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Norman Fairclough<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Department of Linguistics and English Language, Lancaster University, UK

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## SPECIAL FEATURE

### Critical discourse analysis and critical policy studies

Norman Fairclough\*

*Department of Linguistics and English Language, Lancaster University, UK*

This article presents the contribution that critical discourse analysis (CDA) can make to critical policy studies through comparison with two other approaches which also advocate a ‘discursive turn’ in policy studies and that have been discussed in the journal: cultural political economy (CPE), and poststructuralist discourse analysis (PDA). I suggest that there are significant differences between CDA, CPE and PDA in their view of the discursive turn, and that a version of CDA which integrates argumentation theory and analysis with CDA can add significantly to the contributions that CPE and PDA might make to policy analysis. In the Conclusion, I address a suspicion that using argumentation analysis entails a commitment to Habermasian/Rawlsian ‘deliberative democracy,’ suggesting that argumentation analysis is also not only consistent with but also necessary for Gramscian approaches to political and policy analysis, including CPE and PDA.

**Keywords:** policy; discourse; argumentation; critical discourse analysis; cultural political economy; poststructuralist discourse analysis

At the time of writing, the two most widely read papers in *Critical policy studies* were Howarth (2009) and Jessop (2009), which present approaches to policy studies from the perspectives of poststructuralist discourse theory (PDA) and cultural political economy (CPE), respectively. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) shares common ground with both: CDA and PDA are approaches to analysis of discourse each of which has drawn from the other (Fairclough 2003, Howarth and Griggs 2012), CPE incorporates a version of CDA and there has been collaboration especially between Jessop and myself over a number of years (e.g., Fairclough *et al.* 2004). All proceed from a recognition of the discursive (or semiotic or linguistic) character of policy, policy making and policy analysis which broadly aligns them with antipositivist and interpretative positions within policy studies. But there are also important differences: CDA and CPE incline to critical realism rather than post-structuralism and focus analysis on relations between discursive and material elements of social life rather than just discourse, whereas CDA differs from CPE and PDA in the standing it gives to language analysis – analysis of ‘texts’ in a comprehensive sense – within discourse analysis. Presenting the contribution that CDA can make to critical policy studies through comparison and contrast with the other two approaches seems therefore a useful thing to do. I shall also refer to Sum (2009), which is another view of the contribution of CPE to critical policy studies that has appeared in the journal. Howarth and Griggs (2012) is a more recent paper on the contribution of PDA, and I shall mainly refer to this rather than Howarth (2009). Another important connection is between the ‘argumentative turn’

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\*Email: [n.fairclough@lancaster.ac.uk](mailto:n.fairclough@lancaster.ac.uk)

in policy studies (Fischer and Forester 1993, Fischer 2003, Fischer and Gottweis 2012) and the incorporation of argumentation theory and analysis into the version of CDA developed by Fairclough and Fairclough (2012a) which I draw upon in this article.<sup>1</sup>

CDA, CPE and PDA are not however academic endeavors of the same order: CPE and PDA are respectively political-economic and political theories, whereas CDA is a theory of and methodology for analysis of discourse understood as an element or ‘moment’ of the political, political-economic and more generally social which is dialectically related to other elements/moments. Both CPE and PDA have found it useful to draw upon CDA in theorizing and analyzing discourse. CDA on the other hand has recognized that its place is within transdisciplinary critical social research, and has sought to collaborate with a number of social theories, not least CPE. So my aim in comparing CDA with CPE and PDA in this article is not to present CDA as an alternative to either; it is the more limited aim of using the comparison to highlight significant issues and differences in theorizing and analyzing discourse within areas of transdisciplinary research such as policy studies.

I shall first outline the version of CDA which I have developed in more recent work, and which is the basis for the version in Fairclough and Fairclough (2012a). I shall next discuss significant differences between CDA, CPE and PDA in their view of the semiotic or discursive ‘turn’ which they all regard as necessary in political and social theory and analysis. I shall then discuss these differences with regard to policy analysis, suggesting ways in which the version of CDA in Fairclough and Fairclough might add to the contributions which CPE and PDA might make to policy analysis. Finally, in the Conclusion, I address a suspicion that using argumentation analysis entails a commitment to Habermasian/Rawlsian ‘deliberative democracy,’ arguing that argumentation analysis is also not only consistent with but also necessary for Gramscian approaches to political and policy analysis, including CPE and PDA .

### **Critical discourse analysis**

CDA brings the critical tradition in social analysis into language studies, and contributes to critical social analysis a particular focus on discourse, and on relations between discourse and other social elements (power, ideologies, institutions, social identities etc.). Critical social analysis is normative and explanatory critique. It is normative critique: it does not simply describe existing realities but also evaluates them, assesses the extent to which they match up to values that are taken (contentiously) to be fundamental for just or decent societies (e.g., certain requisites for human well-being). It is explanatory critique: it does not simply describe and evaluate existing realities but seeks to explain them, e.g., by showing them to be effects of structures or mechanisms or forces which the analyst postulates and whose reality s/he seeks to test out (e.g., inequalities in wealth, income and access to various social goods might be explained as an effect of mechanisms and forces associated with capitalism or particular varieties of capitalism).

There is a long tradition within critical social analysis, evident for instance in Marx (Marsden 1999, Fairclough and Graham 2002), of viewing social reality as ‘conceptually mediated’ as we might put it – meaning that there are no social events or practices without representations, construals, conceptualizations or theories of them; or to put it differently, that social realities have a reflexive character, i.e., how people see, represent, interpret and conceptualize them is a part of these realities. So the ‘objects’ of critical social analysis are, we might say, ‘material-semiotic’ (Jessop 2004), i.e., simultaneously material and semiotic in character, and a central concern is with relations between the material and the semiotic (or ‘discourse’), which I see as dialectical relations (Fairclough 2001, 2006). Critical social

analysis consequently has an interdisciplinary character, since the nature of its ‘objects’ requires it to bring together disciplines whose primary concern is with material facets of social realities and disciplines whose primary concern is with semiotic facets. It has, more specifically, a ‘transdisciplinary’ character, in that dialogue across disciplines is seen as the source for the theoretical and methodological development of each of them (see Jessop and Sum 2001 on ‘postdisciplinary or ‘transdisciplinary’ research). In these terms, CDA contributes a semiotic emphasis and ‘point of entry’ into transdisciplinary critical social analysis (Fairclough 2009).

### One version of CDA

This section gives a schematic overview of the main categories and relations in the version of CDA I have more recently worked with.

*Discourse* is used in various senses including (1) meaning making as an element of the social process, (2) the language associated with a particular social field or practice (e.g., ‘political discourse’), and (3) a way of construing aspects of the world associated with a particular social perspective (e.g., a ‘neoliberal discourse of globalization’). It is easy to confuse them, so I prefer to use *semiosis* for the first, most abstract and general sense (Fairclough *et al.* 2004), which has the further advantage of suggesting that discourse analysis is concerned with various ‘semiotic modalities’ (visual images, ‘body language’ etc.) apart from language.

