persona as an 'identity cluster' is being negotiated, appropriated, maintained and sustained in the discursive space online; and how the online-constructed identity, with a purpose of functioning as a personal brand, is streamlined along the official political agenda of a political movement (party; official campaign) and social realities.

The creation and maintenance of a political story of involvement and participation is essential for a grassroots group: how the narrative is, and can be, managed on a privately maintained social application such as Facebook. The pages are witnessing an ongoing transition concerning the site's own dynamic progress into a new kind of media tool in citizen

participation whilst it is also undergoing a process of defining its identity as an interpretative community concerning democracy and accentuating the status of different voices in society. There were no preceding, ready-made procedures or codes of conduct concerning new media interactions prior to the first social networking sites. Sites such as Facebook, combined with cutting edge technology and the resources of privately owned companies, have set their own limitations and parameters to online interaction, and consequently, stabilising them as 'natural', on the mere grounds of being the first – a phenomenon which is, in itself, a matter worth carefully, and critically, investigated.

The thesis is constructed in the way that, after general introduction, the theoretical background will be discussed with basic terminology containing the concepts and theory on discourse analysis, multimodal research, social semiotics and analysis of social practices. The main fields of study contain linguistics, media studies, visual theory, and to the subject matter relevant political and social theory.

After that, I will introduce the principles of collecting my data and the methods used, along with the features present on Facebook's political pages. In the analysis the data is treated and analysed as multimodal text, paying attention to the social bearings of the findings. It is my aim to cover and discover the main theoretical landscapes on the subject at hand and illustrate the theory with some flesh textual evidence.

I also discuss the findings and their wider implications on society, with a full understanding of that a more thorough analysis needs to be conveyed in order to examine the subject sufficiently, intertwined as it is within a multitude of theoretical aspects and sociocultural implications.

2 SOCIAL NETWORKING AND SOCIAL MEDIA

'Networking' is a common natural phenomenon which we find in conditions where a system is building up, or evolving, in order to function for a purpose. We can maintain that forming systems for establishing relationships, and for communicating within these relationships, is a deeply rooted phenomenon occurring even in nature: systems evolve like genes in cells, both in man-made structures and in systems; therefore, treating social phenomena, such as grassroots movements, or entire fields of science, like economics, as social 'creatures', is well grounded. As complex systems, all networks operate under astonishingly similar laws of natural order (see Barabási 2002).

A social network is, as defined by sociologist Barry Wellman (1997: 179), "a set of people, organizations, or other social entities connected by a set of socially meaningful relationships." Networking/networks could be defined as services of the web allowing individuals to construct public profiles within a platform of connected users. How public the connections are, depends on the site and user preferences. Regarding the functions for use, it is possible to

be semi-private (/semi-public), and even the list of members or occupants may be hidden, displaying only mutual connections; preferences of activities may be published and forwarded; sites may be closed, requiring special request for membership, or open, and in most cases they are in some ways moderated to protect content from misuse.

Eventually, it is the practices of use that gives a site its characteristics, and individual choices regarding action is then dictated thereon. There are practices concerning networking as a phenomenon, and practices dealing with the action involved: on how action is carried out or performed on online pages. 'Translocal assemblages' – a term deployed by Colin McFarlane (2009), a researcher on the experience and politics of informal neighbourhoods – are formed as a means for conceptualising power in social movements, to distribute information, to lead social movements, and to sustain power (ibid.: 2009).

Sociologist and anthropologist Bruno Latour (1993) advocates a view where there is not a radically 'new' age ahead of us despite the new technology, since, as he states, we "have never really been modern." There has always been inconsistencies and contradictory views concerning analysis of interacting, as well as innate hybridity concerning social subjects and objects. In many ways he still recognises the social constructedness of our actions and their results, even if he argues that social subjects have never, either, been truly discursive (Latour 1993). In this respect, the new technologies of communication may not, in the end, alter our communicative actions a great deal – or result in any grand changes in how social action concerning higher planes of society, or regarding notions such as democracy, will develop. The power, according to him, is not *in* the media but, rather, in the actors working with the media using the available technology. Power lies in the complex interplay between the media, the human and non-human participants, and the organisations involved. As Latour (ibid.) further highlights, social subjects or natural objects, instead of being 'real' or 'social', are more than anything hybrids circulating in networks of mediation. In those networks we find objects and actions, processes and signs in a complex semiotic negotiation over 'meaning'. That actions are socially constructed is strongly manifested also by Norman Fairclough (1992b), one of the founders of an influential approach, critical discourse analysis. His thoughts will be presented here in more detail later. (See also Latour 1987.)

Since the early days of social networking various social applications have proliferated and evolved into Internet's biggest market phenomena. The obvious commercial foundation notwithstanding, users today have integrated various applications, such as Facebook, into their everyday practices. A few percussions have ensued from clashes between contradicting or discordant interests on the sites, such as privacy vs. publicity, interests among user content claims and advertisers. This is a debate that keeps forming itself, side by side with other, therein connected wider social issues in society: where to set the borderlines between private and public spheres of life, how to combine commercialism and other aspects of social life, and so forth. Much of the discussion is intertwined with what might be the scope of individual

space in society, and by what or by whom various activities and practices are driven in society: who has the power to rule and set goals, and to articulate what is relevant for the future. What seems to be taken for granted is the self-evident intrusion of market forces and advertising into all areas of our lives.

Jurgen Habermas (2006), in his (macro-level) writings on the theory of communicative action (TCA), places central theoretical foundation for critical theory in information systems research. He emphasises the importance of public sphere in democratic society, focusing on the implications of speech, and proposes normative standards for communication. Habermas critiques the role of the media in shaping public discourse. His framework holds that knowledge is realised through language and is, therefore, not a neutral representation of an objective world but determined by interests (Chilton 2004: 42). In our age of digital media, his thoughts pull through more contemporary than ever.

Habermas analysis, which is purely theoretical[2], lacking empirical research on media discourse, remains still a piece of valid thinking about the role of lobby groups and media, the institutional 'actors' on the public arena and discourses operating there. Habermas' thoughts can well be employed and applied within a frame of reference of critical discourse analysis in order to investigate grassroot phenomena in the political arena and the discourses therein. Particularly his remarks on "the power of these institutions to select, and shape the presentation of messages" and "strategic uses of political and social power to influence the agendas as well as triggering and framing of public issues" make his work relevant to modern critical (new) media analysis (Habermas, 2006).

As Warren (1995) notes, even if a particular speech act, such as a command or assertion, demonstration or strategic use of language, may be raised to the level of discourse, most speech is not discourse; discourse creates new, developed and restored understandings into disruptions of everyday understandings, and this makes discourse central to democratic politics: political relationships involve disruptions and conflicts, and require negotiation. For Habermas, public sphere is an arena of participation, discussions about matters that concern everyone, and this interaction should take place in equal and free atmosphere, creating a centre of empowering voice, and disenabling coercion, markets, and tradition. At the same time, however, Habermas emphasises that these spheres cannot be organisers of action, because in a collective action there cannot be symmetrical relations of power however fluid or equal these relations might seem. In other words, arenas for decision serving to guide and justify collective actions, and organizations of action, must be kept separate (ibid.: 171-172).

For analysis on media language (as media 'happens' on public space), the Habermasian context and his way of approaching critical theory has theoretical relevance. Fairclough, for

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[2] Critical empirical research is mostly inspired by Latour and Foucault (see Doolin & Lowe, 2002).

example, in his *Media Discourse* (see Fairclough 1995b) investigates changing practices of discourse taking consideration into social processes and cultural change, and the relationship between public and private in the media, as well as information in relation to pure entertainment (the two of which of course in today's media stage are often inseparable: information needs to be sugar-coated displaying elements of entertainment genres).

The Habermasian concept of the public sphere (Habermas 1979; 1984) can, therefore, justifiably be taken as a key concept for analysis within the evolution of democratic society. The public sphere, brought into the modern era, is the public venue inhabited by politicians and pressure groups, lobbyists, parties and grassroot movements, professionals of the media, especially journalists within the print media and electronic media; TV commentators, bloggers in the digital new media and 'hangout sites', election rally organisers, and so forth. It is a venue not merely for the evolution of society but also a venue for the maintenance of certain desired structures of society and communication; hence, through active protagonists, supporters of powerful political ideas and groups, it may also act against its own organic evolution.

2.1 The Internet as a tool for political campaigning

The resources of the Internet for the transmission and distribution of political content are a relatively recent phenomenon, but the possibilities of reaching wide audiences are immense. Therefore, investing heavily in the Internet content pays off, and may prove to be a crucial factor in a political candidate's campaign strategy. The site must contain relevant and current information; and, first and foremost, its design must be user-friendly: the interface must be easily navigable and reflect, in its organisation, the public image of the candidate and the party. Besides political content for mass consumption, the web site produces content for private consumption over networked technologies. The imagined audience is carefully thought out beforehand when the content is planned, branded and segmented for the target audience as part of the promotional work of a campaign. Web content is an asset, but it may also turn into a rock onto which the campaign stumbles. The tone on the pages reflect that of the candidate, and at its best, will build a strong public identity for the campaign.

Philip N. Howard (2006) has published widely on new media campaigns and the 'managed citizens' in politics, especially on the role of information technologies, arguing for the great significance that campaign work has in democracy, and pointing out how little we know about campaigns as organisations. Howard (ibid.) draws on ethnography and social network analysis in his studies on how political campaigns adopt digital technologies and produce political culture. According to him, the meaning of citizenship will be affected by new digital means, as will the very basis of representation. Political hypermedia will increasingly become a conjoined tool that allows people to interact, and to transmit and filter data. Structured over and above the traditional media, "they permit simulations of offline interaction, speedy

circulation of social signs and meanings, rapid decomposition and recomposition of messages, and increased transience of socially significant symbols" (Howard 2006: 2).

A multiplicity of functions in society are today carried out via the Internet, from socialising to purchasing of goods, from entertainment to exchanging of services. The Internet also provides a space for presenting diverse, even conflicting opinions and news (Cardoso 2006: 201). It provides a storage of information, easily accessible, for public use, whether it concerns data on a political party or on an individual candidate. Web sites operate as static public façades of campaigns, assisted with continuously updated blogs, forums, and various kinds of social media where the viewers and participants gather information and distribute content through applications and gadgets.

Political SNSs are also online political tools for advocacy groups, which most political campaigns, both official and grassroot campaigns, today make use at the focal point of the campaigns: the candidates plead for support and money, and recruit citizens to work for their campaigns. The political Internet, as P. H. Howard (2006: 5) notes, appeared as a significant part of political campaigning between the 1988 and 2004 presidential campaign seasons.

2.2 Facebook as a space and medium for representation

Grassroots movements use social media to increase awareness about their work, and to organise communication within the movement. Social media tools are used in the advance planning of external communications: to manifest the mere existence of a group, and to forward awareness of the work amongst target groups. Candidates in elections have embraced the Internet, but surprisingly, as stated by Bimber and Davis (2003: 67-68), while considering the year 2008 races, campaigns did not yet see the Internet as a source of new information. Instead, the target groups for the campaign sites, seen from the point of campaign staff and professionals, are citizens willing to volunteer and donate money, whereas people looking for new information for informed decision-making are but a minority. Campaign professionals maintain that voters' choices may already have been made by the time they arrive at the sites, and they do not visit Web sites to become informed, i.e., in order to arrive at better personal choices but the reason, in fact, might be more complex. It is difficult to estimate the exact figures of information-seekers, although the number is likely to be more significant as the election day is drawing closer (ibid.: 67-68).

Until the recent decade, there has been a limited amount of empirical research into actual social networking, either of its generic use (i.e., which groups are employing it) or thematic use (what is being discussed), but the situation thereon is, naturally, undergoing a rapid change. Social scientists and media studies are busy assessing the impact of social networking on social life, including interaction on social applications such as Facebook, which in the 2012 elections established its role and stabilised its significance as a venue for political action.

Since the introduction of the SNS platforms – amongst the multiplicity of SNS sites emerging – Facebook has gained indisputable dominance over all other: in principle, a monopoly of social networking appliances online. Google also developed a networking architecture with Google + tools and appliances, however, Facebook is currently the market leader in the business of SNS operations. Facebook is thus, by definition, an instance of SNSs, or more accurately OSNs; however, there is a distinct feature of Facebook which makes it stand out: the third parties' involvement on Facebook through applications, which allows outside parties to develop applications[3] for Facebook. Furthermore, through the Open Graph, the Facebook platform offers an opportunity for external websites to integrate with Facebook by placing Facebook features on websites, such as reaction buttons. For instance, via the 'like' button ,a user may express her/his favourite choices amongst web content outside Facebook by transmitting 'likes' to be shown on the news feed of the user's Facebook contacts. This feature is maintained to be beneficial for both parties, demonstrating also the prevailing *modus operandi* of information sharing on the Net, and for Facebook, implicating also its status as a central hub on the Net.

Originally designed in 2004 by Marc Zuckerberg for Harvard students as a 'hang out' platform (or rather, space) for networking with friends online, Zuckerberg designed it to support college network activities between harvard.edu addresses, distinctively for dating purposes (Cassidy 2006). Later, the application began supporting other universities but was still a closed environment, a niché community. Zuckerberg quickly understood the wide range of opportunities of social networking, and Facebook was there to stay from the very beginning. In his view, though, it would take decades for the advantages of using social sites to become fully apparent: initially, Facebook was designed as a platform for mapping out the already existing connections between people (Bobbie Johnson in *The Guardian*, Oct 18, 2007), not specifically for creating new ones or to stretch outside the existing communities.

Julia Häuberer (2011), a researcher on empirical social research, network analysis and social justice, investigates the concept of *social capital* methodologically as a phenomenon entailed in social relationships, drawing on the founding theorists in the field, Pierre Bourdieu (1983) and James S. Coleman (1988; 1990), also on the work of Robert D. Putnam (2000), who has studied networks of civil engagement and maintains that, in 'real life', people are increasingly reconnected from each other. Although acknowledging that a general theory of social capital still awaits to be constructed, Häuberer (2011: 249) studies the preconditions of, and access to social capital, treated as an individual and public good which is at work also in the non-institutionalised relationships, operating at various levels in society. According to her, individuals gain, through relationships, access to various resources, both formal and informal,

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[3] Applications are small programs designed for Facebook, encompassing a variety of games, fan pages, and quizzes.

and these network structures can be characterised as both open and closed, the former being 'bridging', as in competitive actions, and the latter called 'bonding', cooperation. Relationships Häuberer (2011: 249-251) sees, as opposed to Putnam, as a structural rather than a cultural aspect of social capital, and relationships in her study are viewed as a resource to be used and benefitted from but which may also result in exclusion. As Häuberer notes, issues of social inequality in relation to social capital are topics calling for further investigation.

Haythornthwaite (2005) discusses "latent ties" between people, meaning encounters in the real world between people who in some ways are connected to each other. I would rather use the term 'offline ties', since 'life' occurs both online and offline, and physical and virtual interaction are intertwined and inseparable today. The domains of Facebook and other SNSs provide opportunities for investigating forms and ways of human behaviour and actions, even if it is well justified to maintain that what is taking place on Facebook does not portray a full account of how people actually lead their lives but that is portrays, rather, how they choose to perform and represent aspects of their virtual identity. Virtual identity is, nevertheless, today indistinguishable from the actions we perform outside the Web. What happens on Facebook offers thus behavioural traces and residues, which then may also form a wealth of data for research purposes (see Graham, Sandy & Gosling, 2011).

3 DISCOURSE AND DISCOURSES

Approaches within discourse analysis all agree on some grounding thoughts concerning language, and they all share an interest in society. However, in their particular understandings of social practice – depending on their varying theoretical and philosophical roots – they also do differ. In this study, the multiplicity of approaches is present; however, discourse as an object of analysis will be treated, first and foremost, employing critical approaches, and scrutinising extracts of text, following Blommaert's notion, "as a general mode of semiosis, i.e., meaningful symbolic behaviour" (Blommaert 2005: 2). Discourse, as Blommaert further notes, cannot – as an object of investigation – be treated solely as a linguistic object; instead, we ought to treat discourse as contextualised language, and linguistics as moving towards a social science of language-in-society. Blommaert (ibid.: 235) even insists on the deployment of elastic and adaptable concepts, stating that new forms of analysis will inevitably be forced upon us as new data emerges.

The notion of 'discourse' is slightly differently outlined for the two main theorists in the field, namely Norman Fairclough and Michel Foucault. The term as such originates to Foucault, and since Fairclough' work focuses on language, his work and theorising is carried out in terms of narrower definitions than that of Foucault's. Fairclough uses the term 'discourse' referring to what linguists have been calling *'parole'*, 'performance' or simply 'language use', and he regards language use as a form of social practice, and as such, treats it

like a mode of action and representation. He thus breaks away from Saussurian linguistics and maintains that the *use* of language is more crucial for analysis than an attempt merely to grasp the system of (a) language *('langue')* in itself (Fairclough 1992b: 62-63).

Social theorist Michel Foucault, in his archaeological works (see, e.g., 1972), does not equate discourse with language. His discourse analysis is concerned in specifying 'discourses' as socio-historically specific formations, which is a perspective quite different from that of sociolinguistics (Fairclough 2003: 123-124; see also Fairclough 1992b: 40). For Foucault, a prominent theorist in the field, 'discourse' is the general domain of all statements (texts), also an individualisable group of statements. Occasionally, he also treats 'regulated practice' (rules) governing a group of statements as 'discourse'. Analysis, for Foucault, is thus treating discourse in an abstract sense, analysing the domain of 'statements' where 'discourse', treated as an abstraction, is an element of the social (life), dialectically related to other, non-discursive elements. The Foucauldian sense of discourse has since been suggested to be called 'semiosis' (e.g., in Fairclough et al. 2004); that is, discourse in a general sense of language, and including visual elements and other semiotic modes. (See also Chilton 2005: 58.)

Fairclough's 'discourse' is more specific. For him, "different discourses are different ways of representing aspects of the world" (Fairclough 2003: 124, 215). 'Ways' here implies a degree of repetition shared by groups of people, being fairly stable over time. Discourses transcend local representations, and a particular discourse can generate many representations. In his book Analysing Discourse (2003) Fairclough has adopted this sense of 'discourse', denoting both to the material world and its processes, relations and structures, and the mental world of beliefs, thoughts and feelings, and further, to the social world. These aspects of the world become represented differently, and for this reason, the analyst has to consider the relationship between the different discourses.

As James Paul Gee (2014: 2) describes, "language allows us to do things - - *(and)* - - language allows us to be things." Through language we act, and language itself is a form of action; through language we take on socially significant identities. Connections between saying, doing and being are intertwined. People grasp the world from different perspectives, depending on their positions, identities and social relationships in relation to other people. Discourses may be competing or complementary; a particular discourse may at times dominate others. Discourses are part of the resources people use when they interact or keep distance with one another, or when they seek ways of altering their relationships. Discourses may denote to possible, imaginary worlds, projective of something that the world actually is not, and they can be confined to projects to change it in particular directions.

Discourses about phenomena are also ways of thinking about them; according to Foucault (1980), they have an association with what we call institutions. McKee (2003: 100) writes that no single person invents or develops particular 'discourses' around things and phenomena, nor are they floating ready-made around to be grasped and pinned down. Discourses rather

evolve and become developed and circulated within various groups of people participating in different phenomena and their developments over time, these groups maintaining and developing authority on the phenomena so as to be able to introduce new concepts into culture, to institutionalise a discourse into being. McKee (ibid.) continues by stating that some of the discourses around phenomena are more dominant than others, and they are usually denoted as 'ideologies' and appear as more 'common-sensical' within a certain culture, although all discourses may become, and eventually this is very probable, subject to change, like the exclusive female/male distinction around the concept of 'gender' has done.

In research, discourse is dealt with as a micro-level phenomenon, as 'text' and social action, but also as a more stable way of meaning-making pursuing throughout periods of history from particular angles. The latter, as noted by Gee (1990: 155) is indicated with a capital 'D', as Discourse, as a way of being in the world or situating in a specific context; whereas actions and ways of thinking in order to enact socially recognisable identities are defined with discourse with a lowercase 'd', as language used to enact identities and activities (see also Gee, 2011; 2014).

3.1 Analysing text and discourse

Considering the documented history of mankind, the present-day networking society produces new data in an unparalleled pace, also, what we comprehend as 'text' appears as more flexible and multi-layered with all the various multimodal forms of communication combining and integrating 'language matter' in new ways. To theorise and to frame new forms of text adequately will require multidisciplinary approaches to grasp and to comprehend all the aspects of modern 'text'.

Text, or language including the multiplicity of semiotic material, is data for discourse, and online sites offer plenty of potential for empirical investigation (cf. Jaworski & Coupland 2006: 126). Textual analysis operates on several levels of analysis: for some (see, e.g., in Sinclair & Coulthard 1975), it has simply meant analysis beyond the sentence; for Norman Fairclough (1995a), it is a form of social practice. The broader conception of text (i.e., text not merely seen as pieces of written language) became common as a result of discourse analysis which embraced even spoken discourse within the analysis as 'text'. Further, in cultural analysis, which is increasingly multi-semiotic, combining language with other semiotic forms, any cultural artefact, including music and images, may be seen as (a) text and be called 'nebulous', that is, vague (Fairclough 1995a: 4).

Fairclough sees dangers in this broader sense of 'text' in that, with the extension of the definition, one might at the same time blur the distinctive characteristics of cultural artefacts (Fairclough 1995a: 4, 7). This fear in today's multimodal communicative environment has, however, no grounds since communication will to an ever-increasing degree be transmitted

via technology. Also, different modes being gradually intertwined within one another will result in a merger of distinctions between modes towards a single interpreted unity or entity. One could argue, though, that in a way this has always been the case since no message has ever been borne, nor communicated, in a vacuum. One might further add that the conception of 'language' could be understood to include modes of meaning transference beyond those of the verbal, perhaps even whole cultures or periods of time: language could simply be comprehended as 'species-specific behaviour', including all aspects of life. With the outburst of the WWW, however, any piece of text may, along with written or spoken language, consist of images, or images combined with written language, moving images (film), and audio (sound) - each separately, or in various mixed combinations. The conception of *text* covers all of these.

As we pursue to interpret texts, the interpretation does not happen mechanically, nor in a similar manner every time; in every context or for every individual, our past experiences and present purposes – combined with the specific situations and settings with specific audiences at hand – form the basis of both text production and interpretation. Texts do not, in fact, straightforwardly 'contain meaning' but they, rather, 'mediate meaning' across discourses (see, e.g., Wodak 2001: 108-115). Nevertheless, to become understood in a relatively similar manner, there has got to be quite a large amount of convergence across discourses, or otherwise there would not be communication at all. Readers may, nonetheless, interpret the produced text in varying ways due to their different ideological values or the different social settings surrounding them, or different frames resulting the reader to contextualise the text differently.

Hodge and Kress (1988: 6, 264) use the term 'text' in an extended sense to refer to message traces or to a structure of messages with a socially ascribed semiotic unity. Texts are realisation of systems of signs, the product of semiosis, and a site for continuous change; texts also often contain messages by several producers, using more than one code. 'Discourse' is the social process (of semiosis) in which texts are embedded, thereby referring more to the semiotic plane (ibid.).

Discourse analysis strives to describe and explain language usage in terms of various contexts. Discourse, in short, is the meaning-creating element of society and culture, a way of constructing knowledge and social practice (see, e.g., Pietikäinen 2000). It is not an overstatement to maintain that we live *by* discoursing, by using oral and written text, visual and audio language as a means in our pursuits of maintaining things in the world; but also, we live *through* discoursing, using text as a means to reach into its own essence into which we assign and infer meanings. We create worlds out of pure textual matter and make these worlds as alive as the factual matter around us. In the modern world, we handle, exploit, and play on words while shaping and furnishing our lives, and ourselves, with identity and purpose.

Discourses in a text may be articulated combined, or they may appear across a series of texts, and further, various discourses may be combined in new articulations. For Fairclough, the various dimensions of discourse 'event' (i.e., any instance of discourse) entail simultaneously a piece of text, an instance of discursive practice (production and interpretation of the text), and an instance of social practice (how different institutions shape the discursive event and vice versa). Fairclough is interested in the role of discourse in sociocultural change in society, especially through the concept of intertextuality (Fairclough 1992b: 101-136; 1992c), that is, how a text combines elements from other texts or text types. New combinations of texts bear relation to wider social changes in social institutions. Texts draw on earlier meaning formations, and texts mix different discourses, reproducing and undergoing changes. Fairclough is particularly interested in changes occurring in discourses as interdiscursivity manifests cultural changes, acting as a changing force in society.

Texts have also social effects, some of which will result in changes via direct causality between a text and a change in the 'real', tangible world. Fairclough (2003: 8) states that prolonged advertising, for example, contributes to shaping our identities into 'consumers'; similarly are our gender identities affected by continued advertising, to name a few realms affected (ibid.: 9).

Fairclough (2003) discusses the concept of *social constructivism*, based on a *a priori* assumption of the social world being socially constructed, on suppositions that rest on the influence of texts, language and discourse. Fairclough, however, also reminds that once constructed, these aspects of life become realities, consequently affecting the discursive construction of the social world: therefore, constructivism ought to be kept in due proportion, and distinguish 'construal' from 'construction' (see also Sayer, 2000).

3.2 Critical approaches on text and discourse

As stated by Deborah Schriffrin (1994), the linguistic approach can be divided into formalist and functionalist views: the formalist views concentrate on the structures and forms of discourse, whereas the functionalist views investigate the uses, meanings and functions of discourse, and treats language primarily as a social phenomenon. The social approach takes into consideration the connection between language use and social practice, since the meanings language creates are constructions of social practice, continuously changing and context-dependent (Pietikäinen 2000: 211).

When investigating discourses within politics, and on politics, the aspect of investigation is shifted from formalist or functionalist views, or from political scientists' view, into a wider social framework in which all of the above are embedded – not as separate, estranged parts but as integral elements working for a greater whole, towards the meaning of the whole,

echoing what Van Dijk (1994: 165) notes: discourse analysis is the approach which could become a "genuine social, political or cultural analysis."

Teun A. Van Dijk (1991: 108-111) has introduced his socio-cognitive approach dealing with social cognition in text production and reception, text structures, in particular. Van Dijk (ibid.) notes that media 'messages' are text and talk of specific types, hence, the interdisciplinary nature of discourse analysis may bring a more systematic account of the structures of media messages by relating their properties to the cognitive and sociocultural context. He mentions the study of news reports in the press, which, along with studies on advertising, has received much interest from analysts, and he acknowledges the importance of news as they build up social and political knowledge and matter in our everyday lives. Investigating the news in the press and on television is therefore useful. Van Dijk (ibid.) also pays attention to how current discourse analysis recognises text and talk as complex phenomena, requiring accounts at many levels, whereas classical linguistics was satisfied with the separation between form and meaning. There are rhetorical, pragmatic, and interactional strategies involved, and a complex analysis is not limited to 'textual' analysis but provides also social, cultural and historical contexts. Equally important are the production and comprehension processes, interaction among language users, and the societal functions of discourse (ibid.).

The concept of 'critical' is obviously constructed conforming to differing aspects when discussing 'critical literacy', 'critical theory', and so forth. For Fairclough (1992a), critical analysis has risen out of the attributes of certain discursive practices within capitalist society, connected with the use and abuse of power, ideology, and class. This becomes clear throughout his writings over several decades, and he is not hesitant to express his thoughts, or to mask his thinking along prevailing ideological or economic tendencies. Critical linguistics is thus far more than a critique of other orientations of applied linguistics (Pennycook 2004: 784-785).

Due to their opposing nature towards mainstream ideas, critical approaches and critical thinking are often facing cross-current. Criticality is, by definition, thinking on and from the sidelines – in opposition – pushing forward existing boundaries. Yet criticality is not an inherent value or tendency of any particular school(s) to promote adverse thinking as such. Furthermore, the role of critical linguistics is not simply that of a mode of critique, but it may also be applied as a mode of practice (see Fairclough 1992a; Davies 1999: 20). Criticalist traditions draw on a variety of sources: neo-Marxism (the Frankfurt school), Foucauldian archaeology (Foucault 1972), postmodernism, and poststructuralism or deconstruction (cf. Fairclough 1992a: 39-49; see also van Dijk 1993: 251; Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994: 140). Kincheloe and McLaren (1994) suggest that language is central to the formation of subjectivity, and that mainstream research practices are generally implicated in the reproduction of oppressive societal systems of class, race, and gender (Kincheloe & McLaren 1994: 139-140).

Pennycook (2004) is even concerned of the different domains within critical applied linguistics (CAL): what domains fall within CAL, and what domains constitute the varying understandings of the 'critical' in CAL. To consider CAL merely as a meta-theory, or a mixture of domains such as critical linguistics, critical discourse analysis, critical sociolinguistics and pedagogy, critical language awareness and literacy included, would be unsatisfactory due to the varying coverage of these domains in the field of science. Moreover, other domains (feminism, postcolonialism, queer theory) may not be labelled explicitly 'critical' although they are of great relevance to critical theory.

Pennycook aspires, therefore, to a more dynamic stance towards CAL; that it should not merely be an amalgam of critical domains but, also, that its critical views were issued against the critical domains as well. Norman Fairclough (1992a: 218) insisted that this awareness "must not go beyond providing a resource for people…it must scrupulously avoid setting out blueprints for emancipatory practice." Unravelling ideological motivations seems to be an ideological enterprise in itself, and therefore, critical analysis needs to be critical towards – not only others – but towards itself as well. All analysis should be reflective, and hence, as Mary Louise Pratt (1982: 154) states, all discourse is, in a way, also ideological.

As described by Wodak and Meyer (2001: 7, 33, 323-332), Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) draws heavily on social theory: on Antonio Gramsci (1971), Louis Althusser (1971), Jürgen Habermas (1979; 1984), Michel Foucault (1966; 1972; 1980a; 1980b) and Pierre Bourdieu (1977, 1984), to name the most important scholars influencing the CDA approach. The CDA based on Foucault's thoughts ponders issues such as knowledge: what knowledge consists of; how knowledge, valid at a certain place at a certain time, evolves, and how it is passed on; what functions knowledge has for the shaping of society and for its subjects; further, what the impact of knowledge is on the development of society. Knowledge here signifies the contents of consciousness and meanings used by historical persons in their efforts to interpret and shape reality. CDA aims at identifying the knowledge within discourses, at exploring the concrete context of power intertwined with knowledge, and it also subjects this context of power to critique (Fairclough 1995a: ix).

The social agenda within CDA is founded on the notion that linguistic analysis can provide perspectives for social critique; the aims within CDA are political in the sense that it strives for a *change*. Fairclough himself states that his "framework is seen here and throughout as a resource for people who are struggling against domination and oppression in its linguistic forms" (Fairclough 1995a: 1). In his 1992 work, *Discourse and Social Change*, Fairclough outlined 'critical approaches' to serve discourse analysis, including 'critical linguistics' and the study of ideology following the Althusserian approach (Wodak 2003: 35).

CDA sees language use as a form of social practice, hence, disclosure of social issues relating to ideology and social beliefs through analyses of texts, textual events and practices, and a genuine struggle for a change in the world are continually brought into focus in this approach

(Hodge & Kress, 1988). In general, CDA seems not to be tied into any particular methods, instead, any working method may be used in the analysis as long as it aims at bringing relevant insights into discourse in connection with inequality and power. Fairclough has also utilised ideas stemming from Systemic-Functional linguistics (Davies & Elder 2005: 21); M.A.K. Halliday's thoughts will be presented further on in the present study.

Fairclough, according to Jaworski and Coupland (2006: 127) maintains the principal proceedings of CDA to reside at the intersections of discourse and contemporary social life: within research on social differences and social identities, democracy, new global capitalism, and the commodification of discourse. The main areas of investigation would therefore include, according to Fairclough, political discourse, media and advertisement, ideology, racism, and institutional discourse (ibid.).

