

PART III

Crossing Borders:
Disciplinary,
Political and
Otherwise



Online Civic Participation, Discourse Analysis and Rhetorical Citizenship

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Openings: a potential interface

It has been about two decades since the internet became a mass phenomenon, and even if this nexus of communication technologies – that I here simply and with some imprecision term the web – has in some ways become “normal” and no longer feels “revolutionary,” from an historical perspective it does remain an unprecedented seismic societal transformation. The use of the web, not least social media, also called network sites (SNS), has altered just about all facets of social life, its organization, and its dynamics. SNS such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram are truly vernacular contexts, where everyday rhetorical practices contribute to the construction of social worlds, communities, and identities.

Not least, these platforms facilitate new modes of political participation. Rhetorical analysis has often had political speech as its object of analysis; up until about two decades ago the site for such speech, aside from limited live venues, was largely the mass media. Today the mass media remain, while the web has incorporated much of the role of the mass media – major media outfits are now online. More significantly, the web also adds the dimension of interactivity, offering a whole new setting in which groups and individuals can express themselves politically. There are of course limitations and constraints: for example, politics remains a minor focus on the web compared to many other activities that transpire there, and it is much easier to launch a blog than to attract and hold an audience for it. Still, if deliberative rhetoric can be seen as constituting the core of democracy, its site has now shifted to the web, especially SNS. Indeed, the web has become the dominant public space for civic communication; this is where rhetorical citizenship today is largely enacted.

Within my own academic field of media and communication studies, the emergence of the web has been analytically followed with intensity, not least its use in the context of politics. Media and communication studies is rather eclectic, importing theories and methods from a range of other fields. This openness has in the past led to some interfaces with rhetoric – but unfortunately not enough, in my view. In this chapter I want to stage such an encounter between these fields by discussing web based online civic participation and addressing the notion of rhetorical citizenship in the process.

Along with the study of media institutions, publics, audiences, reception processes, and so on, media and communication studies also spends a lot of time and energy analysing media texts. We have at our disposal a rather wide array of intellectual traditions, research orientations and methodologies to draw upon, ranging from hard-nosed quantitative to qualitative currents. In terms of the latter, there are some approaches that seem to have some obvious connections with rhetoric; here I will take up two forms of related yet distinct discourse analysis. What is called Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) has gained prominence over the past two decades – and seen considerable development by scholars within our field as well. A more recent import, still hovering on the periphery, is called Discourse Theory (DT). I will sketch the contours of these two traditions in order to highlight what I see as potentially mutual benefits from an exchange with rhetorical analysis. This of course is done without brushing under the rug the inevitable differences between them. Yet it is my sense that it can be edifying and fruitful to become familiar with what in essence I perceive to be potential allies: useful turns or developments may emerge unexpectedly on either side.

I begin with a brief scene setting of a few central themes concerning the changes in political participation in Western democracies, transformations that can provoke both despair and hope. I suggest that one important aspect here is the evolution of politics itself. This leads me into a discussion on the importance of the web and SNS for political participation; these media are both a reflection of and a factor in the transformation of political participation. From there I take up CDA as a mode of analysis of media texts; it can be seen in part as a more sophisticated successor to the older and problematic notion of the critique of ideology. Thereafter I turn my attention to DT, extracting from its rather dense philosophical program a basic methodological approach for dealing with media texts. In the final section I pull together the main threads from the two forms of discourse analysis,

and juxtapose them with the field of rhetorical analysis, with the notion of rhetorical citizenship serving as the key conceptual link.

Democracy, participation and the web: transforming politics

While democracy has begun to take hold in many countries where it was notably absent only a few decades ago, in the established Western democracies we have seen how the functioning of democracy has become all the more problematic; a crescendo of international voices talk about “crises” and “dilemmas,” or at the very least note profound and problematic “transformations.” The causes are found in an array of factors (I offer a more detailed overview of this literature in Dahlgren 2013). Some analysts point to the late modern processes of individualization and socio-cultural fragmentation that can undermine collective purpose and action. Others argue that the onslaught of neoliberalism subverts democracy by depoliticizing public issues and allowing societal power to drift towards the democratically unaccountable private corporate sector. There are other explanations on offer as well, with considerable disagreement among various camps.

