Universidade do Minho
Instituto de Ciências Sociais

Centro de Estudos de Comunicação e Sociedade
www.cecs.uminho.pt

Discourse Analysis and Media Texts:
a Critical Reading of Analytical Tools*

Anabela Carvalho
Professora Auxiliar

carvalho@ics.uminho.pt

Universidade do Minho
Centro de Estudos de Comunicação e Sociedade
Campus de Gualtar
4710-057 Braga
Portugal

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Abstract:

Under the label of discourse theory and analysis we can find a vast number of standpoints and research programmes. The aims, assumptions and conceptual tools of different works vary widely, with important consequences for the outcomes of research.

The main aim of the paper is to discuss and critically assess various strands of discourse analysis and their applicability to media discourse, as well as to present some results of a study of the British press representation of climate change.

I will draw on a range of authors such as van Dijk, Fairclough and Gamson, who have promoted discourse analyses of the media, and Hajer and Liftin, who have used discursive approaches to investigate policy-making on environmental issues. A multifaceted analysis of news texts will be conducted. The combination of a theoretical critique with empirical work will lead to proposing a re-assessment and revision of various models.

The empirical basis of the paper is a corpus of over 2 000 articles published in the Guardian, Times and Independent between the mid-eighties and 1997.

Keywords: discourse analysis; frame; narrative; analytical tools

Introduction

This paper has two main aims: first, to discuss and critically assess various strands of discourse analysis and their usefulness for studying media discourse, and second, to present an alternative approach to media discourse analysis.

Under the label of 'discourse analysis' we can find a vast number of standpoints and research programmes. The aims, assumptions and conceptual tools of different scholars vary widely, with important consequences for the outcomes of research.

The main assumption of discourse analysis is that the work of deconstruction and reconstruction of texts can give important indications about issues like the intentions of the author of a text or utterance, politically dominant ideologies, or the potential impact of an advertisement on a certain audience. However, there is not a standard method for the examination of texts, but multiple forms of going about it.[1] Each of the procedural choices is not neutral, nor does it take the researcher to the same conclusions as others.

In this paper, I propose a reflection about theo-methodological options in discourse analysis and their implications. I will focus on three mainstream approaches to the discourse analysis of media texts, which I will, as the title of this paper indicates, *read critically*.

With this paper I also aim at making a contribution towards addressing the problems that, as we will see, are involved in such mainstream forms of discourse analysis. Based on my experience of extensive empirical research of newspaper articles, I have developed an approach to discourse analysis that integrates several strands and influences, as well as brings in new dimensions of analysis.

1. The research agenda and the empirical data

I ought to start by presenting the context in which I have revisited discourse analysis and developed the method that I will propose in this paper. The basis of this work is a research project on media representations of climate change. Climate change is a severe environmental problem that results from the accumulation of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. In the last century, the atmosphere's natural greenhouse effect has been greatly enhanced by human activities related to the production and use of energy. This may cause significant changes in climate patterns, as well as an increased frequency of extreme weather events, like storms and tornadoes. The generation of greenhouse gases

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[1] Some approaches to discourse analysis do not even clearly specify the ways to do such work, which has led to discourse analysis being occasionally criticized for imprecision and excessive flexibility.

is deeply rooted in present day practices and lifestyles: transport, heating, industries, etc. Therefore, there is no easy solution for climate change. It will require integrated political programmes as well as the engagement of all of us as users of multiple forms of energy. Climate change is therefore a social, political and economic issue, as well as a scientific and technical one, since we depend on a variety of experts both to know the problem and to find ways to deal with it.

Given the complex and multi-dimensional nature of the problem, along with a degree of uncertainty about specific aspects, climate change is a very challenging issue for the media to cover. As a marketplace of arguments, the media certainly has a role to play in building up a consensus, or not, around the issue.

The concrete empirical focus of the research project is on British quality newspapers: the Guardian, the Independent and the Times. The analysis starts in 1985, when there were some important moves in the political construction of the issue at the international level[2], and ends in 1997, with the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Climate Change Convention.

The questions that direct the research are the following: How was climate change constructed in the press throughout a decade? What images of scientific knowledge and political action on the problem were conveyed by the press? What arguments were advanced by different social actors and how were they contested? How were the views of different actors represented in the press and how did they shape the debate on the issue? How did different journalists view the subject throughout time?

I have gathered all the articles that deal centrally with climate change in the 1985-1997 period in the three mentioned newspapers, and constituted a database of over 2300 articles. These articles are of a variety of types and genres: news reports, editorials, comments, etc. They cover a wide variety of dimensions of climate change - political, scientific, social and economic, amongst others - and appear in a number of different sections of the newspapers.

Obviously, if the corpus of newspaper articles is over 2300 it is not possible to analyse all the articles in detail. A formula for re-selection needs to be designed. I find that the combination of comprehensive (exhaustive) analysis in selected periods with analysis of 'critical discourse moments' works well. On the one hand, there are periods that are overall determining in the construction of an issue and therefore call for an integral analysis. In my study, that is the case for the first few years of presence of climate change in the press when it was transformed from a low-attention issue into a significant political and public issue, namely 1985 to 1990. On the other hand, after

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[2] Although it was only four years later that it really became a political and a public issue in the United Kingdom.

some time discursive constructions of an issue start sedimenting and the amount of novelty decreases, while discursive positions start being more and more recurrent. It therefore makes sense to suspend the article-by-article analysis and 'jump' to the next 'critical discourse moment'. In line with Chilton (1987), I see critical discourse moments as periods that involve specific happenings which may lead to a challenge to the 'established' discursive positions. Questions to be asked about the 'critical discursive moments' include: Did arguments change because of them? Did new alternative views arise?

Up to this point we have set out a research agenda and circumscribed the empirical data to be analysed. It is now important to decide *how* such data is going to be examined in order to answer the research questions that underpin this project. Discourse analysis offers an important potential for interpretation and understanding of texts, and their wider relation to social contexts.

A review of the literature on discourse analysis of media texts will certainly suggest possible analytical procedures. As we re-visit models for discourse analysis we will keep the following questions in mind. Are existing models and analytical tools of discourse analysis appropriate for analysing the data described above? Will they adequately allow for the examination of the data and productively aid in its interpretation?

2. Approaches to media discourse analysis

I have selected three approaches to analysing media texts that are quite influential and widespread: van Dijk's work, frame analysis and narrative analysis[3]. Let us look at each of them in some detail.

Van Dijk's cognitive-structural model for critical discourse analysis

Teun van Dijk is one of the leading scholars in the area of discourse studies. He has produced an extensive body of literature on the field from which I would highlight *Macro-Structures* (1980), *Handbook of Discourse Analysis* (1985), *News as Discourse* (1988b), and *News Analysis* (1988a). He has also founded two journals in the area: *Discourse & Society* and *Discourse Studies*.

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[3] Frame and narrative analysis are not always designated as discourse analysis. Because they examine language in use and the ways meaning is constructed, I see them as forms of discourse analysis.

Analytically and 'procedurally' van Dijk's work is, undeniably, important since he proposes a framework that is very structured and detailed. His proposal is, essentially, to focus on the fundamental theme structures of each text, on the basis of a reduction of the information present in each text to central semantic aspects.

As far as the analysis of the text is concerned the main feature of van Dijk's model is its structural nature. Discourse analysis consists here essentially in the identification of 'thematic' and 'schematic' elements in the way the text is organized. Beyond the text, van Dijk is interested in examining the cognitive processes involved in news production and decoding.

The centrepiece of van Dijk's framework is the notion of macrostructure.[4] A text's macrostructure is its thematic organization: the topics that compose it and the hierarchical relationship between them in the text. The prefix 'macro' refers to the overall level of description of a text, as opposed to the 'micro' level of individual words and sentences.

The reduction of the text to macrostructures is done with what van Dijk calls 'macro-rules'. Examples of 'macro-rules' are the deletion of redundant information or the synthesis of various propositions in a sole, more generic, one. This way, van Dijk reconstructs texts in the form of thematic skeletons.

Let us look at van Dijk's own definitions. We start with the concept of proposition which is the 'smallest, independent meaning constructs of language and thought' (1988b: 31), such as the sentence 'Mary is a lawyer' (ibid.). Macro-structures are then 'organized sets of propositions'. But this is a special type of proposition: 'unlike the propositions expressed by clauses or sentences, they are only expressed, indirectly, by larger stretches of talk or text.' (id.: 32). These are inferred topics, the product of reading the different parts of the text and deriving macro-meanings. Van Dijk then renames them as 'macro-propositions': topics or 'propositions that are part of macro-structures' (id.: 32).