As one becomes acquainted with the network of CDA researchers (see Blommaert 2005: 21), one cannot fail to notice the multitude of layers there, not forgetting the numerous points of view, either: Fairclough started with Hallidayan (Systemic-Functional) linguistics; van Dijk in text linguistics and cognitive linguistics, developing a model that would explain cognitive discourse processing mechanisms and context (van Dijk: 2008; 2009). Van Dijk has also contributed to studies on ideology (ibid.: 1998; 2003) – especially the discursive reproduction of racism by the media, and the 'symbolic elites' in general. Ruth Wodak's (2001; 2005) input in the field is also substantial, ranging across a variety of topics, from interactional studies to her latest work on critical discourse studies applied to social media data. Chilton (2005) has focused on linguistics, communication studies, and semiotics. Furthermore, Mikhail Bakhtin's (1981; 1986) profound thoughts on voice and social layering in the field of literary analysis have been rediscovered. Gramsci's (1971) influence, his concept of hegemony, where power is seen as 'negotiated', is present in Fairclough's thinking on sociocultural practice.

The notions of 'critical' thinking, 'ideology', and 'power' in connection with CDA's programme need to be clarified, since they have a pivotal role in CDA's theoretical backbone. Wodak (2001) gives some basic guidelines on how the terms are understood within CDA. In her research, Wodak combines social psychology, cognitive science, and sociolinguistics, and studied text reception and interpretation. According to Wodak (ibid.: 6-11), 'critical' implies a certain distance from the data which ought to be embedded in the social and taken under political scrutiny. Criticality also requires self-reflection and application of the results from scholars carrying out research. One could sum up Wodak's definition by maintaining that research cannot be 'critical' without practical implications: there will have to be an element of *change* due to the (newly) acquired knowledge grasped through research. Equally important is the act of *articulating*, bringing forth differences of power, and challenging that power through language.

As stated by Jan Blommaert (2005: 22), the contextualisation of discourse and, in particular, investigation on how the effects of power and the therein interconnected inequality (ibid.: 68-

97) are produced in society and in discourse is essential to critical approaches of discourse studies. The inevitable multidisciplinary nature of such pursuits has led Blommaert (2005: 233) into suggesting an 'eclectic register' – with ethnography in the core – one which would bring together the best suited approaches and methods for a framework. That would enable efficient critical studies on inequality and power. However, he wants to alter the restricted notion of 'context' in the (at the time of his proposition prevailing) critical study of language, which was largely based on linguistic and explicit textual forms. Blommaert (2005: 233) also saw the need for investigating the circulation of discourse (ibid.: 133), and various modes of production and reproduction (ibid.: 66, 163). Blommaert is, however, not overlooking linguistics, nor pragmatics[4] or sociolinguistics, as CDA indeed emerged from critical linguistics[5].

To note some basic distinctions between the various scholars, Fairclough's approach, as stated by Jorgensen and Phillips (2002: 89-92), views discourse and the social from a more poststructuralist perspective, underlining the role of discourse in social change. Ruth Wodak, who has worked on interactional studies could, along with Van Dijk, can be held to represent the 'psychological' orientations of CDA. Within the psychological versions of CDA, there is seen to be a socio-cognitive interface between social structures and discourse structures. Van Dijk (1998: 104, 107) strongly underlines the contextual frame of our 'internal speech', memory, circumstances and effects, i.e., situational (ibid.: 55, 73) parameters of discourse production and cognitive approaches into political discourse. In Van Dijk's view, discourse structure and social structure are mutually intertwined through an interface of social cognition – for instance, how political ideologies and political discourse are a product of collective mental processes, involving its storage in long-term, social-semantic memory. Hence, according to Van Dijk, discursive and social practices are mediated through cognitive structures. (See also Chilton 2004: 50-51, and Blommaert 2005: 21.)

In 1995, *Critical Discourse Analysis* by Fairclough was published, announcing in its very title a terminological shift, denoting a distinct new posture in the theoretical backbone behind critical studies, although still being a loose structure with ideas very similar to those within critical linguistics, and with no official organisation or school behind it. CDA is, to convey the most important trail in it, an explanation that integrates the frameworks around it (Wodak 2003: 35-37), and first and foremost, discusses the relationship between language and society.

In the Faircloughian framework, ideology forms an important dimension, especially in regard to how it is positioned within hegemony: its positioning and functioning in relation to power. Fairclough's thoughts owe significantly to the social theory developed prior to him –

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[4] Pragmatics is a branch of linguistics dealing with language in use, paying attention to context, and including such matters under consideration as deixis, the taking of turns, text organisation, presupposition, and implicature in speech (Butler 1985).

[5] In many occasions, the terms 'CDA' and 'critical linguistics' seem to be more or less interchangeable.

to Gramsci and Althusser, in particular – and he also gives them due credit. Pursuing analysis is paying attention to context – cognitive, situational and cultural – as well as processes of language use: not only *who* says what and to whom, but also *why* and *how* we use language in a particular manner. The commitment of CDA is dealing with social issues in the real world, such as inequality and enforcement of power, with a concern for language use with reference to exercising socio-political power, which remains as a signifying element in all problem-driven approaches out of which CDA is borne.

Language use is, by definition, social, and this aspect is what brings the social dimension in Fairclough's theory at a vanishing point where all other aspects of investigation and theory will converge. Discourse as a term, for Fairclough, derives from language use within social practice[6], that is, it is more than a mere reflex in a given situation performed by an individual (Fairclough 1992b: 63). There is, rather, a dialectical relationship between the social structure and discourse, more generally manifested as social practice: social practice is conditioning and affecting social structure on one hand; on the other, social practice, such as discourse, is shaped by social structure. Social structure constrains discourse by relations of institutions and diverse classification systems, by norms and conventions. Social domains and institutional frameworks have influence on the formation of discursive events. However, discourse is involved in the very construction of the same norms and relations, identities, and institutions that account for the social structure (ibid.: 64).

3.2.1 The three dimensions of analysis

Discursive practices are, naturally, affected by the various other dimensions of social practice with which they operate in a dialectical interplay, and that may limit or advance the use of discourses. Fairclough (1995b: 54), referring to Bourdieu's work on the topic (e.g., see Bourdieu 1991), points out that causes and effects of power are often not directly visible but need to be found through critical analysis of language use. The study of language use stretches beyond the individual to grasp constructive changes occurring in time, which are manifested as action. Bourdieu, in his work *Language and symbolic power* (1991), conceives language as a direct mechanism of power: in a social space, language use designates an individual actor's relational position, and interactions are manifestations of the different positions. Interactions, according to Bourdieu, also create categorisations as to who will be listened to, and heard or trusted, or further, who possesses the power to so much as question the prevailing conditions in society.

Fairclough (1995a) begins defining the distinction between mainstream discourse analysis and CDA by stating that the unequal and asymmetrical distribution of power, insofar that the

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[6] In Fairclough's *Media discourse* (1995b), the term social practice is named as 'sociocultural' practice.

production, consumption, and distribution of texts in society are concerned, makes power inevitably discursive and ideological, and so are potentially all linguistic interactions in an unequal world. The goal for CDA, therefore, is to become evolved into a functioning resource framework for analysis, to become a tool "for people who are struggling against domination and oppression in its linguistic forms" (1995a: 1). Fairclough shows how media representation has the capability to mask ideology which he, in the earlier stages of his thinking, sees solely as a negative, repressive force, leaving audience who follows media discourse perplexed about the power relations in society which, in turn, will only become unfold in the course of sociocultural change. The media discourse analysis provides a good example of how critical discourse analysis can, and should, be exercised and put into use. In his later writings, Fairclough's thoughts about ideology have become less restrictive, however; in comparison with Foucault, for whom, although he has been an indisputable inspiration for Fairclough, power may generally also entail positive effects (see Foucault 1980a: 59).

Fairclough (1992b: 62, 237) aims at an analysis that would bring together, in a single framework, linguistically oriented discourse analysis and social thought (in his case, political thought), a frame which, consequently, would prove useful in the study of social change. At this phenomenological and analytical crossroads, he situates the 'social' to the front, to the conceptual position where the analyst initiates the analysis – which also becomes evident when examining Fairclough's three-dimensional framework for text, discursive practice, and social practice. Discourse is situated as part of social practice, its size depending on each investigated case (ibid.).

Integrating discourse analysis within social analysis concerning sociocultural change, and viewed through the three-dimensional construct, the frame for CDA, entails thus three intertwined forms of analysis on the intersection of language and social structure. Firstly, the object of analysis, that is, text analysis entailing the description of the verbal and/or visual texture. Secondly, any instance of language use consists also processing analysis, i.e., interpretation of discursive practices, involving processes of text production and reception, distribution and consumption through writing, speaking, designing, reading, listening, and viewing. The concept 'orders of discourse' is central as a discoursal aspect of the networked social practices that create dominant, marginal or alternative positions; investigating, for example, how 'styles' are networked. Finally, thirdly, any communicative event must include analysis of social practice, in other words, explanation of the concept of 'culture' within socio-cultural/historical conditions governing the processes, or using Fairclough's words, "discursive events as instances of sociocultural practice" (Fairclough 1995a: 2, 85-182; Jorgensen & Phillips 2002: 60-95).

Fairclough situates the dimensions within a wider context of *change*, combining different levels of interpretation: text analysis and description of syntax, features of grammar and style, generic and metaphoric structure and vocabulary, rhetorics, turn-taking (exchange of speech),

presuppositions and implicatures, politeness and conventions; yet simultaneously focusing on the processing analysis, on the ongoing enactment of power (relations); and further, pursuing for wider currents of social life, for social analysis and explanation, the effects of which are to be traced in the text under analysis. The three dimensions are intertwined or embedded within one another, and hence, an analysis is not a linearly structured event but requires all dimensions to be captured and analysed simultaneously (Fairclough 1989; 1995a: 85-182). (For the origins and methodology of CDA, see also Blommaert 2005: 22-31; for CDA as a method in social scientific research, see Fairclough 2001 in Wodak 2001: 121-136.)
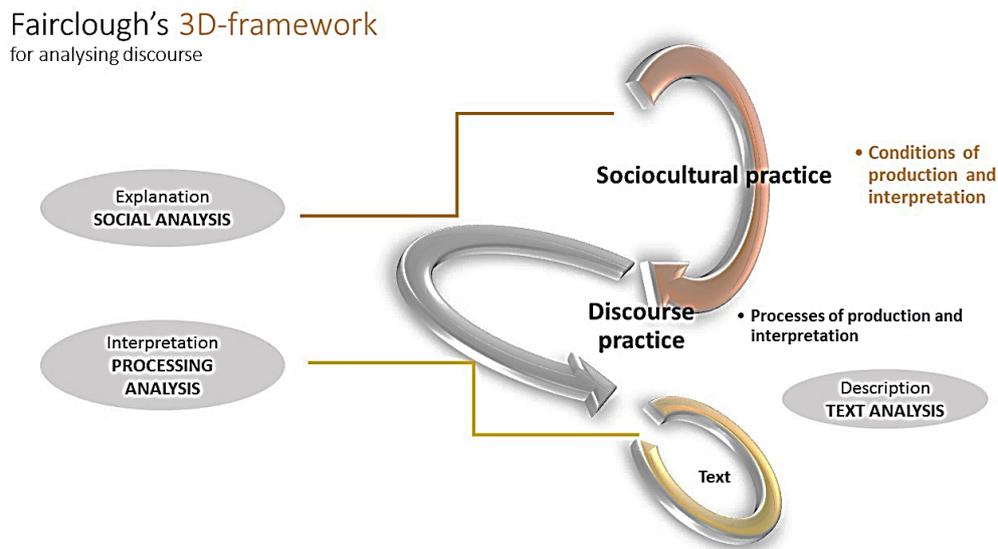

Figure 1. Three forms of analysis within CDA (Fairclough 1989, 1995a).

Fairclough examines the theory of CDA and illustrates how CDA is working with texts, and how analyses on specific discourses can be carried out, such as university rhetoric, medical discourse, or political discourse (Fairclough 1995a). He discusses the relations of linguistic resources and the structures of society, including social policies. The Bakhtinian ideas are drawn on to add heterogeneity of form and meaning, and complexity to the text analysis and interpretation. Bakhtin (1986) is an evident source of inspiration, and rightfully acknowledged by Fairclough, with ideas concerning heteroglossia and historicity emanating from intertextuality, or the repertoire of existing text types, genres and discourses; also, the Bakhtinian concept of 'voice' never ceases to be current in characterising discourse(s) (ibid.).

Fairclough also addresses researchers within other disciplines, encouraging them to integrate linguistic methods and tools of discourse analysis even outside linguistics to advance inter- and cross-disciplinary dialogue and scholarship. He promotes the use of textual analysis as a tool for cultural and social research even beyond 'pure' (isolated) language (if indeed there is such a thing), and attempts at integrating cultural and social theories into linguistic analysis, to grasp the centrality of discourse in a society as a wider phenomenon. In his view, the

"texture" in a text – the way it is organised, and what form it takes – is equally important as the content: in other words, form is "part of the content" (Fairclough 1995a: 188).

According to Fairclough (1995: 32), CDA aims systematically to explore the often opaque relationships of causality and determination between, first, discursive practices, events and texts, and secondly, between wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes – to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of power relations and are ideologically shaped in struggles over power.

Chouliaraki and Fairclough's work *Discourse and Late Modernity* (1999) is an examination regarding the relation of CDA to social theory and diverse theories of philosophy. Blommaert (2005) quite justifiably, argues that the social theories upon which CDA mainly draws concentrate on the First World problems, with theorists such as Anthony Giddens, Jürgen Habermas, Michel Foucault, and Pierre Bourdieu. Blommaert (ibid.) argues, further, that CDA ought to concentrate on analysing the effects of power, the actual impact of power. He also takes a stand away from 'text', bringing instead forward ethnographic analysis as a knowledge trajectory. Foucault (2003), then again, has expressly argued for textual analysis as a valid method in carrying out social analysis. Chilton[7] (2005) has put forward evolutionary psychology as a worthy model for addressing a more cognitive aspect of communication.

CDA views prevailing social order as relative, socially constructed and, it being historically situated, also changeable. Social order and social processes are constituted and sustained by the pervasiveness of particular, constructed versions of reality, in other words, discourses. Discourse is coloured by ideology, and power in society is an effect of particular discursive arrangements that privilege the position of some people over others (van Dijk 1993: 249-253; see Locke 2004: 37-38). Reality, as described in CDA, is textually and intertextually mediated via language systems (e.g., Locke: 2004: 11). Texts, according to CDA, are sites for contestation and inculcation of discourses discovered through systematic analysis of texts (of both verbal and non-verbal systems), through investigating the ways in which power is consolidated and human subjects are colonized in texts, through covert position calls, which can be revealed. The term inculcation means that people come to 'own' discourses: they position themselves inside discourses, and act and think in terms of them. Human subjectivity is partly constructed and inscribed in discourse; discourse, in turn, is manifested in the ways people *are* and *enact* the sorts of people they are. As Fairclough states, referring to Gramsci (1971), "(I)t is commonplace that new economic and social formations depend upon new subjects (- -) "(Fairclough 2003: 208), involving changes in the ways of being, in the identities. (See also Wodak 2001; Janks 1997; Fairclough & Wodak 1997).

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[7] Paul Chilton has worked in the fields of cognitive linguistics, discourse studies, and international politics.

Discourse denoted with the big 'D' (Fairclough's term) concerns general ways of viewing the world, whereas discourses with a small 'd' deal with specific language uses as situated language. Thus, discourse analysis relates to the everyday information and knowledge that we receive, e.g., via the media, but also to particular knowledge in specific fields, such as cultural and natural sciences (Wodak & Meyer 2001: 33).

The relationship between society and discourse is pertinent in CDA, and there are differing viewpoints as to which issues should be taken at the focus of examination. Norman Fairclough writes on the place of language in society: "--- language is centrally involved in power, and struggles for power, and that it is so involved through its ideological properties" (Fairclough 2014: 14). Fairclough describes the goals and practices of CDA, investigating the relationship between ideology, language, and power, and pursuing for an analytical framework for grasping the relationship between them (Fairclough 1995a: 1, 23).

The main thought laid by Fairclough (2014: 14-16) – about the relationship between language and ideology – is the significance of language in relation to power, and also the struggle that it involves concerning the ideological characteristics of discourse (i.e., language as social practice). The effect of social continuity and change is based on the reciprocal *dialogicality* between social structures, practices and discourse. Social conditions determine properties of discourse, and orders of discourse establish links between conventions and social institutions, residing and operating on various levels of society, and they are shaped ideologically by power relations (ibid.).

As Teubert (2010) suggests, the relationship between society and discourse as a social practice that transmits ideology is in the focus of attention in CDA, an investigation into the distorted views of reality at the heart of language use and practices, a view widely shared by practitioners of CDA. The main focus is on the revelation of power relationships in a given society, and the relationship between discourse and society. Teubert views the relationship between discourse and society in a slightly different way than Fairclough: for Teubert (ibid.: 120-123), language (discourse) takes first place, and it is discourse that constructs structures of society. Hence, according to Teubert (ibid.), it is impossible to approach what people do, and how they do it, from outside language, outside discourse itself. For Fairclough, however, the relation is rather the other way around; for him it is society that determines discourse which he views as "…social practice determined by social structures…; actual discourse is constituted by socially constituted orders of discourse…; orders of discourse are ideologically shaped by power relations in social institutions and in society as a whole…" (Fairclough 1989: 179; Fairclough 2014: 29).

For Teubert (2010), as opposed to Fairclough, the dynamics of the mutual relationship between society and discourse is, therefore, differently positioned: Teubert sets his angle of departure in language: discourse constructs social constructs, and not vice versa; Fairclough maintains, however, that discourse "has effects upon social structures" (Fairclough 1989: 17).

Thus, in the mutual dependency paradigm of the two, Fairclough places the 'social' ahead of 'discoursal', whereas Teubert cannot accept that social structures would exist prior to discourse. Teubert (2010) holds that the property which Foucault calls 'orders of discourse' have to be negotiated within language first, within a broader perspective entailing a wider view of discourse where language is involved. Ideological positionings (in Foucauldian terms) are passed to us by authorities; yet the notion of 'authority', prior to it being pronounced, had to be verbally committed, detected, and consciously reflected, i.e., perceived as an object of discourse (Teubert 2010: 121).

Human meaning-making is a hybrid phenomenon involving transdisciplinary theory and praxis where both the social and the life sciences are required as they are constantly 'embedding' one another is the *semiosis*, meaning-making (see Fairclough 1992b: 231). Analysis and interpretation of verbal and non-verbal language systems, approaching texts as discoursal spaces, can only start with the elementary question of what 'text' *means*. Doing analysis is thus paying attention to contexts (cognitive, situational and cultural) and the processes of language use. As Norman Fairclough (1992: 4) reminds, any instance of discourse is "simultaneously a piece of text, an instance of discursive practice, and an instance of social practice."

Language use is social as it involves interaction; interaction, in turn, defined as "…action which affects the relations of self and others…" (Fairclough 1992b: 21). The message is directed not only to those at the receiving end of a communicative act, those who interpret, but also to other producers of content, those who are involved in the process of creation. Shared production of content on a social web page makes everyone simultaneously a producer/sender and a recipient, albeit that they might be accustomed to a different set of affordances for participation.

4 HALLIDAY'S SYSTEMIC FUNCTIONAL LINGUISTICS

CDA refers to, or expands on, the Hallidayan approach to linguistic analysis: Fairclough (2003) states that the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) has been his main tool for text analysis; adding, however, that "the perspectives of CDA and SFL do not precisely coincide" (ibid.: 5). SFL maintains, nevertheless, the linguistic backbone of Fairclough's text-oriented form of CDA. Hallidayan grammar (1994/2004), and his approach to linguistic analysis, is therefore essential for a proper understanding of CDA and what it aims to achieve (Wodak 2001: 8).

Halliday's work is influential not merely on its theoretical grounds, but because his insights can be applied across numerous fields of study concerning even social concerns. Besides discourse studies, the theory and frame of the SFL approach extends to fields such as language education, child language development and computational studies. The SFL has inspired functional approaches to semiotics, and the functions Halliday introduces may be applied into communicative functions of various resources of visual communication where they constitute

the resources as (part of) the 'grammatical' system of images, using Hallidayan terms. SFL is thus influential within multimodal discourse analysis, inspiring theorists, and lending practical conceptual tools for scholars in various fields, such as Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), and Hodge and Kress on visuals (2010; 'grammar' of semiotic modes beyond language), whose approaches have their origins in the Hallidayan semiotic approach. The Hallidayan theoretical frame has been applied even into studies of media discourse (Iedema et al. 1994[8]), and history (Martin & Wodak 2003).

The systemic-functional framework sees language system as a network of value-creating relationships, a social semiotic approach to language: a *socially based semantic theory* of how discourse is constructed, intertwined within language and society (see Matthiessen, Teruya & Lam, 2010). As Eggins (2004: 3) points out, the systemic approach is interested in how people use language, how language is structured for use, and how language users negotiate meaning. SFL treats meaning as a systemic resource, as a *potential* modified by individual acts; a notable aspect of SFL is its capability of grasping meaning as *growth*, as an expanding resource; also, meaning is seen as a shared resource of *collective construction*; finally, meaning is seen as a form of *activity*, powered by grammar (Halliday & Matthiessen 1999). The Hallidayan framework deals with the realisation of social life world: how social reality is constructed and construed.

Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) is a form of grammatical description, and part of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). The resource systems of phonology and lexicogrammar are there for the construction of texts; the semantically oriented grammar, in turn, is a resource for meaning making in texts, produced in meaning-making activity (Thibault 2004: 46-48). The 'functionality' arises from the fact that languages evolve in use as they fulfil certain functions. The options available for choices regarding language use are mapped using a system network. Halliday grasped the link between the grammatical system and the actual language use serving social and personal needs; the architecture of language was thus opened to 'grasp the world' by situating the structure within ecological and social environment (Wodak 2001: 8). Therefore, Hallidayan linguistics aspires to incorporate social semiotic functions into a theory of grammar (Halliday & Kress 1976; Halliday 1978; Butler 1985), where the theory has shifted focus away from the written language alone to the construction of discourse as a whole, into the ways in which discourse contributes to the semiotic wholeness and maintains the unity of the defined discourse contexts.

Within the SF tradition, as introduced by Matthiessen et al. (2010), language is thus treated as a system, and the notion of system defines SFL in two ways: there is the system of language as a whole, on one hand, and then there are the linguistic systems to provide the background for elements of structure, on the other. The meta-level is a description of proportionalities,

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[8] Susan Feez et al. 1994/2008. *Media literacy.* Surry Hills, N. S. W.: NSW Adult Migrant Education Service.

providing a system of relationships, or options (a paradigm), and value-making distinctions through which, and in which, the resource systems are organised. In a systemic grammar, grammatical features are understood as sets of options: the functional framework around the systems, i.e., choices, is characteristic of SFG in comparison with other functional grammars.

The Systemic Functional theory has redefined what grammar is, and what it does (Matthiessen et al. 2010: 77, 131). Grammatical patterns, relations and grammatical categories are seen in a motivated relation with the activity structures within which they are embedded. Grammar, for Halliday, is organised to enable interactions, to act creatively in the world, to bring forward thoughts about the world around us, and to create texts out of the resources we possess and have access to. Within theoretical lexicogrammar (ibid.: 77), there are two levels (*strata*) of the content plane: first, the level of wording, situated between phonology/graphology (sign) and semantics; and second, the resources for construing meanings as wordings, combining grammar and vocabulary (*lexis*) (ibid.: 131). In short, language use is creating meaning which is manifested through wordings (ibid.: 233), and grammar is the resource we employ in order to do that.

Halliday (1978) maintained that linguistic choices, such as choices of words, and usage of moods, may imply in-coded ideological meanings – meanings are not borne outside social or cultural issues (Matthiessen et al. 2010: xi). The theory has placed language as the primary semiotic resource of investigation; however, having extended to other semiotic resources and systems as well, SFL continues to be productive within the research on semiosis (O'Halloran 2004: 1).[9]

4.1 Metafunctions

The relationship of lexicogrammar and meaning has led to assume the existence of diverse functional components and regions, that is, *metafunctions* (Webster 2009: 326), which would explain the fluidity and dynamics of language forms in their relation to and with a context. These simultaneous strands of meaning are expressed in clause structures. The metafunctional principle shapes the way in which meaning is organised: every feature in the structure originates into semantics, and every choice is made against the background of other choices which could or might have been made (Eggins 2004: 3; Eggins 2004: 3).

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[9] For further applications of SFL into the meaning within and across different semiotic resources, e.g., mathematics, science, three-dimensional museum displays, and into the pioneering work in the application of SFL into architecture and sculpture, i.e., intra-semiosis and inter-semiosis, see O'Toole's (1994) *The Language of Displayed Art* and Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) *Reading Images*; see also Kay O'Halloran (2005).

Within a communicational system, and reflecting Halliday's metafunctional semiotic theory, three interconnected semiotic functions become simultaneously fulfilled in a text as stated by Halliday (2004): the *ideational* function, the *interpersonal* function, and the *textual* function. The functions are situated, respectively, at the domains of the ideational, interaction and text bases. The structures, that is, clause as representation, clause as exchange, and clause as message, derive from the respective metafunctions. The interpretative frame does not contain a separate 'pragmatics' in its frame as Halliday does not aim at separating the language system from its textual instantiations. (See also Halliday & Matthiessen 1996/2010.)

While interacting, we choose amongst different strategies, for instance, through selecting the resource for expressing MOOD through speech functions, such as 'suggesting', 'persuading', or 'insisting'. The ideational, interpersonal and textual level, while in operation within multimodal texts, bring out experiences, visions, roles, and a specific habitus we reflect and build up, as well as our relations with others in various textual constructions within a multitude of different contexts (Wodak 2001).

Halliday and Matthiessen (1999/2006) give a thorough, although complicated, account of the different aspects of the integral nature of functions within the overall theory, emphasising that the functions have significance for the analysis of language itself, not merely in referring to any purpose of using language. According to them, the architecture of the *content stratum* of language, that is, lexicogrammar and semantics, is internally organised into three (or four) different kinds of functional regions (see also Webster 2009 for 'essential Halliday'). The ideational region functions in the interpreting structure and is further divided into the 'experiential' (in the clause) and 'logical' (between clauses) regions; it holds a dialectical relationship with our experiences, and also, with the social structure which it reflects and influences as we interact with one another. It is at work in construing representations of the world around and inside us, therefore, the semantic resources at the ideation base construe our experiences into units of meaning (we 'understand'/'know' something). Processes, participants and circumstances at the ideational base can be categorised as general types of 'doing' and 'happening', of 'sensing', of 'being' and 'having', and of 'saying'. The interpersonal and textual dimensions are interwoven, simultaneously, in the internal organisation of the content stratum. The interpersonal function constitutes relationships: it operates in aiding us to enact interactions for specific social purposes and relations. The interaction base contains resources for enactment in a social relationship, assigning discursive roles, in evaluation and attitudes. It also contains dialogic exchanges of strategies, and the social personae of interactants, and their distance. The textual metafunction (Matthiessen 1992: 37-77) operates within the arrangement of communicative events and texts (message entities), and in realizing specific social practices where communicative acts enter into larger entities. The text base enables the speaker to produce contextualized discourse, providing guidance on interpretation to the listener/receiver. At the text base lie, for example, rhetorical structures,

differentiating the various statuses of the text (ibid.). The textual function thus constitutes coherence in the text. It assembles various bits of information as foregrounded or backgrounded (as *given/new*), places bits of text as 'topic' or 'theme', concerns on how the preceeding and following parts of text become linked, moreover, how the social world is considered within the realm of the text (Fairclough 1992b: 65). The resources at the text base allow for and maintain the semiotic *flow* of the text.

As Halliday (1994; 2004) explicates, at the clause level, the units of groups and phrases function as elements in the composure of a multifunctional construct of representation (ideational), exchange (interpersonal) and message (textual). In interpreting group structures below the clause, (i.e., nominal, adverbial and verbal), operations of the functional components of meaning are represented as partial contributions, and not made up of three distinct structures, combined into one as in the grammar of the clause. Around the clause the grammar deals with issues such as cohesion and discourse, and here we are dealing with analysis of texts seen as products of processes. Halliday (ibid.) notes that as phenomena, 'system' and 'text' are not different entities, but phases of one phenomenon where the system is instantiated as text. At a close range, we are encountered with text, whereas observing from a more distant, broader perspective, we build up a picture of a system. System and text are thus situated within a *cline of instantiation* (i.e., not a dichotomy) where, between 'system' and 'text', there is a semiotic region of intermediate patterns (text types and registers). From above the clause, the means of logico-semantic relations are investigated, from the point of view of how the flow of events is construed in the clause complex and at the level of semantic. In a narrative text, for instance, the flow is construed as a series of episodes, where the sequencing is done by relators, such 'as 'and 'then', representing a temporal relator. The effect of combining clause complexes results as tighter integration in meaning. The resources of clause complexing types include the *temporal, concessive, purposive, adversative, spatial* and *quoting* types of relation. Interesting enough, these relations seem to be the manifestations of circumstances in the transitivity system of the clause (see Halliday 2004: 259).

A type of instance, a generalisation across a set of texts, approached from the instance pole of cline of instantiation (see Matthiessen 2010: 221), is called *text type*. It is thus a generalisation of texts reminiscent enough of one another to constitute a 'type'. Seen from the viewpoint of the potential pole, the exact same region is interpreted in terms of *register* (Halliday 1995/2005: 263). Text typology (registers) is arranged according to criteria that may come "from above" (from context), "from below" (from lexicogrammar), or "from within" (semantics). Hence, to characterise a typology as originating "from above" reads as 'contextually analysed or handled'. In the genre model developed by, amongst others, Martin (1992), typology is located within a contextual stratum above the strata of field, tenor and mode, and supplemented with topology to accentuate the shading of diverse genres into one another in a multidimensional space (Matthiessen 2010: 219-220).

The Hallidayan metafunctions have been developed further to extend and fulfil major functions of semiotic systems beyond the written or spoken language, including all semiotic modes, such as the visual. This has been done by Gunther Kress, Theo van Leeuwen, Paul Thibault, and Christian Matthiessen, to name but a few of the scholars inspired by him (Kress & Van Leeuwen 2006: 15; see also van Leeuwen 1999).

4.2 Transitivity analysis

The SFL comprises a multitude of work within linguistics, from lexicogrammar and semantics to text structure and discourse analysis, and beyond. According to Kress (1976: 169), transitivity entails representation in language of processes, and the circumstantial features and participants therein. Halliday (2004) presents the transitivity approach as a central tool in the analysis of representation. Transitivity deals thus with processes controlling the ideational systems in the grammar (Halliday & Matthiessen 1999/2006: 115), a 'theory of goings-on'. Experiences are construed as *configurations* of processes. At clause rank, transitivity generates resources for construing experiences, both external and internal (Fowler 1991).

Transitivity, generally speaking, refers to the transmission of ideas, the representation of meaning in the clause: how language, the mental picture of what the speaker means, as well as the account of a speaker's experiences in the world, are encoded in language (Fowler 1991). The clause is used to analyse situations or events in the process of construing the world of experience into process types ordered in manageable sets, each providing a schema for the construction of different domains in our experience, concerning 'doing', acts of 'sensing', 'saying', 'being', 'having', or 'happenings'. For representing experience, transitivity offers a network of *options*. Systems of transitivity include types of *processes* and types of *participation* in these processes, the two types complementing one another. The processes are distinguished in speech, actions, states of mind or states of being: *relational* processes (process of being); *material* processes (process of doing); *mental* processes (process of sensing), and *verbal* (verbalization) processes (process of saying) (Matthiessen et al 2010: 59, 137).

Experiences involve participants, viz., Actor, Goal, Senser, Phenomenon, Carrier, Attribute, etc., and circumstances attendant on it, such as Cause, Manner, Accompaniment, Location, etc. Mode of participation entails how participants affect one another (e.g., Actor impacting a Goal; Medium, through which a process becomes manifested). Modality is a resource to intrude the speaker's own views into the discourse (Matthiessen et al. 2010: 4, 46; Halliday & Kress 1976).