All observers, however, are in agreement that citizen participation in formal party politics is on the decline in most Western democracies, as citizens often feel marginalized, sensing that established politics offers few opportunities for meaningful engagement. Civic cynicism grows, especially in the face of financial and social crises; many citizens feel political elites subordinate the public interest for private gain, and that governments are inefficient in their use of the public’s tax money. The consequences of this discontent have led to significant declines in participation in party politics on many fronts.

However, if such trends can lead to a generalized sense of political disenchantment for many citizens, for others it becomes a signal to engage politically, to participate – on local, national, regional and transnational levels. While we see some upsurge in engagement in party politics (including, unfortunately, a growth in extreme right wing parties in Europe), the biggest growth is in the alternative, extra-parliamentarian political domain, where on both the Left and the Right, innumerable advocacy groups, activist networks, citizen collectives, social movements, and transient mobilizations enter the public sphere to pursue their own interests and/or their visions of a better world. There are movements on many fronts – human rights, economic justice, environment, gender issues, and so on – that cross national

boundaries, generating the contours of global civil society; see, for example Manuel Castells (2012) and Paolo Gerbaudo (2012). The web can foster the sociality needed for political cooperation, as Nancy K. Baym demonstrates (2010), and connect citizens to discussions and causes in ways that are personally meaningful, as W. Lance Bennett and Alexandra Segerberg show from their research (2013). In particular SNS are effective in linking citizens to the political; see for instance *The Journal of Communication* (2012) and the collection by Brian Loader and Dan Mercea (2012). Such involvement, of course, manifests at least as much affective as cognitive engagement, which Zizi Papacharissi, among others, emphasizes (2014).

In these developments, many observers claim that the notion of politics itself is transmuting, as citizens broaden the notion of what constitutes political issues. Overarching traditional ideologies become less compelling for many citizens, especially younger ones, as they engage with issues that appear more personally meaningful to them, having to do with values, identities, life-style choices, and single issue movements. In the process, they are finding new ways of enacting citizenship, developing new practices for doing democracy. Chantal Mouffe (2013) and others use the notion of “the political” to point to collective contestations that can emerge anywhere in society; at times these issues may become incorporated into formal politics, but often they live a separate life, in a much expanded public sphere.

As stated at the outset, the location for much of this activity – and increasingly for politics in general – is of course the web. Since the advent of the internet as a ubiquitous phenomenon in the mid-1990s, there have been debates about how and to what extent these communication technologies enhance the public sphere or can “save” democracy. James Curran, Natalie Fenton and Des Freedman confront the wishful thinking often involved in such discussions (2012). We need to be cautious in making assumptions about the web and its affordances; Mathew Hindman (2009) and Evgeny Morozov (2011) from different angles argue strongly that there can be no techno-fix for democracy. The web cannot be seen as some simple solution to democracy’s problems; going online per se does not make engaged citizens out of people who are otherwise uninvolved.

Civic online participation is shaped by the character of the web environment, which of course varies; YouTube has different technical affordances and discursive possibilities than, say, Twitter. More generally there are troubling factors built into the web’s present architecture and political

economy, as Robert McChesney points out (2013). José van Dijk addresses these issues in regard to social media, highlighting the now well-known issue of political surveillance and the gathering of personal data for commercial purposes. In addition many observers have noted the growth of “echo chambers,” sites where like-minded people gather to confirm their views and avoid conflicting perspectives; this runs counter to the very ideal of the public sphere. Other problems have to do with “slackitivism” or “clicktivism,” which points to the danger of having exclusively screen-based connection with the political world. As I discuss, with low levels of commitment, attention can easily be drawn from the political into online consumption, entertainment, gaming, and so on (Dahlgren 2013). Not least, the web can be and often is used for undemocratic purposes by all kinds of political actors, from individuals who harass public figures to political groups spreading lies and disinformation. However, despite these and other issues, the web remains a vital resource for civic participation; indeed, it is difficult to imagine political life today without it.

In today’s world, on- and offline contexts have become ever more entwined. The web is interwoven with our social worlds, increasingly embedded in our daily activities of social interaction, gossip, entertainment, consumption, hobbies, and so forth. We usually demarcate politics from other domains of life, yet the boundary is also fluid: via the web, the political can arise unexpectedly in the mundane settings of the everyday. Web tools have become more effective, less expensive, and easier to use; access and collaboration are increasing, and we are evolving from being mostly media consumers to including many media producers – or “producers,” as they are sometimes called. The relatively easy mastery of web techniques is often an empowering experience in itself, leading to further innovative and creative uses.