Topics are organized in a hierarchical, top-down, fashion with more general topics coming above more specific ones.

The process of identification of a text's macrostructures relies on macro-rules: 'semantic mapping rules or transformations, which link lower level propositions to higher level macropropositions. (…) Deletion, generalization, and construction [are] the major macrorules that reduce information of a text to its topics.' (id.: 32)

Macrostructures, 'much as any semantic structure, may be further organized by a number of fixed categories' (id.: 41) such as Causes, Antecedents or Consequences.

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[4] *Macrostructures* is indeed the title of one of van Dijk's books (1980).

Frame analysis

The concept of 'frame' has been employed by many authors with quite varied meanings and requires some clarification. We should distinguish three main ways of looking at frames. The first one emphasizes perception and views frames as patterns for organizing our cognition of reality. Studies on cognitive psychology and on artificial intelligence, have shown that objects or events are never perceived by working from their individual component parts to the whole, but by assigning an overall, familiar, structure to objects or events. For example, if you first see a person running and then one body lying on the ground by a knife, this immediately brings up a whole homicidal plot, where the first person is the murderer. People resort to frames or schemas that provide a recognizable meaning in order to make sense of a complex reality. Scattered information is thus grouped under a subsuming category.

The second conception of frame is linked to the structuration of discourse. Gamson et al. define frame as 'a central organizing principle that holds together and gives coherence and meaning to a diverse array of symbols' (1992: 384). Here frames are viewed as structures present in discourse. A frame is, in this sense, an underlying idea that directs the construction of texts. Equally, frames can supposedly be identified and used by receivers for the decoding of such texts.

A related, albeit somewhat distinct, view of frames puts the emphasis on perspective. The definition advanced by Entman (1993) builds, it seems, on this notion.

> Framing essentially involves selection and salience. To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described. (p. 55)

A third sense of the term frame refers to 'higher level' cultural constructs. Frames are in this sense shared forms of understanding the world. They can be equated to 'social representations', to which Moscovici (1984) made an important contribution. He tells us that social representations are culture-specific. They are conventionalised by each society and attuned to its values. Social representations are also said to be prescriptive, 'that is they impose themselves upon us with an irresistible force. This force is a combination of a structure which is present before we have even begun to think, and of a tradition which decrees *what* we should think' (Moscovici, 1984: 9, quoted by Fisher, 1997.: parag. 4.4). In this line, Fisher (1997)[5] advances the concept of

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[5]Fisher (id.) provides a detailed review of literature on frames in various social sciences.

'cultural frames' as 'socio-culturally and cognitively generated patterns which help people to understand their world by shaping other forms of deep structural discourse' (parag. 5.1). In a study on the popular press coverage of military gender and sexuality policies in the US and UK (1996) she found the following frames: 'some institutions/tasks are not for everybody', 'everyone deserves an equal chance', 'women/gays are important actors in society', and 'militarism harms society'.

I would note that these three levels of frames are profoundly interconnected. Frame-type mental structures are acquired in the process of socialization and their transmission occurs through discursive practices. In socialization, cultural frames are passed on. On the other hand, cultural frames can only exist in and through discourse. It is there that they are reproduced or challenged. The links and interdependencies are obvious.

Of these three uses of the concept of frame it is the second one that is the most relevant for this paper, and the one that we will focus on. In the area of frame analysis of media texts, Gamson is one of the best known scholars. Let us look at his empirical work to see how the concept of frame is employed and what kind of insight we can gain from it. In their analysis of press representations of nuclear power, Gamson and Modigliani (1989) tried to identify the interpretive frames underlying discourse. They observed the following frames: 'progress', 'soft paths', 'public accountability', 'not cost effective', 'runaway', 'energy independence', and 'devil's bargain'. They called these frames 'media packages' in the sense that they would work as overall interpretive principles in relation to the issue. Each of these packages is supposed to be a distinct way of understanding nuclear energy and to mirror the main idea of the specific media texts (verbal and non-verbal). Let us take the 'progress' package. Gamson and Modigliani say that an either/or dualism is part of its core, and that the 'dominant metaphor is a road that branches into two alternative paths – one leading to the development of weapons of destruction, the other to the eradication of human misery.' (id.: 13)

We are not told how to identify a frame. But a list is provided of five 'framing devices' - 'that suggest how to think about the issue' - and three 'reasoning devices' - 'that justify what should be done about it'.

> The framing devices are '(1) metaphors, (2) exemplars (i.e. historical examples from which lessons are drawn), (3) catchphrases, (4) depictions, and (5) visual images (e.g., icons)'. The reasoning devices are (1) roots (i.e., a causal analysis), (2) consequences (i.e., a particular type of effect), and (3) appeals to principle (i.e., a set of moral claims)'. As far as the media package is concerned it is said that it 'can be summarized in a signature matrix that states the frame, the range of positions, and

the eight different types of signature elements that suggest this core in a condensed manner.' (id., footnote: 3-4).

Donati (1992) provides a useful review of frame analysis and the procedures it involves. He claims that there are two 'rules of thumb' to check whether a frame has been correctly individuated:

(a) the frame should always be represented by a category of objects, events or actions, both more general and more commonly known than the frame object - the principle is that the frame should work as a guiding model for what is to be understood; (b) the definition of a frame may be deemed correct when the meaning of the text does not change (but rather becomes tautological) after the frame's name or definition has been transposed on to those places of the text where the topic was named. (1992: 146-7)

Donati suggests that frames should correspond to the 'receiver's common-sense categories', instead of analytic categories: 'No gain without cost', 'Devil's bargain', rather then 'In favour of', 'Inclusive type', etc. That's because understanding 'does not work by deduction, but by analogy' and the 'analyst should try to discover these analogies', 'translating textual language into the people's language' (id.: 154).

Hence, Donati maintains that there are two fundamental types of frames:

those which highlight analogies with objects (especially mechanic objects, such as 'Carefully crafted watch'), and those which highlight analogies with action/event sequences (also called 'script', such as 'No gain without cost'). (id.: 152)

One should note that not all the frames identified by Gamson and Modigliani conform to Donati's teachings.

Narrative analysis

The concept of narrative has a longer history than the concept of frame. It has been studied mostly in the field of literary studies by authors such as Propp, Labov and Barthes, but, more recently, it has been imported into sociology and into other social sciences, including media sociology. McComas and Shanahan (1999) have recently used the concept of narrative to analyse the American press coverage of climate change, an empirical research object that is very similar to my own.

Let us start with the basics in narrative analysis. What is a narrative? Narrative theorists, especially under the influence of French structuralists, maintain that a

narrative is composed of two main elements - the story and the discourse[6]. A narrative would be a story told by the means of discourse, the latter being the representation of the story.[7]

There are some defining characteristics involved in the concept of story. A key aspect of stories is the chronological sequence. Events are ordered in a temporal sequence (which however does not have to be linear). Secondly, there must be some logical coherence in the story. Events must be bound together by some organizing principle. Thus, commonly they are presented in terms of a setting, complication and resolution. Finally, a story implies a change in situations through the unfolding of a sequence of events. The reversal, or change of fortunes, was a key aspect of Aristotelian comedies and tragedies. The present understanding of narratives does not require such a radical modification - from bad into good or vice-versa. What is essential is that the 'after' is different from the 'before', but not necessarily better nor worse.

Structuralist theory has also established that a story is expected to have the following components: the content or chain of events (actions, happenings), plus the existents (characters, items of setting). (Chatman, 1995: 478).[8] We can then conclude that not all texts are narratives.[9]

However, some authors have used the concept of narrative in a more general way than what was described, to refer to all the texts that involve the unfolding of an action or events.

What are the specific characteristics of narrative analysis? How does it proceed? One of the defining traits of narrative analysis is the attention to the text as a whole and to meaning as the result of a specific structure. Therefore, it refuses to fracture such a structure into smaller parts (for instance into themes).

Although there are variations, the methodological procedures of narrative analysis often include looking in a text for the elements previously mentioned, namely characters, setting, action, outcome.

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[6] This is another meaning of the term discourse, not to be confused with previous ones.