Semiosis is viewed as an element of the social process which is *dialectically* related to others. Elements are dialectically related where they are different but not ‘discrete,’ not fully separate; each ‘internalizes’ the others without being reducible to them (Harvey 1996). So social relations, power, institutions and cultural practices are in part semiotic, they internalize semiosis without being reducible to it. This means that although we should analyze e.g., political institutions or business organizations as partly semiotic objects, it would be a mistake to treat them as purely semiotic. It is important to ask the key question: what is the relationship between semiotic and other elements? CDA focuses not just upon semiosis as such, but on *relations between semiotic and other social elements*. The nature of this relationship varies between institutions and organizations, and according to time and place, and it needs to be established through analysis.

The social process can be seen as the interplay between three levels of social reality: social *structures, practices* and *events* (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999). Social practices ‘mediate’ the relationship between general and abstract social structures and particular and concrete social events; social fields, institutions and organizations are constituted as networks of social practices. In this approach to CDA, analysis is focused on two dialectical relations: between structures (especially social practices as a more concrete level of structuring) and events (or: structure and action, structure and strategy); and, within each, between semiotic and other elements. There are three major ways in which semiosis relates to other elements of social practices and of social events: as a facet of action, in the construal (representation) of aspects of the world and in the constitution of identities. And there are three semiotic (discourse-analytical) categories corresponding to these: genre, discourse and style.

*Genres* are semiotic ways of acting and interacting such as job interviews, editorials in newspapers or advertisements on TV. Part of doing a job, or running a country, is interacting in certain ways, and such activities have distinctive sets of genres associated with them. *Discourses* are semiotic ways of construing aspects of the world (physical, social or mental), which can generally be identified with different positions or perspectives

of different groups of social actors. For instance, the lives of poor people are construed not only through different discourses associated with different social practices (in politics, medicine, social welfare, academic sociology) but also through different discourses in each which correspond to differences of position and perspective. *Styles* are identities, or 'ways of being,' in their semiotic aspect – for instance, being a 'manager' in a currently fashionable way in business or in universities is partly a matter of developing the right semiotic style.

The semiotic dimension of (networks of) social practices which constitute social fields, institutions, organizations etc. is *orders of discourse*; the semiotic dimension of events is *texts* (Fairclough 1992). Orders of discourse are particular configurations of different genres, different discourses and different styles. An order of discourse is a social structuring of semiotic difference, a particular social ordering of relationships between different ways of making meaning – different genres, discourses and styles. So for example the network of social practices that constitutes the field of education, or a particular educational organization such as a university, is constituted semiotically as an order of discourse. Texts are to be understood in an inclusive sense, not only written texts but also e.g., conversations and interviews, as well as the 'multimodal' texts (mixing language, visual images and sound) of television and the internet. Some events consist almost entirely of texts (e.g., a lecture or an interview); in others texts have a relatively small part (e.g., a game of football).

Discourses that originate in some particular social field or institution (e.g., neoliberal economic discourse, which originated within academic economics and business) may be *recontextualized* in other others (e.g., in the political field or the field of education). Recontextualization has an ambivalent character (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999): it can be seen as 'colonization' of one field or institution by another, and also as 'appropriation' of 'external' discourses, often incorporation of discourses into strategies pursued by particular groups of agents within the recontextualizing field.

Discourses may under certain conditions be *operationalized*, 'put into practice,' a dialectical process with three aspects: they may be *enacted* as new ways of (inter)acting, they may be *inculcated* as new ways of being (identities) and they may be physically *materialized*, e.g., as new ways of organizing space. Enactment and inculcation may themselves take semiotic forms: a new management discourse (e.g., the discourse of marketized 'new public management') may be enacted as management procedures that include new genres of interaction between managers and workers, or it may be inculcated as identities that semiotically include the styles of the new type of managers. The modality ('may') is important: processes of operationalization are possibilities, because they are not necessary but contingent, and may or may not take place depending upon a range of factors and conditions, both material and semiotic (Fairclough *et al.* 2004).

CDA oscillates between a focus on *structures* (especially the more concrete level of structuring of *social practices*) and a focus on *strategies*, on shifts in the structuring of semiotic difference (orders of discourse) and on strategies of social agents that manifest themselves in texts. In both perspectives, a central concern is with shifting relations between genres, between discourses, between styles and between genres, discourses and styles: change in social structuring of relations between them which achieves relative permanence and stability in orders of discourse, and the ongoing working of relations between them in texts. The term *interdiscursivity* is reserved for the latter: the interdiscursivity of a text is a part of its intertextuality (Fairclough 1992), a question of which genres, discourses and styles it draws upon, and how it works them into particular articulations. Textual analysis also includes linguistic analysis (and analysis where appropriate of other semiotic modes), and these features of texts can be seen as realizing their interdiscursive features.

### CDA, CPE and PDA

CDA, CPE and PDA have a great deal in common, as I indicated earlier. They all take the view that political, political-economic and more generally social events, processes and changes involve semiosis (language) in combination or articulation with objects, actions, agents, practices and structures, and that study and analysis of social processes and changes therefore requires a semiotic or discursive ‘turn’ in political, political-economic and social theory and analysis. However, there are also significant differences between them. From the perspective of CDA in particular, the ways in which the discursive ‘turn’ is taken in CPE and PDA are in various and different respects open to question.

CDA, CPE and PDA differ in their understanding of what a discourse is, and consequently in their view of and analytical treatment of the relationship between semiotic and extrasemiotic elements. The major divide here is between PDA on the one hand, and CDA and CPE on the other. For PDA, ‘language, actions and objects are intertwined’ in a discourse; the ‘scope of discourse theory’ is extended ‘beyond the analysis of “text and talk in contexts” to social actions and political practices, so that all objects and social practices are objects and practices of discourse’ (Howarth and Griggs 2012, p. 308). For CDA (and CPE), by contrast, a discourse is just the language, or semiotic, element. CDA is like PDA (and CPE) concerned with articulations of language, actions and objects, but it sees them as articulated in ‘practices’: it uses ‘practices’ broadly in the way that PDA uses ‘discourses.’ This may seem to be merely a terminological difference, but there is more at stake. Howarth and Griggs (p. 307) cite Gottweis’s observation (2003, p. 249) that ‘social, political or natural phenomena and, inseparately from them, their meanings, are constantly moving, changing and shifting in various directions.’ I would only accept this with the proviso that movement of phenomena and movement of meaning are separate though interconnected. It is crucial to be able to analyze shifting relations between semiotic and extrasemiotic (material) elements of practices such as new public management (one of Howarth and Griggs’ examples), the bringing of semiotic and extrasemiotic elements into shifting articulations. In CDA this is done by analyzing relations between discourses (as well as genres and styles) and nonsemiotic elements of practices, but it is not clear how this could be done in PDA. The difference on this issue between PDA on the one hand and CDA and CPE on the other is part of the difference between the poststructuralism of the former and the critical realism of the latter (Fairclough *et al.* 2004).