Communication among citizens of course manifests many modes and can vary enormously according to local cultures, political traditions, historical experience, and organizational situations. On the web, the range of discursive registers is amplified, especially in SNS; political communication is often quite cacophonous and often most decidedly does not express formalized deliberation. Media genres hybridize; many citizens are doing versions of what might pass for journalism, further enhancing – or problematizing according to some commentators – how journalism is defined. Leah A. Lievrouw writes: “Media culture in the digital age has become more personal, skeptical, ironic, perishable, idiosyncratic, collaborative, and almost incon-

ceivably diversified” (2011, p. 45). Politics and the political are an integral part of this messy online world, which offers innumerable concrete yet often shifting and contradictory discursive contexts for participation.

Specifying the factors that promote or hinder online participation among citizens is naturally a daunting undertaking, but I can briefly note that such discursive agency is facilitated by what I call civic cultures (Dahlgren 2009). These are taken-for-granted resources that need to be available to citizens in their everyday lives; they have to do with knowledge, democratic values, social trust, communicative practices and skills, and civic identities. That civic cultures could be translated into concepts from rhetorical analysis should be apparent. Civic cultures are strong in that they can enhance agency; citizens through their practices can in turn further develop civic cultures. Yet civic cultures are always vulnerable to the exercise of undemocratic power: civic trust can be undermined by sowing suspicion; knowledge and practices can be circumscribed. The point here is that – with sound social constructionist grounding – the sustained enactment of citizenship has the possibility of further strengthening democratic traditions as well as empowering citizens to participate.

Democracy is in turbulent transition, new practices and notions of the political are emerging, and the web has become a new location for discursive agency and political participation. Let us now turn to the two traditions of discourse analysis to see how they help us to analytically approach these circumstances of today’s political communication among citizens.

Critical Discourse Analysis: updating ideology critique

By the 1980s, the Marxian paradigm was facing a number of serious conceptual (and political) problems; among them was the contested notion of ideology. Elements of Marxian analysis had been used in some corners of media and communication studies since the late 1960s; it examined how specific media form and content reproduce illegitimate and unacknowledged relations of power. Ideology in this critical sense implies some distortion of reality, which serves class interests (this stands in contrast the descriptive use of the term, which signifies, for instance, a party’s political platform). John Corner describes how there were various attempts to “repair” the notion of ideology and to re-launch it in new, improved versions (2011). These efforts were not successful; the term had been overloaded and bent in too many different directions, and the time had come to put it to rest. Yet, it was still

clear to many scholars that the interconnections between representation, meaning, value, social structure and power – whatever we choose to call these links – remained, and they demanded critical analysis.

At a general level, the notion of “critique,” and its adjective form “critical,” signify an analytic approach that problematizes power relations, confronting domination as the unnecessary and unjustifiable restrictions on human liberty and equality. Today this perspective extends far beyond class relations. Indeed, the single-minded focus on class was being challenged by voices pointing to other modes of subordination, arising from, for example, gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation; not least the ascent of Cultural Studies played an important role here. Further, more sophisticated epistemological reflection was rendering the categories of “true” and “false” depictions of society as untenable. And in media studies, the view of audiences as victims of ideological media power began to give way to an understanding of them as active, sense-making agents, capable of independent (and critical) interpretation.

As the ideology concept drifted to the margins, another enterprise moved into some of the ground it had covered. CDA, in its various versions, began to emerge in the early 1990s, retaining some obvious connection with the critique of ideology tradition. Norman Fairclough (2010), Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer, (2009) and Teun van Dijk, (1998) offer differing ports of entry into CDA, while an overview, by Marianne Jørgensen and Louise J. Phillips, provides an analytic and comparative overview of the field (2002). The “critical” in CDA signals precisely a central concern with power relations, and it is this that distinguishes it from other, more descriptive strands of discourse analysis.

In simple terms, discourse here is understood as patterned ways of using language in specific social contexts; when these patterns and contexts take on large societal proportions, some authors (for example Foucault) deploy the terms discursive formations. Significantly, theories of discourse underscore its constitutive character: discourses participate in the shaping of subjectivities, identities, social relations, objects, systems of knowledge, modes of cognitive and normative perception – while at the same time being shaped by such elements. (Again, we can see strong parallels with the rhetorical tradition.)