Material ('doing') processes are, according to Kress (1976), *action clauses.* Material processes are associated with the inherent roles of the 'Actor,' or the 'Doer', in the process that is expressed in/by the clause (Simpson 1993; Halliday 2004). Verbalization processes are processes of 'saying': the participant roles are those of the SAYER (the person who is speaking) and the TARGET (the addressee to whom the process is directed); VERBIAGE refers to 'that

which is said'. Relational processes of transitivity expresses the process of 'being'. The main processes of this kind may be intensive (expressing an 'X is a' relationship), possessive ('X has a' relationship), circumstantial ('X is at/of a' relationship). The process takes the form of a relation between the participating entities, also the form between a participating entity and an attribute, both of which may have the verb 'be'. The relationship exists between two participants, but not necessarily in a way that one participant affects the other (Halliday & Kress 1976; Halliday 2004).

Some processes are situated in 'borderline categories', arising from the three main categories of the behavioural (*'material'/'mental'*), verbal (*'mental'/'relational'*), and existential (*'relational'/'material'*) categories. All categories are necessary and equally important, although the category of the material has been at the centre of linguistics, creating the commonly employed distinction between 'transitive' and 'intransitive' verbs. (Halliday 2004: 170-172.) Beyond the transitive-intransitive distinction, there are even more distinctions, the central insight being that of transitivity as the foundation of representation. With the concept of transitivity, e.g., when carrying out newspaper analysis, we may analyse the same event in different ways (Fowler 1991).

Through transitivity analysis, structures deriving from metafunctions prove beneficial when we seek to distinguish the processes, participants and circumstances. "Transitivity is the grammar of processes," as stated by Halliday and Matthiessen (1999/2006), as it reveals the actions and events, the mental processes and relations involved in a text. Transitivity analysis demonstrates how one happening is related to another as part of the domain of ideational meaning base, supported by the interpersonal metafunction at the interaction base, and the textual metafunction at the text base (ibid.: 11-12).

As a fundamental semantic concept, transitivity is expressing how the clause is employed in the analysis of events and situations. For Simpson (1993: 88), transitivity relates to the way in which meaning is generally represented in the clause, how speakers encode their mental pictures of reality and their experiences of the world. Linguistically, transitivity deals with functions of syntactic elements and with propositional meanings. By interpreting language in terms of the interactive, social processes transitivity permits movement across the text, revealing patterns and constellations that build a 'genre' of the overall text in response to the context of the text (Halliday & Matthiessen 1999/2006).

5 REPRESENTATION OF SOCIAL EVENTS

As Fairclough points out (1992a: 64), discourse is a social practice that does not merely represent the world but also *signifies* it, that is, discourse constitutes and constructs the world in and through meaning. The 'world' entails all aspects of social structure: social identities, social relationships, and systems of knowledge and beliefs, which all coincide neatly with the

three functions of language (and hence, dimensions of meaning): 'identity', 'relational'[10], and 'ideational' functions of language.

Stuart Hall (1994) describes nations to be systems entailing cultural representations, i.e., he does not view nations as mere constructs of political activity but as formations of symbolic communities. According to Hall, nations are communities of people, resembling the 'imagined community' portrayed by Anderson (1983), who become interpreted through representations: citizenship is not simply characterised through determination of state policies but through the participation of people in the actual forming of an idea of 'nation' and its representation in culture (Wodak 2002: 146-147).

Hall (1996: 201) argues, further, that "a national culture is a discourse, a way to construct meanings influencing and organising both our actions and our perceptions of ourselves." Hence, identities become constructed through what is understood with the conception of 'nation', by creating stories about it, memories forming continuities, and in the constructed perceptions of 'nation'. Hall has investigated cultural representations in dominant media modes concerning representations of identity (e.g., black identity in TV programmes).

Democracy as a concept resides similarly in the interactive mind, as Chilton points out (2004: 48): it has no 'meaning' outside the mind but it awaits to be attached to a particular time and place, and to particular actors, in order to be pinned to a definite meaning, and to acquire precise content: the 'who', 'where' and 'when' have to be answered initially, prior to reaching a satisfactory meaning, and perhaps even the 'why' and 'what then' – the social continuum and the context of reasons and effects have to be explicated first. We can, naturally, construe general definitions, attempt at the smallest common denominator among parameters for a definition, but they, nevertheless, will end up being empty shells without relevant meaning, because with conceptions entailing social worlds of experience, it is the particularities that finally create 'reality', the actual meaning of it.

Political concepts, as noted by Gallie (in Chilton 2004: 48) are 'essentially contested concepts', requiring contexts beyond mere abstractions. Chilton, along with many others, remarks however that "meaning cannot be a matter of matching expressions to referents" (Chilton 2004: 49), since referents may point to abstract ideas as a set of practices rather than to exact entities in the world. It may be a question of associations around a concept, presuppositions and an 'air' it creates; place, time or participants will not suffice as a proper context for a 'meaning' to be set. What exactly do we mean by concepts, such as 'sovereignty', 'communism', and so on? Many widely used political terms are, in fact, vague, even when there is a context with particular reference mentioned in the accompanying text (ibid.: 49).

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[10] In Hallidayan usage, the 'identity' and 'relational' functions are grouped together as 'interpersonal' function, and it distinguishes a separate 'textual' function.

As for semantics, it is possible to approach meaning-making from two perspectives: representational and referential (Chilton 2004: 48-50). Denotational or referential approach theorises the connection between linguistic symbols and entities 'out in the world': nouns referring to entities, predicates to sets of entities, sentences denoting to events or states of affairs. The matching process between forms and situations require cognitive operations: that we *absolutely* know what 'the world' is as we know it; or what we mean by 'out' and 'there' as we say it. Utterances from others have resulted in our matching of logical forms with mental representations of reality, and these we have reached through our perception in the realm of our cognitive limitations. They are derived through coloured experiences, by intersubjective, collective circulation among individuals.

When we approach texts as social events in order to investigate what is being 'meant', we want to look especially the *implied* meaning of what is uttered, that is, what *more* is said underneath the explicitly expressed – and what, in turn, is left missing. Fairclough (see 2003: 10) writes about interactive processes of meaning-making, the transcript of an act of conversing, conversational turns, stating an example from Cameron (2001), a short conversation between the Bartender and the Customer. In this conversation, what is established explicitly does not convey at all what is being *meant*, however, both speakers – being members of the same communicative context – understand perfectly, through the interplay between them, what is being expressed. Fairclough suggests three separable elements into the processes of meaning-making: besides the text itself, and the production and reception of the text, the latter elements being accentuated, respectively, in the theories concerning intentions and identity, and the interpretative work of the reader/listener.

In images (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006: 45-46), the relations of elements – their positioning and arrangement – are forming a narrative in itself signalling inherent categories within the structure which they present, on whether the action related to them is static or dynamic, or whether it entails subjects that act for a purpose, or, instead, decorations or objects of 'doing'.

Siegfried Jäger, in his studies on tabloids and the right-wing discourses in Germany (Jäger 2001: 9), sketches the concept of societal 'dispositive', the interplay of discursive practices, non-discursive practices and 'manifestation' or 'materialisations' of knowledge (by acting/doing). Discursive practices entail speaking and thinking on the basis of knowledge; non-discursive practices indicate acting on the basis of knowledge. For Foucault, text or discourse does not entirely move or 'meet' our reality, and for him, the dispositive is a strategic function to interpret the historical and current reality more appropriately; Jäger states in Foucault's (1977: 119f) words, "…the net which can be woven between these elements," i.e., the elements of "what is said and what is not said…", and between the elements there is a play of changing positions and functions (Jäger 2001:33, 38-40).

Discourse derives from language use within social practice. Language use is thus more than a mere reflex in a given situation performed by an individual. The individual ties it firmly with

action: discourse is a form of action through which people interact with one another and with the world. Discourse is also a form of representation, a philosophical and pragmatic stance on social interaction, acting upon the world (Fairclough 1992a: 63). Therefore, representation, conceptually, is inseparably intertwined in people discoursally affecting the world – and one another – by using language, and it presupposes a relation to the outside of the individual sphere. However, regarding social structures, detachment of other participants also defines a relation: 'relation' as an abstraction in a conceptual level, the content of which may be held empty since implemented social practice is, however, still incorporated in the conceptual design of the (social) structure.

Discourses may be viewed as interpretative repertoires, a term used within particular grammatical or stylistic usage, and drawn on to social interaction (Wetherell & Potter 1988: 172). Repertoires are defined as "clusters of terms, descriptions and figures of speech often assembled around metaphors or vivid images" (Wetherell & Potter 1992: 90). As noted by Wetherell and Potter (ibid. 92-108) themselves, the term 'discourse' denotes actually the very same process, but they prefer to emphasise the active manner in which people use discourses as flexible resources in their talk of the world, employing available 'choreographies' of interpretative 'moves', and selecting the most effective ones to be used in a particular context. The ways of giving meaning are subject to transformation in time, e.g., how one constructs concepts such as 'culture' or 'nation', but the same concept may also be identified within more than one repertoire simultaneously: i.e., culture may be categorised as 'culture as heritage' and 'culture as therapy'. Rather than make categorisations of different repertoires, one should aim at identifying the discursive practices behind these categories: repertoires are constructed through social practices, appearing as reflections of the constructed world. Moreover, Potter and Wetherell argue that certain repertoires are involved in the maintenance of social order (Wetherell & Potter 1992: 127, 132).

6 FROM SAUSSUREAN TO SOCIAL SEMIOTICS

Many social scientists regard 'discourse' in an abstract sense – that is, as particular ways of representing various aspects of the world. They refer to discourse as an element of the social, and treat it in relation to the non-discursive elements. To avoid miscomprehensions about the concept of 'discourse', Fairclough (2005: 58) proposes a different term to be used for discourse in an abstract sense, namely that of *semiosis*. Within social events and practices, semiosis would figure in three ways: firstly, in representing the world; secondly, as a modality of acting and interacting in the social relations associated therein; and finally, in constructing social and personal identities, that is, in identifying (ibid.).

Semiotics, as defined by Hodge and Kress (1988), is the general study of semiosis, "the processes, and effects of the production and reproduction, reception and circulation of

meaning in all forms, used by all kinds of agents of communication" (ibid.: 261). Social semiotics is, thus, primarily concerned with human semiosis and with social meanings constructed through semiotic forms, texts and practices. All human semiotic systems, as Hodge and Kress (ibid.) note, can be investigated within social semiotics; only communication between non-animate entities, e.g., genetic codes or physical systems, is left out; computer-mediated communication, however, is included as it is a product of human intentionality with social functions.

Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) treat representation as a process arising from the culture and social history of the sign-maker, with focus on the context and criterial aspects of the selection process: the signs are thus *motivated*, not arbitrary, conjunctions of signifiers and signifieds. At the moment of sign-making, the sign-maker chooses the most apt representational mode to convey the signified (i.e., the meaning to be expressed), a choice which is subjective. The sign does, thus, not exist prior to the selection (as though waiting to be chosen) but the sign-maker, instead, 'invents' the sign in the act of constituting a whole out of the form and the meaning. The newly made sign operates like a metaphor that is settled in through the constitution of analogy, which in turn results from classification processes. What becomes accepted into the semiotic system as natural (or neutral) classifications, depends on the culture and the social relations of power. In semiology, as it was, motivation was defined through an intrinsic relation between the form and the meaning: Barthes notes on the relation of the signifier and the signified that it postulates equivalence, that the sign is an associative total of the signifier and the signified, an object in itself (in Jaworski & Coupland 2006: 110-11).

Traditional semiotics introduced the concept of 'rule' into language, including rules stipulating the usage of the lexicon and rules of the grammar in regard to which forms are being used to signify meanings; and respectively, how signs are combined to constitute messages. Within this conception, rules govern the usage. Social semiotics, however, holds that rules – as man-made agreements – can be altered, although changes require that users who wish to change these rules hold required symbolic power in order to do so – in order to fully employ the inventories of semiotic resources. Significant is also the justification of what kind of rules may become employed in various contexts, and what kind are being rejected (Van Leeuwen 2005: 47-48).

As Kress (1993: 173) argues, the meaning in social semiotics is produced in use, by the interest of the producer, and by the characteristics of the object. Therefore, both the production and the interpretation of signs reflect the actual context of use. Blommaert states that "(…)stepping into' society, its history and structure(…)" (Blommaert: 2005: 233-234) – in other words, stepping outside linguistics – is in the centre of investigations regarding semiosis, of which language is but one dimension. Semiosis is shaped or generated in and of the polycentric and layered systems of meaning making wherefrom and wherein discourse is derived, and where it becomes "socially meaningful" (Blommaert 2005: 175). – New resources

brought about by new technology will result in new relations surfacing between the signifiers and the signified, and the creation of new signs.

Meaning-making involves making stories, connecting elements of various signifying systems into a coherent and logical whole. Hodge and Kress (1988: 21-23) discuss the various types of signs and various types of connections[11] that may be found between the signifiers and signified. Kress subsequently (2010: 65-69) criticises the assumption of arbitrariness in relation to the relationship between the signifiers and the signified, and speaks instead of the *motivated* sign, and motivated conjunctions of form and meaning (see also Van Leeuwen 2005: 49). Kress points out how the Saussurean distinction between the 'outer' and the 'inner' world created a percussion into the relation of form and meaning in the sign: for Saussure, a sign was a creation in the mental world combining a phenomenon in the outer world with its representation, the signified. This arbitrary relation was bound together by convention, which in turn was produced and stabilised by social power.

Within semiotics, the study of signs, symbols and signification, the primary object of investigation is the sign as an instance where the form and meaning become a single thing (Kress 2010: 54). Meaning resides in the sign relation: in the roles a sign in its communicative function occupies in each relation (Kress 2010: 62-69). Meaning is analysed in its connotative and denotative relations, the two aspects of meaning, i.e., denotation translating as the literal meaning, and connotation functioning as the added context-dependent value of meaning in a particular language group, constituting another level of meaning.

6.1 A social-semiotic theory of multimodality

Discourse studies have thus been fed with two remarkable 'turns'. In the early 70s, there appeared a movement called the 'cultural turn' or 'interpretive turn', shifting the emphasis of academic research by placing culture into the core of attention (Jameson 1998). This new trend became influential within social sciences, even in linguistic analysis and various systems of signification. Notions of meaning and culture were hence interconnected with identities, values and interaction; consequently, the cultural turn heightened cultural studies into an academic discipline on its own right. New forms of media, such as advertising and tabloid journalism, became acknowledged as forms of interaction. One may claim that prior to the rise of the Internet, the cultural turn was a key phenomenon to expand the notion of culture in the 20th century, reaching a point where 'knowledge', currently, is always seen as newly made, in compliance with individual interests, rather than being consisted of coherent content that would merely being communicated (Kress 2010).

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[11] Originally from Peirce's classification (Peirce 1965: 156-73).

Prior to the cultural turn, there was another 'turn' that broadened the ways of viewing at language and the world, namely that of the 'linguistic turn' (see Rorty 1967), influential through the work of prominent scholars such as Ludwig Wittgenstein, Ferdinand de Saussure, Julia Kristeva, Jacques Derrida, and Michel Foucault, all of whom pondered the question of language and reality and the concepts and definitions thereof, from their own specific angles. As mentioned by Kress (2010), the linguistic turn challenged the processes of language and composition, and critical view had to be placed to grasp whole *designs* of things to oppose canonical representations of knowledge, up to the point where the concept of knowledge itself became disputable and arguable (Kress 2010: 133).

As a theory, the social semiotic approach to language is anchored in the writings of M. A. K. Halliday. The key thinkers practising actual analysis of multimodal environments, then, would be Gunther Kress (2010) and Theo van Leeuwen, who – in most respects – represent what could be called the semiotic perspective of Hallidayan theory, his being purely a linguistic one (Wodak 2001: 8). In a social-semiotic sense, it is more accurate to discuss on the *making* of signs in semiosis in social (inter)action than the *usage* of signs. This focus is one of the features characteristic of social semiotics as the tenets of social semiotics lie, stated by Kress (2010), on the following assumptions: that signs and sign-complexes are *newly made* in social interaction, they are, in other words, metaphors; also, signs are motivated relations of meaning and form, not arbitrary as is the case of the linguistic sense, motivation arises out of interest on the part of sign-makers; and further, the signifiers/forms used as signs are being made in social interaction, and they become part of the culture's semiotic resources (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006: 8, 12). Yet another concept is of relevance here, namely the *aptness* of the form/meaning relationship: the 'best fit' of meaning is desired between the form/signifier and the expression/signified, and this is reached when the form possesses the features in order to carry out the expression of the meaning (Kress 2010: 54-55; van Leeuwen 2005: 3, 48-49).

Moreover, the analysis entails an aspect of *context*, which may be viewed at different levels of analysis as it is attached to nearly all aspects of any viewed phenomenon. One may approach context in reference to textual formations where articulation and different voices in the text offer a context to one another; or, 'context' may be addressed as the social formation around – and within – an analysed sample of text. In addition, there is the context of viewing, comprising how a text is positioned in respect to its reception and questions regarding its audience; similarly, there is the context of production and distribution. Further, context may refer to situated practices and experiences, or the interwoven forms of interdiscursivity; social dialogue is 'context'. Context thus forms itself out of the backgrounding and foregrounding of things – or the absence of things – and through the setting and design where a thing or phenomenon is situated (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006: 161-163), also, where the viewer is situated (ibid.: 114-116; Fairclough 1992b: 81, 83, 188).

Social semiotics investigates meaning in context, but the creation of social semiotic meaning entails even *agency* of its participants. Agency could be defined as generative communicative participance through the use of cultural and social resources in the process of "sense making of the world" via signs. Individuals are socially shaped, with their own histories and environments affecting the process. Furthermore, expression may be carried out through different media, a process which the research into *multisemiosis* (multimodality) strives to examine (Matthiessen et al. 2010: 94). Signs exist in various *modes*, and the meaning resides, accordingly, in the sign-complex where all modes need to be taken into consideration in the process of analysis (Kress 2010: 54).

Although inspired by the Paris School of semiotics, and Roland Barthes in particular, research within social semiotics has evolved from beyond mere structure and system into wider landscapes of meaning: from analysing the 'sign' towards the use and regulation of semiotic *resources* contextualised in certain social situations, institutions and practices. Resources are regulated in different ways and to different degrees as they are being used in the production and interpretation of communicative events and artefacts, and analysis focuses on this regulation far rather than on descriptions of characteristics of separate semiotic modes (Van Leeuwen 2005: xi).

Halliday (1978) and Lemke (1995), working with language issues and various media by or through we operate with language, share an interest in semiotic resource systems, along with scholars focusing on visual representation, such as Kress and Leeuwen (e.g., 1996, see also O'Toole 1994). Text as written words on paper or spoken utterances in talk, or as images on paper and canvas, or carvings on stone, is now transferred to new media language appearing in digital form. The transition has ultimately even changed what we actually comprehend as signs. The material substance, the *matter* of language, is undergoing a change, an evolution of converting itself into *non-materiality* (resembling its original form of sound waves). Pure digits cannot be grasped physically, although they may be stored – and as Harris (1995) states – a medium ought to become analysed in terms of both the physical processes and material products (Harris, 1995). What more, the focus within research has shifted from signs to discourse. Lemke (ibid.) talks about *ecosocial systems*, by which he means organisations in regard to media; that is to say, organisations are not merely collections of people but the two are, rather, participants in mutual activities, and dependent on one another. In this respect, SNSs featuring a particular topic form an ecosystem of a kind operating in its own fashion.

Functionalism forms an underlying notion of how practices fulfil pragmatic social functions (Van Leeuwen 2005: 69). Social semiotics, not least due to Halliday's functional theory, has been influenced by the thought of syntax being a resource for interaction rather than merely consisting of fixed rules. Design, sociology and social anthropology, along with linguistics and social semiotics, are fields in which functionalism has emerged into the study of different interests and needs in society.

Multimodal analysis on SNSs entails the study of multimodal texts and media content on issues such as politics and societal decision making, including news broadcasting and grassroots movements. Analysis is carried out by examining texts that are multimodal due to modern technology, providing means for multiple modalities. In the contemporary world, the means and modes in and through which meaning is created and communicated takes increasingly place through diverse visual modes of language. The work of Hodge and Kress (1988), Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), and Kress (2010) are leading the way into thorough analysis of images, moreover, new tools and insights for carrying out analysis are bound to emerge.

Van Leeuwen (2005) quotes what has been said on the subject of good design: it benefits people in discovering their needs (ibid.: 71). The need has always been there, yet through a particular design, we realise that need and will find the *motivation* to act in a certain way.

7 THE SELF IN A DISCURSIVE DEMOCRACY

Discourse theory and practice by Margaret Wetherell, Taylor and Jates (2001), an informative Reader with its base in social science, selects topic areas which are central for discourse analysis, named as *discourse domains* (ibid.: 5). The following three domains are mentioned in the work, along the patterns and ordering of which discourse study pursues to investigate discourse: first, the study of *interaction* where the interest lies in the mode, order or particular level of interaction, discussing the accomplishment of mutual understanding (intersubjectivity), a domain dealing also with coordination of talk in order to accomplish social life, as well as examining the nature of social action; secondly, the study of minds, selves, and sense-making: order here is of special interest to psychologists, policy researchers, and sociologists within cultural studies in particular, focusing on the production of *social actors*, and dealing with the construction of psychological order, i.e., the construction of identity, of making sense, of the emergence of collective and individual mind, and what people do while discoursing in the frame of what the normative, conventional social organisation of discourse is making available; and thirdly, the study of *culture* and *social relations*, examining the order and patterns to be discovered in the institutional or historical features of discourse: how meaning making has been set in certain patterns over time, and on what grounds certain, very particular formations have been established. The third domain is the one where orders and patterns deal with *power* and social relations, both local and wider, including even abstract relations and ordering principles of 'otherness' and marginality (Wetherell et al 2001: 5-6).

Wetherell and Potter, in their work (1988), maintain to having traced repertoires which sustain particular social order but, as Jorgensen and Phillips (2002: 133) point out, they do not provide proper documentation of these in their studies. The researches maintain that an endeavour to make analytic claims by referring to empirically demonstrated grounds only

diminishes and reduces social life towards political impoverishment (cf. Wetherell 1999). Wetherell and Potter are not deeply interested in how discourses may have social bearing, and hence, discursive practices at work in maintaining social order is not at the top of their agenda. Discursive psychology has also been criticised for subjective interpretations and insufficient methods, such as its lack of random samples and quantitative analysis (Potter 1996: 167).

For discursive psychology, the self is a dynamic, ongoing process that involves the social world. The social psychologists view the self as a construct of discursively constituted, multiple identities that never produce a single, unchanging identity, although different strands of discursive psychology may possess slightly differing emphases on the self. Sociologist Stuart Hall (1996), a renowned researcher in the study of the self – and influenced by poststructuralism and Foucault – describes 'identity' as a meeting point in-between discourses, practices and processes producing subjectivities which then can be spoken, emphasising the temporariness of the subject positioning. Hall (1996) underlines the unstable and fragmented nature of identities (ibid.: 6) in the midst of various dimensions of constantly changing 'centres'. We are acting out a 'version' of the self, announcing a temporary closure.

The interactionalist perspective investigates identities as 'resources at use' when we are talking (Antaki & Widdicombe 1998). Identities are constructed on discursive resources, which, due to their continuous change, are at any given moment incomplete. Discursive psychology draws here on Bakhtin and Vygotsky, treating minds, as Jorgensen and Phillips (2002: 108) note, as constructs borne through internal dialogues. They continue by stating (ibid.: 108-113) that identities are seen to be formed in interaction where they are socially negotiated: identities may, besides being a resource for action, also be treated as products of discourses, where people position themselves within and through the construction of multiple, even competing, discourses and accounts of themselves, being positioned as subjects and as agents within social reproduction.

The radical democracy, as characterised by Jurgen Habermas, holds the view that powerlessness corrupts, but democratic participation is a means of self-development and self-realisation. More participation will therefore produce more tolerance, more reciprocity, better judgment, and people who weigh their preferences better. Democracy, thus, is something more than a means of distributing values: it is a way of life (Warren 1995: 167). From a Habermasian perspective, the ideals of democracy are found between the institutions and the discursiveness of political judgment, placing discourse at the centre as a means of resolving disputes and enabling actions. As Warren (1995) reconstructs Habermas's discursive theory of democracy, he points out that politics should have a close connection to opportunities for self-development and to control over everyday life and participation. Democracy ought to be a means of negotiating and coordinating collective actions as part of individuals' negotiations on their identities; it should not be a process which locates itself within specific institutions.

For Habermas, the definitive institution of democracy is the "public sphere" (Warren 1995: 167-171).

People express their identity through language and by non-verbal means; discourses, in turn, can be analysed through identities presented in textual sources in the society. Gee maintains Discourse (with the capital 'D') to function as an "identity kit" guiding our functioning in a particular role (Gee 1990: 142). We become intertwined in the Discourses in sociocultural contexts, and we are recognised and identified through the roles we assume in these contexts (Gee 2011: 178). According to Gee, discourses allow us produce and act within different positions; they also provide us tools to identify these positions; and finally, discourses set boundaries and demarcation lines between different identities (Pietikäinen and Mäntynen 2009: 63-66).

Social identities are set up in discourse through – or in relation to – what Fairclough calls the *identity function* of language (Fairclough 1992b: 64). Halliday (1978) emphasises the relevance of viewing language system and the social and personal needs in relation to one another. The relational function relates to how social relationships are then enacted and negotiated. Halliday called this the 'interpersonal' function (Fairclough 1992b: 64-65). Identity, thus, is something that is able to be realised only within social practice, and within discourse forming a part of social practice. We exchange meanings and construe the world as a shared enterprise in a community within which we enact our multiple roles.

Discourse is important in the construction of social identities. For Fairclough (1992b), this perspective of construction and its relevance is why he decided to view identity as an individual part of Halliday's interpersonal function, dividing 'interpersonal' into 'identity' and 'relational' functions. Societies build identities in ways which relate to the most basic aspects of how societies work; the ways in which identities are categorised embodies power relations imposed and exercised upon the people. Hence, the role of discourse in the construction and constitution of selves is essential in positing types of 'self' into subject positions within social practice (Fairclough 1992b: 64-65; 168). Fairclough discusses the ideological 'investments' people make through language, by choosing to signify an event in a certain way (and, by doing so, excluding some other way(s)). – We enact the interpersonal function by declaring, imposing, and interrogating, i.e., by making use of the diverse modalities at the level of language and behaviour.

Foucault's (1972: 95-96) notes that the social subject is a function of the statement the subject produces. Hence, the subject creates a relationship between the subject and the statement, made up of discursive enunciative modalities: in other words, types of discursive activity such as describing, formulating regulations, forming hypotheses, teaching, and so on, each of which create their own associated subject positions (Fairclough 1992b: 43).

Blommaert (2005: 203-204) discusses various identity shifts, genres of acting and being: modes of talking about ourselves while enacting our roles in society, living up to the

stereotypes and following the rituals expected from us. He takes note of how context dictates our behaviour, the 'who and what we are', as does also purpose and occasion. This identification process, as he points out, usually involves a semiotic process of representation with symbols and narratives, and textual genres. Blommaert (ibid.) underlines the semiotic nature of identity, a fact that reflects also towards the opposite direction in that all acts of semiosis are also acts of identity. Literature and various studies on identity is abundantly found within social-scientific disciplines, especially on gender and race.

7.1 Voice and orders of indexicality

Blommaert (2005: 68-69) defines 'voice' as the way in which people make themselves understood, and are able to accomplish desired functions through language: create conditions that make their message come across as they desire, or fail to do so. Basically, the favourable conditions are created by mobilizing the most appropriate semiotic means, and by hoping that they will become interpreted following the directions of contextualization.

Voice (ibid.) is a social issue, therefore, a linguistic analysis will never suffice: emphasis on politico-economic values is required. Differences in language are differences in social value, and these values are nested in *orders of indexicality*, through which people move and which are not available for everyone in society. Orders of indexicality as a phenomenon reaches beyond language, and it affects people's ability to deploy communicative resources. Voice is the capacity for semiotic mobility, a capacity associated with, e.g., multimodal Internet communication; the capacity to accomplish functions of linguistic resources translocally, across intertwined physical and social spaces (Blommaert 2005).

Dell Hymes (1966) pointed out the significance of sociolinguistic systems, based on fashions or ways of speaking, how language actually works, what language forms *do* in real societies, and how similar forms inserted into social actions may have huge differences in how they function. These are matters in the field of ethnography, which in the era of globalization, as stated by Blommaert (2005, among others), is what will be needed to investigate further; it has impact especially on questions concerning unequal access and availability to linguistic resources while performing discourse functions in society. Differences in the use of language are systematically translated into inequalities between speakers in stratified societies.

What globalisation does is the constant flow of people, objects, and images (Blommaert 2005: 71-72) around our living sphere. The scale of contact and difference is changing, as is perception: e.g., 'speech community' as a concept becomes more difficult to handle. On the Internet, the closure of a speech community is no more what it used to be, nor are speech communities necessarily homogeneous or synchronic. Linguistic resources move across time and space, and across orders of indexicality, and the functions of the resources are not easily placed into commonsensical categories: the shape of discourse may travel unchanged, but the

values, function and meaning do not, instead, they have lost their 'market value' as cultural commodities which always have to be granted from the outside through orders of indexicality. Mobility, therefore, often brings problems into communication, since it entails codes, customs, rules and expectations. Conventionalised patterns of indexicality feed also aspects of identity work, e.g., displays of marginality or 'groupness' among grassroots action, and it affects how people reproduce their peer group norms within the orders of indexicality, or situate themselves vis-à-vis other groups. The same signs may thus index different things in different orders of indexicality, leading to different representations for identities.

'Centring institutions', i.e., authoritative actors to which the systemically reproduced indexicalities are tied, are often 'central' institutions imposing the stratification of value in the system (Blommaert 2005: 75). This function is attributive, meaning that it generates indexicalities that others have to orient to if they want to be seen as 'social', to 'belong'. They draw on the potential of central values related to or ascribed to a group; what is seen as 'ideal' or 'good', what is understood by the 'country' or 'nation', or by 'economy', or 'real woman', and so forth; and naturally, pointing out what potentials for feeding identity become inhabitable. These specific institutions are actors using authoritative voice which uniforms identities, make claims on homogenisation and orientation towards the centre, and thus, leads to reduction of difference and creation of normative meaning. These centring institutions may be peer groups, communities, large and small groups at all levels of social life; they are imagined communities, yet triggering specific behaviours. Blommaert underlines, however, that individuals always are *polycentric* and stratified, with multiple belongings, and possessing mixed or hybrid identities (Blommaert 2005: 75.)

8 ANALYSIS OF MULTIMODAL RESOURCES

Theories of multimodality investigate the representation of ideas across varied channels of media, SFL being used as one approach or framework, along with social semiotics (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006) and multimodal interactional analysis (see Scollon & Wong Scollon, 2003). CDA has also moved beyond mere linguistics to the multimodality of discourse, to articulate the relation between discourses and social practices; it has not reduced the social into mere language use but has investigated the changing discourses and new practices. With detailed analysis of language use – revealing how power is exercised and negotiated in social relations and in presentations and representations of identities – CDA has the potentiality to reveal what passes unmarked in the constant flow of information, and amidst the readily available, processed 'fast food' of knowledge production, which on social networking platforms, in particular, has exploded during the past few years. It helps to distil fake fabrications out of genuine pursuits in order to tell, show and inform the world, and eventually, to have an effect on social change.

Multimodal communication refers to language use which is "contextualised in conjunction with other semiotic resources simultaneously used for the construction of meaning" (O'Halloran 2004: 1). O'Halloran states that visual images contain functions, and that images do, besides written language, deliver meaning. The integration of the various modes is also noted by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), and by Lim Fei (2004: 220-221)[12]: meaning in today's multimedia society employs a combination of semiotic resources of which one, but not the only, is the written language. The co-operation or joint functioning (rather than accompanying) – dialogic, even fused – affordances of various resources work together to facilitate conveyance of meaning within and across semiotic resources.