[7] We can also think of the opposition between events and plot. As noted by Culler (1997: 86-7) what readers encounter is the discourse of a text (the plot is something readers infer from that text).

> Confronted with a text (a term that includes films and other representations), the reader makes sense of it by identifying the story and then seeing the text as one particular presentation of that story; by identifying 'what happens', we are able to think of the rest of the verbal material as the way of portraying what takes place. Then we can ask what kind of presentation has been chosen and what difference that makes.' (Culler, 1997: 87)

[8] Van Dijk (1988: 50) distinguishes this understanding, the one favoured by the 'story grammars', from the more general view of story as an action discourse, 'featuring terms such as goal, plan and result'.

[9] Franzosi (1998), for example, distinguishes narrative from non-narrative texts. A narrative text may contain narrative clauses and non-narrative clauses.

3. Testing the analytical tools of existing models

What better characterizes and is most distinctive of the three types of analysis of media discourse introduced above are the analytical tools they employ - the notion of macro-structure, and the concepts of frame and narrative. Macro-structure, frame and narrative are often taken by researchers as designations of real structures that are present in the text. I prefer to think of them essentially as conceptual tools that allow the researcher to 'discover' various aspects of the text, and that help understand the social construction of different (social) objects. I suggest we focus on them and evaluate their strengths and shortcomings.

The best way to assess the usefulness of these tools is to test them on concrete texts. We shall apply these analytical devices to one news article from my database, published in The Times on the eighth of November 1989: 'UK plays key role in securing accord on 'greenhouse' gas; Carbon dioxide', by Michael McCarthy and Robin Oakley. The article reports on a conference that took place in Noordwijk, The Netherlands, and which was called by the Dutch government to assess the possibility of a stabilization of greenhouse gas emissions.

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08 Nov 1989 UK plays key role in securing accord on 'greenhouse' gas; Carbon dioxide: The Times[10]

By MICHAEL MCCARTHY in Noordwijk, The Netherlands, and ROBIN OAKLEY

1. The world's leading industrialized countries, including the United States, the Soviet Union, Japan and Britain, yesterday pledged themselves for the first time to freeze 'as soon as possible' emissions of carbon dioxide, the industrial gas principally responsible for the greenhouse effect.

2. European countries, including Britain, went even further, and at a conference here on climate change committed themselves to stabilizing CO emissions from coal-burning power stations and motor vehicles by the year 2000 'at the latest'.

3. The agreement, fiercely criticized by environment pressure groups for not being tough enough, comes a day before Mrs Thatcher is to announce increased British

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[10] I have divided the article into sentences (marked by a full stop) for ease of reference.

spending on international efforts to combat environmental pollution in her keynote speech at the United Nations.

4. Although the key question of the baseline level at which a freeze should take place will not be considered for another year, the commitments given yesterday imply far-reaching changes, in Britain as elsewhere, both in public policy and in people's living habits.

5. Britain's transport policy, for example, which foresees huge rises in motor vehicle traffic with attendant exhaust emissions over the next three decades, is incompatible with yesterday's pledge, given on Britain's behalf by Mr David Trippier, Minister of State at the Department of the Environment.

6. British energy policy will also need radical revision to accommodate it, with far more emphasis being given to energy conservation.

7. Resolving these differences will be the principal tasks of the new Cabinet committee which has been set up to deal with environmental matters.

8. Mr Trippier and the British delegation played a leading role in securing yesterday's accord, after real disagreements had earlier emerged for the first time between leading nations on how global warming should be tackled.

9. British mediation helped to effect a compromise between countries such as The Netherlands and France, which wanted an immediate binding agreement on stabilization of carbon dioxide emissions by 2000 at the present levels, and countries such as the US, the Soviet Union and Japan, who were hostile to the idea.

10. The 69-nation conference reached the first unanimous agreement on the need for, and nature of, a world treaty to protect the atmosphere.

11. Ministers also agreed unanimously on exploring the possibility of setting up a world atmosphere fund, to help developing countries change their energy policies, and to pursue a target for replanting the world's forests with 12 million hectares (29.6 million acres) a year at the beginning of the next century.

12. But Greenpeace labelled the conference 'a disaster'.

14. Mr Andrew Kerr said: 'This was the last chance in the 1980s to make a start in limiting global warming before we entered the final decade of the millennium.

15. But the conference has failed to commit itself to any specific action by any specific date.'

16. Mr Stewart Boyle, of the Association for the Conservation of Energy, said: 'There won't be a single tonne of carbon dioxide saved as a result of this conference.

17. It has committed nations to do nothing specific.'

18. But after the possibility had loomed of a disastrous split declaration, many national environment ministers and UN officials thought it provided a genuine push to international efforts to combat global warming.

19. However, Mr Trippier said: 'It has not all been plain sailing, but I am very pleased that Britain has played a central role in advancing the international political consensus on climate change.'

20. The agreement certainly provides a positive political background for Mrs Thatcher when she addresses the UN General Assembly today.

21. In a wide-ranging address, the Prime Minister will demonstrate that she is matching actions to her words on the environment by announcing substantial new measures that the Government intends to take in Britain and a stepping-up of British contributions to international schemes.

22. The Prime Minister, who helped to bring environmental issues to the fore in Britain with her speech to the Royal Society 14 months ago, is keen to play a leading role in international efforts to preserve the planet.

23. Whitehall sources say that she could have picked many other subjects on which to address the UN, but has chosen green issues.

24. She will argue that sustainable growth and environmental protection are compatible.

25. Setting out the latest scientific evidence and detailing Britain's record as an example to others, she will underline the need to ensure that any initiatives taken to protect the environment are scientifically and economically sound.

26. More controversially, Mrs Thatcher is likely to emphasize the important contribution of nuclear power to an improved environment.

27. The Prime Minister has been arguing in other international gatherings, as she did at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, the need for channelling international co-operation on environmental issues through the existing institutions of the UN rather than creating new ones.

28. She is expected to develop the case for a framework convention on global climate change in the expectation that further elements can be 'bolted on' as scientific knowledge increases.

Macro-structure

If we adopt van Dijk's analysis of theme structures in news texts, the Times article will be represented as follows.

INSERT IMAGE HERE

The type of analysis advanced by van Dijk emphasises the structure of texts and the internal construction of meaning. It is a topic-driven technique with a great deal of concern for hierarchical relations between different parts of the text.

If the purpose is to examine each text individually, and to look at the (internal) connections between different themes and aspects of the text, the notion of macro-structure serves it well. It can provide a very useful analysis at the micro-textual level. But for analysis *across* a number of texts it has a very limited use. It is of difficult application to a large number of texts and it does not allow for easy comparisons of different texts.

Of course van Dijk does not limit his work to the analysis of macrostructures. He also looks at schematas or textual superstructures. Schematas are typical forms of organization of different types of text. At the micro-structural level, he looks at style and rhetoric. However, the notion of macro-structure is the backbone of his analytical framework, and it is therefore justified to put it to trial.

Frame

Can we find a frame, i.e., a main underlying idea, in the Times article? It is difficult to identify a simple, powerful notion, such as 'progress', in this text. But if we account for the predominant role of the headline and for some of the sentences (especially 8,9 and 19) in the article, 'Britain's international leadership' stands out. However, it is also indicated that environmental organizations perceived the conference to be a failure, which contrasts with the impression of Britain leading the world to agreement.

Could 'Britain's international leadership' be the structuring frame of the article? Searching the Times article for the 'framing devices' outlined above does not prove it. There are five expressions used metaphorically in the text: 'disaster' (Greenpeace à propos the conference), 'loomed' (possibility of a split declaration), 'disastrous' (split declaration), ['It has not all been] plain sailing' (Trippier about the negotiations), 'bolted on' ('further elements' to the climate negotiations). The majority of the metaphors allude to the failure, or potential failure, of the conference and not to Britain's leadership. Moreover, except for some of the sentences that employ the expressions above, there are no 'catchphrases'. As far as 'exemplars' are concerned, it is doubtful that the mention of Britain's record on environmental matters in sentence 25 corresponds to Gamson and Modigliani's understanding of historical 'exemplar'. They

do not define what 'depictions' are, and given the vague character of this word, I will leave it on the side of the analysis. Finally, the article does not have any visual images.

'Reasoning devices' of the kind mentioned by Gamson and Modigliani cannot be found in the article either, with the exception of the sentences 4-7 on the consequences of the conference declaration. In conclusion, it does not seem that 'Britain's international leadership' is an interpretive 'media package'.