For example, a widespread response to the current crisis by governments has been to advocate policies to increase the ‘competitiveness’ of their countries. The discourse of ‘competitiveness’ in this case has been criticized for illegitimately extending the microeconomic concept of the competitiveness of, for instance, products or companies to whole nations or multinational entities (e.g., the EU). Krugman (1994, p. 30), for instance, asserts that ‘it is simply not the case that the world’s leading nations are to any important degree in economic competition with each other, or that any of their major economic problems can be attributed to failures to compete on world markets’ (he also takes up the issue for the current period in Krugman 2011), and his critique focuses on several aspects of the relationship between the discourse and the policy actions and objects it is articulated with. For instance, he notes (1994, p. 40) that

many sensible people have imagined that they can appropriate the rhetoric of competitiveness on behalf of desirable economic policies. Suppose that you believe that the United States needs to raise its savings rate and improve its educational system in order to raise its productivity. Even if you know that the benefits of higher productivity have nothing to do with international competition, why not describe this as a policy to enhance competitiveness if you think that it can widen your audience?

He also notes (1994, p. 41) the dangers that can follow from embracing ‘competitiveness’ as (in my terms) a policy discourse and imaginary:

First, it could result in the wasteful spending of government money supposedly to enhance . . . competitiveness. Second, it could lead to protectionism and trade wars. Finally, and most important, it could result in bad public policy on a spectrum of important issues.

An example of the latter would be allowing the commitment to ‘competitiveness’ to color formation of policy on an apparently unrelated issue such as health care reform; Krugman notes that health care experts were virtually absent from the task force set up to deal with this reform under the Clinton administration. These examples indicate the importance of being able to analyze relations between semiotic and extrasemiotic elements.

CDA, CPE and PDA also differ in their understanding of the character of semiosis, specifically over whether semiosis is regarded as having a multifaceted or ‘multifunctional’ character. Here the major division is between CDA and the other two. Discourse analysis within the social sciences commonly reduces ‘discourse’ – what I am calling ‘semiosis’ – to discourses and thus to representations, and it is mainly discourse analysts with backgrounds in Linguistics that view semiosis as having multiple dimensions, as I have above: action and identity as well as representations, genres and styles as well as discourses. This is an important distinction between (this version of) CDA and other approaches to discourse analysis.<sup>2</sup> It has consequences for what is seen as semiotic and what is seen as extrasemiotic, and therefore for one’s view of the relationship between semiotic and extrasemiotic elements of social processes, and one’s view of the nature of discourse analysis and of its relationship to other forms of social analysis. In particular, taking action (and social interaction) to have a semiotic character entails a view of the semiotic as text and of discourse analysis as analysis of texts in their syntagmatic as well paradigmatic aspect, as ‘chain’ as well as ‘choice,’ articulating choices between different discourses with the chain relations associated with particular genres. Social action and interaction are seen as articulating semiotic and extrasemiotic elements, and rather than limiting discourse analysis to identifying choices amongst available discourses in abstraction from concrete (inter)actional events, such choices are seen as part of such events made in the course of particular (inter)actions and in pursuit of purposes associated with them. One consequence is a view of semiosis which sees action as primary and representation as subsumed within it, and correspondingly sees genres as primary and discourses (as well as styles) as subsumed within them.

A related difference between CDA and CPE is over dialectical relations between semiosis and extrasemiotic elements. Jessop (2009, p. 338) differentiates ‘two forms of complexity reduction’ which ‘work to transform meaningless and unstructured complexity into meaningful and structured complexity,’ semiosis and structuration, which are respectively ‘semiotic and structural aspects of complexity reduction,’ and which are ‘dialectically related.’ CDA also sees the relation between semiosis and structures as dialectical, but conceives the relation in a different way that is inconsistent with a simple differentiation between semiosis and structuration. The structuration of social interactions is not for CDA simply ‘extrasemiotic’ – it is partly semiotic. This relates to the CDA category of ‘operationalization’ discussed above. Discourses can – contingently – be operationalized: they can be enacted as ways of (inter)acting (social practices) and inculcated as ways of being (identities) as well as materialized (e.g., as ways of organizing space, in architectural forms). Crucially, enactment and inculcation may themselves take semiotic forms: a new management discourse (e.g., the discourse of ‘new public management’ that

has invaded public sector fields like education and health) may be enacted as management procedures, which include new genres of interaction between managers and workers, or it may be inculcated as identities that semiotically include the styles of the new type of managers. Moreover, technologies in the CPE understanding, which are social practices of a particular sort (Jessop 2009, p. 339), are, like structuration, partly semiotic in character.<sup>3</sup> The particularly important point here is that the emergence of genres and the selection, institutionalization and normalization of particular genres as the dominant and conventional ones is itself a significant part of the structuration of social interaction.

Policy making is widely recognized as having a ‘problem–solution’ character which is addressed by CDA, CPE and PDA in different ways and with different emphases. One notable contrast between the papers by Jessop (2009) and by Howarth (2009) (and Howarth and Griggs 2012) in the journal is that whereas the former focuses upon ‘imaginaries’ (which we can see as CPE’s distinctive take on solutions), the latter focuses upon ‘problematization’ (see also Bacchi 2012). Though both do in different ways recognize the pairing of problems and solutions (particular imaginaries are associated with particular interpretations and narratives of crisis, particular problematizations favor certain solutions and preclude others), the *relationship* between problem and solution is not a focal concern in either. Yet there are good grounds for claiming that this is a focal relationship in policy making and debate, and for developing models for analyzing them that accentuate it. Taking this point together with the claim above that discourse analysis centers upon syntagmatic relations in texts and genre, an approach to policy analysis that incorporates critical analysis of discourse should focus upon generic features of policy discourse appertaining to the relationship between problems and solutions. In line with the ‘argumentative turn’ in policy analysis (Fischer and Forester 1993, Fischer and Gottweis 2012), I would suggest that this entails focusing upon forms of argumentation, specifically those with a problem–solution character, a position that is developed in Fairclough and Fairclough (2012a) where CDA is integrated with the analysis of ‘practical argumentation.’<sup>4</sup> Moreover, this move is indicated by the CPE emphasis on the interdependency between semiosis and structuration: genres of practical argumentation are part of the structuration of social interaction, and part of the ‘the conditions that make semiosis possible and secure its effectivity’ (Jessop 2009, p. 338). Note that what Jessop refers to as the effectivity of ‘semiosis’ is specifically the effectivity of discourses/construals.