These theories of discourse are strongly influenced by social constructionism: discourses can serve to engender and sustain social order – as well

as to challenge it – through patterns of meaning. Thus, discourses are more than just text; they are manifestations of (collective) social practice – while at the same time functioning as linguistic contexts, as symbolic environments for human action. Action, in turn, as the meaningful expression of agency, always has a discursive dimension to it. CDA, concerned with power arrangements, was rather quickly adapted by media and communication studies, which is not surprising: the media are ubiquitous carriers of discourses enmeshed in power relations.

For Norman Fairclough CDA examines the dynamics between three basic dimensions: text, discursive practice, and social practice/structures (1993). Moreover the opacity of the links between discourse and social power is in itself a significant aspect of power. Methodologically the approach is rather diverse and open, and specific methods tend to emerge in relation to the given discursive object, its social contexts, and the problems perceived in this triad of text-practice-context. The scope of its use in media and communication research is broad – in principle it can be applied to any media content and context.

The web offers of course almost endless contexts where discursive patterns are manifested, from the mainstream journalism of commercial media organizations to radical political organizations at both ends of the spectrum. Texts emanate from powerful organizations, but also from oppositional groups and individuals. CDA can help identify significant discursive and societal online contexts and elucidate discursive patterns within them – illuminating their implications for power relations between the concerned parties. On the web, “text” of course can mean all sorts of multimodal audiovisual productions, and a given discourse can be manifested across a variety of platforms such as Twitter and Facebook; Habermasian rationality is of course usually the exception in these settings. The discursive agents and their recipients are largely under-theorized, however; CDA does not delve extensively into conceptualizations about the subject. This concern, on the other hand, has a more pronounced position within DT.

Discourse Theory: hegemony, contingency and subjectivity

It must be said that Discourse Theory is a somewhat unfortunate label, since it easily leads to confusion with CDA and other variants of discourse analysis. An intellectual endeavor that derives from the work of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (1991), DT encompasses an extensive philosophical ontolo-

gy and a politically radical understanding of democracy, but my focus will be on its discourse analytic toolkit. This has clear parallels with CDA, but goes further conceptually in linking discourse to other domains of social theory. DT has been used in a variety of contexts in social and cultural analysis with a political bent, but has only recently begun to be deployed within media and communication studies.

Laclau and Mouffe's by now classic text first appeared in the mid-1980s at a time when Marxism was confronted with growing dilemmas, and when post-structural thought, especially as expressed in the works of Foucault, Anne M. Smith (1999), Jørgensen and Phillips (2002), and Jason Glynnos and David Howarth (2007) offer useful introductions to this tradition and the debates around it. In recent years media researchers have begun to make use of DT in a variety of ways, as exemplified by Nico Carpentier and Benjamin De Cleen (2007) and Lincoln Dalhberg and Sean Phelan (2011). Nico Carpentier and Erik Spinoy demonstrate its utility in other domains of cultural analysis (2008).

DT is post-Marxist in its efforts to better align critical social theory in keeping with historical realities, and it is clearly post-structural in its approach to society, knowledge, language, and the subject. This is quite evident in its emphasis on contingency: Laclau and Mouffe argue that all our knowledge, and the discursive modalities that it takes, are predicated on particular circumstances – a position not completely foreign to rhetorical analysis. No human practice or subjectivity exists outside the specific conditions that both make them possible and delimit them. DT's position is that there is no foundation or essence, no fixed meaning – for knowledge, language, subjects, or social phenomena. There are only possibilities, nothing is necessary. Not everybody would align themselves with such a stark version of contingency, but it does have the asset of clarity.

Turning to their methodological approach, in Laclau and Mouffe's lexicon, we find elements in DT that are clearly parallel to CDA. *Discourses* refers to relatively stable structures of meanings that arise as linguistic and material practices within a particular context relatively social and material practices. Having both linguistic and non-linguistic dimensions, this conception aligns itself with notions of language use as social action. DT posits that meaning arises via *articulation* – the positioning of signs, words, and actions in relation to others, which closely parallels the semiotic notion of “the play of signifiers.” While meaning is never entirely fixed, it can attain

a degree of social stability, and such meanings are called *nodal points* of discourses; we can think of them as the core concepts or established vocabularies. We see in DT's view of language the general poststructuralist perspective on meaning, as manifested, for example, in the later Barthes's semiology and in Derrida's deconstructionism (meaning is always to some extent "deferred," as Derrida says).