Cultures differ in their ways to perceive the written mode in the act of reading (Kress 2010: 89-92). The distribution of elements adheres to social characteristics of the audience: some languages apply left-to-right reading, some the opposite direction. In Western cultures, left is the accustomed position for the established, 'given' information, i.e., things we already know, whereas right is the position for the 'new'. Layout arrangements conform to this socially adapted cultural custom of comprehending and categorizing the appearance of elements in a semiotic space, placing something in the 'centre' and something other in the 'margin', presuming also an ordering of events in time as 'before' and 'later'. The sharing of a principle within a group fulfils the interpersonal relation of communication within a community (ibid.).

Although originally organised for the study of language, the tri-metafunctional framework is suitable for the scrutiny of semiotic resources even more generally, and not least because it rests on the assumption of language as a social semiotic (Lim Fei 2004: 221). On the Expression plane, there are no discrete categories, but the three (meta)functions are more appropriately described as functioning on a cline: systems operating on the Expression plane can contribute to the Ideational, Interpersonal and Textual meanings in a text, and may best be examined by revealing which metafunctional meaning is likely to emerge from choices on the Expression plane (O'Halloran 2004: 232). These necessary conditions and circumstances are called the *critical impetus*, and the critical impetus for a dominant Interpersonal meaning here is *salience* – achieved, for example, through a contrast of Colour, Shape and Size; that is, when salience has critical impetus, the Interpersonal meaning dominates. For Textual meaning, the critical

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[12] The paper published in O'Halloran (2004) proposes a framework of Integrative Multi-Semiotic Model as an attempt to bring together the systemic-functional matrices and multimodal frameworks, and use it as a meta-model for the analysis of a page or frame utilizing both written language and semiotic resources (the model was first introduced in Lim, 2002). The model considers these contributions for the expression, content and communicative planes of language, and visual images in the IMM. The model does not, however, account sufficiently for the dynamic environments (including video texts and hypertext), and it is an early proposition to be further developed. (See Lim Fei 2004: 220.)

impetus on the Expression plane is the presence of *textual unity* and *cohesiveness*. On the ideational meaning, two types are described on the Expression and Content strata, posing a double layer of signification in pictures (as described by Floch, 1986 and Thurlemann, 1990), viz., the *iconic* and the *plastic*: observed on the iconic level, the picture stands for an object that we recognize from the lifeworld[13]; on the plastic level, abstract concepts within the lifeworld are conveyed.

In pictorial images (Lim Fei 2004: 231-233; Doonan 1993: 15), there are two 'modes of referring'. Firstly, 'Denotation', the Denotative Value or the literal meaning which, however, acknowledges the cultural-based subjectivities; secondly, 'Exemplification', the Connotative Value which, extended into SFL terms, might be seen as the Context of Situation and Context of Culture (social reality), echoing terms originally proposed by Barthes (1977), although Barthes' denotation reflects non-Context-dependent Platonic ideal, and for O'Halloran it is literal but Context-dependent.

The choices made in Typography are usually stereotypical options made according to specific genres rather than as a marked choice – and thus, atypical of genre – 'standing out' as a departure or mismatch from the convention (cf. O'Halloran 2004: 233). For instance, in the present study, adhering to the genre of thesis, an association with certain typographical convention is expected, it is not an altogether free choice made by the producer of the text.

In Facebook, there is no marked selection within Typography: what is available is but one type of typography. However, the arrays of other pictorial symbols, such as smileys (later emoticons), and to them adhering functions are on offer, and they may be seen as parallel to typographical affordances. Italic script, cursive typography, may thus be paralleled with certain iconic symbols portrayed in smileys of a certain kind. These symbols may also be taking over certain typographic functions, perhaps due to lacking typographic affordances on sites such as Facebook.

In analysis, semiotic structures are usually described in terms of various relations within the principles of structure, such as *cohesion* and *order*. Cohesion includes relations of fusion/separation, identity/difference, and order relations of the vertical and horizontal. Clause complex analysis contains degrees of complexity and subordination, such as hypotaxis (involving subordination and hierarchy), and parataxis (involving parallelism and sequence) to impose order, embedded clauses, ellipsed elements, and so forth (Hodge & Kress 1988: 263).

Semiotic structures are bound with *relativity* and *specificity*: they exist at different levels: on macro-, meso-, and micro-structures, depending on how easily they can be perceived, and they are labelled in relation to the point of semiotic entry, which are relative to semiotic positions.

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[13] *Lifeworld* is a concept from Husserl, referring to 'world taken for granted' (Doonan, 1993; as quoted by Lim Fei in O'Halloran, 2004).

Structures can be patterned (i.e., homology) or related by contiguity or causality (i.e., determination). Of the semiotic movements between levels, we can use terms such as stretching or diving (Hodge & Kress 1988: 263).

Semiotic structures (Hodge & Kress 1988: 263) are built up by the acts of joining and separating, including expansions and contractions (such as the act of negation or of choice, which is a type or species of negation), and wherefrom a play of unities and differences is brought about. Negation becomes meaningful in terms of the rejected positive, and the forms of full and partial negation or inversion signify the possibility of a positive term. Choice affirms one term while negates another in a system of differences, becoming therefore meaningful only in relation to the fuller structure (ibid.).

Fairclough, in his 1995 anthology, views text mainly as written or spoken language, and that is obviously partly a view of its time although he clarifies his view by stating that texts are increasingly becoming multisemiotic, combining language with other semiotic forms, such as on television, or the various kinds of graphic designs on written (printed) pages, with photographs and diagrams (1995a: 4). Fairclough could continue recognising a text as the principal linguistic cultural artefact, but also take into consideration, to be grasped within further research, even other semiotic forms, and interaction between different modes.

Fairclough's notion resonated the rapid rise of 'social semiotics', and also the inevitable question of how CDA best could be employed with examining multimodal texts/language as reality, and the modes by which the issue was being dealt with was beginning to appear as fundamentally 'multiple', and far more complicated than any settled and fixed view of what 'text' or 'language' might entail (see Hodge & Kress 1988, and further, Kress & van Leeuwen 2006). Fairclough had already earlier risen the notion of 'texture' (including form and organization of texts) among discourse analysts, entering analysis from outside linguistics, to grasp analysis reaching beyond mere content analysis (1995a: 4).

With the emergence of new forms of literacy combining the textual with other modes (visual, audio, and so forth.) in a single sign, a consumer of texts, as stated by Blommaert (2005: 116), has to combine a multitude of activities in the process of interpreting (see Kress & van Leeuwen (2006), i.e., 'reading' and 'looking at'; a synthetic view of the whole sign aside from analytic decoding, resolving the meaning of the sign into its components.

The rise of media studies has advanced an awareness of the non-verbal aspects of texts and led to a shift of focus from linguistic devices to semiotic devices. Theo van Leeuwen has pioneered by his contributions in his work within interaction between the verbal and the visual, and the studies on meaning conveyed by and through images. He has worked also together with Gunther Kress, another prominent theorist in the field. Van Leeuwen in one of the first scholars investigating the complex interaction of the visual and the verbal in discourse, and what images really 'mean': what is their communicative impact in texts (van Leeuwen 2005: 120-122.

The scholarly work in the field has witnessed a shift from the old art theory of images – or mere pictorial semiotics – towards a study of signs as language systems. Relevant and influential theory was put forward by Kress and van Leeuwen (1996), as they provided a framework for the communicative potential of visual media devices. As Wodak and Meyer (2001) report, van Leeuwen familiarised himself with Hallidayan linguistics and studied film and television production, publishing on topics such as intonation of newsreaders, language of television interviews and newspaper reporting, and the semiotics of music and visual communication. Sociologist Roland Barthes is also a prominent scholarly figure in the field of image analysis. In *Multimodality: A Social Semiotic Approach to Contemporary Communication* (2010), Gunther Kress discusses the field of visual and multimodality studies further.

Materiality and culture are two intertwining factors pursuing towards explanations of resources for representation. Culture is always seen as part of the social organisations in which it exists, while materiality gains semiotic power through physical facts (which may not always be visible). Multimodal grammar, e.g., the 'grammar' of the visual, cannot be a straightforward transposition of the terms of a grammar dealing with the linguistic mode (Kress & Van Leeuwen 2006: 225), because the resources for representation – the materiality of it - is different: instead of the ordering logic of time (as in speech), images use the space of surfaces. This influences terminology as entities of visual grammar are described; transpositions deriving from linguistic terminology have not paid attention to materiality: phonetics, for example, due to its materiality, operates on a different level of abstraction than other grammar.

As Kress and van Leeuwen (2006: 226) point out, the study of language in linguistics has moved from 'language as such' towards comprising the materiality of it as well, entering into a *semiosis* of language: speech happens as sound, which in turn happens in temporal sequences taking place in time: there is the 'first', the 'second' – a significant ordering of entities where the order *means* something, and is a cultural matter of sign-making. Using sound as speech is using the possibilities of changes of pressure in the air, using the potential of changes in the frequency of vibration, or changing volumes to fashion a semiotic resource. There are cultural differences in what can be chosen into a resource in order to make representations, or what is chosen as a mode: for example, to what extent is lexis, or pitch, employed to produce differences.

8.1 Affordances and modes

The landscape of communication has changed dramatically during the last few decades, as Kress notes (2006; 2010). Content on the Internet uses a variety of communicative modes and channels of communication. *Modes* are the means for representation through elements (like sounds or words, morphemes and clauses), and through differing arrangements of the elements into texts and messages. However, there are meanings that do not become fully

encoded via writing and images, that is, via the conventionalised categories of modes, but need other features, in-between modes, that will contribute in conveying a more exact meaning (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006).

The Web page opens, or rather, *folds up* as a single landscape where certain parts are designed to instantly catch the eye. It is designed to serve a multiplicity of functions through reading /watching /viewing /listening; as we deal with multimodal texts, we 'read' images when we assign meanings to them (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006); similarly, we 'watch' text when we pay attention to the layout or fonts. The reading utilises particular rules of perception, developing thematic designs for the reader/viewer/listener. The single verb 'read' denotes to the overall perception of the content laid out on the page: we 'read' whatever meets our gaze on the screen, since the processes of watching/reading happen simultaneously and are intertwined, and often inseparable.

As stated by Kress (2010), the integration of the written and visual prompts on a web page means that movement and meaning (hence, interpretation) are also increasingly intertwined, changing what in communication has traditionally been a naturalised semiotic movement of reading written pages, even ones with pictures. The screen offers a display that is inherently spatially organised with all the affordances of modern technology, and inevitably, the visual mode dominates the new logic concerning the arrangement of a page. As Kress (ibid.) points out, movement on a web page entails basically a response to a *prompt*, following thereafter the reader's/viewer's interest. Compared with a traditional page, there is more order and direction on a web page, and the whole design in terms of introduced topics, themes, and the ordering of items, such as columns and images, is designed to meet the reader's eye in a certain manner to guide reading experience and the intentions of the creator of the message. (Kress 2010: 169-170.)

The imagined movement on the page is suggested, for example, using colour; the forms and uses of multimodal texts are intricately related, as Kress points out (2010: 170). The menu bar on the left or on top of the page introduces the main topics found on the page, to be activated by a click. The ordering of columns entails a sense of prediction and suggestion concerning the user's movements (or directions of action) on the page. Modes and their arrangements project and signify the imagined and desired audience and their world-view and interests, and they also signal the intentions, conscious and unconscious, direct and indirect, of the page designer. As noted by Arnheim (1974, see chapter 4), the operations of perception and production of pictures are based on similar foundation. The visual mode dominates the screen, and the frames consist of Given and New, the different degrees of visual *salience*. Possibilities for choice (options) are mediated via *arrangements* on the screen. As Kress (2010) notes, the screen display is gradually changing towards an aesthetic of movement, for fuller colours and multimodality; aesthetics is also a politics of style as the chosen style seeks a certain kind of audience with a particular habitus and lifestyle (Kress 2010: 171-173).

How do we define the realm of mode? For example, is *font* a mode, as Kress (2010) asks; how about *colour*? – The answer, according to Kress, can be viewed both socially and formally. If 'font' becomes included in the *repertoire*[14] of resources regularly used by a group of people, and there is a widespread agreement as to the potentials of its meaning in the community, then, certainly, it may be treated as a mode. Formal requirements, on the other hand, are fulfilled following Halliday's theory of communication. Kress (2010: 84-88) refers to Halliday's semiotic approach concerning what a theory of communication, in order to suffice, must contain: it has to represent meanings about the ideational function, about the interpersonal function, and to possess the textual function; that is, meanings about states, events, actions, about social relations, and texts projecting social worlds.

The meanings we comprehend and conceive are both objective and subjective, according to vision psychologist J. J. Gibson (1979) who originally defined the insights of affordances. According to Gibson, an affordance is a relation between an object and an organism, situated in an environment which may be a medium, an object, a substance, or a surface with a quality of allowing an individual the opportunity to perform an action. Affordance thus bears meanings not yet recognised, as stated also by Van Leeuwen (2005: 5), that is, latent potentials of semiotic objects, including words.

Gibson (1979: 5) states further that an affordance, to be realised, needs first to be perceived, and it constitutes essentially complementarity between an individual and an environment, one affording potential action. The environment furnishes objects with functions enabling us to perform them, or it may constrain our actions; our perception is selective, but the affordance is always objectively present. Compared to Halliday's 'meaning potential', according to which words and sentences possess a potential to signify something, affordances bring meanings not yet recognised into the society.

Jamie Ward (2006: 169), based on J. J. Gibson's work, defines affordances as certain structural properties by which objects imply certain usages: a handle may imply grasping, and an edge may involve cutting. Thus, according to Ward, there might be a 'psychology of materials': a handle of a coffee mug provides an affordance for holding it to drink coffee, a knob allows the twisting; buttons await to be pushed. Similarly, a bicycle wheel has an affordance to move round in circles because its form allows us, through the act of pedalling, to rotate the wheel. Even when we do not do so, this affordance is present in the wheel and may be discovered and harnessed at any given moment. If there is no need for us to use a bicycle, we do not pay attention to the wheel, or even the bike, it escapes our attention although its properties are completely perceivable for us. An affordance is, in other words,

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[14] 'Repertoires' entailing the totality of linguistic resources, knowledge about their function and about their conditions of use in an individual or community (Blommaert 2005: 254). In interaction, interpretative repertoires are drawn on as flexible resources (Jorgensen & Phillips 2002: 105).

potentiality of an object *to be awakened* by our acts, repeated instances of which constitute our actions; but it is not a property situated solely in an organism or an environment. As stated by Van Leeuwen (2005: 5), semiotic resources in a society are to an extent fixed, controlled by rules, they are 'codes' – in some domains of social life more than in others.

Cognitive scientist Donald A. Norman (2013) has cultivated J. J. Gibson's conceptual idea of affordances in a slightly different manner than many Gibsonian psychologists by adding characteristics of human interpretation into it, coining a term 'perceived affordance'. The relevance of perceived affordance is especially important in interface design, on surfaces we perceive momentarily and all-at-once. In Norman's view, affordances result from mental interpretations of things (ibid.: 219), and he investigates how the perception-action coupling guides space around us, and hence, the coupling of function and control, can enable usable design by exploiting the natural relationships within our perceptional qualities, distinguishing actions which are perceived as being possible from actions which actually are possible. According to Norman (ibid.: 219), our past experiences along with our knowledge, applied to our perception of things, are what triggers affordances to become interpreted. Visual details are used as signifiers which help viewers perceive interaction between elements such as navigational components on an interface. Graphical elements may suggest, or hinder, certain affordances through their design. It is possible to design an interface in order to lure the viewer into doing an appropriate action, and vice versa, to lure the user away from an action, not to perceive inappropriate affordances. Affordances may also fail to afford an operation; or be false affordances which, although being apparent, have no real function, therefore causing the viewer to perceive non-existent possibilities for action (ibid.: 9, 10).

Affordance is a term widely used in a variety of fields, from perceptual and cognitive psychology and industrial design to human-computer interaction and artificial intelligence. As for the present study, the most usable perspective is viewing affordances as qualities and relations of objects, organisms, or environments which, according to Van Leeuwen (2005, echoing J. J. Gibson's definitions) are "the potential uses of a given object, stemming from the perceivable properties of the object..." (Gibson 1979). Van Leeuwen (2005: 273) also lays emphasis on how what becomes perceived varies from person to person due to the selective nature of perception: our perception seeks to find what is needed, and found interesting, for a specific occasion. It is noteworthy that what does not catch somebody's eye, or what passes unnoticed, continues still objectively to exist, waiting to be detected as latent affordances in the object.

As Günther Kress (2010) states, ever since the introduction of the concepts of 'mode' and 'multimodality', the up-to-then prevailed notions of 'language' were brought into consideration: what we consider as 'modes' could even be stretched to include furniture, clothing, or food, and so forth. However, since these do not *primarily* bear meanings for representative or communicative purposes, they probably should not be labelled as 'modes'

(2010: 79). Modes are, nevertheless, layered, or their many appearances in meaning making are building up, strengthening one another, contradicting and struggling for attention. Different times bring different governing modes, often introduced by new technology and tools, and consequently, making us more sensitive towards certain modes.

The question of mode is not only a semiotic issue; what is salient, important, in a society, depends on social practices and histories, on the valuations in a society. Modes, the material stuff of signs, realise and materialise meanings in the world into specific arrangements in space and time (Kress 2010: 154-155). Writing and speech, for instance, are two different modes with different scope of operation. Choice of mode is foundational to meaning-making, since it brings its logic, its *syntagm*, and its semiotic arrangements along with it. Kress (2010: 84-88) reminds that, besides its potentials and limitations, the *reach* of each mode is important: what social and cultural domains it covers, what a particular mode does, and what features each mode sustains. We employ different inventories of various modes in different times and places to fulfil certain needs. Even what is regarded as a mode is, basically, a social decision (Kress 2010: 154-158).

Images have been used in newspapers and magazines since printing was invented, however, in the analysis of texts visual features have been neglected as part of meaning making, as multimodal entity; that is, in conveying the whole meaning as one. Written text was analysed separated from images, and with a different set of tools. Language was not seen to include images as one mode.

Different modes cannot be grasped separately, however, since multimodal meaning-making and practices are created in and from the *combination* of all that is perceived, which, of course, is different for various recipients and analysts. A newspaper article with written language and images is perceived and read as one piece (that is, reading of language and image simultaneously, although reading of written language takes more time), and it should be described and interpreted a whole. On the Internet, images, written and spoken language (recorded and distributed) combine with a multitude of components and modes, and their usage also keeps continuously changing. Our ways of communicating will also become affected, as they have done since the pen and the paper, through the new available technologies. A relevant question to ask, then, is *who* is engineering the new tools, and for what, and for whose ends. (See Hodge & Kress 1988, Kress & van Leeuwen 2006, and Kress 2010.)

8.2 Visual interaction: designing social action

Designs are based on aims and purposes, and they are implemented through instantiations of choices. Style in a message is an outcome of multiple choices concerning design – these choices being, more or less – circumscribed by power; therefore, style, without doubt, is also

intertwined in the politics of choice (Kress 2010: 28). The shaping force of *design* into various kinds of environments entails new ways of viewing the representational modes and genres, and altering the focuses of acting in social environments.

The content on an SNS creates new functional relations entailing the visual mode and the written language. The visual mode in multimodal texts serves multiple representational and communicational requirements, and the visual sign-making utilises ideational choices. The ideational metafunction derived from Halliday's framework can be applied to the visual mode, which, as was mentioned earlier, allows the semiotic systems to represent relations between objects outside the representational system, including the system of (a) culture, which in itself is semiotically represented. Different modes offer various choices of representation and realisation through interactional processes or hierarchical connections. (See Kress & van Leeuwen 2006.)

Images differ in what will be included in the picture, and of course, what is left missing. As for interpretation, what becomes excluded may eventually be more important than what is being presented. As introduced by Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006; see also Scollon & Wong Scollon 2003), the arrangement of the elements in the foreground and background, their ordering, categorising and placing at certain distances create relations and conflations between them and a viewer, dynamic processes of meaning and interpretation in terms of different forms of social interaction, and different interpretations of experience. Kress and van Leeuwen analyse composition of visual images using Halliday's analytical approach to grammar as their basis for representing meaning potential.

Besides formal art theory (see e.g., Arnheim 1974), images can be analysed through functional semiotic theory (Halliday 1978; 1985/1994). As approaches of analysis, the two are not mutually exclusive but can benefit one another. Arnheim's theory applies 'volumes' (that is, participants or 'being') for distinct entities valued as prominent according to the degree of their salience, and 'vectors' (processes or 'acting') for dynamic forces of communication. 'Salience', a key term in analysing images, is achieved by a repertoire of forms, size, colour, shape, and contrast (Kress & Van Leeuwen 2006: 176-177, 201-203, 214).

As Halliday (1985: 106ff) states, different types of mental and verbal processes can be distinguished with the aid of grammatical criteria. Processes of perception, affection and cognition all have a Senser and a Phenomenon; however, there are no structural visual devices to draw a distinction between cognitive and affective processes (see Kress & Van Leeuwen 2006: 76-78). Functional semiotic theory, formerly applied into language, draws attention to the functions of participants, using semantic-functional terms such as 'Actor', 'Recipient', 'Carrier', 'Attribute', Goal' and 'Transaction' for the roles employed into analysis, terms familiar from functional linguistics). It should be noted, though, that the employment of similar terms does not suggest their use being identical to that in linguistics, or that relations in images could as such be transformed into linguistic form; they are rather capable of fulfilling

similar goals as language, although using different ways of realisation (Kress & Van Leeuwen 2006: 49-50).

The visual foregrounds procedure over content (the substance), which may have an impact on more emphasis being set on strategies for merely reaching a target audience than on placing emphasis on the actual services provided for the reader/viewer of images. Kress and Van Leeuwen state with compelling reason (2006: 48, 65), indicating to the Shannon-Weaver communication model (Shannon & Weaver 1949), the problems with analogy statements to language concerning image analysis. Language in the Western culture gives centrality to language, and English language in particular as it has acted as a model for the semiotic schema and lexical distinctions concerning processes (verbs) and objects (nouns), even though the organization of the visual and language cannot, eventually, be mutually transcoded. Different modes employ different epistemologies (ibid.: 65-66, 76-78); for example, visual Events and linguistic Events can be quite different: linguistic Events have processes without an Actor, and structural devices for cyclical or interactional events lack in the English language.

Visual representational structures can be divided into two types (Kress & Van Leeuwen 2006: 59-63): narrative presentational structures unfolding action and events, processes of change, transitory spatial arrangements, and conceptual generalized structures representing participants in terms of class, structure or meaning. Narrative structures are vectorial patterns; conceptual patterns represent participants more in their essential and stable essence. Narrative structures always have a vector (directionality), a diagonal line of elements 'in action' in the picture wherefrom an 'Actor' departs or emanates, whereas conceptual structures do not possess vectors.

Combining language with visuals, that is, creating multimodal text, offers the viewer/reader a semiotic interplay of two modes. Structures and processes in language and in images do bear resemblances, but differences are greater than similarities, as Kress and Van Leeuwen note (2006), hence, some visual devices cannot be represented through linguistic conceptualisations, nor vice versa.

8.2.1 Genre and text types

Also the generic structure of a text suggests a particular organisation of the text, and the choice of the main genre is important to the overall impact, involving headlines, the layout of paragraphs, elaborations situated in the text, and images – all of which combined form the entirety of what the reader or viewer comprehends as a textual unit. Many institutionalised texts have, for instance, clear standards of how textual elements should be arranged on official pages, be it on paper as documents, or online on a web page.

Blommaert (2005: 252) describes 'genre' as an ordered complex of indexicalities, structuring the precise ways in which particular communicative action has to be performed, and creating expectations in that sense. In its discourse aspect, genre is a way of acting (Fairclough 2003:

216). Identifying genres may happen at various levels of abstraction, some genres generalise over several forms of narrative. Disembedded genres and situated genres are tied to specific networks in social practices, such as 'political interview' in modern TV coverage. (See Bakhtin 1986; Fairclough 2000b; Fairclough 2003: 22, 65-70.)

Genres, as Fairclough points out, draw upon discourses, but a discourse may also be drawn upon various genres. Text types can be seen as conventionalised genres for particular categories of activity for certain social situations; similarly, they are also configurations of discourses and voices, of styles and modes developed for certain situations. To take a wider perspective, one may see text types as a socially ratified way of language use (Fairclough 1995a: 14).

Social networking online is one such way of using language in connection with activity of a particular type, in Hallidayan terms, in connection with a 'field'[15], or 'discourse', i.e., a domain of social practice viewed from a certain perspective, with certain social practices. Also other facets of genre become applied: particularities of 'voice' (how participants are constructed on the site), and 'style' (the relations of participants), further, 'mode' (forms of textualisation) need all be taken into consideration. When discussing realms of notions and conceptions of something, different abstraction levels may confuse when employing different accounts and frameworks of analysis (van Leeuwen 1993; Fairclough 1995a:14-15). Bakhtin, Kress, and Van Leeuwen, for example, have, respectively, formulated 'genre' slightly differently, according to their individual goals, and reflecting the mutual dependency of the tools they employ for analysis, i.e., conceptions and terms employed and applied within their respective frameworks. (Van Leeuwen 1987, Bakhtin 1981, 1986.)

Genres linked together are systematically transformed to form genre chains. For example, reports on television are linked with associated press releases, which in turn derive from official documents. Genre chains have an impact in 'action at a distance' (see Fairclough 2000a). Both the mixing of genres and genres forming chains involve interdiscursivity, and they are associated with social practices, especially those resulting from globalisation. They are also potential instances of social change. Through analysis of genres we may locate eventual processes of change in texts (ibid.).

8.2.2 Represented and interactive participants

As Kress and Van Leeuwen suggest (2006: 47-48), images involve two participants: represented participants and interactive participants. The interactive participants are the ones who produce and view images (and, naturally, speak/write/read), while the represented

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[15] Foucault also uses the term 'field', distinguishing 'fields' of 'presence', 'concomitance' and 'memory' within the intertextual aura of a text (Bakhtin 1986: 46-7; Fairclough 1992b:102).

participants are the subject matter of the communication on which we are producing images, or writing, or speech – including the people, places and things depicted, also eventual abstractions. The represented participants are thus objects and elements of communication: they are the people, things and places that the images portray; the interactive participants, in turn, communicate with each other through these images, they are the real people producing, interpreting and regulating images in social settings. For Scollon & Wong Scollon (2003: 86), the participants are, following Kress and van Leeuwen, representational structures, an element that can either be conceptual or narrative: a block of text, a logo, or an image of a person).

The two categories, represented participants and interactive participants, may affect one another through an interplay: the producers and viewers can themselves be represented in an image, causing narratological complexities; on the other hand, there may be a complicated relationship between the implied producer/viewer and the real participants (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Kress and van Leeuwen (2006: 45-48) use the term 'represented participants' in place of 'objects' or 'elements', but the principle of interaction is similar to that of the Hallidayan principle. Through the notion of 'represented participation', Kress and van Leeuwen emphasise the relationality of participance (participation in something), and the differing types of participance, that is, interactive and represented participance.

Relations occurring within visual interaction may, in other words, involve relations between the participants being represented; and further, between the represented and interactive participants; finally, between the things the interactive participants do through images. Yet there are also circumstances in which the involvement is more vague and less tangible – where the image, for example, is holding the scene of events seemingly independent of the underlying context, detached of any imminent source of production. Whoever is 'in charge' is hidden from the open eye; and vice versa, the producer cannot exactly know who are following the flow of contents.

8.2.3 Narrative and conceptual representations

Scollon notes (2003: 86) that narrative structures unfold processes of change, events and actions, whereas conceptual structures entail more generalised categories. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006: 175-214), Scollon and Wong Scollon (2003: 91-95) and Theo van Leeuwen (2005: 198-209) introduce vectors as compositional structures relating participants to one another and to other elements in the pictures, not leaving aside the significance of the whole, that is, how the interactive elements and representational elements become integrated meaningfully. The placement of elements gives them specific information values depending on whether the elements are situated in the left or right, at the top or at the bottom of the frame, or whether they are situated in the centre instead of being positioned as marginalised items.

In its display, multimodal composition combines verbal, typographical, kinetic and pictorial elements. As Scollon and Wong Scollon (2003: 95-98) point out, participants, besides

demonstrating conceptual and narrative relationships amongst themselves, also create relationships with the viewers: that is, contact, attitude, and social distance. With certain affordances of the design, it is possible to position the interactive participants, the represented participants and the viewers in relative positions with each other. Through civil inattention (a term borrowed from Goffman), an image can establish an offer for the viewer (see Kress & van Leeuwen 2006: 114-124), entailing an inference of avoiding eye contact, 'offering' the personal front for examination by other people. The opposite of offer is demand, a direct look establishing a need to enter into an engagement with that person, to make a move in the interaction space.

Within the frame of the image (Van Leeuwen 2005: 198-209), it is possible to foreground and background elements, and through composition, to give specific value to elements in relation to one another: items can be placed 'up' and 'down', on the right or on the left in the spatial space of the frame. Framing in itself, naturally, provides impetus to certain aspects, at a cost of leaving out something else of what is being depicted through the images. These are always matters of choice. As Scollon and Wong Scollon (2003) note, classical web page design follows the progression from left-to-right and top-to-bottom reading patterns, relating to the given-new and ideal-real information structures. From within these situated elements in the picture, we capture the most salient element, which is the eye-catching element of the image, through its emplacement and size. The design of things is important, not in the simplistic manner of regarding how something looks but, instead, what the look 'means': what the sign contains, and what is the signified behind the multifaceted sign, or clusters of signs.

When detailed naturalistic images are being analysed, the analogy with language may contrive two separate modes, and eventually, one can never reach a final agreement on their being mutually interchangeable, or transcoded into one another. The details in images contain embedded analytical processes (Kress & Van Leeuwen 2006: 46, 48-50), whose function in language might be expressed with, for example, prepositional phrases or subordinate clauses. (See also Halliday 1985: 106ff.)

Following Halliday (1985), and based on the different kinds of vectors and participants involved, narrative processes are distinguished as projective (mental and verbal) and non-projective processes: that is, action processes (transactional, bidirectional and non-transactional); reactional processes (the vector is formed by the direction of the glance); speech or mental processes (connecting an animate being with 'content'); conversion processes (forming chains of transactional processes); geometrical symbolism (abstract patterns, e.g., different kind of arrows affecting meaning); and circumstances (e.g., foreground, background, the setting) (Kress & Van Leeuwen 2006: 63-73). These choices are made both concerning a visual as a whole, and on verbal propositions.

Kress & Van Leeuwen note (2006: 109-113) that the linguistic structures which Halliday called 'existential' and 'relational' have tangential properties with conceptual structures in

images (see Halliday 1985: 112ff. for linguistic structures). What is being represented is rather a state of affairs or a general truth than an action or a mental process; in language the processes would be those of the Attributive and the Identifying processes. Attributive processes can be Intensive (about what a Carrier is), or Circumstantial (about where and when or 'what with' a Carrier is), also Possessive (about what a Carrier has). Identifying Relational processes define the Value as the identity of the Token ('is' being the Identifying process); the Value is the function or meaning, and the Token describes the occupant of the function or sign. Intensive Attributive clauses bear a resemblance to visual Classifications, and Possessive Attributive clauses to visual Analytical structures, further, Identifying clauses are comparable to visual Symbolic Attributive structures. Existents in Existential clauses are the Events or Entities (see Halliday 1985: 130).

Conceptual representations (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006: 79-87) of images are divided into classificational, analytical and symbolic processes. Conceptual representations relate participants to each other, employing a taxonomy of classification reached by arrangements such as ordering of items in the image. The realisations of taxonomies can be overt (single-levelled or multi-levelled, based on the number of subordinating participants in a tree structure), or they may be covert. Classifications do not equal real, natural classifications but the proposed equivalences are rather processes read as such. The relation of the Superordinate, Interordinates and Subordinates is realised by, for example, symmetry and diverse tree structures. Visual hierarchical orders are signified as a system as they place participants in a static order, which can blur boundaries of the static and the dynamic reality concerning what is an instantiation and what is an enactment of a system underlying the hierarchy (ibid.).