Focusing on practical argumentation has the advantage of bringing to bear upon policy analysis a coherent approach to problem–solution relations that accommodates relevant aspects of both CPE and PDA approaches and may enhance their analytical force. Practical arguments in Fairclough and Fairclough (2012a) include: a Value premise, a Goal premise, a Circumstantial premise, a Means–Goal premise and a Claim (or conclusion). Existing states of affairs are represented, and problematized in particular ways, in the Circumstantial premise. Possible and desirable alternative future states of affairs are construed in the Goal premise, in accordance with representations in the Circumstantial premise and with underlying values and concerns (Value premise). The Means–Goal premise has a conditional form: if a course of action A is pursued, it will or is likely to take us from the existing problematic state of affairs C to the desirable future one G in accordance with values V. The Claim advocates pursuing a particular course of action. Problems (problematizations) are associated with the Circumstantial premise. The treatment of solutions is more complex. The goals (Goal premise) are advanced as solutions in the sense of future states of affairs that can and should replace existing states of affairs. But goals are advanced not only in the light of problematizations of existing states of affairs but also of sets of values and concerns – the view that, once a particular problematization is accepted, a range of compatible



solutions and the exclusion of incompatible ones simply follows, ignores the significance of values not only for how circumstances are problematized but also for what solutions are advocated. The means are also part of the solution that may serve the achievement of the goal, but agents often pursue complex series of goals in which the achievement of one goal is a means of achieving further goals and in which achieved goals become parts of the circumstances in further arguments. We argue in Fairclough and Fairclough (2012a) that integration of CPE categories into a schema for practical argumentation can give them greater analytical force: a ‘strategy’ is on our account a plan of action for achieving a goal through potentially highly complex chains of means–goals–circumstances relations; ‘imaginaries’ are goals associated with Goal premises.<sup>5</sup>

There are differences between CDA, CPE and PDA over the object and scope of analysis and the nature of analysis. Jessop (2009) contrasts the tendency of discourse analysis to ‘focus on specific texts in particular contexts’ with the need to address the relationship between semiotic and extrasemiotic factors in the variation, selection and retention of imaginaries and associated material practices. But this conflates two issues: the need to deal with the relationship between semiotic and extrasemiotic processes as against the tendency in some discourse analysis to focus exclusively on the former; and the need for analysis to go beyond ‘specific texts in particular contexts.’ This version of CDA has always accepted that semiotic processes need to be analyzed in tandem with extrasemiotic, though it needs to turn to external resources (notably CPE itself) to specify how this might be done. The second issue has not been satisfactorily addressed either in CDA or CPE. CDA does tend to center upon specific (bodies of) texts in particular contexts and related contexts (in particular organizations, institutions, fields etc.). CPE analysis on the other hand tends to amount to summation of longer term trends in the coevolution of semiotic and extrasemiotic processes that generalize over many social interactions. If CDA is faced with the problem of how to extrapolate from analysis of particular events and interactions and texts to analysis of the production, reproduction, contestation and transformation of hegemonies, CPE has the problem that its generalizations are generalizations about concrete realities which themselves are not analyzed. It is legitimate for both CDA and CPE to limit their own analytical focus and concern, but both are committed to transdisciplinary research, and within transdisciplinary research they would seem to be dependent on each other: CDA analysis needs to be framed by CPE analysis (or something similar), CPE analysis needs to be grounded in CDA analysis (or something similar) of particular social events and interactions. CDA has recognized (Fairclough 1992) that there is a need to integrate analysis of concrete interactional realities with analysis of underlying trends, arguing that the focus needs to oscillate between (changing) features of particular bodies of texts and changes in orders of discourse. But this is a schematic response to the problems of integration, and more attention is needed to the methodological problem of how to design research projects to build in this duality of focus.

Sum (2009, pp. 186, 198–199) provides two lists of questions for exploring how ‘the discursive features of capitalist social relations . . . are mutually implicated with structural features in the production of hegemony.’ Here is the first:

- (1) where do particular policy ideas and their related discursive networks originate; (2) which actors, individual and collective, get involved in the policy discursive networks that construct objects of economic governance; (3) what ideas (or knowledge brands) are selected and drawn upon to recontextualize the referents of these objects; (4) how do these ideas enter policy discourses and everyday practices; (5) how do these modes of thought discipline and/or governmentalize the organization of spaces, policies and diverse populations; (6) how do they

become part of the hegemonic logics and challenge by diverse social forces; (7) how are they challenged and negotiated to maintain unstable equilibria of compromise?

These questions point to a rich program of research, and I shall briefly discuss the forms of analysis needed to pursue them.

There are four main focuses of attention in these questions. First, the origin of policy ideas and discursive networks. Second, the selection and recontextualization of particular ideas and associated objects of economic governance, and the emergence of a semiotic order as part of the emergence of hegemonic logics. Third, its disciplining and/or governmentalizing effects. Fourth, the action of particular actors, individual and collective, in constructing and in challenging these modes of thought and objects of economic governance. In part, these questions appertain to the emergence of a semiotic order as part of a hegemonic order; in part, they appertain to the actions which go toward constructing, challenging and negotiating this structure or order. In terms of the ‘interrelated aspects’ distinguished by Jessop (see Note 5), they are focused partly on structuration and partly on agency.

To pursue the program of research indicated by these questions, it would be necessary to analyze the involvement of actors in actions in policy discursive networks that are directed to the construction of objects of economic governance (Sum’s question 2) and the involvement of actors in actions that are directed to challenging and negotiating modes of thought and objects of economic governance (question 7). A prerequisite for doing so would be a method for analyzing semiotic action, yet as I have indicated above CPE has not so far worked with such a method.

### Critical policy analysis

Like Howarth and Griggs (2012, pp. 323 ff.), CDA takes discourse analysis to be a ‘problem-driven approach’ based upon an ‘an internal relation between explanation, critique and normative evaluation’ (see the version of explanatory critique in Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999, and Fairclough and Fairclough 2012a), but it has a different view of the nature of such an approach. Howarth and Griggs formulate the ‘first analytical task’ as ‘to problematize the various problematizations of the issue under consideration, so that we can construct a viable object of research’ (p. 325). This is helpful at two levels. First, in suggesting that critique focuses upon the ‘problems’ that people face, e.g., in the current crisis. Its starting point is what various groups of people take to be problems, though these cannot be taken at face value: critique asks what the problems really are with regard to some issue, through evaluation of the various problematizations of it that currently exist, and explanations of why that issue is problematized in the ways that it is by various groups of people. Second, it is helpful in suggesting that critique is analogous to practical engagement with the problems of social life – it also problematizes, though it ‘problematizes problematizations’ in their formulation.