Given that the political is an inexorable dimension of all social relations, power is always already present in some way in any setting – yet is often not readily visible, remaining occluded, which becomes a key critical point for DT – to flush it out. And in many instances power is seen as lacking legitimacy, as unjust, and should be challenged, for the same reasons that CDA would assert. DT posits that some discourses, in relation to others, have *hegemonic* positions, that is, they offer preferred or dominant meanings. Here we have the pivotal point of politics, where such prevailing discourses are challenged by alternative, *counter-hegemonic* ones. While hegemonic discourses may operate as formalized political positions, mostly they seep into the micro-meshes of ongoing communication, for example in a Facebook group, surreptitiously framing assumptions and perception. Since meaning is always to some extent shifting and contested, even hegemonic discourses can never be fully secure – even if they are characterized by large degrees of inertia.

Where DT most clearly goes beyond CDA is in its notion of the subject and the processes of identity. If politics has to do with antagonisms between groups, between an "us" and one or more "them," discourses can serve as mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion. Discourses *interpellate* subjects, addressing them and providing them with *subject positions*, i.e. identities, in relation to contested issues and those who take opposing views. In the context of public spheres and politics, subject positions can be understood as political identities made available by pertinent discourses. However, given the often contested and disorderly state of discourses circulating in society, it is often the case that subjects are to varying degrees *over-determined*, which means that they are not fully at home in any one discourse, but are pulled in different directions and positioned by competing discourses. Their political identities thus are decentered, fragmented, and the us-them divisions become less self-evident (for example, one may strongly identify with an ecological position that argues for less industrial development in one's region, yet also be a union member who wants to generate more jobs in industry). DT's post-structural character is underscored by its insistence on

ambivalence – certainly a disposition well suited to the character of the on-line world with its chaotic array of nodal points offering over-determined subject positions.

Though shaped by discourses and seen more as a process than a solidified entity, the subject is also a political actor, a contingent discursive agent. Conceptually there is a force-field of power between discourses and agency, between hegemony and counter-hegemony. DT is engaged in exploring the conditions that make specific identities, meanings, and practices possible, and how the dynamics of power support or alter them. Public spheres, not least online, become not just sites of political communication, but also the spaces where political subjectivities, with all their complexities and contradictions, are constructed, negotiated, and contested. There is a vast range of discourses that offer (and seductively compel) subject positions on a constant flow of issues on the web – via blogs, tweets, Facebook groups and other digital platforms. There is no finality here, assuming that democracy is functioning reasonably well: politics is never finished, new contestations and antagonisms always arise.

Discursive subjects, rhetorical citizens

Pulling together the discussion thus far, we have seen that both CDA and DT are oriented towards critical analysis of discourses (as opposed to merely descriptive rendering), trying to illuminate how meaning is structured via discursive practices and elucidating their significance in societal contexts. There is an emphasis on power relations, which are often not overtly visible. Discourses have a constitutive character: they participate in the shaping of subjectivities, identities, social relations, systems of knowledge, modes of cognitive and normative perception – while at the same time being shaped by such elements. Discourses are more than just text; they are manifestations of (collective) social practices; they *do* things. Action, in turn, always has a discursive dimension to it, to the extent that it is meaningful. In terms of the differences between them, DT can be seen as adding theoretic weight beyond the program of CDA, particularly in regard to contestation between discourses (hegemonic and counter-hegemonic) and in particular notions about the subject as an often tension-ridden entity.

Much of this should be rather familiar territory for rhetorical analysis, even if the terminology varies. Most rhetorical scholars today share some version of a social constructionist view of language and see language as a form of

social action whereby humans constitute meaning as well as their identities and relationships. At bottom, rhetorical analysis addresses discourse, and all discourses have rhetorical dimensions. More broadly, today rhetorical analysis addresses all manner of human communication in just about all types of situations, from institutional settings such as law, science, and journalism to expressions from popular culture as well as everyday life. Fiction, visuals, works of art, even objects and their manner of display – indeed, all symbols – can be understood as having a persuasory dimension and can thus be of potential relevance for rhetorical analysis. And in most such settings the potential for the political, and thus for rhetorical citizenship, is ever present.