Moreover, could we consider 'Britain's international leadership' to be a frame for understanding climate change in an overall way? Certainly it does not look very appropriate, since international politics is only one of the many dimensions of the issue.

Deciding what is the adequate level of abstraction can be a problem in frame analysis. For instance, at a different level of abstraction, the dominant idea/frame in the Times article could be that 'climate change can be solved by international agreements'. At a more specific level, of assessment of the Noordwijk conference, it could be simply 'success' (as opposed to 'failure', as suggested by the NGOs).

Recapitulating, if we follow Gamson and Modigliani's model for frame analysis in our empirical test on the Times article we run into a number of difficulties. First, it does not appear appropriate to subsume the whole text under the idea of 'Britain's international leadership', which is the closest we got to identifying a 'frame' in our analysis. Gamson and Modigliani do not say whether a text can have more than one frame (but they suggest that texts, or at least parts of texts, can be unframed). Second, it does not seem that 'Britain's international leadership' would be the type of interpretive frame that Gamson and Modigliani point to, given that it did not pass the test of 'framing and reasoning devices'. Third, such a frame would only refer to a dimension of the climate change issue (international politics), and it is not clear how one could decide on the proper level of abstraction in the analysis.

If we account for Donati's conception of frames, there is an added problem in our empirical exercise. Although 'Britain's international leadership' passes the test of the two 'rules of thumb' reasonably well, it is not one of the two frame-types indicated by Donati (object or action analogy).

Frame analysis can be reductionist because it attempts to identify a central idea or principle and can therefore leave out significant, if minor, aspects of the construction of the issue. Its tendency for overall labelling can lead to insufficient attention being paid to detail, to the concrete forms of meaning generation - at the level of words and sentences, for instance. Its programme consists in turning regular what is predominantly singular, or seeing structure where there is not necessarily a structure. This may be particularly grave in the analysis of complex, multi-dimensional, matters, like climate change.

On the positive side, frame analysis has the advantage of being easily applicable to a large number of texts. By highlighting the main idea of each text, it also has the benefit of allowing for easy comparisons.

In order to overcome the problems associated with the notion of frame as structure, I propose taking up the notion of frame as perspective, that I have mentioned before (Entman, 1993; also Rein and Schon, 1991[11]). The notion that we always have to choose a particular standpoint to talk about complex, multi-dimensional realities seems particularly helpful to me. Framing in talking is like framing in photography. It involves a specific angle and it involves bringing in or leaving out certain aspects of a pictured reality. I will further elaborate on this.

Narrative

We now turn to narrative analysis. How would it help analysing the Times article? What would it say about the text?

Let us assume, as suggested above, that the main elements of a narrative are characters, setting, action, and outcome. The main character in the Times article is Britain, either as a country or represented by its minister, David Trippier. Britain sorts out the complications of the story and shapes up the outcome. Amongst the other countries mentioned in the article, the United States, the Soviet Union and Japan are awarded a more prominent role in the narrative then the Netherlands and France. Greenpeace and the Association for the Conservation of Energy (and their representatives) are secondary characters, whose role is a mere short commentary.

The setting of the article is an intergovernmental conference on climate change in Noordwijk, The Netherlands. The core action of the story is the negotiation of colliding claims of different countries and Britain's mediation. The outcome of the story is predominantly portrayed as a happy one where Britain secured accord for a positive decision that will benefit the environment.

Narrative analysis highlights the time sequence of a certain course of action. It also emphasises relations between presuppositions or causes, and consequences. Narrative

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[11]Rein and Schon (1991) define framing as follows:

> Framing is (...) a way of selecting, organizing, interpreting, and making sense of a complex reality so as to provide guideposts for knowing, analyzing, persuading and acting. A frame is a perspective from which an amorphous, ill-defined problematic situation can be made sense of and acted upon. (263)

> Although the definitions that both Entman and Rein and Schon propose for frame emphasize the notion of perspective, occasionally they also implicitly treat frames as structures.

analysis can be quite useful for understanding certain discourses on complex or uncertain processes. In such cases, the author of the text tends, in face of complexity, to simplify the issue under consideration and in face of uncertainty to construct scenarios/stories.

One of the disadvantages of narrative analysis is that it can conduce to neglecting texts/parts of texts that do not entail the characteristics of a narrative. Also, unless it is done in significant depth, narrative analysis may tend to focus exclusively on the dominant narrative of a text.

Often there are only faint traces of alternative narratives in texts. But they should not be ignored. A second narrative is inscribed in the Times article - the NGOs' narrative. NGOs construct the conference as a more crucial event for the future of the planet than what governments convey, and tell of a radically different outcome - the failure to commit countries to concrete actions and the negative impact on the environment. This alternative narrative is however awarded only a tiny space in the article, which says something about the Times ideological standing. We should also note that, at the end of the article, there is a continuation of the first (government's) narrative with a scenario of future action. Margaret Thatcher is here the central character and we are told what actions she will take in relation to the environment.

X-Ray Machine, camera and video-camera

I suggest the idea of an X-ray machine, a camera and a video-camera as metaphors for the concepts of frame, narrative and macro-structure, and their use as instruments of analysis.

If we follow the analytical course advanced by van Dijk with the notion of macro-structure, the image we obtain from a text is similar to the one that an X-ray machine gives us of the human body – the (bone) structure, the skeleton.

If we associate the notion of frame to perspective and to composition, a camera, as an instrument that mediates our relationship with the world, is a good metaphor for frame. If we think more in terms of fixed mental and textual structures, a mould could be our tool in relating to the world. Like a mould, a frame shapes up (the perception of) reality according to pre-existing forms, categories and schemas.

Finally, the work involved in deconstructing and reconstructing narratives seems facilitated to me by the idea of a video-camera. If we think about what is captured by a camera, about the impression of reality it shows to us, we are getting very close to the notion of story and narrative.

Each of the three concepts we have focused on has more then methodological implications: they are different epistemologies altogether. All are non-neutral lenses and consist of specific ways of seeing the world. It is important to be aware of what is lost and what is gained with each research technique.

4. Developing an alternative approach

The previous section has shown that different analytical tools provide quite different insights into the text. We have also seen that there are various problems in each approach, and that none is fully satisfactory to examine our media data. This section will attempt to show a way forward by proposing a new approach to the analysis of media discourse.

4.1. Rationale for innovating

But do we really need another approach to discourse analysis of media texts? Could we not just retain and combine the positive aspects of the models debated earlier in this paper? My answers are, respectively, yes and no. Besides the difficulties and limitations that we have already found in the existing models, I have identified some issues that remain unresolved or unsatisfactorily addressed by those approaches to discourse analysis, even if combined.

The time plane in discourse analysis

Time has largely been unaccounted for in the existing literature on discourse analysis. Most forms of analysis do not express awareness of the time sequence of texts, nor do they clearly explain the implications of discursive positions on subsequent ones. I contend that time relations are a major factor in determining discursive constructions and therefore call for a time-sensitive discourse analysis.

If we take two texts, time relations between them can be of priority, simultaneity, or posteriority. It is the latter that matters the most for discourse analysis. However, simultaneous texts on the same issue are also interesting for examining differences in the representation of reality.

The historical nature of discourse is one of its most fundamental characteristics. Texts always build on previous ones, taking up or challenging former discourses.

Discourse analyst Norman Fairclough (1995a; 1995b) has conceptualized these relations as intertextuality. Intertextuality is an important contribution to the study of discourse but it does not, *per se*, give a full account of the time plane.

My contribution to this matter is the promotion of a historical-diachronic discourse analysis (together with a comparative-synchronic one). I will explain this approach below in more detail.

Agents' intervention in (discursive) reality

What journalists do is usually a discursive re-construction of reality. Rarely do they witness events, or get to know reality, in a way that does not involve the mediation of others. A variety of social actors serves every day as sources of information for media professionals, in a direct or indirect way.

Let us take the press coverage of climate change as an example. The majority of the articles are not about climate events but about reports, conferences and political summits. So the media representation of this issue seems to be very much a function of the initiative of social actors to organize their claims and to project attention to the types of 'happenings' mentioned above. The media depiction will obviously depend largely on the preferences and options of the media professionals, but necessarily builds on the ways social actors construct climate change in their multifarious discourses.