Part-whole structures represent participants, a Carrier and (possessive) Attributes, through an analytic process. Analytical pictures, employed, for instance, in maps, advertisements and fashion shots, offer an abundance of details or a variety of ingredients and parts, leaving the background fairly plain. As described in Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006), an analysis of these structures involves selection to pick out the criterial attributes. In the absence of vectors which would signify narrative processes, and lacking a symmetry in composition or any kind of tree structures, the analytical process is the unmarked option in the visual representation system, with the main objective to find the Carrier and to examine and analyse the Possessive Attributes attached to it; as Kress and van Leeuwen state, the analytical process is the visual structure of the verbal 'this is' (ibid: 91). Schematic analytical images are more impersonal and detached while others, albeit representational, are aimed at interpersonal, interactive and emotive identification purposes, dominated as they are with a fixed Gaze directed at the viewer, thus creating a bond between the image and the viewer (Kress & Van Leeuwen 2006: 116-124).

The third group of processes (Kress & Van Leeuwen 2006), that is, symbolic processes, focuses on what a participant is or means. There can be either two participants in the picture,

the Carrier and the Symbolic Attribute (the Symbolic Attributive process), or the Carrier alone (the Symbolic Suggestive process). The process involving two participants establishes the identity of the other participant through the relation of the two, the other participant representing the meaning or identity. The Symbolic Suggestive process emphasises mood and atmosphere, for example, by using soft colours or contrastive lightning, lending symbolic meanings to the Carrier, thus rendering an analytical interpretation difficult; meaning and identity in the Symbolic Suggestive process derives from the inner qualities of the Carrier.

9 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The present study aims at examining discourse in social media settings, using Facebook as a source of situated discourse. The aim of the study is to examine citizens' discursive space, simultaneously operating as a platform for political grassroots movement. I aim to examine the multimodal affordances available, and at use, on the site, as well as its purpose and justification: what is 'going on', taking place on an online site for social networking, one with a political affiliation. And, from the essential language point of view: how the site operates as a multimodal ensemble, as a discoursal entity.

The primary questions are how the resources of multimodal affordances become employed: how power is being negotiated, how the involvement of ordinary citizens is positioned in relation to the official power establishment. Through the study of multimodal texts on the pages, I aim to discover how individuals are conversing online as they negotiate their appearance via the public profiles during a political campaign, or as they randomly pay attention to the ongoing campaign – the roles of various participants may vary considerably.

An endless flow of inventories regarding choices emerges as we produce a sample of text. We make continuous choices, both as readers of text and as producers of it, on at least the following: What set of resources are available for us and what are, or will be, chosen to be used. Yet more; how about the order of things represented, superordinate vs subordinate modes – the architecture of things; further, how things are connected; or, whose angle is presented or forwarded. How does the text guide the interaction between the reader and the writer? – Further, what is hidden or taken for granted; who are designed as the 'targeted' audience; whose voice is represented. What prior knowledge or contextual frame might be required from us as readers/users of the site. And perhaps the most important question of all: what is the purpose of the text as a whole (does it have or need a purpose?): what need does the text as a textual ensemble, as a semiotic entity, strive for and fulfil?

Social sharing – as a communicative tool for the purposes of decision making in politics – may, at first sight, seem a huge success story with countless implied assumptions of sharedness – and even at the second sight, it may seem quite unproblematic. However, the tool(s) of operations on SNSs may appear to be more commanding than was anticipated. What

becomes enabled and, on the other hand, hindered, may begin to dictate the substance. Are the tools of communicating, inevitably, imposing themselves on the channels and forms of discourse, and consequently, are they dictating the core of things, the substance? How do the chosen tools affect our interpretative *repertoires* and *practices*, and how do they revise what we expect from discourse(s) around us?

Are digital technologies truly a tool for the empowerment and enhancement of ordinary lives, for the strengthening of translocal communities and for supporting participation within wider-than-local communicative spaces? Do discussions online support a development towards a more inclusive community of people, active citizenship? Due to the relative novelty of the phenomenon, studies in the field have been sporadic and of isolated cases, but more knowledge is accumulating on whether and when engagement into communities has improved, and whether it is beginning to alter social practices.

In a world conceived multimodally, the aptness of the means for representation, and the complexes of modes – in order to achieve communicational requirements – are of great importance. In addition to writing, there is speech, still and moving images, gestures, action and colour, all offering their respective and specific potentials. (Kress 2010: 28-29.)

As for identities, both the construction of the official Obama brand and his public persona, as well as Michelle Obama's hybrid identity as the First Lady – whilst also a private person (Wife, Mother and Woman) – are being inspected insofar they prove to be significant.

10   DATA AND METHODS

My underlying approach is that of CDA, due to its capacity to grasp both the social and the linguistic perspectives. As for the principal system for grasping the data, I draw heavily on Systemic Functional literature, since a majority of the theorists dealt with in this study are influenced, in one way or another, by M. K. Halliday's work on social-semiotic theory. SFL provides a construct wherefrom a usable perspective into the data will be available. In the heart of the SFL is meaning, articulated in the multifaceted semiotic systems of language and images (if we want to separate language from other semiotic systems).

Halliday created his fundamental ideas prior to when not so much as a hint of an era of the Internet could be imagined, however, his thoughts are still valid when entering the World Wide Web and the networked social communities functioning, acting, and interacting presently online. It may be that the intrinsic nature of his thought – embedding linguistic theory into the life world – is reminiscent of the processes of the 'real' life, the natural, constantly organically forming and transforming life which, of course, has always been multidimensional, discursive, and filled with interdiscursivity and hybrid genres of interaction.

Starting from his early writings, Halliday acted on language as if all aspects of meaning-making encountered on the Internet today might have a fair chance of being invited in, although through affordances and resources that still awaited for the novel technology to facilitate their evolution, such as the social, multimodal Internet. Language is an essential part of what living creatures *do*, and how they *are*: how actions, representations, identities and meanings as texts become transmitted, worked out, produced, consumed and distributed. The new evolving modes do not really alter the basic ideas of it.

The frame of CDA provides us with a firm grip on investigating texts by looking beyond the obvious by using both knowledge of the world and scientific knowledge of properties of text and talk. However, the transformation in the ways we communicate has not yet provided us with adequate tools for analysing 'web talk'; furthermore, the channels of communication have altered the ways actors in politics function. We are interpreting modern texts with a toolbox for linear, textual storylines; at the arenas of politics we are still chasing for the 'correct' pieces of information, attempting to find the 'truth' – and assuming there is one. However critical we might have been earlier, there still was a silent consensus that a single statement would provide us with the correct information of what really is happening. This applies so much to the politicians and professional commentators as it applies to various actors in the uprisings of eventualities in the world, or as far as the representations of events are concerned, with how history is being updated and its narratives transformed through new information and new interpretative representations of it. CDA, nevertheless, gives us the basic tools of questioning things, not taking the content and representations presented as granted, i.e., it equips us with some basic tools of reading fa bit further, deeper, and beyond the imminent surface of things.

The study on multimodality, and considerations on social semiotics owe largely to the work of Kress and Van Leeuwen. As for the analysis of indexicality, and Facebook as a site for building up political habitus within campaign work and for grassroots campaigning, I rely also on Scollon and Wong Scollon's work (2003). Using relevant methods of investigation, both the written and the visual elements are being studied as forming textual ensembles of multimodal entities.

I treat Facebook sites, by Faircloughian terms, as instances of particular sociocultural practice, which manifest an 'ongoing discursive event' shaped out, in the present data, through the data posted by the page owner/primary user (Michelle Obama) but also of comments and discursive actions of ordinary citizens. A critical approach, due to the social aspects involved, offers the best suited background for qualitative interpretation of the 'going-ons' at work on the pages, and above all, of the relevance of the site for ordinary participants, the citizens. Examining representations of online social events involves issues concerning both textual analysis and social analysis, therefore, CDA – as a critical undercurrent – is well suited as the underpinning framework in a study of linguistic and visual particularities: identities

presented and represented, as well as the various affordances for action, the modes, genres and styles.

The research involves text data collected from a cluster of politically oriented Facebook pages relating to the presidential campaign of Barack Obama in the 2012 elections, consisting of a selection of Facebook pages prior the 2012 presidential election in the USA. The main source of data is Michelle Obama's Facebook pages, along with other Barack Obama related sites which are studied as tangential background sources as the various 'sets of sites' work combined for the same principal goal (for the office of White House). As for some of the most popular postings on the site, which become paraphrased and copied onto other sites, or are themselves strongly reminiscent of content elsewhere (such as on the official Barack Obama sites), social media presence on the Michelle Obama site is being studied as reflecting, and being aware of, the presence of other appearances of the same topic; however, at all times the analysis is conducted from within the position of Michelle Obama site, noting the presence elsewhere when necessary but bearing in mind that, for the user/reader of a particular site, the instances of presence elsewhere may be hidden or unknown, and therefore, the user is treating each posting as 'new', and reads it accordingly in that context.

There is an abundance of data for research online, and it is obvious that the data for a case study has to be filtered and framed according to some set of principles. The data here covers a chosen, delimited period of time, that is, a two-month period prior to the presidential election in 2012, since it is sensible to grasp a limited scope under a closer investigation, keeping in mind, however, what has happened beyond that particular scope of time whilst analysing the sequence of events, and the weight of the topics. Nevertheless, the textual evidence comprising a period of two months will be in the main focus.

Facebook pages serve as a documentary source for the analysis where I am situated as one of the users, as an observer of events, largely in the manner that researchers in a non-structured participant observation situation would posit themselves in analysing media content: not interfering to avoid modifying the behaviour on the site. Starting from a presupposition that quite a few of the participants are, in fact, followers/observers without any special need to actively participate in the actual happenings on the site, I also anticipated, nevertheless, that the reasons for participating and observing must be varied; whatever the motivation, all forms of participation are, and must be, allowed on a social networking site. – All reasons serve some purpose. Examining all of them, however, would require a separate study.

As the research includes aspects of society, we need to be aware of the social bearings of the topic. We are dealing with human behaviour, in-between private and public concerns, amidst the personal and the social – people performing culture-forming acts. Here, the processes of formation generate a reciprocal, two-way traffic of individual and social bearings as the users both send and receive content; the roles of producers and users are constantly mixed and blurred. We are dealing with human behaviour but also the products of behaviour.

Practices of interaction are under alteration and modification, being restructured, reformed and revised continually both on the users' part and on the part of the providers of the platforms for social interaction, and the pace of change of the communicational transformations concerning online mass-media is fast. The implications of how social and political issues are handled in the modern media are far-reaching.

The methodological considerations need to pay attention to the multiplicity of dimensions at work in the phenomena such as the one at hand. My main focus here is on the theory of the study, tackling with the characteristics of the phenomenon and pursuing for an understanding of how theoretical considerations are situated within, and in respect of, online social resources. Textual and visual elements are tackled, using relevant theories, as multimodal entities. We find social action in photographic images dealing with social action, even ceremonial activity. Images reflect and construct identities carrying psychological bearings and expression. We are able to find patterns, characteristics that are creating salience, status, and 'order of things'. They are a record of happenings, a progression of social action over time, even in the most minuscule scale, such as through postings of one individual user or group. The qualitative case study method, often applied into the study of social and cultural processes (for the qualitative turn, see Jensen & Jankowski 1991), is useful in gaining a deeper understanding of the social practices and multimodal affordances investigated here.

The Internet as a source of data is a 'live' source in that it offers the researcher valid empirical material: the language, and what is being discussed online, is 'real' language use in authentic situations, resembling the way in which we acknowledge material in spoken language studies, by listening and participating in situations. One can utilise spoken language methods, but circumstances online are, nevertheless, such that they demand their own methods and validations. Online presence does not in every aspect equal with 'reality', as also will be pronounced in the findings of this study, although the two most certainly are intertwined – and in many cases, inseparable – affecting one another, since instances of being and acting cannot be grasped separately any longer.

Textual analysis requires an analysis into the organisation of a text – form and content operating combined (Fairclough 1995a: 117-118). Online, the configuration of elements is particularly significant, since in multimodal texts the arrangement of the textual and visual elements has great impact on the content. Regarding the content on the SNSs, it being dynamic in the sense that it keeps continuously updating in time-space, what is perceived as a shared 'meaning' keeps equally evolving and fluctuating in a state of flux. To be able to study a single piece of text, one either has to 'freeze a moment' and make meanings in and (out) of that particular textual instance; or, one can fluctuate along the landscape of meanings to find an in-depth understanding of the relevant inner workings, a 'significant body of meanings' leaning on textual evidence along the way.

In my view, the most effective analysis can be reached by the combination of the two, as the restrictions of merely taking some samples to be examined would not fulfil the requirements of 'representative sample', due to the fact that a site such as my research object operates more as an *event* than as a static web page. It is in constant touch with reality outside the pages and the participants, and it might only lay still at the moment of its death when a relative point of closure could be reached. Therefore, I study a restricted number of individual postings (or *episodes*), but also how the postings evolve, without forgetting the page(s) as a whole.

The transcription of multimodal discourse events and texts would reveal the innate coding(s) in the semiotic resources, and the dynamics of the semiotic affordances might become loosened. As for the present purposes, I chose a variety of 'educated' samples, and not a variety of statistically chosen comprehensive data. This is due to the relatively large and multifaceted theoretical part of the study, the width of which is justifiable due to the multitude of simultaneously affecting aspects and levels of analysis involved in creating and conveying the meaning. Limited case studies seemed a justified choice of selecting topics due to the richness of raw data on the site. The qualitative case study method aims to deepen understanding about a case investigated, its features and impact. It aims at finding the relevance of the happenings of a situated phenomenon within a larger frame of society. The data gathered is meant to reflect the theories introduced above, the frames of thoughts around the phenomena as they encounter the research questions.

11   RESULTS

Investigating online-discourse requires attention both to language, images therein included, and to action perceived on the site examined. Interpretation of text involves considering the realisation of contextually specific rules of interpretation, in this case, rules of use on how Facebook as the owner of the application, on one hand, and the users, on the other, create shared practices of use. Facebook Inc. as the owner exercises power as the ultimate regulator of the use, but only within the limits that will result in it gaining a profit. Therefore, it has to be careful in order to appeal both to its users and advertisers.

In the present study, I confine myself to present a general impression of the goings-on on the site, illustrating the remarks with a few examples which become considered in greater detail. The overall considerations arise from the data as a single text. Therefore, the study is a qualitative one: I am aiming at an interpretation of the site as a whole, and illustrating the overall findings with a few sample text(s) which become analysed in more detail.

11.1 Discourses identified on the site

The regulating rules in a text are found by examining the discourses surrounding its environment. Discourse type is an element of the order of discourse, and the type(s) utilised will position the discussion in a certain way. The type determines what is to be expected to be uttered, and consequently, what is expected to remain absent. As Fairclough points out, there is no mechanical relationship between discourse type and discourse, although there are conventions enabling engagement in discourse. Rather, it is noticeable that discourse types cannot straightforwardly be drawn from the implementation of discourse: a discourse may draw upon, and combine, more than one type. Discourse should therefore be viewed as an ongoing process of creatively combining resources (Fairclough 2014: 25-26).

New media has undoubtedly extended and combined resources in a novel manner, and will continue to reform and regenerate them, which will create new categorisations and conventions. Every convention, in that respect, is always a temporary one. In the present data – with political affiliation – the dominant discourse found in the main postings (by the page owner) is that of 'political announcement', i.e., informative postings concerning events prior to the presidential campaign, and during the campaign, following its advancement. As the election day approaches, the site becomes increasingly focused on the campaign particularities; the content that had been presented prior the elections, seems at a later date subordinate to, and more or less already in advance harnessed to, serve the desired outcome in the elections. The personal touch that has been ignited becomes more of a tool to be utilised in the campaign work.

Another significant discourse all through the postings is 'family discourse' dealing with, on one hand, the Obama family's personal life with birthdays, celebrations, and so forth, exclusively portraying happy family arrangements. Family discourse is present even in a wider, more official context of 'family, educational and parental issues' pursued forth by Michelle Obama, whilst executing her power and duties within the 'territorial entity' of First Lady. At the ideational level the page presents the American way of life, drawing attention to core values such as the central role of family in social life.

'Women's issues' is yet another, distinguishable discourse, though connected and intersecting with the general family issues, but also as a separate concern, delivering gender sensitive content for female participants/members/voters. 'Womanhood' is a signifying factor throughout the site, occasionally serving merely as an adding element, bringing value to the main content of a message, and delivering a supposed female aspect on things. 'Being a woman' is treated positively in the postings, however, in the comment field you may find critical views, especially on how 'acting as *woman*' is being presented on the site. The postings allow much potential for expressing emotive meaning, enhanced with smiling faces and expressions of heightened feelings.

'Fandom', a mixture of affective discourse around the Democratic Party and also as a social phenomenon aroused along the exciting election rallies, is yet another distinguishable discourse surrounding Barack Obama as a candidate/president, and Michelle Obama as the presidential spouse, campaigning jointly for the next term. Notably it is the figure of 'Barack as a father' or 'husband' at first that is being appraised, even more so him in that role than as 'political leader' or 'incumbent president'. This is a distinction that keeps fluctuating as the election day approaches, even governing and positioning where Michelle Obama is situated at each moment in the whole ensemble of things.

Womanhood is here also closely connected with fandom: Michelle Obama is luminous and charismatic, an 'exemplary woman' with plenty of desired attributes. Michelle Obama is also a role model for 'people of colour', and as such a woman, a mother, a lawyer that is witty, modern and wise, educated and assertive, all of which are attributes that have not customarily been lifted when discussing people of colour. She is something that has never been seen in the position of First Lady prior this election. She crosses expectations and breaks through barriers in an unprecedented manner in more respects than one. That is why she appears as genuine and powerful but also 'otherwordly'.

The phenomena around the notion and construct of the First Lady forms a discourse of its own, one which is more or less, but constantly, intertwined within the other discourses. Michelle Obama's persona, acting from within a position that allows various agendas to be promoted but from within a personalised, intimate, 'domesticised' level, creates a unique link between the scattered issues around the elections. She has power which factually operates as official power as her status legitimizes her authorial voice and lends her credibility beyond a mere spokesperson for a candidate. This being noted, she *is* also a co-voter, a peer for the other voters, residing in the realm of 'voting citizens', and – maintaining strong personal qualities and characteristics – she is an influential individual in that position. Her voice, most probably acknowledged even in the official blueprint for the campaign script, is also meant to be heard as coming from the grassroots, albeit she is not 'there' anymore, among 'them' anymore but a 'messenger' into two directions, a 'mediator' of (at least) two worlds. The blurring of roles creates, in fact, a role in itself, a functional one, and one which Michelle Obama acts superbly.

11.2 The design on the screen: virtual spaces and reality

The design of the screen display structures interpretation through its multimodal arrangements. Through its whole *ensemble* of events, the design creates a presentation that influences how users/members read the text they encounter and experience *as a whole*. The style chosen to address particular audiences and to reinforce certain lifestyle *(habitus)* is carefully planned for its purposes. The assemblance of the design enables particular functions to surface rather than others, whilst also hindering or discouraging, overtly or tacitly, certain

other systems of processing or participation to be delivered, detected and received. Facebook's design is the surface on and through which users channel their action and, therefore, it forms a significant contextual frame for the dynamics and forms of participation.

The social practices around 'membership' are created through the functioning principles designed for the site, which guide users towards certain practices, and which will be validated and further evolved through usage. On these sites, the first users form a test group for usage, since behaviour of large groups of people is difficult to predict precisely in advance. The assembly of resources (repertoires) is enabled through affordances of the design. Identities and meanings are constructed as part of the social structure through functional dimensions of language, starting from how we call the participants, and how they experience themselves: users, members, participants, fellow citizens, participating individuals, and so forth. All of these carry separate meanings attached with separate traits for identities, allowing separate choices and chances for action.

Multimodal discourse on a social web site is constantly in action, fluctuating, negotiating itself and organically evolving, but it is not a sovereign or self-governing entity in a sense that would free its design from social guidance or constraints. Layout is part of the politics of style (as discussed before, see Kress 2010). On these pages, how the page looks is an essential part of the rhetoric of events, more so than merely being an isolated unity of aesthetics free of power negotiations.

How can one treat physicality in a space that is virtual, non-existent as regards its materiality? Virtual space has no body as it is tangible only in the realm of thoughts, however, it *is* an artefact accomplishing functions similar to 'reality'. The user can 'move' through virtual spaces, 'in and out' of different states, within different localities, go 'forwards' and 'backwards' in time and space, compose groupings of people and things and of shared identities, and toy with intertextuality and diagonality. While doing so, the user has a composed persona, designed to one's needs, performing tasks, portraying the user in different and fluctuating roles, conducting experiments on the user's identity, forwarding personal aspirations. Online users of social networks are constructing themselves, acting out their social habitus to create an acting persona for the purposes that might prove useful in managing their life experiences. How much of this creation work is conscious, and how much unconscious – and in time, even automatic – is difficult to ascertain. Nevertheless, it is an ongoing process.

On Facebook, the time-space dimension constitutes a venue where the users reside, and a position wherefrom they act out themselves. The sense of materiality stems from the scattered items on the screen, from arrangements of textual elements situated in relation to one another, and of the movement that results from the things users 'do' and act out online. Therefore, the Internet, besides being a functional space, is also a place of 'inhabitance', a residence of events occupied by miscellaneous tribes and communities, gathered together by bonds of 'similarity'.

The images, words and thoughts that form meanings, as well as the human tendency to break into groups and liaisons online, construct a social world not that much separate from the real one since the virtual world *is* a reality on its own accord, a space interconnected to the physicality of the 'real' world. What is uttered online has an effect on how we appear offline; the interaction online intersects our physical world and alters our social standing, resulting in transformed actions performed offline. The two, virtuality and physicality, are mutual, organic openings of one into another, instances continuously transforming and blurring into one another much rather than being separate entities or states of 'being' and 'acting'.

The states of being 'online' or 'offline' both fill vacancies for the users' needs. Combined they create a continuity of time, space, and action. We sense things such as 'closeness' and 'distance', actions like 'approaching' and 'receding', 'appearing' and 'disappearing'. Therefore, also the virtual space is a place with histories and memories, and a venue for negotiating social order. Everything on online platforms will be indexed within the scope of its functional space but also within the materiality of the world where people as physical beings breathe and live.

The Facebook users have the confined space of their profiles to determine and re-determine how they wish to appear, how to appear and act online. The timeline of events is chronologically arranged, and functions such as the continuously updating collection of items defining who the user is, or what s/he does. The timeline is creating a setting for the construction of experiences and for enactment of social roles. Easy adjustability, even the idea of erasibility, is essential on Facebook, the possibility to tailor the profiles and events to suit the desired persona and the course of history being presented and constructed on the timeline.

Intertextual chains repeat histories whose sources have long been forgotten and which may be intractable, impossible to trace back to their origins. As the Internet is a space for continuous flow of borrowed, adjusted, sampled and embedded material, the original source of a photo or a piece of written text might be next to impossible to track down. Eventually, a piece of text or an utterance might end up being circulated as a meme, an artefact valid on its own grounds, detached from its original context.

On a Facebook profile, the past stays in the texture of our profiles although the user can edit audiences afterwards, make postings invisible (however, they may appear somewhere else, in other users' timelines); virtual histories are eternal as long as the Web functions according to its fundamental principles. Although the users are able to wipe their profiles clean, the remnants will be 'there' forever, circulating in the Net. 'Erasing', 'deleting' or 'cancelling' an event is no more than an event itself in the flow of things – there is no memory loss online, complete wipe-out is unthinkable; new content becomes intertwined in the old storage at the moment the user decides to upload a photo, or send a comment. What has been published can never be entirely wiped out, deleted so as to create a completely different setting or scene. In that sense, Facebook, like other social applications, has an inner memory of events

on its own terms. A user cannot 'leave' Facebook, since leaving is merely 'turning it off'; the profile exists on the server waiting to become 'turned on' anew at any instance. Actions leave tracks which will alter things that would happen later. Online presence, once created, cannot be removed, it will continue to exist even after the physical death of a user, not perhaps visible to all, but still at least as an option to become re-activated at any chosen instance, making appearances on other sites as past comments and 'moves', such as 'liking'.

On SNSs the dynamics of action and interaction is constantly fluctuating between old and new connections, as well as between potential connections and temporary links, interdiscursive and associative ones. The medium has become as important as the things being performed or acted out, on it and through it; the medium has, in other words, become part of the performance. This is a basic difference between SNSs and the traditional print media so far as the parameters concerning production, consumption and distribution of information and knowledge are concerned. The 'locus' of things is not a place, nor is it particular people who would be responsible of the editing, writing and informing that takes place on the site; the processes are instead jointly performed but without a single centre. Therefore, it is more accurate to consider the site as an 'ongoing event' where various instances of time and place are simultaneously available and functioning whilst it is constantly redefining itself anew.

Although a defined centre might be missing concerning the action performed on social sites, it does not necessarily mean that the action behind individual user profiles would not be managed and carefully planned. On the present site, it is obvious that there is plenty of managing involved. 'Michelle Obama' is situated in the campaign office lending her brand for the distribution of carefully designed content. Physically 'Michelle' most likely consists of several individuals and teams compiling the postings and editing the upcoming comment flow, much in the same way that modern reality shows become managed on television.

11.3 Representations of social events on Facebook: online tactics

The websites have gradually become an event database, which inevitably has started to influence the structure and resources of communication in diverse groups. The main target, to incorporate and to build dialogue with people who are interested in the purpose and aims of a designated group, and to invoke a dialogue with a politician on a Facebook page, is hidden amongst the hectic rhythm of tiny fractured pieces of information that is fed on the page. Facebook, as OSNs generally, is a site both in the sense that it is on the Internet, *located* on the Web, but also in a more abstract, theoretical sense of being a *discursive space*. The site is involved in the shaping of relationships between institutions, social and economic processes; it forms and follows sets of therein situated behavioural patterns, systems of norms and modes of characterisation. It is a platform for discursive events, as well as a stage for performed and negotiated identities, a site for the construction of self and group formation. It is, besides a

multimodal life blog introducing and presenting events, also a functional space of representations dealing with agency and action.

It is important to separate 'communication' and 'discourse', which represent two separate constructs. Communication signifies an act of transmitting messages steered in a certain direction (recipient), whereas discourse denotes meaning delivered with *intent*. The selection of linguistic forms on community sites is demonstrated in terms of communicational needs manifested on the site. On a political page, the needs are interactional, cognitive, social and affective. Participants interact to keep contact, to receive knowledge and to be informed, to participate, and to feel connected with something bigger than their individual aspirations.

The processes present on the pages are those of operating with external and internal communication, and those of actual substance, i.e., the work with political campaigning and civil engagement. Therefore, several features of these sites serve double duty as a resource and as an appeal: the former to serve supporters, the latter to serve undecided citizens. Features with a dual purpose are sections detailing the candidate's issue positions, and the candidate background/biography. Biography, offering an attractive portrait of the candidate, also occupies a prominent position on the page (top left corner), displaying photos of the candidate and his/her spouse, and his 'road' to the White House. Bio pages are not like résumés, instead, you see pictures of candidates as infants, photos featuring their newborn babies, candidates walking with their family, posing as athletes, participating welfare events, etc., with emphasis on the candidate's human characteristics. Attributes of character are an overwhelming element of campaigns assigning gravitas to certain aspects of the candidate's personality, and shading away undesirable characteristics to create affiliation with the audience. The most important message to be conveyed is the possession of leadership capability and qualifications, and the texts in the biography section stress this trait. Equally important on the pages is an identification with voters, and an ability to be empathetic. In the candidates' self-presentation texts, these are the very traits stated by Richard Fenno (see Bimber & Davis 2003: 74). Candidates want to communicate and express their identification with voters; they understand the voters: "I feel your pain."

Self-presentation in electioneering is wider than ever: former newspaper essays via the printed press, electronic media via the broadcast media, and satellite broadcasts or casting via the cable have broadened into a wider array of tools with the affordances of the Internet. Candidates' homepages, political grassroot campaigns, and political fan-pages allow limitless opportunities for a politician's online campaign presence. The Web has overtaken much of the media coverage in campaigns, and the print media and television have reduced their respective coverage. Candidates have home pages that they govern themselves, reflecting carefully the page owner's chosen personality, and every politician today have their own social media account, be it Facebook pages or Twitter or Instagram. Information is immediate, seemingly open, and transmitted without delay.

A modern campaign is part of a detailed planned, even carefully orchestrated communications strategy for politicians, with targeted goal groups and issues governing the media, sponsors, and the public. Politicians apply different kinds of 'solutions' for their image, and parties for their brand. It is a network of services with a conscious and considered scheme.

Discussion on a networking page may, or may not, be spontaneous, but it will always seek authenticity, or at the very least an illusion of it. Discussion obeys an agile, iterative communications strategy with syndicated feeds, well-matched to meet the needs and demands of the candidate and his crowd in any particular moment. What seems to be deriving from grassroots, may thus, in fact, be planted there. A desired tone to catch viewers and readers is set by the campaign staff along indicators based on surveys, and not necessarily by initiatives by individual users/participants as it should be in a grassroots movement. The postings of the page owner/user serve as prompts for discussion. New awareness of how to interpret the content, the multimodal text, is needed on social networking pages, especially on those which give the impression of deriving their contents and substance from bottom upwards, from citizens to the establishment.

11.4 Action, participants, and the setting

On SNS individuals, or *users*, articulate their personality, or personas, though a profile with ready-made categorisations and lists of traits and descriptors[16]. The list is far from comprehensive, nor is it an adjustable inventory: the user chooses or excludes categories (for example, you may have 'music' as an interest but not 'visual arts'). There are categories, such as in the 'About me' section: age, gender, marital status (with the interesting 'it's complicated' notion, which, being vague, might be interpreted either as flirtatious or an indication of searching for company), interests (some categories; no open categories), location, work, and school or university. You may add a profile picture to avoid a gender-based logo for men/women, and a Cover image situating the user within a wider frame of social setting. The cover is often a nature-related, beautiful scenery, or a picture from the user's home or children, portrayed as an extension of the user's persona, or perhaps as part of the user's achievements.

Social media usage is a novel way of communication, and on Facebook, the marketisation of discourse is evident as the service is built on commercial grounds of selling advertising space, thus turning interaction itself into a product. A commodity needs to be sufficiently alluring to catch potential advertisers, which happens through auctioning of advertising space onto the site. The site needs to allure advertisers.

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[16] Referring here to Facebook terms of usage during the examined period of 2012-2016, but the basic terms and principles of usage are very similar today.

The commodification of social services has resulted also in the commodification of social practices at the level of individual users, because no site can survive without users. An ethos of self-promotion has surfaced, and even in grassroots movement it corresponds to emphasis laid on the buzz of events in order to keep the atmosphere of 'eventing' continuously 'high'.

Language use is, besides a generative tool for creating novel forms of usage and spreading current information, also involves spreading attitudes and emotions, supplying any text with specific relations concerning the subject matter and the reader. Texts carry signs attached both to the writer and the reader, therefore, how texts are written cannot be treated separate from the contents: the presentation of things, including style, form, and layout, is all an integral part of the contents. The production of texts is entwined with how the writer thinks; how, and why, s/he has chosen a particular angle. Texts carry beliefs, ideologies and values of the writer, which, through analysis, may be traced into, and out of, the text.

On a site carrying a message, there builds up a common ground for the ways in which thoughts can be presented, and a sense regarding choices of topics that might gain most viewers and commentaries. Which discourses are employed and forwarded will bear a relevance to what purpose the site aims at serving, or why the site has been created. The persona of the site owner is adjusted to the core message of the site, in all its aspects. The participants, the viewers and readers fit themselves to the world view the site advocates in order to be accepted in, to become acknowledged members in a group.

Writing texts means making linguistic choices resulting in new texts which carry different meanings. Language community is involved in the decision-making processes on the choices as each member of a community arrives with a slightly different set of values. Writing/reading as action is thus never performed in a social vacuum. In a similar manner, no individual text, as a product, can exist in a vacuum as an isolated entity; instead, it carries other texts along with it, both those prior to it and those not yet written as it will perpetually mould and accumulate further texts. The meaning(s) will alter in connection to future texts, on each occasion the texts are used and re-read. The interaction of all affecting factors will produce a realisation of the single text in a particular moment, for a particular purpose. The text is written anew for each moment of its realisation, and out of each interpretation of a new reader.