But CDA like CPE is committed to (critical) realism (Fairclough *et al.* 2004), which takes a different view of problematization than poststructuralism, based upon a ‘moderate constructivism’ (Sayer 2000). Poststructuralist accounts of problematization draw extensively on Foucault, but there is one account by Foucault that is consistent with our position (Foucault 1984): whereas problems are a product of problematization in thought, and are not defined by situations or contexts, problematizations are applications of thought to ‘difficulties’ that are defined by situations or contexts (and exist whether or not thought is

applied to them). Whereas problems are constructed in thought, the ‘difficulties’ they problematize are produced by material processes. An important consequence that distinguishes realist from poststructuralist positions (e.g., Bacchi 2012 as well as Howarth and Griggs 2012) is that some problematizations capture these difficulties better than others, and are so evaluated in normal social practice as well as in critique. I would add that problematization posits problems as causes of ‘difficulties,’ and is partial explanation as well as evaluation, which evaluates posited causes as ‘problems’ because they produce negative effects or consequences (‘difficulties’). In a critical perspective, problematization links negative critique to positive critique: in positing a cause of difficulties as a problem and explaining these difficulties as effects of this problem, one is identifying (in accordance, as Howarth and Griggs (2012) note, with demands and grievances) what needs to be changed, what needs a solution. A problem is simultaneously what explains difficulties and what demands solution.

We also need a clearer view of the various points and levels at which issues are problematized, and the categories and types of social actor involved. I suggest that the main distinctions are these: participants’ problematizations as part of the normal processes of social practice; social scientists’ problematizations in theorization and analysis of aspects of social life; the problematizations of social actors in politics, management and governance who seek to regulate, govern and change aspects of existing social life; the problematizations of critical social scientists, who like the latter seek to change aspects of social life, based on ‘problematizing the problematizations’ at the other three levels.

With regard to participants’ problematizations, we must recognize that normative evaluation is an inherent (if often neglected) part of normal processes of social interaction and practice (see Sayer 2011 on ‘lay normativity’), and that part of normative evaluation is identifying aspects of life and of the actions, beliefs, arguments etc. of social actors as problems, problematizing them in particular ways. Problematization is thus on one level a mundane, banal feature of social life. With regard to social scientists’ problematizations, CDA seeks to incorporate the insight in Marx’s critique of political economy as simultaneously a critique of actual political economies and of the political economists: the critique of any aspect of social life is simultaneously a critique of its actuality and of the theorizing and analysis of it by social scientists and others, with the proviso that actualities include lay normativity as just indicated. But ‘social scientists’ problematizations’ is too narrow: I include here the problematizations of various types of commentators, experts etc., which involve various types of recontextualization of social science. With regard to the problematizations of social actors in politics and governance, problematization can be seen as practical critique oriented to changing existing social life in certain ways (and linked at the political level to grievances and demands as Howarth and Griggs 2012 suggest). Critique in critical social theory and analysis finds the basis for its own transformative agendas in those of certain practical critics of existing social life within politics (those who, in obviously contentious terms, seek progressive social change), but it includes the problematizations of the latter within the scope of its explanatory critique: it problematizes them, and potentially arrives at different problematizations.

But we also need to clarify the form in which the problematizations which are problematized in critical social science present themselves to it, to specify what its own particular activity of problematization consists in (i.e., what critique consists in). Lay participants, social scientists (commentators, experts etc.) and practical critics do not simply problematize for the sake of doing so, they problematize to some end, they problematize aspects of social life which present difficulties of various sorts because they wish to resolve or cope with them. We therefore need to change Howarth and Griggs’ (2012) formulation

of the first task of critique: it is not critical analysis (problematization) of problematizations as such, but of the purposeful activities in the course and service of which and as part of which problematizations occur. In discourse analytical terms, this means critical analysis of practical argumentation: argumentation in favor of or against particular courses of action on the basis of particular problematizations of existing states of affairs (as well as particular goals and values). Note that practical argumentation on the account of Fairclough and Fairclough (2012a) includes normative evaluation of argumentation, on the part of those who participate in it as well as on the part of those who critically analyze it, which is conceived as sets of critical questions that are directed at all the elements of practical arguments (their various premises, their conclusions and the relations between them).

But it is also useful to think of critique itself as structured on the model of practical argumentation. A common view of critique is that it has ‘positive’ as well as ‘negative’ aspects, and that the former are built upon the latter; Howarth and Griggs (2012, p. 338) in fact end their paper with an observation about how ‘to move beyond “negative critique” to the generation of positive alternatives for social and political organization.’ We can view critique as advocating courses of action to transform in some particular direction whatever part of social life is in focus, on the basis of reasons drawn from its description, evaluation and explanation of that part of social life. This is we might say the logic of critique, not a claim that every piece of critique has this form. Seeing critique in this way provides a more explicit and coherent view of the relationship between negative and positive critique than one generally finds: negative critique is incorporated into the representation of the existing state of affairs in the Circumstantial premise, positive critique is incorporated into the selection of a goal (or goals) ‘imagining’ a possible and desirable new state of affairs in the Goal premise, on the basis on both the (negative critique) of the existing state of affairs (Circumstantial premise) and the values and concerns that inform and motivate the critique (Value premise), and means for achieving the goal(s) are the advocated line of action in the Claim. Critique has for CPE, PDA and CDA both a normative and an explanatory character, and modeling it on practical argumentation helps to clarify the relationship between the two. Practical argumentation as I have said includes normative evaluation through sets of critical questions, which can be taken as a model for the structuring of the normative dimension of critique. One aspect of the normative evaluation of practical argumentation relates to the explanations given for and in support of particular representations, interpretations, narratives and problematizations of existing states of affairs (in Circumstantial premises), questioning the adequacy of explanations (and in some cases the absence of explanations), but also advancing alternative explanations (drawing upon critical explanatory models in political economy and other areas), which may lead to different problematizations (negative critique) and different proposed solutions (different goals and means – positive critique). Critique can fruitfully be modeled not just on practical argumentation but also on deliberation, as an extended dialogue with lay participants, social scientists (experts, commentators etc.) and social actors in politics and governance, in which their problematizations are critically questioned as part of the critical questioning of their argumentation overall, and responded to with different arguments including different problematizations. I should add that these representations of critique are in part descriptive of what happens but mainly normative: critique does not always go beyond negative to positive critique, nor does it always engage effectively in dialogue with social actors, but I argue that this is what it should aim for.

There might be an objection, especially from CPE, that this reduces critique to argumentation about argumentation, and therefore makes it purely semiotic, excluding the dialectic between the semiotic and extrasemiotic which is a central concern for CPE and

for CDA. In response I would go back to the character of the dialectic between the semiotic and the extrasemiotic and suggest that the relation between them is itself semioticized, as we might put it. In more concrete terms: agency and strategy play a part in the selection and retention of particular interpretations of states of affairs and associated policy imaginaries and solutions, and this includes social actors thinking about, anticipating and deliberating over both semiotic and extrasemiotic factors that are germane to selection and retention, and the relations between them. This is implicit for example in a formulation in Sum (2004, p. 3):

forces seeking to establish successful hegemonic projects should analyze the strategic contexts for their actions, engage in a stepwise transformation of the structural selectivities that may obstruct and/or facilitate the realization of the project, and promote individual and collective learning on the part of potential hegemonic subjects and subaltern forces so that they will share its values and objectives.