At the epistemological level, most rhetorical analysts today assume that we are always already immersed in language; there is no extra-linguistic escape, as Burke (1969) argues (cf. White 1984). Language operates in social contexts to shape what we know and how we see the world; we use language, but language also uses us, as it were. This stance is found throughout 20th century philosophy, from the later Wittgenstein to post-structuralism via social constructionism (and can be traced back not least to Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, with its emphasis on the contingencies of our knowing). As with discourse analysis, rhetorical analysis addresses discrepancies in knowledge or assumption about social reality between communicators and their audiences. This suggests links with the ideas of what Paul Ricoeur calls the three “masters of suspicion”: Nietzsche's idea of power-knowledge (adopted by Foucault), Marx's concept of class-based ideology, and even Freud's notion of the repressive unconscious: all critically exemplify social consequences of language-based knowledge discrepancies (1970).

The door to an interface between rhetorical analysis and CDA/DT appears open. With its keen eye for contingency and indeterminacy, rhetoric is equipped to deal with the protean realities of communication on the web and its SNS. If rhetorical analysis has traditionally tilted towards the audience side of civic communication, the realities of the web signal an unprecedented historical shift that actualizes the imperative to energetically address the participatory side of civic interaction. Via the web, democracy has gained innumerable rhetors who are altering the fundamental character of the public sphere, not least through their at times dizzying displays of post-rational, affective communication.

Here the concept of rhetorical citizenship becomes cogent. As underscored in the Introduction to this volume by the editors Christian Kock and

Lisa Villadsen, rhetorical citizenship signifies participation via language in the processes of democracy. Publics are understood as processes – constantly emerging and dissipating. Thus, publics are embodied in practices, and these are largely of a communicative-rhetorical character. Individuals who comprise publics can thereby be seen as rhetorical political agents, enacting rhetorical citizenship. Moreover, such agency varies according to prevailing contingencies, empowering – or disempowering – citizens according to specific circumstances.

We can see here some parallels with discursive subjects, especially as conceptualized by DT. The differences reside chiefly in how and the extent to which the subjectivity of discursive-rhetorical agent is theorized. Rhetorical analysis can extrapolate readers' and listeners' responses to communication, yet the subject as such remains for the most part less theorized within rhetorical analysis, somewhat on a par with the situation in CDA. Psychoanalytic perspectives are mobilized on rare occasions; most specifications of the subject traditionally do not go beyond basic distinctions such as cognitive vs. affective or classic models of the psyche such as logos, ethos and pathos. More recently, however, theories of rhetorical agency have been underscoring the situational factors that impact on the rhetor – a development that could facilitate links to DT.

It could readily be argued that rhetorical analysis can manage just fine without further ado about the dynamics of subjectivity; there is much it can do to illuminate civic agency on the web as it is. My assumption, however, is that to the extent that it wants to pursue the notion of rhetorical citizenship in a deeper manner, it would benefit from enhanced reflection on the dimensions and contingencies of subjectivity. DT's view of the subject as radically contingent and often fragmented need not be swallowed whole, but could be considered in small doses. Also, if rhetorical citizenship is about political participation, more attention to the power relations that enable and constrain civic participation in concrete situations would be an asset.

Additionally, rhetorical analysis tends not to deploy a highly developed social theoretic perspective in contextualizing its studies; the so-called "rhetorical situation" tends to be rather micro-contextual. Pursuing the notion of context further may involve taking some steps into political sociology or other social science endeavors, but in my "undisciplined" view – that research in the humanities and social sciences often benefit from crossing disciplinary boundaries – the gains usually outweigh the efforts required.

Indeed, with DT, the notion of discourse itself refers to both linguistic and material practices: there is no border to defend between them.

And certainly CDA and DT in turn could derive methodological inspiration by engaging with and adapting elements of rhetorical analysis, since so much of the analysis of discourse in fact has to do with how discourses impact their addressees. Thus, questions having to do with how discourse interpellates receivers, the compelling power of nodal points within discourses, the interplay of text, discursive and social practices, and so forth, are aspects that can be productively subjected to rhetorical analysis within the overarching logics of CDA and DT. Rhetorical analysis on the one hand, and Critical Discourse Analysis and Discourse Theory on the other, should not be seen as orthodoxies, but sets of tools of potential utility – that may be complemented and combined with each other. Such ventures of course require a degree of conceptual rigor to maintain coherence, but they may all have something to gain by getting to know each other better. And in the process we may deepen our understanding of the dynamics of citizens' political participation online.

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