Furthermore, for each occasion, a text undergoes a dialogic process, often implicit, although analytic, where the total meaning, the entirety of the text, can be attempted to be traced in its concrete realisations as language: words, clauses, connections, typography, and so forth. Those realisations carry evidence of diverse meaning networks of a world view, of an angle: in short, the world view can be traced into the texture of a text with semantic connections, the display of choices, deleted meanings, cancelled propositions, relations between things, and all inferences.

Although each dimension of the text may and ought to be investigated separately as proper analysis is performed, all of them are, in fact, present simultaneously, and at every instance of

analysis also inseparable; if not mixed, the very least intersected and affected by one another. Some dimensions may be more or less muted whereas some more salient, but all dimensions exist there: even in the instance of absence, they are non-existent in a manner that has an effect; 'not being' is also an instance of 'being': something *not at sight* carries a meaning *due to its absence*.

This is also why critical analysis is complicated: it is performing investigation on something whose interface does not stay still even for the duration of a critical moment of inspection as one cannot 'freeze' a text at any instance of investigation; or if you would manage to do so, theoretically, you would easily miss the grasp of the event of happening as such, an event under change, since discourse is all about action and interaction. By restraining the action or change, you will consequently become unable to perform a full analysis.

Certain sections or instances of analytical entities, such as notions of 'orders of discourse' and 'interdiscursivity' ought, if you wish to be true to the all-including panorama of theory and practice, to be situated in a double position in the frame: within the dimensions of both discourse practice and social practice (simultaneously, or co-existent). Where you grasp them into your analysis is basically dependent on the at-the-point prevailing perspective that is being investigated, or the pertinent phase of analysis dictating wherefrom the analyst is viewing the 'site of discourse at hand'.

The analysis of the setting of any interaction entails a resolving of the underlying arrangement of the interaction, the time and place, and moreover, the significance of that arrangement. As the Internet is a space for continuous flow of borrowed, adjusted, sampled and embedded material, the original source of a photo or a piece of written text might be next to impossible to trace. Eventually, a piece of text or an utterance might end up being circulated, stripped-down, as a 'thing' without history or previous background or context; or as a meme, an artefact valid on its own grounds, detached from its original context, recreating and renegotiating its existence and meaning. Deictic expressions, in language commonly expressed with adverbs such as *now* and *then*, *here* and *there*, *today* and *tomorrow*, all have their own signatures in how meaning is created, and how the setting is shared between the participants. On an online site, the particularities representing the setting may seem different, however, the actual setting is found in the chain of events, in the integral composition of the narrative, on how the site points to itself and outside itself, creating an intertextual form and meaning that reaches to the world outside the scope of the site, which in itself is a fluctuating thing. In addition, the totality of the arrangements forms a comprehensible and coherent continuity of events, creating a history with memories that become shared by the members. It is interesting to try to figure out how this is done; how the community is created and how it evolves, and how the narrative forms itself within the content.

To become duly and properly noted, a message needs to be wrapped in an appealing parcel. The parcel is made to appear and feel inviting by the toolkit of rhetorics, by enhancing the

textual message with means that lead the eye. Emotion is used to create hype and enthusiasm, and there are also therapeutic voices which urge the users to 'share' their feelings and experiences in order to create a consensus as a group. Whose voice becomes heard loudest is the core matter for power negotiations on the site; not every voice has the same accountability, regardless the content.

As the chain of conversation progresses rapidly, the comment becomes easily 'overwritten' with other comments: the scope of life for a single remark is limited, more so than, for example, for a column in a newspaper. New comments overwrite what was just being commented, and very few even of the devoted users have the energy to dig out what was written in the beginning of a comment flow. Comments are therefore for fast consumption, to be invested instantly for the benefit of further remarks as they are overtly visible only during a limited time scope before being swallowed by following (newer) comments.

On the construction of ideological discourse, emphasis is on the representational process, by which we mean any basic cognitive process in which some entity comes to stand for, or to be represented as something else, and on transitivity that reveals the close relation between language and ideology, between text as discoursal element (words and images), and ideology. The tacitly and overtly made choices out of the repertoires available regarding textual elements are revealing as they manifest and embed implicit and explicit ideologies. As Mari K. Niemi (Hatakka et al. 2017) in her studies on political campaigning and populist leadership has maintained, the media has become an active partner in politics (see also, e.g., Korkut, Bucken-Knapp, Cox & Mahendran 2015).

11.4.1 The composition and organisation of the site

There is a shared vision on the page, stated and publicised in the 'About' section. In the act of choosing to join in, by becoming a member, an individual accepts the set goals. Joining is a situated, temporarily and spatially anchored act, with which the member of the community begins to share the views of the page (i.e., the community), and even if the user has conflicting views and they are expressed, this opposition is, even then, anchored at the common goal, and becomes contextualised within that context.

Participants gradually share a mutual history that binds them tighter together, and even conflicting episodes are investments in a shared future. The worldview of all participants need not be entirely shared, it is enough if there is a critical amount of shared parameters to establish a 'feeling' of shared community. Affection seems important, much of the content is affectionate and asking to be met with emotions.

Despite its spontaneous appearance, the reader/viewer is confronted with a highly polished and ready-made effect created by the design of the pages. A political movement and a political figure in today's world is a brand – a commodity to serve a purpose – which will result in that nothing about the design and arrangements is left coincidental. The design and

the 'air' around the pages aspire to a relaxed, laid-back effect, one striving for content that, once and for all, appears to be 'genuine' and 'spontaneous', and, above all, having been produced by the actual page owner herself (Michelle Obama) along with her genuine 'followers' (the users/commentators).

The front page, although consisting of a multitude of functions, must be perceived as a single unity. The core impression needs to be perceived at a single glance, and although consisting of various elements – photos and written text – to be perceived as a unified entity; therefore, that first glance has to be effective, and guide the reader tactically on the page, along the intended points to integrate the message of the sections to settle on a desired meaning.

Facebook as an operational appliance or platform for communication consists of a collection of interrelated profiles through which participants are able to interact and share content. Core channels of Facebook include the function of private Messages, allowing private person-to-person interaction or the forming of small instant groupings for temporary messaging. Furthermore, News feed, the location portraying friends' updates and up-to-date postings from chosen contacts in chronological order, i.e., 'liked' pages, organisations, communities, magazines, groups, and so forth. Besides 'liking', users may comment on each other's posts and updates by adding written or multimedia text, by embedding photos and video clips. The user's home page, the Wall, acts as a central hub for basic self-relevant information of the user to share with others, including an opportunity to select separate audiences for each section displayed, including relationship status, workplace, events calendar and 'likes'. Friends, again by choice of the user, may be shortlisted for smoother inclusion/exclusion operations of interaction. 'Friending' and unfriending is easy: one click is enough to start or terminate a relationship or liaison with anyone, it is possible to block a person, and to make oneself invisible and unreachable; however, through indirect contacts everyone is present with anyone since it is not possible to block friends'-of-friends commenting after a person on others' profiles. Avoidance cannot therefore be executed without leaving any 'residual remainders' of the person blocked.

The simple design of the interface supports the content in the Timeline, consisting of written postings with images, and accompanied with the flow of advertisements and game applications. The construction and arrangement on the page is governed by Facebook's own familiar design. The pre-existing framing and sections allow little adjustment for an individual user. The functions on the page are simple to use because their operation principles are, or will become, familiar without great difficulty. This serves the purposes of the page owner far better than a completely newly designed page: the page does not require much learning prior its use as the members seem to be, for the most part, experienced users of the Facebook platform. The simple interface with familiar operations, with only minor changes over time (up to year 2012), has made it easy for a page follower to become accustomed with the composition of Facebook, with a concise appearance and interface which the user does not have to interpret anew, or

relearn at regular intervals. Due to the familiar elements, it operates like an invisible hand, naturalising its functions.

Once the user has 'liked' the page, Michelle Obama postings emerge automatically into the news feed of the user. To read more, the user is one click away from the entire page constellation, with all the postings up to that moment. All elements on the site are simultaneously present, the newest image acting as a new prompt for conversation. The new postings govern the page without distractive elements, the pace of postings forming the rhythm, or pulse, of events in time. The affordances of layout on the Timeline consist of blocks for writing, and images on the surface of the page/screen. The 'given' and 'new' entities follow a regular pattern, where the latest posting emerges on the top of the page; of comments, the latest comments are present, and older ones are hidden behind a single click.

The semiotic modes including shapes, things, and users/members, are articulated in the frame and space provided by the screen in a particular way to produce the sought-after meaning. The most salient element on the page is the new posting consisting of a photo with accompanying text, followed with a comment chain. The latest posting is what is noteworthy, new, on the page, therefore detached from the rest of the page, appearing also in the news feed of the user. The most foregrounded visual field is situated on top of the page, the Cover photo, capturing the essence of the ideational meaning of the site; another significant visual field being that of the new posting. The new posting becomes more eventful as it is placed slightly to the right, creating a visually heavier element.

Facebook page is a visual artefact of a person's or organisation's public image, and also a representation of a lifestyle. The Cover photo comprises the ideational meaning potential of a user's 'story', what the user sees as essential in her/his lifestyle or aspirations. In a visual mode, the Cover image captures the main theme of the present life of Michelle Obama, and it may be at any moment updated and replaced with another image to govern and direct the different aspects of the ongoing story or personal history in the Timeline, highlighting any current themes. The realm of meanings is formed by what a viewers sees as shared and relatable in the photo, what they feel they have in common with Michelle Obama: a family, a career, domestic issues, lifestyle, gender, career, political work, and so on; a variety of issues that many American people can identify with.

Originally, Facebook was based on the governing principle of monomodality: the chosen mode was that of the salient written text, with the exception of profile pictures. Pictorial elements emerged soon, however, photographs and various kinds of images, first into the Profile section, then into the customised news feeds. In the data of the present study, images in the flow of the Comment section are perceived rather as two different components of 'text', two separate modes of making meaning. Images may become commented on, but commentaries do not actually generate new interpretations of the current issue at hand, they are merely commentaries based on the image as such: users comment on a dress or a hair-do,

on how 'cute' the picture is; in short, exclamatory remarks on what is portrayed in the photo, not that much on the issue discussed on the posting.

In the Comment section, a random image in-between tends to form a separate, individual utterance which usually is not connected to the previous, written comments. The salience of an image, along with its capacity to be intuitively captured all and at once, makes it nonetheless a powerful comment. Thus it would appear that the 'flow of thought' is not equally important in the advancement of a comment flow as is the visibility of a comment in the chain. An image catches the eye, no matter what the content of it in relation to the messages.

It is possible to write on the surface of an image in the Comment flow employing image processing techniques, but the resulted image is still, first and foremost, an *image* supplied with over-written, additive commentaries of words or phrases. An image with written words can be interpreted as a firm compound, for instance, when the image and phrase form a *meme*, where the pictorial and written components are not merely additions or commentaries in respect to one another but form a new sign with a meaning of its own, and will thus be interpreted as a whole. To acquire an organic ensemble of meaning, resembling that of a meme, on a wider textual level, would require a more focused, shared intent of how meaning on the site should be developing, and what seems to be missing there in order to fulfil the shared vision. This is probably due to the fact that members in the group do not actually read much of what is written on the previous comments, only the comments following immediately their own comment, or whatever is currently available on the screen (the visible comments, i.e., the latest or, depending on the settings, the most popular).

The reception for the viewer/reader is spatially articulated so that the comment chain is hidden behind a function of a click, revealing the latest comments only. This is a compositional choice based on the balance of the visible elements as the endless column of comments would appear visually boring, thus, the page looks visually balanced and the semiotic processes channels reception towards pointing out the newest posting first. The colour palette is flattened to emphasise the content, with a calm blue basic frame.

There are also kinetic functions on the page, for example that of a 'like' function, along with a function that allows the user to view a list of the users who like(d) a post/comment, also a function revealing the previous comments on a comment chain. These functions add hypertextual functions into the organisation of the page. Clicking these functions allows the user to move on different paths of reading/viewing according to the her/his interests.

Although advertisements are the pivotal content of the page, their appearance at the side column suggest their being 'extra' material; they appear as 'added value' for the user. This probably is the cleverest arrangement of Facebook: users do not identify themselves as consumers, nor do they comprehend the site as a marketplace. The continuous presence of advertisements is the only hint of the actual operating logic behind the pages; the

advertisements affect the viewers unconsciously, yet efficiently, catching the eye at random intervals. There is also a constant follow-up behind the pages regarding what the users are occupied with elsewhere on the Internet: if your Facebook is open, it is able to track down your movements on the Internet, and furnish you with a tailored set of advertisements.

The logic of events supports the overarching presence of the emerging new posting. The writing section of comments is inferior to the dominant image, which without exception governs a new posting, and sets the tone. The visual prompt is overwhelming, although careful reading of all comments might contain a lot more information for the user than the image. In case an image is followed by hundreds or thousands of comments, following the chain of comments become very tiresome, even impossible, which may result in repetitious writing on the comment section. Mostly, people tend to read only the latest comments currently on view: that is the scope of the eye catching the content. There does not actually happen accumulation of anything besides a steady flow of postings; the page does not evolve towards a clear, or any, direction.

Interactively, the page functions badly for grassroots activity since its operational logic, and the culture developed on the page does not encourage people to begin conversations on new subjects or topics. As Michelle Obama posts a photo with an accompanying note it will easily function as an interpretative manual, and people 'like' or add a 'comment' thereon. Being 'followers' or 'members', users usually press 'like'. To operate as a page for citizenry formation, the openings for discussions should surface from the people, or at least a greater part of them than what is the case here. People seem mainly active in strengthening the brand of the party, and the image of Michelle Obama. In my view, the mediator's role of Michelle Obama between the establishment and the ordinary people does not function for the people very well. The site seems more a noticeboard of electoral events, an enhancement of the official campaign work, utilised to lend it authenticity.

The political message is coded into the package of Michelle Obama's persona that stands as a symbol for a number of things useful for the campaign. The surface, forms, colours, written text, and style of representation defines the image of the personalised commodity furnished with traditional American values. Comprehending the various semiotic signs, codes and their significance is relevant in communicating a desired message. Meanings lie in the design of things.

11.4.2 Styles and genres

In online discussions (chats) it is not a straightforward task to determine a specific genre even for a single discussion, as texts appear in mixed and hybridised forms. One can detect conversation and interview mixed with random and playful use of language for fun, and innovative use of language. The genre of the site studied here is an assemblance of campaign

rallying events and a personal life blog, a kind of multimodal diary of Michelle Obama, presenting her different personas through small pieces of ephemera.

Modal resources of written text and images are both present; however, the site is definitely designed for the eye. Since both, writing and images, are graphic modes, received by the physiology of seeing, the encounter with a certain type of layout and graphic choices, such as the font, is also a choice of a genre since it presumes a certain audience. The current Helvetica typography is unassuming, and writing/typing text does not allow for the use of intensifiers such as cursive script or bold typeface (which would signify the equivalent of 'loudness' of sound); variation in text graphic certainly would add textual choices to the written text. Instead, users use emoticons, such as smiling faces, whose meaning is socially learnt, and socially shared and mediated. These are modal choices by the designer, a signal of a rather limited repertoire to express nuances in writing by its texture, and turning the written word towards the visual mode. Layout means composition in space. The content is organised not that much by topics as by modules, consisting of programmes and activities, an advertising section (for third-party advertisers) being also a kind of activity on the display of the screen. Each of these modules hide a path of reading through clicking on the given prompts.

The chronological ordering of events follow the campaign calendar, but also personal events such as birthdays, holidays, seasonal feasts, etc., are recognised among the events. The choices concerning the selection of topics reflect and frame the persona of Michelle Obama, but also the Democratic Party, and online campaigning in general. In that sense the site is a generic hybrid, utilising both the personal, subjective framing and topics of a personal blog and the objective framing of newscast. The campaign is using Michelle Obama as a device for campaigning, and Michelle Obama is using the campaign to consolidate her own persona and to foster a certain habitus of her in the public sphere.

Texts on the postings (attached to an image) borrow and combine elements from various styles, from newscasting style and magazine style to casual blog-writing. Occasionally the style is informative, giving information on the party events or meetings.

The topic texts accompanying photos use plenty of *slogans* (a short phrase that is easy to remember[17]), *buzz words* (a word or phrase from one special area of knowledge that people suddenly start using a lot) , *catch phrases* (short, well-known phrase used regularly by an entertainer or other public figure), *platitudes* (a phrase that is so clearly true that it has no useful content), *quotations* (a sentence or phrase from a book, play, poem, etc), *proverbs* (a well-known saying that gives advice or says something about human life), and *sayings* (a short sentence that contains advice, or says what is usually *true in a particular situation)*. The use of familiar 'lines' makes them useful since their signified meaning is vague and the reader easily finds a

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[17] Descriptions of terms from Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (updated edition online).

personal experience attached to them. They gain meaning from the user's personal inventory of resources (emotional life events).

The samples of postings receive resistant readings in that they are met with passive-aggressive responses of nonsensical comments, the use of exclamation marks, repetitive phrases, or comments that bear no actual connection to what the posting is dealing with. Some comments use languages other than English, and although there is no way of knowing whether this is a form of resistance, e.g., towards English, or the campaign, or the candidate, it nevertheless acts as an estranging element: if the writer does not know English, s/he probably has not been able to comprehend the meaning of the postings, notwithstanding, s/he wants to occupy a space to show that other realities exist, manifested by other languages. The fact that people are responding with other languages than the proposed English, may implicate also their feeling of being excluded culturally on the site's cultural realm of what being American could involve, or they wish to gesture a difference, contest the posting's suggested hegemony of English-speaking culture. It might be their only available arena to denote some form of persistence, although they know only a few can understand what they are saying: at least their existence may become recognised.

Example (1):

A photo of Michelle Obama in the camera focus (Figure 2), with followers (shaded) around her. The camera has captured Michelle Obama's smiling face, the surroundings around the face is backgrounded and not sharp, leaving the contours of the followers, the represented participants, anonymous and thus without distinct identities: they represent a generic crowd of followers – the young woman covering over a third of the surface at the front is standing even her back towards the camera. Size, however, is not relevant in this design, the focus is. 'Michelle' in this image is, besides a represented participant (portrayed on the photo), also an interactive participant (she is posting the image on her site for her followers to view), representing a double narrative process.

Multiple font types and sizes are used on a reddish-brown tinted image, the overall colour palette is 'old-fashioned' but cosy and warm. The main audience targeted in the textual message is that of young people: the chunk 'in young people like you' is framed with pinpointing arrows from both sides of the chunk, the arrows representing a mode situated between (and connecting) the verbal and the visual. That particular piece of text is also situated in the section of the 'new given'. The textual passage resembles advertising slogans, with a clear rhythm in the chunks of the slogan, which makes it 'ear-catching': the reader 'hears' the chanting rhythm while reading: "The reason that (Barack) and I invest so much of our /time and energy /in / young people like you / is because we see ourselves in / each and every / one of / you."
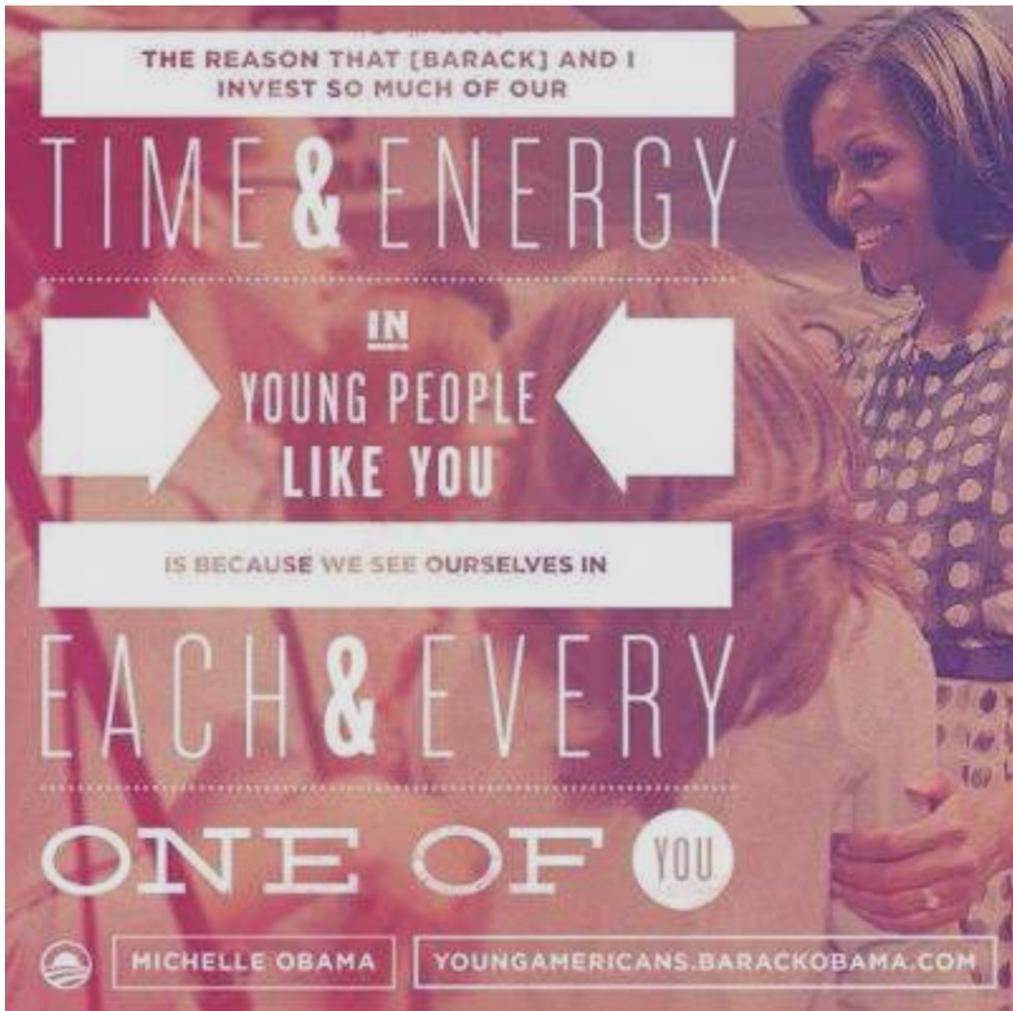
Figure 2. On Aug 1, 2012 (retrieved Dec 2, 2012).

The image, accompanied with carefully organised lines of text, activates several senses in the reader/viewer: you sense the rhythm in the text due to the emplacement of the lines, with varying font types and sizes which produce a kinetic sensation, a *motion* around the notion 'in young people like you', further evoked by the affordances of the arrows comprising 'young people' as the target audience.

The plea in the form of a declarative clause in the photo (Figure 2) is composed as an analytical message. Its message is 'making contact', signalling also an attitude. It is not – at first sight - addressed to a 'you', a single person but instead, to 'young people like you' which singles out the young but keeps them still undefined, as specimen of the generic youth. The Recipient becomes thus addressed with a generalised term, placing her/him as the Carrier of the possessive Attribute of 'young' in a greater whole (the targeted group of 'young people like you') with arrows from both sides signifying the relation between the verbal and the visual realisation; '(Barack) and I', the Actor, who 'invest so much of our TIME and ENERGY' signifies 'Michelle' as the actual Actor (who is investing time), and Barack signifying modality (I 'can' – i.e., 'with the power invested in me through my office/status').

The message is grammatically divided into two, both verbally and graphically: situated graphically in the middle, and also acting as a divider of the verbal statement, there is the clause: – 'is because we see ourselves in' – linking it with the rest of the message: 'each and every one of YOU'. Thus Michelle and Barack become Carriers of 'time and energy', and at the same time possessive Attributes of the circled 'You' (the young).

The conjunction 'and' is expressed with the graphic '&', which makes it stand out, and as a sign, it creates cohesion and will read out as 'connection', but also accentuates the conjoined words through a repetitive force. 'IN' is underlined, which relates it with 'action', 'belonging' in the group with Barack and Michelle.

The style of the site complies with the personal style of the page owner in that they function well together to achieve the desired impression and message. Michelle Obama wears the same dress in several of her photos, on different occasions: the same, or a very similar, dress as in Example (1) is seen also on Aug 9, Aug 16, 21, July 20 and 22, and Nov 4. – As her supply of choices concerning her wardrobe is plentiful, wearing the same piece of clothing on several occasions is of significance: (she probably likes these particular dresses, yes) the dress is also chosen as her attributive 'signature clothing' which lends added value and gravity to her habitus, and consequently, functions as a projective process towards her followers: it lends certain attributive characteristics to the followers: laid-back, ordinary, simple, accessible person – like' you'.

Michelle Obama's habitus, where dressing code is concerned, is consistent. She wears either a colourful dress or a suit for more formal occasions. The colour code in her dresses resembles either the one found in the American flag (combinations of blue/red/white), or bluish-purple colours combined with solemn and calm white, grey and black. The patterns on her dresses are often striped or robustly dotted. She avoids a clear-cut geometric pattern, but favours a more vague shape. – Shapes readily resonate meanings: she wants to avoid unwanted or mistaken, 'sharp' or adverse connotations. Dresses are plain, with the exception of an occasional matching scarf to the dress, signifying a feminine 'tie' which carries authority.

Clothes are meaningful signifiers that matter, even when the choice concerning them is unconscious or random. The outfit meets the eye of the viewer, who always makes an interpretation of it. In the present data, the appearance of the presidential family is carefully premeditated to fit the for the campaign devised strategy, however, unconscious connotations will always emerge, resulting in some amount of distortion in the signifying process, or a residue escape of sought-after meaning. Meaning never escapes the eye, though, even when what is seen is always somehow managed and filtered, and the signs will be perceived, although in slightly differing ways depending on the circumstances and the context. The affordances for interpretation are, nevertheless, always present, and they will result in meaning making.

11.4.3 Representing speech and action

Texts have social effects, some of which will result in changes through causality between a text and a change in the 'real', tangible world. Fairclough states that prolonged advertising, for example, contributes in shaping our identities into 'consumers', and similarly are our gender identities affected by continued advertising, to name a few realms. (Fairclough 2003: 8.)

Language use is socially determined. Within the social setting, there is an asymmetry concerning action on the site, a gap of silence between Michelle Obama and the other participants as she does not respond to any of the comments given, that is, there is an *absence of acknowledgement* from her side regarding the other participants. However, her not responding seems 'natural' because of her higher status. Social rules governing behaviour are regarded as different for her. Consequently, her not responding – and that being natural – also positions the others into a lower position: from the default setting of 'participant' which would assume an equal status, they are – through her silence – positioned into 'followers' signifying a lower status. The prevailing social condition determines what is normal and what exceptional, and her being silent in the textual world of the page becomes thus a 'normal' feature, instead of signifying a malfunction in communication, due to discoursal conventions people jointly hold. The participants, regardless a shared objective, hold different positions, and that determines presuppositions of action which become sustained by language use as a form of social practice (in this case, the one-sidedness of communication). The sets of conventions and the varying social identities of participants determine the limits for individual choices between normality and abnormality (even unsocial behaviour) in interaction.

Writing as a mode has its own potentials of meaning making: it has words, clauses, grammar and syntax, and resources such as font, bolding, frames, or colour. The communicated interaction entails virtually everything on the pages: the pictures, the videos, verbal text, layout, and occasional diagrams, that is, different modes for representation and communication. Taking place online, there cannot be gestures or touches, things attached to normal interaction and conversing when people physically meet; no tones of voice, no physical movement, no physical smile or signs of emotion, no spoken words (except, of course, on the videos), and so forth.

Nevertheless, there are a plenty of other means to pursue interaction and to maintain desired rhetoric objectives. These means are virtual, multimodal tools forming discursive interaction. Emotions, gestures and touches, in other words, physicality is transformed into virtuality through new forms and tools of interaction. Quite a lot becomes also inadvertently revealed as the medium is relatively new (in 2012), and people have not quite yet learnt to hide all they might wish to hide. There may also be technical hindering; or there has not yet formed a consensus of what is on its way of becoming naturalised, and what might be sanctioned (not 'liked') by the group. One could say that it is these early stages of new forms of communication where people reveal most of themselves, as the norms are not yet fully established.

In my view, participants on the investigated Facebook site are, at the very least, 'tangentially' involved in constructing and sustaining an order which is mainly determined from outside the page itself, and being *harmonised* with structures beyond the scope of what these participants assume to be participating with. They are not in control of the discussion although that supposedly is the very purpose of a grassroots involvement. Although the various customising choices give a user a feeling of control and choice, an individual has very limited control of the fundamental settings of the 'service'. Internet discussion becomes institutionalised and increasingly pre-structured, following algorithms and procedural settings that cannot be passed or changed.

I will give you a set of two events on the site, each portraying a photo message posted by a participant on the comment chain.

Example (2): 30 August, 2012

[Image deleted on the Comments section]

A photo in the users' comments portrays three men who are sitting confronted with a heap of bloody corpses, Barack Obama is situated in the middle. The man in the left has put his hand in front of his mouth, with his right hand placed on Obama's eyes as preventing him from seeing, Obama placing his hand onto the right ear of the third man (who is using his own hand to cover his left ear). The message is that of muted senses: no talking, no seeing/watching, no hearing/listening in front of a catastrophe ahead. The photo is followed by (another) user's comment: "Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through me.'"

That posting of that day is today missing, it has been deleted. 'Michelle Obama', the persona behind the profile, and the holder of her postings (besides Facebook Inc.), is authorised to add and delete what she chooses (and, to be accurate, so can the staff behind her profile and her content but here they function as one and the same actor). – Why delete the entire chain of a posting due to one unwanted comment in it? Had the person who posted the comment been the one who also deleted it, the rest of the chain would have been spared: thus, it was not the poster who decided to take it off.

On a grassroots support site, deleting a *single* commentary on a chain would read as restricting people's voice, it would leave a gap in the chain of commentaries; therefore, the profile owner must delete the *whole section* in order to hide the deed: to flush down the 'tarnished' chain of 'misplaced' commentary. It needs to be noted that deleting the *entire* posting with *all* its comments – due to one unwanted photo on the chain – also muted the other member's voice.

The published photo was visually heavy and, absolutely, raised questions, but 'Michelle' did not trust the users' judgment to figure it out themselves. – Deleting *all* of the comments

and the original posting will leave no trace on the site, and thus, one cannot discuss the matter in the group any further, either. There is no evidence that the posting ever existed. The action in the chain is suspended, the content is modified, and the poster (actor) is cancelled.

Example (3): Member's posting

In Example (3), the user's photo (on Nov 1st 2012; Figure 3) states, on a pink background: "President Obama / has fought / for / planned parenthood / and the / millions of women / who rely on that / for / healthcare." The image is a comment on Michelle Obama's posting from the same day stating: "Only one candidate in this race is a proven advocate for women's health care. He needs you to volunteer this weekend: (a link)."
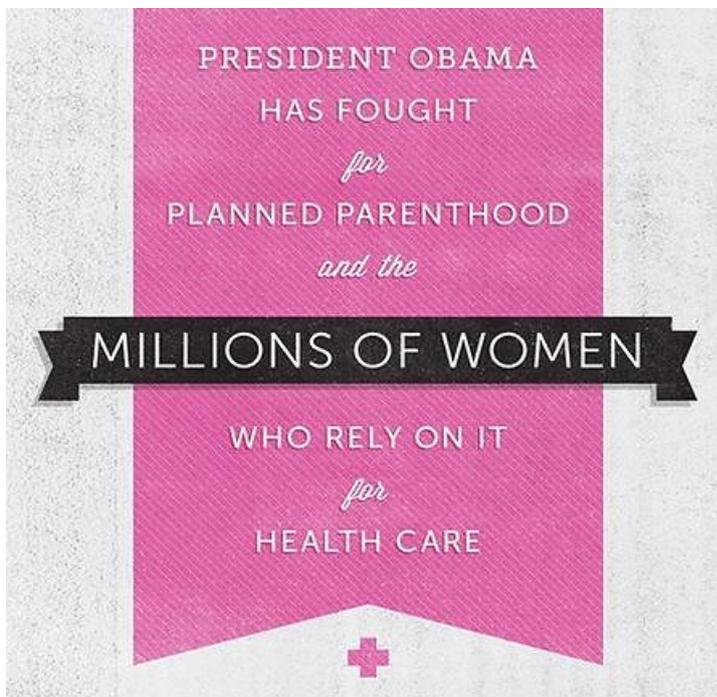

Figure 3. On Nov 1, 2012.