This includes the implication that social actors must analyze existing states of affairs, anticipate possible obstacles to the successful pursuit of their strategies (structural selectivities, but also agentive selectivities, dispositions of agents toward one strategy or other, and likely consequences of certain lines of action), and act on the basis of such factors to try to preempt such obstacles and produce effects that facilitate the pursuit of their strategies. They must produce arguments for or against particular lines of action on the basis of an assessment of such factors, and critically evaluate and in some cases oppose the arguments of actors pursuing other strategies, which entails a process of deliberation in the sense of critical comparison and assessment of different arguments for different courses of action. Semiotic factors and extrasemiotic factors and the relations between them must be brought into this process of deliberation.

Of course, given that such matters are essentially uncertain, actors may be wrong about structural selectivities, agentive selectivities, consequences of lines of action and ways to preempt them. Clearly the scope of analysis must include what happens in practice (e.g., what the actual consequences of some action are) as well as actors' anticipations, and CDA therefore only contributes to transdisciplinary analysis within which an approach such as CPE is essential. But we must also recognize that this semiotic process of deliberation over extrasemiotic as well as semiotic factors may, as Sum's (2004) formulation implies, lead to action that transforms extrasemiotic as well as semiotic factors germane to the successful pursuit of strategies. It is in practical argumentation and deliberation that lines of action are advocated or rejected on the basis of a weighing of extrasemiotic as well as semiotic factors and their relations, and it would seem that analysis of variation, selection and retention and of the production and contestation of hegemony needs to give attention to the deliberation which we would argue, in an Aristotelian vein, is the necessary basis for decision and action (Fairclough and Fairclough 2012a).

I shall now seek to make these issues more concrete through a discussion of policy responses to the financial crisis, which are the focus of both Fairclough and Fairclough (2012a) and Jessop (2009). Both of these accounts address these responses in terms of the relationship between problem and solution, and this relationship is also in focus in Howarth and Griggs (2009), though neither Fairclough and Fairclough nor Jessop use the term 'problematization' (they refer to 'representations' and 'interpretations'), solutions are conceived as 'imaginaries' and policy responses by Jessop, and 'goals' and advocated lines of action as 'means' by Fairclough and Fairclough. Jessop's main concern is with how certain interpretations, and consequently certain policy responses, but not others have

been selected in diverse capitalist regimes, and with the semiotic and extrasemiotic conditions affecting selection and retention. The central contribution of CPE is theorization, description and analysis of how struggles to produce and contest hegemony (can) unfold, but it is also committed to critique of ideology and critique of domination. It involves a form of political intervention that ‘goes beyond Ideologiekritik’ by exploring ‘the semiotic and extra-semiotic mechanisms involved in selecting and consolidating the dominance and/or hegemony of some meaning systems and ideologies over others,’ offering ‘more solid foundations to understand the nature of different forms of social domination, to develop Herrschaftskritik (critique of domination), and to contribute thereby to critical policy studies’ (Jessop 2009, pp. 343–344).

On Jessop’s (2009) account, executives in leading neoliberal capitalist regimes were given power to implement exceptional measures (financial stimulus, recapitalization of banks etc.) to solve the crisis and restore ‘business as usual,’ on an interpretation of the crisis as a crisis *in* finance-led accumulation (rather than *of* finance-led accumulation, or neoliberalism, or indeed capitalism itself), which entailed a concentration of political power in the hands of economic and political elites that limited the space for democratic debate and narrowed its scope to a narrow set of policy choices (over stimulus, recapitalization, tighter regulation, limited reform of a still neoliberal international economic regime), diverting attention from the basic social relations that produced the crisis and continue to reproduce crisis tendencies (pp. 348–349). Jessop says that the idea that the crisis can be solved simply by correct policy choices and the associated veiling of crisis-inducing social relations are matters for ideology critique, and his account incorporates a critique (*Herrschaftskritik*) of the mechanisms through which the domination of a particular meaning system (the right policy choices will correct problems in finance-led accumulation and restore ‘business as usual’) and particular ideologies has been secured. He sees the return to ‘business as usual’ as only a short- to medium-term option, and discusses ‘what sort of economic imaginary is likely to shape a meaningful “post-finance led” or “post-neoliberal” macroeconomic order’ in the longer term: the Green New Deal has been ‘selected as the basis for concerted action in the late 2000s,’ what is at stake is the likelihood and form of its retention and of its translation into ‘accumulation strategies, state projects, and hegemonic visions.’ He expects that it will acquire a ‘strong neo-liberal inflection in the leading national economies.’<sup>6</sup>

CPE, PDA and CDA all develop forms of explanatory critique which can be applied in critical policy analysis, though there are significant differences between them. Jessop’s view of *Herrschaftskritik* explains social and political domination in policy formation in terms of the semiotic and extrasemiotic mechanisms that lead to particular inclusions and exclusions: the selection and retention of certain interpretations, policy solutions and imaginaries and the exclusion of others. Howarth and Griggs (2012, p.337) view ‘the challenge for critical policy studies’ as ‘to evaluate the extent of inclusion and exclusion within policy processes and the forms of antagonism that structure patterns of inclusion and exclusion.’ Although they do not discuss policy responses to the crisis, one can see how their approach could be applied to this case. It would seek to (retroductively) explain the ‘problematized phenomenon’ (for Jessop, interpreting the crisis as a crisis in finance-led accumulation and selecting the restoration of ‘business as usual’ as the solution, to the exclusion of other interpretations and solutions) in terms of the operation of ‘political and fantasmatic logics,’ where political logics account for the form of antagonism that structures such inclusions and exclusions, whereas fantasmatic logics ‘explain the way subjects are gripped’ by such discourses and ideologically ‘rendered complicit in . . . naturalizing’ such relations of domination (Howarth and Griggs 2012, p. 331). The ‘logic of a discourse captures the rules that

govern a meaningful practice, as well as the conditions that make the operation of such rules possible' (Howarth and Griggs 2012, p. 329). There is a correspondence between the two forms critique distinguished by Jessop and the two types of logic: political logics are the focus of critique of domination, fantasmatic logics are the focus of critique of ideology.

Both CPE and PDA see CDA as contributing to their projects, including their application in policy analysis, but they both underestimate the contribution that CDA can make. I have already touched upon this issue with respect to CPE above. In the case of PDA, Howarth and Griggs (2012, p. 332) view CDA as contributing ideological analysis of texts and linguistic interactions, viewing ideology as 'discursive naturalization of contingently constructed meanings and identities,' though also 'looking for unrealized possibilities for transforming the way social life is currently organized.' I shall now consider, with reference to policy responses to the crisis, what greater contribution CDA (as developed in Fairclough and Fairclough 2012a) can make and how it can accommodate important features of both CPE and PDA in ways which may add to their value for critical policy analysis.