A good method of discourse analysis has to account for these two levels of discursive intervention over a certain object - the sources' or social actors' intervention, and the journalists' intervention.

Van Dijk's approach is not satisfactory in this respect. He focuses on the journalist and does not deal with previous discourses of social actors. In narrative analysis, there is space for examining the stories told by different social actors. Thus, in an analysis of various cases of environmental policy, Roe (1994) attempted to individuate those stories and their implications. But in most of the works on media narratives this aspect is not elucidated. In this respect, Gamson and Modigliani (1989) refer to the 'determinants' of packages or frames. They maintain that there are three classes of 'determinants': 'cultural resonances', 'sponsor activities' and 'media practices'. Sponsors would be, for instance, policy-makers or pressure groups. However, there are two problems with their conception. First, they do not account for the full range of social actors whose agency is important in the discursive construction of reality. Second, they do not adequately view the framing by the media as a process of re-framing.

I will propose a reinforced attention to the role of actors in media discourse. It is important to study the ways they are represented and analyse their discursive strategies in the construction of reality.

Modes of operation of discourse

How do discourse and social realities interact? What social and political consequences can be generated through discourse?

Some works on environmental policy-making have provided more insights into this issue then most scholarship on media discourse. In a book about discourses of acid rain politics in the United Kingdom and The Netherlands, Hajer (1995) has referred to discursive mechanisms as processes through which discourse operates. Hajer subsumes a large variety of effects under the category of discourse mechanisms, which both show the force of discourse and potentially empower the agent.

I will attempt to build on and further elaborate on this. I think that discourse analysis ought to say something about how social action (or inaction) is engineered through discourse. And media discourse is a specially important form of social, political and cultural action.

The following section aims at explaining the procedures that I have adopted to examine the data of my PhD thesis, described above. I have attempted to integrate some answers to the questions and the issues that I have just discussed. Also I have taken in consideration the advantages and shortcomings of the analytical tools that we have examined previously. Furthermore, other contributions to discourse analysis influenced my own approach, mainly Fairclough's work (especially 1995b).[12]

4.2. Proposed method for discourse analysis of media texts

I start off with an open-ended reading of the material, i.e. not constrained by very specific research questions or hypotheses. I think this can produce quite interesting results since it allows for the identification of the most significant traits of the data, without the filter-effect of a tight research programme.

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[12] I integrate several aspects of Fairclough's approach in the methodology I propose below and will refer to them later more specifically. Naturally, I also differ in relation to Fairclough in a variety of issues.

It is important to make use of critical thinking during the reading of the data. Some of the questions that may come to mind are: Why do some things get said and others do not? How are things said and what are the possible implications of that?

The first reading of the data will lead to the identification of significant debates, controversies, and silences, and possibly to the amendment or specification of the initial research questions.

From here we turn to the detailed discourse analysis of texts. In the pages that follow, I will propose a step-by-step approach to the analysis of media texts. Such an approach is especially oriented towards written media texts, i.e. newspaper or magazine articles. I will first focus on the unit of analysis, that is, each individual text, and then proceed to its wider context.

I. Textual analysis

I have identified a set of dimensions of the text that matter the most in the construction of its overall meaning and that ought to be analysed. They are detailed separately below.

1. Surface descriptors and structural organization

I propose first looking at a few 'surface' elements of the text - the date of publication, the newspaper in which it was published, the author, the page (page number) in which the article appeared, and the size of the article. These indicators say something by themselves. For instance, the different impacts of publishing an article on page 1 or page 20 are quite obvious, and that clearly expresses a newspaper's valorization of the issue or event at stake. As far as the author of an article is concerned, if we know her/his usual standings, ideological commitments and institutional belongings that can help us start locating the text in a certain context[13]. This should however not imply a deterministic view of the authorship, nor lead to pre-judging the text because of who wrote it.

The structural organization of the text has a key role in the definition of what is at stake, as well as in the overall interpretation of an issue. In the line of van Dijk, I will weigh the headline of the article differently from the body (the rest of the text). The headline marks the preferred reading of the whole article. A bigger weigh will also be conferred to the first few paragraphs of the article, which, in the Guardian, Independent and the Times, tend to have the function of the lead, generally inexistent. Differently

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[13] We return to the analysis of the context later.

from van Dijk, I do not think that a detailed exploration of the organization of the text is much more revealing.

2. Objects

The second question to ask is: Which objects does the article construct? Objects are equivalent to topics or themes. However, the term 'object' has over 'topic' or 'theme' the advantage of enhancing the idea that discourse *constitutes* rather then just 'refers to' the realities at stake.

Objects of discourse are not always obvious, and clearly identifying them is an important step towards deconstructing and understanding the role of discourses.

In the case of climate change, the broader objects to be constructed may be economics, government or nature, while more specific ones may be, for instance, climate change impacts on agriculture.

A related question to be asked at this stage of the analysis is: What events/specific issues are associated to the broader issue under consideration? This question is particularly relevant for complex issues like climate change, which have many dimensions, and therefore can be tackled from many angles and perspectives.[14] Mapping the links between specific events, say the option for a new road programme, and climate change can be very illuminating vis-`a-vis the political standing of a certain discourse.[15]

3. Actors

Who does the article mention? How are these actors represented? Here we are interested in the individuals or institutions that are either quoted or referred to in the text. Some of these actors may have worked as sources for the author of the article, others have not.

The term 'actors' means in my analysis both social agents and characters in a staged story (which is ultimately what news reports are).[16] Actors are then both subjects - they do things - and objects - they are the talked about.

Texts play a major role in building the image of social actors, as well as in defining their relations and identities, as suggested by Fairclough (1995b).

An essential aspect in the study of actors in texts is their perceived influence in shaping the overall meaning of the text. Whose perspective seems to dominate? Elsewhere (Carvalho, 1999) I have referred to this effect as the 'framing power' of social

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[14] In journalistic terms one can think of news pegs. What events or issues 'originate' a particular article?
[15] The fact that an author does *not* make such links is just as meaningful.
[16] Compare with the term 'voices' employed by Fairclough (1995b).

actors in relation to the media. Framing power may be defined as the capacity of one actor for conveying her/his views and positions through the media, by having them re-presented by journalists either in the form of quotes or regular text. Having the predominant framing power in relation to a certain issue is an important form of social influence. But we must bear in mind that such framing power is crucially yielded or denied by journalists, who hold a major power of discursive construction of social, political or environmental issues.

4. Language and rhetoric

We now turn to more specific language aspects. The identification of key concepts and of their relationship to wider cultural and ideological frameworks[17] is an important part of the work to be developed here. Furthermore, we look at the vocabulary used for representing a certain reality, e.g. forms of adjectivation, and at the writing style, e.g. formal/informal, technical, conversational.

Rhetoric looks at metaphors and other figures of style employed in the text. An emotionally charged discourse, with an appeal to readers' emotions, is often found in the press, and can have an important rhetorical role.

The classical object of rhetoric is persuasion. However, in journalistic discourse, persuasion is tied in with such issues as 'truthfulness, plausibility, correctness, precision, or credibility' (van Dijk, 1988: 93). I prefer to keep rhetoric limited to the aspects mentioned above and treat these other issues as discursive strategies (see below).

In the analysis of language and rhetoric we look on the one hand at the formulations advanced by social actors and on the other hand at the journalist's own discourse.

5. Discursive strategies and processes

Discursive strategies are the forms of discursive manipulation of reality by social actors, including journalists. Manipulation does not have here the sense of undutiful alteration of a certain reality, which is common in the use of the word. It simply means intervention on that reality in order to achieve a certain effect or goal. This intervention and the procured aim can be more or less conscious. I will refer below to some of the most significant strategies.

The main intervention the speaker/author undertakes consists in the selection of an angle of the (complex) reality s/he is talking about. This is an important part of the act of 'framing' a certain reality[18]. I suggest thinking in terms of *framing* as an action or

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[17] In this line see the work of Jacobs and Manzi, 1996.

[18] Here I refer to framing mainly in the sense of perspective, as discussed earlier in this paper.

operation, rather then in terms of *frames* as (fixed) independent entities (see critique of the concept of frame earlier in this paper). Framing is to organize discourse according to a certain point of view or perspective. In the production of texts, framing involves selection and composition. Selection is an exercise of inclusion and exclusion of facts, opinions, value judgements. Composition is the arrangement of these elements in order to produce a certain meaning.