In the member's posting on the Comments section, the 'MILLIONS OF WOMEN', the uppercase text in the middle, is written on a banner in a large font which accentuates its significance; it is also situated in the salient middle of the photo. The message is placed on a distinctive background colour of pink. It assigns Barack Obama, as the Carrier of his post (acting as president), and using a declarative mood, as an Actor for women (fighting for them).

The pink background colour derives from the inner qualities assigned (attributed) to the female gender, pink being a socially sanctioned symbol for 'soft femininity', a traditional choice for representing femininity; one might think that it is even too obvious an attribute, worn-out – but nonetheless, a safe attribute during election time (you cannot go wrong with it). Femininity is signalled and symbolised also by the cursive handwriting, which – funnily –

is used only in the least meaningful filler words of the written message (i.e., conjunctions, prepositions). – These are the individual user's choices but echo also the values and perceptions of the American way of life. Therefore, they also serve the eligible identifying processes at work on the site.

Comparing the two user's images (Examples 2 and 3) – the image of Example 2 being deleted, and Example 3 still existing on the comments section – we easily grasp the reason for their different moderation: Figure 3 represents safe, familiar values, it is socially 'approved', and it also follows the agenda of the campaign (and is used to propagate that); therefore, it does not breach the prevailing practices, the negotiated order, on the site or in the society – and, at the same time, it functions as an advertisement for the campaign themes.

Examples (2) and (3) are individual examples but they do pinpoint the overall expectations towards the members: their role is to follow the set markings of the profile postings, discuss but not unduly contradict or disturb. The demarcation lines are thus framed by 'Michelle Obama', not by individual users who, nevertheless, in Example (2) might have ended up into the same conclusion (that the image should be deleted), however, on a shared site that should have happened through joint reflection, and through a social negotiation process by the group as 'collective agent' – ultimately, by a moderator who is a member of the group, *in* the group. That would have given the impression of grassroots action.

11.5 The affordances for action

Analysis may comprise the materiality of texts as well as the behavioural aspects of communication; meaning-making semiotics as an all-embracing effort. Multimodal text is a platform for action: things are done, identities are presented and represented, content is produced, distributed and consumed. It is *activity* and *action* rather than a fixed, unchanging entity that might be situated under analysis or description; the participants are involved in events, acts and action(s), in and through which power and ideologies are transferred, positioned and created.

Instead of places of action, it would be more accurate to talk about sites and *instances* of action, of settings and on-going stagings and processes. The viewer is *experiencing* an SNS more than reading it, although we can introduce the verb 'reading' to include all that is perceived when entering the site. The choices made out of the available affordances, distinctive organisations and combinations of them realise values and ideologies of the participants.

The participants on a Facebook site perform and act out a shared social effort and commitment using the affordances available, producing semiotic resources where social shaping takes place. The cultural selection of features within social network applications emerges through the social setting and practices gradually formed on the site, and the ways of acting and reacting will also find their familiar, naturalised paths. Dispositions of the most

used applications become principles that spread into other domains and will thus influence the culture of using them, that is, practices around them. In this way, the familiar Facebook functions begin to look and feel similar all over the globe, also on other applications. How the site operates becomes taken for granted; hence, its significance in shaping, for example, social practices concerning political action online will be considerable, and eventually may become unquestionable.

What we see on the site is not any genuine attempt to enable 'discussion', it manifests a rather mechanical posting-response relation where Michelle, nor 'michelles', never bother to embark on a discussion, or give feedback. The discussion ends at the point of an update being thrown into the world. From that point onwards the option for exchange closes, since people very quickly figure out the 'code of conduct' regarding the exchange type: after delivering her posting, the person/profile holder Michelle disappears out of reach. The users are left to reflect on each others' reactions or comments. The profile itself acts as a textual black hole, sucking everything around it, using it, but not revealing anything about its own position or stance on matters. Therefore, it also absorbs all possibilities for the people to influence on the issues dealt as it contains all the power of selecting and managing the topics and boundaries of conversation for itself.

The only real messaging takes place between the participants in the chain of comments, and as it appears, their comments are not interconnected, without a few exceptions, but their contributions in the chain are random, isolated episodes. The enactment of interpersonal function in social practice entails a dialogicality between the identity function of discourse and the enactment of social relationships. Identity is construed at an eye of a discoursal hurricane, all be it a small and gradual one.

The original decision regarding the deployment of the 'like' button on Facebook can be seen as an ideological choice for the benefit of a desired, solely positive disposition. The fact that 'disagreeing' does not have a 'hot key' was a choice made concerning the whole arrangement of elements on the site in general, where the space for a choice for critical evaluation was left empty, or filtered out, through a choice made concerning the design of the interface. The arrangement now readily allows to express positive sentiments, leaving spontaneous negative feelings, or critical judgments, aside. 'Negativity' on Facebook is not at the array of default settings of affectation or attitude.

The user should wonder why the site is designed in a way that makes critical thoughts difficult to express, whereas positivity is made natural and effortlessly accessible. Besides ideological reasons, and combined therein, are commercial factors: advertisers are the prime clients and the first-hand users of the site, although they appear to be third-party contributors; members of the community are there because the application needs their data to attract commercial agents. Within this frame, positivity simply sells better and more effectively than unforeseeable incidents of critical thinking that might ruin the brand. The platform, besides

retrieving data from the users, basically lends itself to be used for communication in order to create heightened buzz for commerce. That positions the individual users as consumers, and sets the atmosphere within an array of features conducive to happy consumerism.

Habitus, "an accumulated experience of a social actor" (Scollon & Wong Scollon 2003: 211) tends to be a significant source of action, and very often not consciously pre-determined. It is created as an accumulation of intervowen layers of habits and features that we carry along. However, combined with brand creation, habitus can be a useful tool for advancing messages.

Michelle Obama as a figure of addressee is in possession of multiple voices. The site is designed in order to approach readers with a voice of a Citizen, a Woman, a First Lady, a Democrat (and sometimes, as a Female Democrat), a Mother, a Wife, a Spouse (forming the Other of 'presidential couple', not necessarily including attributes of womanhood). The style varies between an Expert and a Role Model, focused on topics such as 'women in politics'.

Obama, Father and Husband Obama; and, as my study approaches the candidate from the perspective of Michelle Obama, the Wife, Michelle (ordinary woman), the Public Wife, First Lady, Citizen (moreover, Female Citizen). The figures represent different aspects of the persons involved, and are applied and employed in the textual representations. They all have their respective functions as they interact with the audience, or the users of the platform online.

Equally involved and intertwined with the image of the political figure is the identity construction of the Citizen, the private person and political agent, the publicly announced group member who is conversing and commenting in the privately maintained support group. There are fans, of Barack Obama, of Michelle Obama, of the Democrats, of politics, of campaigns, fans of being a fan (a kind of metafandom); many inhabit and act out several of these positions simultaneously. There are responsible citizens who are searching for information and commenting actively on the events, and people merely looking for a space to become involved in what, at its worst – as far as the socio-political relevance is concerned – could be described as discursive 'overflow': content that does not fulfil any imminent purpose socially or politically, random commenting without a purpose – other than to fill in comment space with inscription.

On the Michelle Obama site, the interpretation of events results from a *prompt*, a new posting by the account owner (Profile), which without exception on the site is a visual one (a photo or a video clip), usually accompanied with a short, written commentary. The great salience of any image lends to the significance of a posting: a message delivered in pictorial form is grasped immediately. It may be a photo, a campaign ad or an announcement concerning the elections or Michelle Obama's duties as the President's spouse, or a multimodal video clip. A short processing span of a news item is essential since users are scrolling through pages, viewing more than actually concentrating on reading and contemplating. An image has huge imminence that sucks in the viewer's attention instantly. The gaze of the viewer is directed towards the new posting emerging as a new event on top of the screen.

The images appear to be professional, of good quality, they are carefully composed and emotionally loaded. Nearly all of them concern the elections or the presidential family (animals included), and on this site, one must see the family as part of the promotion setting, not as a separate issue or topic. An accompanying section of written text commenting the photo adjoins the images, and they function as guidance or a script to the reader's interpretation. Whatever is written below has a starting point in the 'Michelle Obama's' first-hand comment.

The follower of the page is able to be included into the production of text to a certain extent, but only in a responsive role. The initiation for interaction, without exception, comes from Michelle Obama who as the owner of the page (account) holds the advantage of making initiatives, to begin discussions, and to end them. The owner/producer is able to write and read the text, while the reader/viewer is able to merely interpret what is laid in front of him/her, or encoded in the images. On the Michelle Obama page, followers seldom post images, and when they do, the photos resonate the same feeling and topic as the original posting by 'Michelle Obama', all postings from followers are in the Comments section, not in the topic section in the Timeline.

The discoursal space reserved for action for the viewer/reader is therefore that of a mere response. The comment, in definition, ought to have a connection to what has been said earlier, either by 'Michelle Obama' or by previous commentators, in order to make textual sense, and to function as a turn in conversation, promoting a discussion or dialogue. However, new openings or turn takings from within the 'crowd' are rare.

There are comments that best could be described as deliberate nonsense, and the purpose of those comments appears at first confusing. Why would anyone bother to publish comments that do not make sense, that do not connect with the previous content but simply fill a space? It may be, however, that 'filling a space' is a way of becoming acknowledged or at least seen: "I was here." The same type of writings you can see on toilet walls. It can also be a form of resistance when the user has comprehended the nature of the page where appearances matter more than discussion, and that creation of 'hype' overrides actual dialogue or discussion.

Viewed as whole, the style of the discourse on Michelle Obama Facebook postings is that of a hybrid mix of the public and private, which is a common media style on Facebook, portraying audience incidents, expressing feelings with campaign followers, with friends and family, but also depicting scenes from 'behind the curtains' to make followers feel 'invited' in a VIP position. Followers are attending the rallies from the front seat although they actually do not know any more than anyone following the news. The hybrid style is a deliberate choice for generating useful connotations into the meaning of the site, and to the identity of a politician, infiltrating as many layers of life as possible.

The various personas of Barack Obama mixed with the multiple manifestations of Michelle Obama leave room for exciting connotations or playfulness, offering powerful symbolic

meanings. The followers have a feeling of being included into events of exclusive access, albeit on a public site. On a public site, the postings would however appear visible to everyone once the user seeks the page even without the 'initiation act' of 'liking' the page, but the act of liking gives the user the privilege of receiving new openings (postings) into his/her personal news flow, like being visited by Michelle Obama at regular intervals. The user has made a *choice* to participate. The act of liking a page turns the roles of visitor/guest metaphorically around: to not press 'like' makes one a visitor of a particular site (the user has to search for it particularly to see the latest happenings); pressing 'like' *invites* you 'in', and 'Michelle Obama' will 'come and visit' you on your news flow.

On the Internet, there is no physical body moving in the physical world, however, an individual has an identifiable and unique signature created through the profile. As this person updates her/his status or personal info, or comments on others' postings, s/he is an agent moving in a space in time, 'giving off' her persona through her presence and her thoughts, her pictures, her history on the sites where she is a member/participant. S/he gives off race, sex, age, political standing, mood, to name only a few aspects of how a person may signal her/his outlook in the world. The physicality of the Internet is a matter of how much we ascribe physicality to actual materiality, and how much we ascribe it to the representations of materiality that produce very similar practices. In my view, physicality online is in many ways comparable with 'places' and 'situations' outside the digital world, as are people's actions as agents and actors online.

In Facebook each user adheres to a particular *zone* within whose realm s/he interprets communication and determines her/his relative positions amongst participants. The user adopts, and accepts, a certain position with a certain amount of power wherefrom to express feelings and thoughts, as well as the feasible array of topics and attitudes available for that user. The demarcation lines are invisible, yet powerful, and they are continuously indexing the actions performed on the site. Hall's concept of crucial distances (presented in Scollon & Wong Scollon 2003) is a functional notion also with online communication, even though distances online cannot be calibrated and measured in inches and feet.

On Facebook, distances may be measured through the forming of groups and their visibility. Hall's (1959, 1969) categories of intimate, personal, social and public distances are operating online as well. Social distances, as Goffman (1959) points out, as resources in displaying intentions and determining what kind of relationships we are seeking, and what may be available to us. Also feelings of social pressure stem out of these demarcation lines that are carefully signalled through the way people use online tools for communication. All spaces, although seemingly open for everyone, are not meant to be engaged with anyone. On Facebook, part of the participants are positioned as audience whereas others perform visible action and are granted attention. We may be civil and keep up appearances but beneath there is a strict social order with roles and identities which cannot be surpassed easily.

Distances cannot be determined through mere tools of operating, people do send personal messages to total strangers on Facebook; on the other hand, many of the 'friends' in our friends' list we may have met only once (if ever). Power is distributed and manifested through practices, through emotive responses, through liking (/or not), through commenting, and in an interplay of mutual positive feeds and acknowledgement between participants.

As Scollon and Wong Scollon note (2003: 54), Goffman and Hall did not relate interpersonal spaces to linguistic indexicality but it is evident that on Facebook there are rules concerning behaviour in different sociocultural groups, as well as a kind of deictics of who may strive to reach what, or where. The range of action becomes determined, and certain personal value of exchange is measured on anyone and everyone communicating on online sites. A personal range of power, a kind of social affordance for action for each individual varies from site to site in relation to this particular person, but on each 'arena' the potential power becomes valued, embodied and expressed.

On Facebook, the users form a shared social understanding of the interaction order: it is a kind of social aggregate. It displays a menu on what is at offer, and the act of entering is made easy. Discourses converge, generating codes, and discourse is shaped by the arrangement of the constellation within the space it occupies. Each participant shares her/his personal space through a comment box that may be activated by a single click in order to take a turn; the social space is entered through these individual comments.

On Michelle Obama site there are plenty of solitary comments on a very crowded platform, not really evolving into a more general discourse but filled with isolated, repeating comments, i.e., no actual aggregation of thought taking place, nor is there special interest to create actual discussion. It is more about participation, light talk, being in a shared 'march' without connecting to much more than the brand of the page owner (Michelle Obama).

11.5.1 Narrating the self

On Facebook, identity is construed through *membership* in a group or groups – the same person may be participating in multiple groups, but in slightly different roles and employing slightly different identities. The roles are manifested through the content system of 'worded' language and images; images are seen as part of the language system, as they should. Identities may be played out at different levels and within differing range, the profile being the pivotal text expressing and representing our 'selfhood', how we relate to other participants, how we negotiate our space online, and how we function on the site while negotiating our identities and social space.

As for the participance in specific groups, and performing roles on social sites, e.g., taking part in political activities such as is being presented in the data retrieved for the present study, participants are enacting their citizenship, construing the social actor within and out of themselves. They are forming subject positions by taking action, they work for something, and

simultaneously – due to the dual American party system and this period representing election time – inevitably also against something. They are making decisions concerning what 'type' of person they are, making choices about how they might signify social identities and relationships, knowledge and beliefs (see Fairclough 1992b: 76).

The manner in which the user is set up as a persona, a stance which is constantly updated, has made users reliant on how the feeds look, how individuals present themselves through constantly modified self-images, selfies, and the number of notifications they receive. Diary writing was once fashionable, today we transcribe life events as written speech and continuous flow of images online. On the screen we also mirror our current representations.

11.5.2 Roles for participation: Users, Members or Participants?

At the early days of Facebook, when joining the network was based only on invitations of friends, the invited user felt s/he was 'chosen' in to embrace an intimate, *inclusive* (which simultaneously reads 'exclusive' when approached from a different angle) membership in a safe and guarded surroundings of 'friends', or 'friends of friends' – as part of a naturally evolving social fabric, resembling much the way in which nature propagates itself. After all, everyone wants to be 'taken in'. Our resilience online has since increased and we have become accustomed to the ready-made categories of OSNs, such as Facebook, and we have begun adjusting our thinking and behaviour accordingly.

Different identities ascribe different meanings to actors. The range of resources is not the same for the respective members on the sites: someone is assigned as expert with a higher status, some other as 'layperson' who may possess opinions but not similar prestige or authority. Identity is thus, as noted by Wetherell and Potter (1992: 78), "sedimented out of the prior practices."

Members present themselves in a manner that makes their actions acceptable and likable in order to have influence and to become noted. While doing so, they readily ascribe themselves even as consumers of a product, although 'Consumer' as an agent of change is quite far distanced from the act of 'creating' which all change requires. The roles people ascribe to themselves change the whole environment, and hence, the meaning-making within the social construction as a whole.

On the site, there are blind followers as miscellaneous clusters of fan culture, approaching a genre of political fan fiction. During election time, people seem to be treating politicians in America like rock stars; Hollywood, for some, is in Washington (literally), and the 'fun' is, in many cases, intertwined and inseparable with the 'fan' section of action, especially on the Internet discussion groups, which seem to be functioning as an integral part of political maneuvering as well. Too often, the language on the sites becomes incomprehensible, losing sight and cohesion. Meaning loses its bearings in the jungle of genres; clusters of words roll in

the comment flow in emotional outbursts. There is little conscious and informed analysis, although, in places, there is also that.

Democracy in our lifeworld is seen as a kind of 'negotiated order', using a concept familiar from pragmatism and of sociology (Honneth & Joas 1991:114). Habermas promotes the ideas of lifeworld "as represented by a culturally transmitted and linguistically organized stock of interpretive patterns" (TCA, vol II, p. 124). Content of this lifeworld is merely background, unknown to the actors (Honneth & Joas 1991: 114).

In discourse events in particular sociocultural contexts, power is conceptualised in terms of asymmetries between participants, and they do not have equal opportunities for control over the production, distribution or consumption of the texts involved in the event (Fairclough 1995a: 1). This on these pages is evident, since although the comments are directly from individual persons, and notwithstanding the evident moderation of incoming texts (some comments are deleted), the choice of topic and the initiation of text fragments come from the outside and above; the style is also set ahead; even the sub-genre under the obvious main genre is pre-chosen.

In a political campaign, part of the emerging comments may be pre-arranged, and not genuine citizen responses; and although 'everyone' by definition is a citizen, comments 'from the inside out' are naturally challengeable, and basically incapable of acting in a role of a genuine 'grassroots' commentator. The power of control means that there are actors who are capable of, and who occasionally have the sole means of, sustaining practices that override alternative 'readings' or narratives in the chain of comments by adjusting the meaning back to the desired track, by controlling the process of the negotiation on meaning.

11.5.3 'Like' as a conversational move and as a social determinant

The default setting of 'liking', a choice of action for social bonding, has now become customary and commonplace on social sites. On Facebook there is an ready-made option for 'liking' under each posting, for a quick response. From 2016 onwards, there has been an even wider array of response buttons available; however, the present study concentrates on the choices available at the time of 2012 election.

In my view, and based on my findings on the investigated site, the 'action buttons' of Facebook has had a significant effect on how the users make sense of their role as a social network user. Through the buttons of Facebook, the person shapes and scores a certain stature: s/he is admired or regarded as important, gains prestige and standing, a certain reputation for him/herself; or not. Through the 'like' functions the user also communicates his/her personal stances on what is happening on the site. The button and its usage positions her/him eventually at every moment along a set of social clusters. S/he will be defined and identified through the amount of 'likes' s/he gathers (or not), and while chasing the 'likes', s/he will eventually comply to a defined cluster with most likes, find a rank within a group. From that

position, s/he will continue to operate, which too often signifies shaping an identity to fit the mould wherefrom s/he is pleasing the crowd.

In the early days of Facebook, one could hear users wondering, even complaining, about the limited choices of spontaneous reactions at hand; however, very seldom do the users today actively take notice of the 'like' function in a manner that would question its existence, or the lack of some other fast functions. It has become commonplace, natural. The function was created to resemble a 'button', and due to its ready-made fashion its functioning principle is now fully conventionalised and automatised. It was, up to March 2016, a function without options. The new, wider array of options for reacting are not, even today, mutually exclusive, i.e., 'different' choices in the sense that the desired blanket disposition of 'positivity' had been in any way passed: on the static screen, before any action is made, the 'like' button stands as the sole, obvious and visible choice; it is only after you place the cursor above the 'like' that the other, alternative choices become activated as hovering options above the 'like'. – These functions undergo changes, evolve in time, therefore tomorrow the choices may be dispositioned differently.

Any full array of choices, in other words, is only activated *after* you have decided to react positively. As an operational set of procedures, performed as a chain of actions in time, the initial choice of making a response to a status update or comment already places the action 'under' liking, thereby indexing eventual criticality under humorous, slightly sarcastic commentaries automatically subordinated to the prevailing positivity. This results in behaviour eliciting solely positive responses and emotions, allowing merely a slight gradation within the chosen mood of positivity. Due to the procedural chain, there remains but one actual option, and other options are indexed below it.

After the functioning principle of 'reaction' has become automatic, users are no longer actively aware of being invited or restricted to a limited choice, or being withheld the marginalised, invisible possibility to 'not-like'- not to mention the stronger 'dislike' – the positive button is the only visible, existing choice for expressing a sentiment. Pressing 'like', or leaving the option of reaction or 'rating' empty, hinders thus other fast and spontaneous choices for the user - and at the same time, excludes the choice of, for instance, stating that a posting might be 'important', 'interesting', or utter nonsense. To do that, the user has had no other choice but to write a separate comment, which always requires more thought and time.

On a comment section, one may write what one wants, yet the act of expressing thoughts in writing requires some formulating, perhaps even grounds for the stated critical notions, and that is not altogether effortless. The user soon realises that it is much easier to adapt to the desired positivity, the a priori valid disposition on the site. Moreover, 'not-to-like' becomes easily a distinct act in itself, equalled to '*not* pressing 'like'', which makes it socially detrimental, especially in a tight community. The 'like' function is a signifier, a resource for expressing sentiment, and it contains meaning-potential which is specifically directed through

the design of the site. It is justified to maintain that the affordance of 'opinion' is here heavily framed socially.

The design of elements available on Facebook is not an insignificant matter but one indicating a wider cultural and social orientation to the world. Placing a prompt for 'positivity' in the centre of action, and even though there are huge amount of positive things in the world, willingly reacted on by 'thumbs-up', the arrangement of elements on Facebook does not portray a *sufficient* array of imminent choices for the user. The 'like' button on Facebook therefore causes the social environment to become a blunt, inadequate instrument for new thoughts, and for social action. Through its functional choices, the page creates a social disposition of inflating the fruitful critical potential into an approving humming, which works always well for the prevailing status quo in society. The designer's choices are embedded in attitudes about how democracy should work, and turned into code; the code, then, is embedded with the normative choices of the designers (Howard 2006: 3; see also Scollon & Wong Scollon 2003 on the situatedness of signs).

Psychologist Ellen Langer (see e.g., Langer 2009) has named the effect of people sensing or overestimating the ability of control over events as the 'illusion of control'. When people perceive that they are in control of their environment, it gives them a feeling of accomplishment. The affordance of 'like' on a Facebook site operates as a false affordance without any actual function other than to consolidate bias to optimism. It is not an actual opinion as all the other imminent choices of action are ruled out. Nevertheless, pressing 'like' is psychologically rewarding, and it gives a sense of control. It gives a person visibility, although after becoming naturalised and automatic without real significance, the 'like' function is an emptied signifier which could even be maintained to function more efficiently when *not* used, or used sparingly to evoke its original meaning. Users press 'like', notwithstanding the actual content of a posting, as a sign of 'I have read/seen this (and I am still your supporter/friend)' in a manner widely known as classical conditioning[18]. It appears harmless and insignificant but alters behaviour, albeit in a non-straightforward way.

What is left for the individual commentator is either to 'like' or not to like, which is, in fact, the same as no reaction, since the actual 'no' is in itself emitted from the choices of response. The repertoire does not allow negation. The implied 'no' becomes hidden inside 'not *especially* liking', which of course is very near liking.

The absence of 'dislike', and the fact that it seems to remain absent on the application means that the resources of Facebook are fixed and controlled, although the semiotic inventories could easily be completed to serve a wider multitude of actions. What is on the array of choices really matters in the configuration of speech acts. Absence of choice reflects directly on what

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[18] See Ivan Pavlov's work for stimulus-response actions, e.g., Pavlov 1910.

we can say, it creates gaps of mode. However, the relevance of widening the inventory does not seem relevant to Facebook owners due to the fact that advertising, which is an all-embracing positive world, craves for a certain kind of atmosphere on the pages.

Discourse communities online are not static in a sense that there would be a unified, fixed culture of doing things, even when there is a devoted fan structure behind the activity as is often on political sites, especially during election campaigns. The fact that it is an open group into which new members may enter at any point makes it inevitably a potentially dynamic environment. Participants, including the ones following and not commenting or posting themselves, are 'together' making sense of the shared goal(s) established on the site.

The shared vision of the page is stated and publicised in the 'About' section. In the act of choosing to join in, by becoming a member, an individual accepts the predefined goals. Joining is a situated, temporarily and spatially anchored act, with which the member of the community begins to share the views and stances of the community, and even if the user may have conflicting views and they are expressed, the opposition is, even then, anchored at the common goal, and becomes contextualised within that context.

Participants gradually share a mutual history that binds them tighter together, and even conflicting episodes are investments in a shared future. The worldview of participants need not be entirely shared, and that will happen when there is a critical amount of shared parameters to establish a 'feeling' of shared community. Affection seems important, much of the content is affectionate and needs to be responded with affection, by express feelings and cultivating emotions.

11.5.4 Idle chatterati or citizenry formation

Not all responses can be expressed by a straightforward *on/off* operation such as via the 'like' button; writing a comment requires processing and grounding. Writing an actual remark also gives the user a *voice*, a chance to formulate more personal messages on one's own terms, which ought to be seen as something precious in terms of being recognised. – It is wearisome, though, to follow entire stretches of conversation on a page where there may be hundreds, even thousands comments for a single prompt, in order respond and post a sensible comment on the comment chain. People do not usually have the energy, or time, to read each previous comment; instead, they start writing their comment as if starting the comment flow 'anew', from the start.

The language in the Comments section, where the ordinary citizens use their voice, uses a range of conversational devices, such as incomplete sentences, conversation fillers, contractions, slang and informal spellings, trendy expressions (evaluatives like *'absolutely fantastic'*), even indications of timing and intonation. Even 'style of the street' is used, reflecting lifestyles and identities that are constantly updated through specific vocabulary and the latest expressions.

There also seems to be a very human need in the group to gain personal legitimation, genuine responses, instead of random remarks emerging from 'a anonymous void'. It is inevitable, though, due to the obvious lack of concentration in the act of reading the comments chain, that the content in the chains would become repetitive: users say the same things over and over again. As the act of 'placing a comment' gives the instant, desired visibility, most users seem to settle with that. Their visible 'being there' may be more significant for them than what they actually needed to say. *Commenting* signifies therefore more the recognition of mere existence, or the acknowledgement of one, of an individual than actually 'commenting' as pointing to his/her actual actions, his words, on the site.

Commentators post comments that are identical, or near identical, to the previous comments – when that happens, no new information is delivered on the site, and nothing relevant becomes added to the previous comments. A long comment flow states, over and over again, how something is *'beautiful'* or *'so beautiful'* or *'beautiful!'*. Most of the near-identical expressions are ecstatic exclamations of joy or admiration, or simple greetings on festive days in the middle of a comment chain under a posting of something altogether different.

I believe such comments also serve as *inscriptions of presence*, markers of 'I am here'. The comment thus marks an intent to manifest one's distinct identity for others' gaze, it is a suggestive *offer* for recognition: the commentator's name is visible, so is her profile picture. The name and picture of the commentator reads out as the actual message, the content of the comment could very well be left empty – but then, of course, no message could be sent. The fact that people do not actually follow the chain of comments naturally exhausts possibilities for 'conversing'. The need to 'belong' is more crucial, to exist in a chain of the 'like-minded', even 'believers'; to be a faithful member in a group; to be a fan. The most significant, and desired, act in the group seems to be to *'belong'*.

Example (4):

The image (Figure 4) from the 7th November 2012 is retrieved from Michelle Obama's Facebook pages, where it functions as an update posting in two parts: a photo and an accompanying message in writing. The photo, which is the key element of the posting, is thus elaborated with the message, and followed with a link: "Today is the big moment – be part of it by voting today: (link)." The topic of the posting is a plea to women to vote in the elections – the 7th of November in 2012 was the election day – and this was one of the pleas from that day that Michelle Obama posted on her various social pages, stating the same declarative message: "Every woman has a voice, and voting is one of the most powerful ways to express it."

Figure 4. On Nov 7, 2012.

The message is signed with a signified 'sender' of *First Lady Michelle Obama*. The accentuated 'signature', stating her official status, adds to the authority of the message: Michelle Obama is not merely a candidate's spouse, but the still-prevailing President's spouse, in the midst of an identity transition: she is on her way towards the identity of the forthcoming President's wife; or, if president Obama will not be re-elected, moving towards a role as the spouse of a retiring President, holding respective status. The message, as it is selectively directed to female voters through the verbal positioning of 'women' in the topic, is also positioning her under the attribution of 'wife' more than that of 'spouse', the effect of which is further accentuated by the epithet 'First Lady', with capital letters pinpointing her official status. Being more pronounced as a 'wife' *bonds* her closer to the female participants/voters than being a 'presidential spouse', a role rather distant to ordinary women.

The photo as a whole epitomises a transitional moment in-between 'before' and 'after': Michelle Obama, First Lady, is on her way to be re-elected along with the President, her husband. Her 'becoming something' is, however, subjected to a goal detached from her imminent persona, her existence is positioned and situated within a discourse, and her social subject is, in itself, secondary: her image is a vehicle for the position of Presidency, and she serves as a function (not the source) for the statement expressed in the text. She is situated in the discourse in a particular way, turned into a symbol of the concept of Citizen, more

precisely, a token of female citizenry. She is also occupying a subject position associated with what the title of 'First Lady' is supposed to contain and represent; hence, the discursive activity positions her as First Lady.

As for the image itself, what we perceive here is a woman who, although being 'one of us' (i.e., one of the women whose attention she has captured through the message), also boldly 'takes the floor' by stepping on the orator's platform and whose presence is indexed to the visible microphones through which we can hear her. The microphones imply that something is being uttered, and integrate her with 'authorial voice'. We do not see the speaker's stand but are implicated of its presence. In this way there is a sense of disengagement created between the reading/viewing audience on the website staring at the photo, since the actual audience (present on the occasion) are hidden beyond the scope of the frame of the photo. She is, with this posting, addressing specifically the online viewers, the followers of the site who are invited as front-seat guests into a wider, assembled audience in an actual real-life venue.

Due to this disengagement, for her online followers, 'Michelle Obama' is here acting rather as a representation of herself than a real person, her face turned away from the camera. She is standing on the platform as though unaware of the gaze of the followers on the website, creating an illusion of being 'caught in action', photographed as by chance, offering herself to be examined. The audience on-the-spot are not aware of the 'other' audience. However, the invisible audience most probably is the target audience for that day, since the amount of online followers surpasses the on-site living audience. The audience at the venue act as a vehicle for creating 'presence' for the online event.

Her detachment in the photo of her online audience adds to the objective air of her statement, makes it a matter-of-fact utterance rather than a subjective opinion that could be more easily opposed. Her gaze away from the viewer, looking to the right creates an illusion of her eyes following a path into the future, accentuated with the actual words 'Forward.' at the centre of the speaker's stand; she is concentrating on tomorrow, the viewers' eyes follow the direction of her gaze to the future as well.