The analysis of political responses to the crisis in Fairclough and Fairclough (2012a) covers some of the same ground as Jessop's analysis though at a different level: in analysis of a range of specific political texts. Our approach to analysis and evaluation of practical argumentation and deliberation allows us to identify extrasemiotic as well as semiotic aspects of the pairing of problems and solutions in the texts we discuss, so that we also go beyond, in Jessop's terms, 'the narrative resonance, argumentative force, or scientific merit' of the argumentation to include elements of the extrasemiotic 'selectivities' (structural, agential, technological). The central issue here is the character of our model of evaluation and of the critical questions it allows us (as well as participants in the public debates) to direct at argumentation. Our analysis and evaluation of Chancellor George Osborne's June 2010 Budget speech and October 2010 Spending Review statement in chapter 4 of Fairclough and Fairclough (2012a, pp. 135–173) provides one example that I shall draw upon below without going into the details of the analysis. See also Fairclough and Fairclough (2011).

Our approach to Osborne's speeches and more generally to the government's arguments for action is based upon the principle that a practical argument is only reasonable in so far as it can stand up to the critical questioning that occurs within deliberation (e.g., in parliamentary debate or public debate in the media). Analysis and evaluation are applied not only to Osborne's speeches but also a range of contributions to the public debate on the government's strategy in which its arguments (and Osborne's) are critically evaluated. We distinguish three ways in which practical arguments can be criticized: (1) criticism of the conclusion of the argument which seeks to reject it by arguing that pursuing the line of action advocated will have consequences that will undermine the goals or values advanced in the argument, or other goals that cannot be compromised; (2) criticism of the validity of the argument on the grounds that there are other (better) means than those advocated for achieving the goals, or indeed other goals, and that if they are added to premises the argument will no longer hold; and (3) criticism of the rational acceptability (or truth) of premises, e.g., of the way in which the existing state of affairs is represented, interpreted and problematized. These ways of criticizing practical argumentation appear in the government's own argumentation, in that of its critics, and in critique, which includes both within its scope.

In criticizing courses of action advocated in conclusions, on the grounds of their likely consequences, participants in deliberation are in effect arguing over the relationship between (the conclusions of) practical arguments and 'structural selectivities' in CPE terms. For example, in a debate on the policy of austerity hosted by the *Financial Times* in

July 2010, defenders of austerity pointed to the likely catastrophic consequences of failing to deal with the debt (loss of business confidence, a downgrade of Britain's credit rating, higher interest rates that would increase the existing debt), whereas opponents of austerity pointed to likely catastrophic consequences of premature fiscal tightening (e.g., massive unemployment, leading to more welfare spending, requiring more borrowing that would increase the existing debt). The argument between them is over the effect of extrasemiotic factors on the possible retention of the strategy of austerity, and the extrasemiotic factors in contention are structural tendencies (hence, structural selectivities).

In criticizing the validity of an argument on the grounds that there are other means than those advocated, participants are in some cases arguing that though the advocated means of austerity may be necessary to achieve the goals, including the goal of long-term growth, they are not sufficient, that for instance structural reforms to promote growth are also necessary. This again boils down to an argument over structural tendencies. In other cases, the argument is that the advocated means are neither necessary nor sufficient, for instance that austerity understood as primarily cuts in expenditure is not necessary because the alternative means of increasing taxation and tackling tax evasion and avoidance is available, or that a program of public sector investment is an alternative and superior means to austerity. In yet other cases, the argument is that the government is pursuing a strategy of austerity for ideological reasons, and that its stated goals are not its real goals (which are, e.g., a Thatcherite goal of 'rolling back the state'). This would, the argument sometimes goes, explain why the government persists with austerity in the face of evidence that this strategy is not achieving its goals, and of expert opinion which says that the growth regime it claims to be creating the conditions for (back to 'business as usual') is not sustainable. In some cases, the argument centers upon the relationship between goals, means and values, upon whether the stated goals and the means advocated are compatible with the stated values. There is a controversy over whether the government's austerity strategy is 'fair,' as they claim, whether the distribution of pain between rich and poor in cuts and taxation policies is fair, and whether the strategy and policies are merely rationalized as 'fair' whereas the motivation for them is quite different. In the latter two cases, analysis and evaluation of the government's argumentation and the argumentation in the public debate touches upon *Herrschaftskritik* in Jessop's (2009) sense, and upon agentive selectivities: the government has been able to continue repeating its arguments while largely ignoring extensive criticisms of them and counterarguments and deeper issues of crisis-inducing social relations, and continuing to receive enough support or acquiescence in parliament and in the public debate to be able to push ahead with its policies. Criticism of the government's argumentation raises questions about, in Jessop's terms, the semiotic and extrasemiotic mechanisms which may allow dominant social actors to secure the selection of a particular meaning-system. So, as in the case of structural selectivities, agentive selectivities are brought into critical evaluation of arguments within deliberation.

Criticism of the rational acceptability of premises includes the representation, interpretation and problematization of the existing state of affairs, the context of action (Circumstantial premise). In interpreting and problematizing the crisis as the state of public finance (deficit and debt) and explaining it as the result of the recklessness of the previous Labour government, rather than the failure of finance capitalism (or neoliberalism, or capitalism), the government (and Osborne) is effectively reducing the scale and scope of the crisis to that of, in Jessop's (2009) terms, a crisis *in* finance-led accumulation. This interpretation and problematization of the crisis has been consistently repeated despite criticisms in the public debate. We can say that the government draws upon a discourse that preselects a particular way of interpreting/problematising the crisis, whose persuasiveness



depends upon its ‘resonance’ – for instance, representing the crisis as ‘living beyond our means’ finds a powerful echo and response in public common sense language. In Howarth and Griggs’ terms (2012), this is a matter of the ‘fantasmatic logic’ associated with the discourse which explains how ‘subjects are gripped’ by it and its ideological character (extrapolating ‘living beyond our means’ from the household to the state contributes to naturalizing relations of domination), whereas the privileging of the antagonistic relation between Labour and Conservative is a matter of its ‘political logic.’

What then can these three ways of criticizing practical arguments contribute to CPE and PDA that goes beyond their current view of CDA’s potential contribution and could possibly add to their value for critical policy analysis?

First, CDA contributes a more satisfactory account of how discourses may have effects on social change and the production and contestation of hegemonies than is currently provided by either CPE or PDA. It does so by treating discourses (and therefore representations and interpretations) as providing premises in practical arguments and therefore as elements in the actions of social actors, rather than analyzing them in isolation from action. Discourses, as we argue in Fairclough and Fairclough (2012a, p. 241), provide external reasons for action. If a particular discourse is drawn upon in representing, interpreting and problematizing the context of action (Circumstantial premise), such as the discourse which the UK government has drawn upon, it provides an external reason (which preexists and exists outside of a particular argument) for pursuing one line of action rather than others. In so far as the argument prevails over others and informs decision making and action, social actors seek to act upon the world as it is construed in this representation/interpretation/problematization of the context of action, and their construal of the world may thereby contingently come to have constructive effects upon it. Unless we incorporate the question of the effectivity of semiosis (of discourses, of ‘construals’) in an account of agency and action, we cannot adequately account for how discourses can have such effects.