Unlike Durham (1998) and other authors, I do not view framing as an optional intervention in discourse[19]. Instead, it is something inherent to the construction of texts. Framing is not something that you choose to do or not, but a necessary operation in talking about reality. Therefore, what is at stake in the analysis of framing as a discursive strategy is *how*, and not *whether*, an actor frames reality.

Turning now to other discursive strategies, I would highlight narrativization and positioning, and, as examples of more specific strategies, legitimation and politicization.

I look at narrative texts, and the stories in them, as the product of discursive manipulation of reality by specific actors. Narrativization involves constructing a sequence of (predicted) events and (anticipated) consequences. I have suggested that we think of a narrative as involving an action, a conclusion or outcome, characters, and a setting or framework for the action. An implication of narratives and narrative analysis is the reinforcement of the role of action - in Ricoeur's words 'doing something' is central to the narrative (1984: 56, cited by Franzosi, 1998: 523). So the importance of social actors and, more generally, human agency is heightened with this discursive strategy. Unlike framing, narrativization is not a necessary aspect of the discursive construction of an issue.[20]

Positioning is a discursive strategy that involves constructing social actors into a certain relationship with others, that may, for instance, entitle them, or not, to do certain things. Positioning can also be viewed as a wider process of constitution of the identity of the subject through discourse.[21]

Legitimation consists in justifying and sanctioning a certain action or power, on the basis of normative or other reasons. Politicization is the attribution of a political nature or status to a certain reality, such as climate change. Some of these strategies have a reverse, such as de-legitimation and de-politicization.

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[19] In Durham's article framing is seen as reduction(ist) practice undertaken by journalists to make sense of reality in a systematic attempt to identify a single meaning for events (that are often complex and multi-dimensional).

[20] As we have seen, there are narrative or non-narrative texts.

[21] Cf. with the relational function of discourse mentioned by Fairclough (1995b). Halliday (1978, 1985), on whom Fairclough draws, called this function interpersonal.

Naturally, there is a very large number of potential discursive strategies, at different levels of specificity. For instance, while framing is a fundamental and necessary operation, building out responsibility (in the representation of climate change, for instance) is a much more specific and highly discretionary strategy.

In the analysis of discourse strategies I attempt to carefully map them in relation to social actors. Which actors use which discursive strategies? How are different actors involved in the discursive strategies of others? The link between actors and discursive strategies is a contribution to addressing the issue of agents' intervention on discourse which, as mentioned before, is not addressed in a satisfactory way by most existing models of discourse analysis.

Discursive processes consist of wider effects on discourse and on its relations to social contexts. Discursive processes are not the direct consequence of actors' discursive interventions. An example of a discursive process is discourse structuration - domination of the terms of the debate. This may be intended but does not only depend on an actor's construction of an issue. A second example is discourse institutionalization - the transformation of institutional structures and/or practices in a way that embodies a certain discourse.

The sort of distinction I propose between discursive strategies and processes is not usually made in the literature. Ruth Wodak (1999; Wodak et al, 1999) refers to strategies[22], but not to the sort of discourse processes that I mentioned. Hajer (1995) uses the expression 'discourse mechanisms' to refer to both discursive strategies and processes, therefore not individuating agency in discourse, as I do.[23]

Both discourse strategies and discourse processes provide insights as to how discourse operates in the construction of meanings, and in the broader relation to social, political and cultural contexts (see point made previously about the operation of discourse).

6. Ideological standpoints

Ideological viewpoints are possibly the most fundamental shaping influence in a text. Yet discourse analysis does not always reveal them.

We must naturally start by clarifying the concept of ideology, which tends to be controversial. Often, ideology is related to the reproduction of power. Such is the

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[22] Wodak defines 'strategies' in discourse as 'plans of actions that may vary in their degree of elaboration, may be located at different levels of mental organization, and may range from automatic to highly conscious' (1999: 188)

[23] Moreover, his category of 'discourse mechanisms' is not very consistent given the sheer variety of aspects he includes in it.

understanding of Fairclough, for instance (1995b)[24]. However, power is itself a contested concept, which can have many dimensions[25]. I prefer not to make this association which, I think, can raise a series of questions: What kind of power are we talking about? Is ideology always on the side of power? So do the powerless not have an ideology?

Van Dijk has recently proposed a quite encompassing notion of ideology:

... the basis of the social representations shared by members of a groups. This means that ideologies allow people, as group members, to organize the multitude of social beliefs about what is the case, good or bad, right or wrong, *for them*, and to act accordingly.' (1998: 8)

I retain this normative nature of van Dijk's understanding of ideology and hence relate ideology to moral judgement and to values. But my conception of ideology also entails a political dimension. I think ideology is the groundwork for the most fundamental political standings - how should society be organized, what is the role of the state, what kind of government is desirable.

In the text, we should then look for fundamental political and normative standpoints. Naturally, ideology is an overarching aspect of the text. It influences the selection and representation of objects, actors, the language, and the discursive strategies employed in a text. However, one should expect the ideological standpoints of an author not to be always explicit in the text; identifying them often requires a good deal of interpretive work.

In the field of environment, ideology has essentially to do with normative and political standpoints on the relation between man and nature. Dryzek (1997) has classified this kind of stances into the following 'discourses': survivalism, prometheanism, administrative rationalism, democratic rationalism, economic rationalism, sustainable development, ecological modernization, green romanticism and green rationalism.

To conclude the methodology involved in textual analysis I should say that, like Fairclough, I not only look for what is present in the text, but also for what is absent. Texts are read 'politically', to use the terms of Carver and Hyvarinen (1997). 'Political reading' recognises that politics is not natural, but 'contingent, plural and conflictual' (p. 6), and aims to maintain in the analysis the awareness of possible alternatives to the

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[24] Drawing on Thompson (1984, 1990), Fairclough maintains that '... ideologies are propositions that generally figure as implicit assumptions in texts, which contribute to producing or reproducing unequal relations of power, relations of domination.' (1995b: 14)
[25] See Lukes, 1974.

dominant position(s). What is obscured in the text? How does the inclusion and exclusion of facts serve the creation of a certain meaning?[26]

II. Contextual analysis

In a second stage of the analysis, I look beyond the text/unit of analysis, at the overall coverage of an event or issue in one newspaper. How many articles are dedicated to each event? The number of articles is a crucial indicator of the importance awarded by the newspaper to the event; similarly the omission of an event or issue is a significant indicator of the newspaper's valorization of such an event.

Two time-related dimensions of analysis will be considered in this stage - synchronic and diachronic. This will be achieved by two main means of inquiry - respectively, comparison and historical analysis. Therefore, I end up pursuing a *comparative-synchronic analysis* and a *historical-diachronic analysis*. With the comparative-synchronic analysis, I will look at the various representations of an issue at the time of the writing of one specific article (my unit of analysis). More specifically, I will compare the first article with other representations of the issue - articles written in the same day by different authors, both in the same newspaper or others. The comparison of press depictions of reality leads to an attempted reconstitution of the original events (discursive or non-discursive). By crossing references and in some cases comparing with original documents, such as reports or policy documents, we can form our own image of reality, which is hopefully more accurate or complete than each press representation. This is important because it allows for a better assessment of the intervention of journalists (or other authors) on that reality, and of their critical reading of the discursive strategies of social actors.[27]

The historical-diachronic analysis takes place at two levels. At a first level, I will examine the temporal evolution of discourses. I will look at the sequence of discursive constructions of an issue and assess its significance. How did representations of reality impact on subsequent ones? How were they reproduced or contested?[28] At a second level, the historical approach involves being aware of the course of history, i.e. of the

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[26] Fairclough (1995b) highlights the notion of choice in discourse. His analysis of the text is always aware that it is a product of choices and that alternative choices - and hence alternative constructions of reality - could have been made.

[27] Cf. Fairclough's choice relations (1995b).

[28] Cf. Fairclough's chain relations (1995b).

significance of events, and of their wider political, social and economic context. (cf. Wodak et al, 1999 [29])

Recapitulating, here is an outline of my approach to discourse analysis:

I. Textual analysis

1. Surface descriptors and structural organization
2. Objects
3. Actors
4. Language and rhetoric
5. Discursive strategies and processes
6. Ideological standpoints

II. Contextual analysis

1 Comparative-synchronic analysis
2. Historical-diachronic analysis

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5. The empirical trial

It is now the time to subject the proposed approach to the same kind of test that the other analytical tools had. Let us see what the methodology I proposed tells us about the Times article.