The voice with which the reader/viewer is addressed is even slightly 'educational', it presents an offer to do 'the deed'. The message is further distanced from the recipient as it is 'signed' with an addresser (First Lady); also, the message does not employ the Imperative Mood which would imply facing the addressee (a You or all You); the message contains a verbally stated Subject (every woman). The message is a Statement of Fact, which is a strategic decision at this point of a campaign. The "Forward." sign in the Imperative Mood, possessing a huge information value due to its placement, faces the addressee more directly by giving an order, highlighted with its definite low-key full stop instead of an exclamation mark, which is a choice for calm serenity and authority, leaving behind and excluding the messy rallying of the campaign trail. It is also a choice of style, a more elevated choice compared to an exclamation mark, and the placement in the middle lends it great salience.

The arrangements of the elements in the picture do not meet the followers with a direct gaze; a gaze turned away from the viewer is in accordance with the lack of a direct address of 'you' of the written message. It also underlines the representational mode of the image: it represents a detached figure rather than makes a contact with an actual, real-life Michelle Obama; the 'Michelle Obama' on the page stands for a character representing and personalising the campaign of the Democratic Party. Also the act of voting in the written message is an abstracted representation, not an enactment of her personally going to the polling station as a voting citizen. There is thus a sense of disengagement in both the written and pictorial elements.

Her avoiding an eye contact with the online viewer also situates the scene itself at the front: the occasion, this day, is more important than engaging personally with anyone anymore. She does not need to reach out for individual persons, this is her making a final declaration for the election day. She is here to be seen. What is left to be commented (by the audience) will therefore be 'a comment on her comment': to 'like' her posting in a similar manner as the audience on the venue are applauding. The posting has thus, in its initiation, exhausted actual invitations of response from the online followers; it is merely a ready-made prompt to be watched and saluted, an exchange that ends in a closure.

The message is thus positioned to gather the *momentum* of First Lady officially serving a summons on all women to enter the polling stations. The slogan 'Forward.' at this specific point underlines both the transitional moment of before/after and the actual steps to be taken to the polling stations. 'Movement' serves as a metaphor for the political movement of the Democratic Party but also for the society in general; one word thus works on multiple levels of abstraction and is situated within multiple fields of discourse. The full stop at the end (of the one-word slogan!) is completing the announcement's finality and definitive nature: 'This is all I have to say at this point of the election campaign: this is the decisive moment'. The campaign facing its final point, the destination *(reading as a full stop)* of the campaign is here and now, whereas the future, the next statement to be issued by the act of casting a vote, will be made by the recipient. The full stop frames the scope of events as 'ending here'. The imperative 'Forward.' is an edict that needs to be followed and obeyed, combined with a caption on the road: Michelle Obama speaking is the signifier connected to the signified, the big moment, 'time to vote'.

The speaker's stand accentuates the word 'voice' of the message. The Michelle Obama of the photo is indexing her womanhood to citizenry, and so are invited to do the presupposed recipients (of the posting), the addressees. "Every woman has a voice" reads, in this context, 'every woman has a vote'. Refrasing the whole message, "a woman's voice has its most powerful impact in the act of voting," thus becoming noticed and heard as a woman in society. The style of the posting is not conversational, rather it is uttered by an 'expert' in women's affairs (concerning politics), or of a role model for the voting women; there is no attempt to

appear as an 'ordinary' person, instead a boundary is risen between the private and the public both in the image set up by the speaker's stand and in the written message (as part of an image) which is formal and signed. The formality is also accentuated with the American flag at the background, shaded but on the left (the place you start to read), as a commencement or taproot of the event.

Example (5):

Figures 5-7 display the same speaker's stand, in different events but portraying a similar pose and expression. The images position the viewer at different angles in relation to Michelle Obama, at her side but looking towards her; a pair of salient objects placed in the foreground: the glass speaker's stand / the 'Forward.' sign (Figure 6 and Figure 7). This is the composition as the online viewer of the photos will read it; for the audience in that specific place, the reading would be slightly different, depending on where exactly the on-the-spot viewer would be situated: would s/he have a direct contact with 'Michelle', in one way or another. At the event itself, there would also be other elements present, such as echoes, voices, people talking, smells; it would be cold or warm, and so forth. – In that way, the members of the audience are very differently positioned to interpret the happenings on the stage compared with the followers online, who read/view the images on the website.

Women for Obama Luncheon with First Lady
Michelle Obama—New York, 09/20/12

Figure 5. On Sept 23, 2012.

The audience in the 23 Sept photo (Figure 5) is positioned on the left. Online viewers on the Internet would be approaching her from the side, perhaps waiting what would be said (the message just yet unspoken and uninterpreted). Since the viewer reads the image from left to right, s/he will register the affordances offered by the glass stand: the perceived properties of the glass and its use. The transparent stand lends it properties to 'Michelle': we can trust her, she does not want to hide anything (/has nothing to hide). The simple, yet stylish form of the object (glass stand) as conceptual element also lends certain attributes to how the viewers perceive the event and Michelle's persona. The elements, and the image as a whole, accent simplicity, elegance, and modernity.

The viewers' glance on the site, following the site's composition, will then gradually begin to follow the comments section accompanying the photo, furnished with certain expectations, and forming a particular stance towards the emerging comments. And perhaps, the viewer/reader will also want to add a comment of her/his own, become part of the narrative, to create a relationship with 'Michelle'.

In Figure 6, 'Michelle' is situated the other way around (horizontally) which, in turn, places the audience on the right. They have read the message (posting), the speech is nearly over. The 'Forward.' sign is foregrounded, taking the salient focus as Michelle Obama's gaze is directed away, to the left. 'Michelle' is positioned so as to offer the viewer her personal front to be examined. The direction of her glance, and the vector of the reactional process, is pointing away from the viewer. The roof structures of the venue even accentuate the movement as pointing vectors, the largest rafter pointing upwards and to the right from the blue sign as an arrow, signifying dynamic force.

First Lady Michelle Obama in Leesburg, VA yesterday: "Don't let anyone tell you any differently—elections are always about hope."

Figure 6. On Oct 11, 2012.

The audience attending these events, i.e., the people physically present, read the situation slightly differently, and the act of interpretation is also carried out in a different manner. The audience 'there' cannot read online comments, instead, they can read the faces and gestures of the rest of the audience (around them), they can see the smiles comparable to online 'likes', and so forth. – They can respond with applause ('agree').

They also have the opportunity to take another seat in order to see more or better if they wish. Their choice of chair determines the perspective they catch regarding the happenings on the stage – that is, provided they are free to choose their seats or move their physical position in the venue, to sit either closer or further from the stage. They may chat with each other, take photographs or videos (and end up in other attendants'' photos and videos – at the same time, act as presented and represented participants in the event).

Online, the choices of the stance for scrutiny regarding the composition, are made by the photographer. The online viewers/readers may express their views by commenting (thus, produce content) or not, based on how much they want to become involved. Commenting entails a possibility to create a connection with the speaker (Michelle) symbolically 'touch' the speaker, to make a personal mark in the event, get closer and thus become 'involved' and 'engaged'.

In the photo of 23rd Oct 2021 (Figure 7), the viewer is at her side but looking towards her; the 'Forward.' sign obliquely placed but readable, with the accompanying topic text:

The First Lady in Florida yesterday: "Let's lay it on the table. We believe in an America where every child, no matter where they're born or how much money their parents have, should have good schools. The kind that push them, and inspire them, and prepare them for jobs and college."

The speaker's stand, a representational element featuring several of Michelle Obama's postings around the investigated period, is made of glass, a widely used material in speaker's stands, evoking again connotations of honesty. The glass stand is placed in the middle, the viewer is situated slightly below at the sides looking upwards, foregrounded by the speaker's authority.

It is a deliberate choice by the photographer to take photos from different angles, to use different perspectives. Choices regarding the repertoires of perspectives and the will enable and create narratives, evoke dynamic forces, situate salient elements, structure information portrayed by the image. In the act of photographing, the photographer positions him-/herself in the double position of creator/interpreter (writer/reader) in order to achieve the intended result or effect. However, everything can never be staged fully in advance, since every viewer has a different mindset regarding the evoked contexts due to different personal backgrounds, skills and experiences. Therefore, no photographer can determine *all* the interpretations of any photo, nor can its meaning be ever fully closed. The picture is reborn and evoked in each viewer's brain slightly differently each time.

The First Lady in Florida yesterday: "Let's lay it on the table. We believe in an America where every child, no matter where they're born or how much money their parents have, should have good schools. The kind that push them, and inspire them, and prepare them for jobs and college."

Figure 7. On Oct 23, 2012

There are clues, however, in the written text and in the images – the entity as a whole of the words and images – on how to 'read' the various personas of 'Michelle Obama', and the messages delivered – implications through which the entire text becomes contextualised. In that way, we might say that Michelle Obama, the 'Person', has disembodied herself into a variety of working personas to suit her purposes (and those of the organisation attached to her, the Party) to cover effectively a wide range of situations, to play out different roles introducing different identities, and hence, representing different roles which position her, respectively, within the differently 'distributive' layers of power – escorting readers/viewers toward the desired meanings and interpretations, and positioning them at their due positions as group members. It creates and functions as a kind of 'architecture of prominence and power'. It also distributes choices differently: the higher you are in the structure, and the nearer the centre of it, the more choices you have. For an ordinary member of the group, there are limited 'selections' available rather than choices: the affordances for action in the group are not equally distributed.

On the site in general, the followers' positioning reflects what Michelle Obama is stating, and which role – and consequently – position she holds at a given time (e.g., wife /spouse /mother /woman /*working*_woman, and so forth): readers /members /followers and Michelle Obama are occupied in an interactive social game in which 'turns' derive from constantly fluctuating set of affordances concerning the social-semiotic configurations.

'Michelle Obama' is ubiquitous and fluid, not fixed in a particular role, which sometimes also leads to insecurity regarding agency as members of the group are constantly pursuing to

get responses from her, to be acknowledged by 'Michelle' for who they are, and recognised for their actions as citizens. However, exchanges are one-sided, and there is no response. In order to become 'seen' and 'heard', the group would have to form a common body of 'us', to become an agent with a shared mind and a goal, which cannot be reached through Facebook's functions and affordances which divert the attention of the group members away from one another to be solely drawn to 'Michelle'. Therefore, the group does not evolve: their communication is scattered and purposeless; and as for action, they are drifting.

Power does not tend to look straight in the eye, more often is it veiled in mystery and distance; the relation of the reader/viewer and Michelle Obama is imaginary rather than real. In many of the photos, Michelle looks sideways, not facing the viewer: she is posing to be examined as a specimen for success, power, and influence. This, of course, is the case with most situations where establishment confronts with 'lay persons', or groups. The distance is also evoked with the apparatus, or design, involved; here, the web site design (generally) along with the application design (Facebook) with its customised affordances (such as the confined button of 'like').

The relationship between her persona and the participants is unequal due to the higher status of Michelle Obama, and of the relational setting of her being the sole person capable of proposing themes and topics on the page, making all the initiations of conversation and choosing the venues. The alienation becomes all the more awkward, and the persona of 'Michelle' all the more vague, because the *actual* person posting on the page is most probably not Michelle Obama but the posting (as action) would most likely be delegated to a staff member amongst the elections officials representing her and Barack Obama's public relations. 'Michelle' is a token, a symbolic image.

Michelle Obama, the private person, is most probably a charming person. However, this setting, or staging, is not about *her*. She as much as anyone is also a captive in the 'orders of discourse', conceptual terrains that control the structural elements of what is possible to be and to do. However, in the end, those elements always favour the strong rather than the weak – that is where critical aspects, and analysis, necessarily enter the equation.

Example (6): Four more years

In Figure 8, the Obama couple are attending an out-of-doors gathering in an open-air setting: the mood is relaxed and the style propagating casual-chic ambiance. Michelle is wearing one of her signature dresses for this campaign: a red-white checked, simple dress where the hand-drawn pattern is vivid and uncompelled. Her bare arms signal practicality, as does Barack Obama's casual white ('pure' and 'official') shirt with sleeves rolled up ('relaxed'). Barack is wearing khaki pants that become indexed under comfort and easygoingness. He has left the tie off and the top button unbuttoned thus stripping off, temporarily, some signs of his post and authority in order to become more relatable.

Figure 8. On Nov 4, 2012.

The arrangement of the scene portrayed in the photo, and also at the event itself, is composed in a way where Michelle is the main performer, making a speech whilst the candidate is 'hovering' at her background as an optional token for attendance ("I'll speak up if I get a chance"). The online viewer is situated slightly below, the gaze set at Barack, and moving therefrom to the right to view Michelle and her microphone, and finally, the familiar signboard (Forward.) which is placed at the front of the stand. Barack is looking straight at the viewer, taking the online audience into account, *bonding*. The moment is clearly Michelle's, she is acting in the attributive function of a surrogate leader. The arrangement legitimises Michelle's position as a 'channel' to Obama, hence to power, and it also sets the viewer as in a link of a chain, connected to inclusion and involvement. Michelle operates as a channel into power, which is meant to empower also her followers.

Example (7): Cover photo

The image shown in Figure 9 portrays a photo from November 30th 2012 on the Michelle Obama site. Representing a cover image, it is more significant than an ordinary photo: cover photos demarcate the 'mood' for topics during the period a particular cover is maintained, but simultaneously, they signify the values of the user, much the same way a book cover seeks to provide the reader with a set of reading guidelines. Therefore, it is useful to ponder why this particular photo was selected as a cover photo for that particular period (after the presidential election). – Why did 'Michelle' (and her team) opt for this one?

Figure 9. On Nov 30, 2012.

A user comments:

" the gifts of nature do not burn the 12 gods of olympus taught the ancient spirit of el…my uncle from olympic gods was the current archbishop of Athens Spartans to the winners of ThEMISTOKLIs..O MARATHON oF JUDAG twelve CHRISTIANITY iS … YOU ARE MAIN MICHEL the ALITHNI VIEW ATHENS fALSE called EVDOXIA Balian iS fALSE NAME AND CODE ARE YOU SOSIAS took advantage of people that look like COPIES"

The same user continues, immediately thereafter, in a separate comment:

"The current Archbishop of Athens in the god Dionysus ….. he helped me to find you Olympus you are the real one There are 2 Greek women who liik amazing to you … when your album went down on they key, your album lied to politicians that the Micheleel Obama is a false view of Olympus. You are the real one, I saw it in the Atlantic….name eudoxia balita and anastaia petrov working in national bank"

Another user comments:

"Hello Amerika ❤️ Hello Michelle

For a God new time in Unidet Staats of Amerika ☮️
"Präsident von Amerika"
Sachsen Penig Deutschland
Onkel Jürgen Olejniczak

Germany by Briefing und Consulat Leipzig ❤️ "

The 'Cover Photo' on Facebook is situated on top of the overall composition of the site, and positioned as a 'logo' of the user which, besides setting the mood, also represents the various and fluid identities of the user, and the overall 'ethos' set by the user, to last (at least) for a defined period of time. A cover is usually replaced with another cover when and if, in the flow of events, there occurs a significant thematic shift in the course of events (for ordinary users, a change of cover often marks a change in everyday routines, festive days, family events, and such). Some users choose to stick to a permanent cover photo signifying a solid, permanent (maybe not fixed) identity, one not easily swayed (or, perhaps the person does not spend time on Facebook).

Written comments accompanying the cover are found on the pop-up commentary chain for followers, visible once one clicks on the image. In due course, having been replaced by more recent photos, old cover photos are stored in the Profile's photo gallery under 'cover photos'.

What we see in Figure 9 is an analogy of the famous setting in the painting 'Last Supper 'or 'Holy Communion' with Jesus and his disciples – 'simple men' with their 'master' – a painting by Leonardo da Vinci. Regarding da Vinci's painting, it is commonly assumed that the secret of the topic, the message, is to be found in the fact that Jesus is pictured in the painting as a common mortal along with other 'common men', sitting at the table having supper; that is, Jesus is depicted as an *ordinary* man (as opposed to a holy person).

In this picture, in comparison with da Vinci's gathering, we see a very similar setting, although here we have women in place of men. Also the 'Savior' here is a woman: 'Michelle' as a newly-made sign, functioning as a metaphor for 'savior', the meaning settled through an analogy with the famous painting. – They all rejoice here together; 'Michelle', in the salient middle, as a Carrier of 'salvation' is opening her hands to an embrace, vectors of dynamic force pointing to the skies. We can quite literally hear the quoting by the psalmist David: "You are opening your hands and satisfying the desire of every living thing."

Instead of supper, the participants at the gathering have in front of them *papers* (possessive Attributes), which function as conceptual elements: the nourishment here is not common food but something more elevated, conseptualised: the papers represent plans, schedules, tasks, and power – albeit accompanied with 'mortal' refreshments in the paper cups of Coke or Pepsi, recognisable through the familiar form and red colour of the cup. Coke and Pepsi are all-American icons signifying stability and familiarity: president Trump even had a *button* on his desk for ordering for more Pepsi, a conscious choice to display and transmit assumed American values.

The women, amidst their plans and schemes, are clearly, and decisively, heading 'Forward'; there is no remorse here (the original painting marked the day the traitor amongst the disciples was to be exposed): 'Judas has left the building'. In a way, the composition, although similar, does not signify the same thing but reads as an interpretative turn in more respects than one.

The composition of the horizontal layout is almost identical to that of da Vinci's setting: the table, the three-dimensional background with reddish-brown tiles and white-washed walls. Even the table legs are positioned at the same spot as the central item at the front of the original painting to create the same balance of forces, and to guide the eye in a similar manner. The radial directions which the eye will follow mark the table ends, walls and floor lines. Marking the spot for the 'scenery' found at the back wall in da Vinci's painting, there is the American flag: a conceptual element for the landscape that is their (and ours as viewers) destination. The image will be perceived all-at-once due to its composition but also through the layered meanings it evokes. The heightened genre is evoked and introduced through the discourses surrounding and intersecting da Vinci's famous work and its thematic repercussions; and the other way around: the discourses present here draw upon the genre of holy scriptures.

The composition cleverly places 'Michelle' at the spot of interest, her figure is in the focal point of gaze where the perspectives merge into one: she is the vanishing point (in paintings called *sensus communis*) where signification is integrated, burst into the world, her arms even charting the interpretation to entail the whole 'communion' (in the painting, the composition signifies the first celebration of the still performed ritual of 'the Eucharist'). 'Michelle' is facing the spectators/viewers, looking in the eye as the victory is confirmed and verified, her companions seem already occupied with tasks, although happy, sharing the mood.

The written text in the comment section accompanying the cover photo is confusing and unsettling. The first commentator has understood the basic message: she is talking about spirits, gods, Christianity, Olympus - all items that can be grouped with divinity and holiness.

The most curious part states: "fALSE NAME AND CODE …of people that look like COPIES." – And she continues in her second comment: "(…)you are the real one(…)"

Perhaps there is evolving a thought regarding originatity/reality in her contemplation. – No attention is paid to grammar or spelling in the comment, which is quite common on the site; flawless grammar quite possibly is not a 'thing' there, and not that many care about spelling, either, in the 'real' world. Regardless the spelling, all voices need to be heard; still, on some social sites one cannot shake off the impression that sloppy spelling is intentional, even desirable. – It functions as a sign of resistance. The form simulates the content, which is to disrupt, to break the code of the socially ratified way of language use.

The second commentator uses emoticons in his message (the heart and the peace sign). As regards the usage of emoticons, the 'spelling' of the graphical representation on the site seems more accurate than the spelling of words: emoticons are also carefully chosen, and they seldom seem misplaced. It may be easier to signify what one intends to convey or express when the meaning is contained in an all-embracing *feeling*. – Words require more logic and organisation, and on some of these comments, words seem to be randomly splattered all over the textual substance in the comment spaces.

12   DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Communication involves both information production, reception and distribution, but also strategic uses that in the social world readily connect with power. Critical analysis aims at revealing the concealed strategies, eventual attempts to hide or mask what, according to democratic and transparent principles of decision making, ought to be brought into light. Intentions matter, and manipulation of facts hurt the whole of society. How power is transmitted and used has long traces in the culture of how we live our everyday lives, therefore, to investigate meanings is to study life itself.

Ruth Wodak (2002) writes about the redefinement of national identity and how the representation of it is becoming recontextualised, e.g., in Europe due to the enlargement of the European Union. Discussions concerning integration and immigration have resulted in ongoing negotiations over new European identity, since the old national and ethnic identities have become fragmented, leaving previously firmly established identities unstable. Collective identities are facing tensions and being contested. (Wodak 2002: 143; see Giddens 1988.)

Echoing Giddens (1998), Wodak (2002: 143) notes how "reflexive modernization does away with boundaries within or between classes, sectors, nations, continents, families, and gender roles," and counter-modernization constructs them anew. As societies keep transforming, even short-term representations of anything have always been difficult to hold, nowadays, the ongoing processes are taking place in a larger scale than before, and in a fairly rapid pace. This, in my view, has mainly to do with advances in information technology: the novel forms of communication and information sharing allowing multiple, simultaneously active sources of information and instantaneous sharing of information without a delay, are displaying societal functions and representations through online presence with seeming transparency and approachability. The transparency may be hiding more than it is revealing, the actors and agents in the processes being more firmly and more effectively attached to power than previously, transferring and transforming the visible boundaries of representations that used to form the Citizen and the State as agents into using the representations of them as carriers of new representations working behind the curtains of the online scenes. What we see may be a stage set for an audience. There is a difference in representing and presenting things.

Multimodal environment has always been 'out there', in the life world and in the created representational world of communication and knowledge production. New technological tools have changed merely the means of communication. However, novel technology, even if it does not change the mindset of interaction overnight, most certainly will alter how meanings are transferred, carrying their own pitfalls, and accentuating the happenings of the world differently due to the adoption of new technology. Therefore, technology may ignore something but also set forward something else.

The shift in the materiality and in processes of media is bound to have an effect on communication, and on what we understand with 'meaning' making processes. The unforeseen connectedness of various forms of semiotic resources makes meaning-making an endless game of reflections from one medium onto another, of one mode into another. The digital world is creating parallel, and simultaneous, versions of 'reality'; or rather, our senses and cognition are being succumbed into a two-fold reality, at the same time physical and digital. It is bound to change our way of viewing the world and its phenomena, create new phenomena and conceptions, and change the tools and practices by which we operate. The affordances, by definition, are featured clusters for particular communicational purposes, laid upon technological devices and applications. They are inevitably creating set of worlds in our minds that will change the way we comprehend things in the world: associations and connotations that become united, and are experienced as combined or fused, and others that gradually become detached or deleted, forgotten.

Language is thus always somebody's language, which at once means that an utterance never can work for everyone. Language use is *loaded*, biased, regardless if the bias is coincidental or deliberate. When we are addressing political texts, or text on politics, we end up talking in fuzzy terms: what is 'political', what is even 'politics', exactly? Whose definition of politics is valid? Concepts in the political arena are, first and foremost, *somebody's t*erms, reflecting a point of view with a purpose. It is also important to remember that actors and agents at the political stage are all aware of this. Politicians know it, as do the media and the informed audience; it is a game of shared rules where words are not meant to be taken at face value. Facebook, as any social network or platform, offers opportunities of participation in social activities as well a massive database of text and talk for research, a view into people's behaviour.

When opponents in a political battle fight with words, they act innocent of the shared fuzziness of terms and vague meanings, and words become re-set, positioned back to their default settings. This leads to questions on what battles for 'truths' really are: discussions for better society, or battles simply of political gaming, games of words where the game is a goal in itself more than use of language as a vehicle for social justice or welfare. Rhetorics may have been born as an art of words, to clarify thinking, but it has always been also a means to mislead. Facebook campaigning reveals an essential fact on the discourse of election: the main purpose is to win an election, albeit through churning out excitement and 'hype', rather than facilitating debate on politics and society on the social media sites, at least in the data of the present study.

Language use is always social interaction directed to other producers and interpreters; therefore, 'pure' language in a cognitive, affective or social vacuum does not exist. Discourse is created within society where humans act out their individual agendas as subjects and, simultaneously and inseparably, function as social beings forming societies. Therefore, discourse bears values and ideologies and belief systems generated thereof. Meaning-making

is a process that takes place in various hybrid instances. Analysing discourse strives for identifying resources through which we construct our identities, activities, stances and roles, and in any serious analysis, it is this social aspect of discourse that is under investigation. We act out the multitude of resources within different contexts, make choices and construct and reconstruct identities. We are the subject but simultaneously subjected to change since meanings that are constructed are continuously changing.

Advertising genre is occupying the private texts, we are forced to push ourselves forward, to display our persona, customise it to fit expectations. 'Shared' means appropriation as to how one is welcomed as a member into a group, it is always a matter of negotiation; on the other hand, 'togetherness' is also empowering, sharing of knowledge and strength. Crucial for the action is how an individual is positioned (and positions her/himself) at the interface of the two: empowerment of belonging to a group, and situated identity to fit into the common ground of the group to avoid being socially abolished as the odd-one-out. On a grassroots site, there ought to be an open and wide channel for negotiation and appropriation, a process that would not misuse power against the members less inclined towards authoritarian behaviour in the appropriation process.

The identity construction and brand management for a public figure and for a phenomenon involves employment of a multiplicity of personas for the use of the campaign. Michelle Obama is the tangential force in-between the campaign organisation, the candidate (Barack Obama), and the citizens. That is why her action is more interesting to study than Barack Obama. Also, she can be utilised in a campaign in more ways than one; and she, when she so wishes, can do a lot to pursue the formation of true citizenry among her followers. – She could become a mediator between the establishment and the people but the design of the co-operation with the grassroots movement would have to be different: the setting of the interaction hinderes genuine cooperation with the citizens in the group. As it is now, it merely displays arrangements of 'groupness', of shared action: signposts of attributes to which the members need to subject their identity in order to become approved and invited in.

Geosemiotically (see Scollon & Wong Scollon 2003), the placement of political discussion on Facebook is problematic due to the functional principles of the site. Through its proposed 'like' function, Facebook easily turns speech into a 'positivity discourse', indexing talk under one choice, the positive sentiment: what can be responded with 'liking' is apt material for circulation, since everyone wants to be popular. It works as an operating manual or a social code for the site on how texts ought to be read and reacted upon. In that way, it also operates as a form of social control. A 'positive' platform is a safer environment for the advertisers who are the primary users of the application – and the only one charged. Therefore, a tendency to create 'buzz' will inevitably also result to the functional principle of Facebook. Facebook calls itself a 'service', which often is understood as a "service for people,"although services on Facebook, in fact, take place between commercial agents and Facebook Inc.

Online 'discussions' seem in places nonsensical, not having a continuity but rather fragments of random utterances, isolated from previous text chains and the assumed context, often not even attempting to relate to the prompt (usually an image) on which the comments supposedly react. Is there a hidden, yet mutually understood frame of interpretation that cannot be comprehended for an outsider glancing through the lines? Or perhaps I as an outsider am not adequately 'in' in the network or the culture, or literate enough? Are there further levels of interpretation, of framing, of textual openings that I am not able solve: the content in some places seems chaotic nonsense to me. Some of the comments seem distracting as if their main function would be to disrupt the chain of meaning making. People seem to ignore them, though, the distracting comments without any message are background 'noise' that conveys no actual meaning, and they are recognised as such by the readers. However, I believe there is 'content' and 'purpose' there as well, if not other than to disrupt the consensus of the circulating content. Membership allows you enter an inner circle of 'us', and thus you deliver also from the inside out.

The text on the SNSs is published, yet also private; it is 'spoken word' although 'printed'. The writing there is situated in-between public and private spheres, reception is always private until the moment the reader wants to say/write something online, make a response. Responding makes reception a public act. The interpretation becomes an agent of something through its content as it lies within a context with other responses. As an entity, it will contain different kinds of elements after it is publicly viewed; it is mediating something in the context of other comments and updates. Occasionally, is positioned in a strategic mine field in which it has to advocate itself. People on the site are not negotiating inside a dialogue, they are negotiating their meanings within a tribe of like-minded members and random (few) hostile offenders. Interpretations cannot be foreseen, the responses are thrown out into the world without any guarantee that they will be understood.

The ideological content lies mainly in the unsaid void, in what is being assumed both by the writer and the reader (or speaker-listener). As Faircough states (2003: 11), we make judgments and evaluations also about the levels of authenticity of the words and their literal meaning, especially when dealing with irony or word plays. In these Facebook pages, messages are understandably rather transparent even when they are full of rhetorical turns. The main issue here is to win a battle, everyone is aware of the main presupposition behind the status updates; what is layered on top of that may be more difficult to peel off. Meaning-making transfers the ideological content forward, reinforces the already enforced and cemented statements and positions.

As Kress (2010) points out, sites such as Facebook are "associated with specific characteristics of power and agency in communication." – They are sites of making an appearance, manifesting online presence and boosting one's personal brand, and also of dissemination of knowledge production. Kress continues to argue that as social engagement

has found new routes, the designs for producing meaning and knowledge have to be carefully investigated as they also shape our inner semiotic resources, the concepts we use, and identities (ibid.: 27).

Habermas has stated that people working in the relevant sectors of the media system have no choice but to exert power as they are the ones selecting and processing relevant media content: consequently, they intervene in the formation and distribution of opinions and power interests (see Habermas 2006). This entails also reproduction of (the chosen) discourses. It is probable that people who are involved are agents more than actors, more than mere 'puppets in a play', but not aware of any larger context; not aware where exactly the locus of the power is situated. Notwithstanding that, they work for it, because they do not, for various reasons, take the trouble to 'look behind the curtains', a task which may also be difficult due to the multilayered and shifting positions of the actors involved.

The Bakhtinian creative potential laid in heteroglossia along with the essential nature of intertextuality, our (in principal) unchained imagination, and the hybridity of human enterprise becomes strongly challenged by hegemonic shackles and fetters of convention. The first entails use of power, which almost always means using it for or over someone; the latter is inevitable and useful, since convention basically creates social algorithms, sets of fixed guidelines for behaviour and procedures – which in itself is not bad but also necessary for smooth and efficient communication; like genres that are larger (than single words), blocks with which we create meaning, and situate phenomena, root experiences. However, when convention allies with power, and becomes a fixed way – the *only* way of doing things that will allow no change or opposition – society has a problem.

When SNSs were first launched, quite ordinary people were excited: this was the start of a new era of communication, perhaps of new citizenry: at last, the true voice of common people was to become heard. The excitement was justified, that is, in the first stages of it. It indeed appeared to imply a fresh new start for a medium in hands of the ordinary people, not elites colonising every corner of the public sphere with their interpretations and agendas. Yet, the more I looked into the political sites, the clearer I realised that only the surface was new, and that the novelty of the phenomenon, the freshness, was to last only a while. There *was* freshness, though, and inspiration as the shift of practices was still ongoing, not yet stabilised itself as the newest domain of hegemony to employ and reclaim the old orders of discourse in a novel package; when the configuration of practices, and the set of tools, was still in the hands of amateurs, i.e., 'genuine' citizens. As stated by Fairclough (2014), discourses structured in a given order of discourse change over time, and are determined by changing relationships of power at the level of the social institutions or of the society, and power includes the capacity to control orders of discourse, one aspect of control being that of the ideological (ibid.: 25).

After a while, the creative instability gives way to voices that do not enter from the roots of people, and the power shifts away from pure citizenry, small local activists, into a forum in

the hands of official campaign administration. What is soon 'going on' on the site is not an independent voice of the people, set free from/of the structures behind, but rather the incorporated voice of the representatives of the official administrative apparatus catching hold and working side by side with representatives of grassroots movements. And, what is most dissatisfying, is the amount of pure nonsense on the pages; the white noise, interfering and dysfunctional noise for its own sake that jammed all sensible developments. This noise was not moderated away, although it would be naïve to think that 'everything' was allowed. Therefore, it is clear that the noise *has* a function, it is integrated into the community with a purpose.

All political action is set in motion by language, and political actions are also controlled by language. In that way, power moves both ways between language and actions. The mode of power is multifaceted in these processes: it is negotiation, preparing and justifying acts and actions, guiding and empowering; and on the other end, neglecting and suppressing, marginilizing. This is happening also in the interplay between language and visual semiosis on the Internet, creating ensembles of representation, messages and exchanges.

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