I. Textual Analysis

1. Surface descriptors and structural organization
We already know that the article at stake was published in the Times on 08.11.89 and that its authors were Michael McCarthy and Robin Oakley. It appeared on page 10,

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[29] While I have been developing these research lines, both theoretically and empirically, a historical-analytical agenda has been launched by the Vienna group of discourse analysts, chiefly Ruth Wodak (1999; Wodak et al., 1999). Their focus is more linguistic than mine.

approximately the middle of the newspaper. It is not the most prominent location in a newspaper, but it is not the least noble part either.

The article has 837 words, a size that is above the average of the articles in my database (574 words), reflecting the valuation the newspaper made of the specific event that the article covers.

The headline and the first few paragraphs highlight the role of Britain in an international conference on greenhouse gas emissions where a 'freeze' on emissions was decided.

2. Objects

The main themes/objects of the article are the international politics of climate change and British diplomacy. Another important object is Thatcher's personal role in the international politics of climate change. Domestic policies with relevance for greenhouse gas emissions are a marginal object in the article.

3. Actors

The actors represented in the Times article are the following, in the order they first appear in the text: UK, 'world's leading industrialized countries', United States, the Soviet Union, Japan, European countries, 'environment pressure groups', Mrs Thatcher, Mr David Trippier, Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, 'new Cabinet committee', British delegation, The Netherlands, France, Ministers, Greenpeace, Mr Andrew Kerr, Mr Stewart Boyle, Association for the Conservation of Energy, national environment ministers, UN officials, Whitehall sources. I have considered countries as actors because they - or their representatives - have agency in international politics.

The vast majority of these actors are official figures (the state itself, its government or diplomats). This is an indicator of the preferred sources and of the article's main framing of the issue, along with the official line.

In this article's depiction of social actors, the following aspects are worth noting: the repetition of references to certain actors, such as David Trippier, environment minister, or Margaret Thatcher, the highlight and the space awarded to representing them, and the fact that the article's account of politics follows the views of these actors quite closely. All this constitutes these actors into the prime definers of the represented reality. Theirs is the predominant framing of the article.

4. Language and rhetoric

Language choices and rhetorical constructions create in this article a very positive image of British diplomacy and of the international politics of climate change.

The headline's expressions 'key role' and 'securing accord' strongly promotes Britain and British politics. The next thing to note is the repeated use of the word 'leading'. It is employed four times à propos '(industrialized) nations' or British politicians, contributing to a depiction of Britain as the leader of the leaders.

The importance of the agreement reached in Noordwijk is reinforced by repeatedly classifying it as the 'first' one of its kind (three times). And Britain (and other European countries) 'went even further'.

Metaphors like 'It has not all been *plain sailing*' and 'the possibility had *loomed* of a *disastrous* split declaration' enhances the role and status of Britain.

Many other linguistic aspects could be detailed here but that is not the main research strategy of my approach.

I should note that up to this point my approach is not very different from other models of discourse analysis of media texts, such as van Dijk's (as I said, besides the theme structure, he also accounts for lexical and rhetorical aspects) or certain aspects of Fairclough's (however, Fairclough's work entails several other dimensions). It is from the next point onwards that the approach I propose becomes distinct in relation to others.

5. Discursive strategies and processes

The Times' representation of the Noordwijk conference is a powerful legitimation of British diplomacy and of the international politics of climate change.

Positioning Britain as the mediator and the rescuer of the conference aids the construction of an image of international leadership (see what was said in the language and rhetoric section).

The dominant framing of McCarthy and Oakley's article is clearly the one advanced by David Trippier. He is quoted and his interpretation of the conference is aired several times. Trippier's strategy of framing the conference as a victory of British diplomacy is therefore very profitable.

The only critical look into climate change politics comes in the reference to the implications of the international agreement in terms of national policies, such as transport policy.

Margaret Thatcher's construction of climate change as an international problem, to be dealt with by all the countries - and not just the industrialized ones - within the United Nations forum, is largely promoted by McCarthy and Oakley.

The adhesion of the journalists to the government's propaganda is easily read in the following sentences.

In a wide-ranging address, the Prime Minister will *demonstrate that she is matching actions to her words* on the environment by announcing substantial new measures that the Government intends to take in Britain and a stepping-up of British contributions to international schemes. The Prime Minister, who *helped to bring environmental issues to the fore* in Britain with her speech to the Royal Society 14 months ago, is keen to *play a leading role in international efforts to preserve the planet*[30].

There is both a descriptive and interpretive reinforcement of Thatcher's views and roles.

Non-governmental organisations - Greenpeace and the Association for the Conservation of Energy - constructed the Noordwijk conference for the journalists as a failure, by dramatizing it and heightening its importance (conference as a 'disaster'; conference as the 'last chance'), and by pointing to the fact that there was no *specific* commitment in the conference. However, this strategy did not get much receptivity in the Times. A reference to NGOs' reactions seems to be there only 'for the record', with no impact in the broader construction of the issue by the journalist.

6. Ideological standpoints

Ideologically, this article is clearly on the side of the British government. As we have seen, the government's perspective dominates almost the entire article. Strong support to British politics is also evident when McCarthy and Oakley make a link between this conference and Thatcher's United Nations speech to take place soon after. A nationalistic or patriotic ideology seems to prevail in the article. But the article also (implicitly) supports and reinforces the described international political order, or international distribution of power.

The idea that climate change can be solved by international agreements is clearly present in this article. In Dryzek's terms, we can then classify the discourse of this article as administrative rationalism, the assumption that environmental problems can be sorted by legal-political formulas.

II. Contextual analysis

Comparative-synchronic analysis

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[30] Added emphasis.

On the day McCarthy and Oakley's article appeared in the Times, 8 November 1989, the Guardian and the Independent published one article each on the Noordwijk conference: 'Greenhouse gas freeze blocked' by Paul Brown (Guardian, page 24), and 'Ministers back down on CO 2 levels' by Richard North (Independent, page 16).

The Times article contrasts very starkly with the Guardian's. A simple comparison of the headlines points to the radically opposing understandings of the role of the UK in the Netherlands meeting. Both in the headline and in the body of the article, Brown presents the UK government as a blocking force, precluding the achievement of a desirable international agreement.

Paul Brown is also attentive to the incoherences of the government. One example is the roads programme, and its consequences for greenhouse gases emissions. Another example is international action: while Thatcher is expected to advertise Britain's international role in environmental protection at the UN, Trippier opposes agreement on reducing greenhouse gases emissions. This double face of British environmental politics is further exposed with resort to Greenpeace's interpretation:

> (…) Mr Steve Elsworth, Greenpeace air pollution campaigner: 'Britain is all talk and no action. It is an internationally co-ordinated public relations exercise with no solid content in it.'
> ('Greenhouse gas freeze blocked', Paul Brown, 08.11.89)

The relation between politics and science is put into a new perspective in this article:

> Environmental groups believe that because the big industrial nations control these committees[31] and are anxious to avoid curbs on industry and car use, they are using this scientific research as an excuse for taking no action.
> (ibid.)

In the Independent, Richard North subtly promotes a conservative view of economic growth, which sees environmental regulation as a hindrance:

> Yesterday's agreement said the freeze would 'be set at levels to be considered by the International Panel on Climate Change and the Second World Climate Conference of November 1990' (...) This wording, which was brokered by David Trippier, one of Britain's junior environment ministers, matters because it allows for continued raised emissions of carbon dioxide, which most rich countries believe are necessary to their economic growth.
> ('Ministers back down on CO 2 levels', 08.11.89)

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[31] Committees of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, then chaired by Britain, the USA and the Soviet Union.

This is an ideological viewpoint that is incompatible with international agreements or treaties, and that implies his approval of the Ministers' 'backing'.

But North's coverage of the issue ends up falling into incoherent terms. On the one hand, he approves the inexistence of controls, on the other hand he acknowledges the scientific claim for reduction of emissions:

> There is a strong scientific consensus that carbon emissions need to be halved soon if the world's climate is to be given a chance to continue roughly as at present.

The analysis of the Guardian's and Indepedent's representations of the Noordwijk conference indicates that comparison - across newspapers, and across authors of articles - can be very useful because it shows that alternatives exist in the discursive construction of reality.

I should here acknowledge that the other methods of discourse analysis discussed above also entail a comparative work. However, in some cases, as we have seen, this is not facilitated by the tools of analysis. And in all cases, the potentials of comparative analysis are not as explicitly and minutely explored as I have suggested.

Historical-diachronic analysis

Let us start by looking at some of the articles that were published before the Noordwijk conference, as they spell out the prospects and expectations for the negotiations, and give us a wider picture of each newspapers' discourse on climate change. On 28.10.89, the Guardian carries an article headlined 'Bush under fire on greenhouse effect: President accused of reneging on campaign pledges', by Simon Tisdall. Tisdall points the contradictions between Bush's stated intentions and real actions - while he claimed to be the 'environment president', his policies do not match. The article conveys a strong image of in-fighting in the US administration over the greenhouse effect and the position to adopt at the Netherlands, and is quite critical of the US and of Bush's propaganda. This article helps understanding the role that the US decided to play in Noordwijk, opposing concrete commitments in the same line as the United Kingdom.

Extended analysis which cannot be fitted within the confines of this paper shows that in the months preceding November 1989 the Guardian tended to promote environmental protection and often called for a precautionary approach to climate change. This means taking action even before full scientific proof of an evil is gathered, in order to avoid that evil. This standpoint naturally leads to a critical view of Bush's

policies and of Britain's attempt to avoid specific commitments on greenhouse emissions.

On 07.11.89 the Guardian carried one article on the Noordwijk conference entitled 'Britain stalls on warming' by Paul Brown. The image of Britain blocking the Netherlands' call for limits on emissions of greenhouse gases is prevalent in this article, as it is on the one on 08.11.89 ('Greenhouse gas freeze blocked', Paul Brown). Trippier's call for scientific evidence is contrasted with the position of Dr Mostafa Tolba, executive director of the UN environment programme, who 'warned the conference': 'It is almost a virtual certainty our planet faces unprecedented climate change. In the face of catastrophic possibilities, we cannot await empirical certainty. We know enough right now to begin action.' Ideologically, this precautionary stance is profoundly different from Trippier's requirement of scientific proof, and it is clear on which side Paul Brown is. Both this article and the one on 08.11.89 also explore the inconsistencies of British policies on climate change.

Throughout time, in the late eighties, the Guardian sustained a critique of inaction in relation to climate change. This often involved a contestation of the directions taken by the British government, as well as other countries.

The Independent carried another article on the Noordwijk conference, also written by Richard North, on 07.11.89. The focus of the first article, 'US plays for time in pollution war'[32], is on the United States, which conveys the idea that this is the leader country. Like in the article published on 08.11.89, Britain's role in the Independent's narrative is minimal.

Previous coverage of climate change by the Independent indicates that this newspaper swings between the promotion of environmental values and an uncritical amplification of the government's construction of climate change. Occasionally, the Independent sounds sceptical towards environmental claims in general, and climate change in particular. The factor that explains these variations is authorship. Different journalists have different ideological perspectives in their analysis of climate change. Richard North tends to speak from a liberal standpoint, which is in general opposed to regulations of economic activity. This contributes to a better understanding of his coverage of the Noordwijk conference.

The day before the start of the conference, 05.11.89, the Times published an article entitled 'The greenhouse effect: fact or fantasy?', by Richard Palmer. The framing of the problem highlights scientific uncertainty around the greenhouse effect - 'Take 10

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[32] The expression 'pollution war', used in the headline, is sensationalist and inaccurate.

scientists and you will get 10 different answers [to questions about the future impacts of the greenhouse effect]'. In anticipation of attempts for regulations in the conference, Palmer's main argument is that there is no foundation for making 'big sacrifices' to address the problem. We are told that to reduce greenhouse gases emissions 'populations may well have to agree to lower standards of living or at least lower rates of economic growth.' This is presented as a matter of fact, as opposed to the scientific knowledge of the greenhouse effect, which is constructed as a matter of opinion.[33] The British government's position, opposing international commitments on the issue before the IPCC's reports, is seen as 'sensible'. Palmer finishes with an even more reactionary note, mistrusting of all science:

> There is just one problem. Although many more scientific reports on the greenhouse effect will have been published by [June 1990], it is unlikely that the scientists will be any nearer agreement.

The first article appearing in the Times on the Noordwijk conference was headlined 'Britain in new dispute over global warming' (Michael McCarthy, 07.11.89). Although the conflictual position of Britain in the conference is hinted in the headline, the article largely legitimises the British stance. David Trippier, the Environment Minister, gets a very positive representation with his intervention in the Netherlands being described as a 'leading role'. As we have seen, this type of representation would be taken further in the Times the following day.

Let us look in more detail at the first Times article on the Noordwijk conference. No information is provided in the Times article on the positions of the Netherlands and all the other countries that are in favour of the adoption of a limit for emissions, although such countries were the large majority at Noordwijk. This is a form of selection (meaning 'exclusion') of information to support the point being made.

The Times article ends with an emphasis on the (imagined) negative consequences of the adoption of regulations of greenhouse gases emissions.

> Industrialized nations agreeing on CO emission limits will need to undertake intensive energy efficiency campaigns and impose traffic restrictions.
> ('Britain in new dispute over global warming', Michael McCarthy, Times, 07.11.89)

Note how this article implicitly builds on the scepticism and conservantism of Palmer's article.

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[33] One should note that the relation between greenhouse gases reductions, quality of life, and economic growth are viewed by other analysts very differently from the Times depiction.

The article's quotes show Trippier dequalifying the Dutch meeting as an adequate locus for decision-making.

> 'This is not the meeting at which we should be invited to make specific binding international commitments on CO emissions. 'That was for the fora of conventions', he said, referring to the Framework Convention on the Atmosphere being drafted by the UN-sponsored Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, a group of expert scientists which reports on the greenhouse effect to the world community next year.

This strategy fits well into the plans of Margaret Thatcher and the government to constitute the United Nations as the appropriate site for decision-making on climate change. A day after the Noordwijk conference Thatcher gave a speech at the United Nations that strongly emphasized the role of the whole international community, and of the United Nations, in addressing climate change.

Further to synchronic comparison, diachronic analysis shows how ideological differences between newspapers in the representation of climate change are historically constituted.

On the other hand, analysis of the historical context of the Noordwijk conference contributes to a better understanding of the discourses of different social actors. The Noordwijk conference was the first attempt for international regulation of greenhouse emissions. However, countries like the United States and the United Kingdom were not willing to support the leadership of the Netherlands' government. Britain had an international political agenda that was not compatible with Noordwijk, as the United Nations speech of Margaret Thatcher epitomized.

Conclusions

Combining a theoretical critique with empirical work this paper has proposed a re-assessment of mainstream models of discourse analysis of media texts. We have mainly focused on the conceptual tools that researchers employ as instruments of dissection and reconstitution of texts. We have seen that each analytical tool both shows and hides certain aspects of the text, and has implications on the images we build of discourses.

In this paper, I have also advanced an alternative approach for analysing media texts. It integrates multiple tools of analysis and addresses issues such as time in discourse analysis, the discursive manipulation of reality by different social actors, and the modes of social operation of discourse. The scope of analysis in such an approach is both synchronic and diachronic. It privileges the analysis of continuity over the analysis

of the episodic. Implicitly, such an approach promotes the comprehensive analysis of the media discourse on particular issues over an extended period of time.

Like any other method, the one that I proposed generates some difficulties. Because of the preferred large scope of analysis, the dimension of materials to be analysed can be very vast. It is then unmanageable for a sole researcher to analyse each unit of analysis (typically a news article) in useful time. The approach that I have promoted above, of analysing some periods exhaustively and then focusing on 'critical discourse moments', seems a more adequate answer than random sampling or another arbitrary form of choice of texts. The analysis of those 'moments' allows for the identification of discursive turns or continued lines of argumentation at particularly important times in the social construction of an issue.

The analysis of discourse, from discursive strategies to ideological standpoints, and even the selection of certain periods as 'critical', are essentially interpretive work, which is probably not replicable in the same exact terms by other individuals. If the researcher is mainly preoccupied with issues of reliability and verifiability, discourse analysis in general, and the approach that I proposed in particular, are not the right choices.[34] But if the goal is to understand how meanings assigned through language to reality are a crucial basis for social and political (inter)action, and to look at the subtle ways in which those meanings are achieved, discourse analysis offers an important potential.

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[34] Content analysis is possibly a better option for this researcher.

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