Second, CDA makes more explicit than CPE how extrasemiotic as well as semiotic factors bear upon the selection and retention of strategies and imaginaries and the production and contestation of hegemonies. I have suggested that in evaluating and criticizing practical argumentation and in developing strategies to move step-wise toward a goal (imaginary), social actors anticipate the likely consequences of particular courses of action in terms of the likely effects of extrasemiotic (as well as semiotic) factors associated with structural and agentive selectivities. Thus, relations between semiotic and extrasemiotic factors affecting the selection and retention of strategies and imaginaries are anticipated in action by social agents, which is designed to achieve the selection of particular strategies and imaginaries and prevent the selection of others. Such action is one of the factors that determine selection and retention. Though structural and agentive selectivities are ontologically distinct from agency, they are dialectically enfolded within the actions of social agents, and in being anticipated in action their effects may potentially be forestalled or offset.

Third, CDA clarifies the possible effects of problematizations on social change and the production and contestation of hegemony. This overlaps with the first point, in that difficulties are problematized in terms of particular discourses, so it is necessary to consider problematizations not in isolation, but as providing premises in practical arguments and therefore as elements of actions. In addition, problematizations are taken to be elements of problem–solution structures in practical arguments, and both states of affairs and arguments (including the problematizations which they incorporate) are problematized. Moreover, problematization is seen as a normal part of the practical argumentation

of ‘lay’ social actors, social scientists (experts, commentators), social actors in politics and governance, as well critical analysts. This approach views evaluation of arguments as critical questioning within deliberation, and problematization as a part of evaluation.<sup>7</sup> On this account, in problematizing states of affairs, social actors at each of these levels are also ‘problematizing the problematizations’ (in Howarth and Griggs’ 2012 formulation) or critically questioning the argumentation (in ours) of others, including potentially those of social actors at other levels. This applies of course to policy making: in problematizing states of affairs, social actors involved in policy debates are typically problematizing the problematizations of lay and social scientific social actors as well as those of others involved in policy debates.

Fourth, in seeing critique as a form of practical argumentation which in Howarth and Griggs’ formulation (2012, p. 335) ‘problematizes problematizations’ as part of the critical evaluation of practical arguments, our approach clarifies the ‘internal connection between explanation, critique and normative evaluation’ and the character of explanatory critique. Normative evaluation is an inherent part of practical argumentation that critique shares with lay, social scientific and political/governmental argumentation, which includes ‘the problematization of problematizations’ (in more general terms the evaluation of evaluations). One observation we made in Fairclough and Fairclough (2012a) was that the critical questions included in our (‘analyst’s’) model for critical evaluation were largely posed by participants in the public debate over the crisis, including lay participants, e.g., in readers’ comments in response in the press.<sup>8</sup> Critique differs from the other levels of (problematization and) practical argumentation in systematically developing the explanatory character of evaluation: in critically evaluating for instance problematizations of existing states of affairs, it seeks not only to show how they are problematized, but also explain why particular social actors and agencies problematize them as they do, drawing upon critical explanatory models such as that of Harvey (2010).<sup>9</sup> The explanatory character of evaluation is also evident in evaluation at other levels, but its systematic development is the distinctive feature of critique. Through such explanatory evaluation, critique on this account is able to clarify the political and ideological character of particular problematizations and practical arguments, including especially dominant ones, as Howarth and Griggs (2012, pp. 335–337) argue that it must, but it is also able to show, which their approach does not, how (in their terms) political and fantasmatic logics may contingently have constructive effects, by treating them as elements of practical arguments and deliberation that are a part of action by social agents which may contingently result in changes in social reality.

## Conclusion

There is a tendency amongst analysts to exclude analysis of argumentation from their analytical methods on the assumption that it commits those who use it to the ‘deliberative democracy’ associated especially with Habermas and Rawls, with its view of democratic politics and policy making as directed to the achievement of consensus through purely rational means. Though it is true that advocacy of an ‘argumentative turn’ in political and policy analysis has in some cases gone along with such a commitment to deliberative democracy (e.g., Fischer 2003), it is not true that employing analysis of argumentation necessarily means a commitment to deliberative democracy.<sup>10</sup> The starting point of Fairclough and Fairclough (2012a), for example, is the empirical linguistic observation that the primary genre of political discourse is argumentative, specifically practical argumentation.

What social actors engaged in political activity and in policy making and debate above all do discursively is argue practically, and, if one is concerned (both CPE and PDA are) to analyze political, political-economic and policy-making processes in a way that includes the contribution of the agency of social actors to shaping the character and outcomes of these processes, one must surely find ways of analyzing their practical argumentation. What I have sought to show in this article is that analysis of practical argumentation is not only a possible but also a necessary element of the critical policy analysis envisaged by CPE and PDA, and what this indicates is that this form of analysis is consistent with their Gramscian positions and in no way exclusively committed to Habermasian or Rawlsian positions.<sup>11</sup>

Howarth and Griggs (2012, pp. 317–318) differentiate two aspects of hegemony: a type of rule, and a practice of politics (i.e., hegemonic struggle). Both Howarth and Griggs and Jessop (2009) and Sum (2004) offer approaches to critical policy studies in the perspective of hegemonic struggle, the production and challenging of hegemony. In his account of Gramsci's historicism, Morera (1990, pp. 76–77) claims that one of its 'crucial aspects' is that 'an historical phenomenon is not fully known until its effects can be described.' For Gramsci, philosophy of praxis (Marxism) 'is not only interested in understanding the world, but also in changing it,' and the political activity of those committed to changing the world (hence engaging in hegemonic struggle) 'must be based on true descriptions and evaluations, for their attitude towards a progressive force must be very different from that towards a regressive force.' But 'the evaluation of the degree of progressiveness of a ruler or an institution must be based on the results of his or her actions or its consequences. It is the effects of the situation . . . that will indicate what kind of situation it is. And this is not a question of value, but a description of effects, a causal judgement.' This implies that political activity necessarily has a semiotic moment – it must be based on 'true descriptions' and (consequence-based) 'evaluation.'

But consequence-based evaluation would seem to be doubly present in political activity: existing states of affairs are evaluated (in Morera's 1990 terms as progressive or regressive, and if the latter as problematic and in need of change), but so too are imaginaries for possible future states of affairs that are advocated as goals, and the strategies associated with them, and both are evaluated in terms of their (actual, possible or likely) effects or consequences. This is consistent with the account of political discourse as the semiotic moment of political activity in Fairclough and Fairclough (2012a): political actors advance practical arguments for or against particular courses of action which include as reasons descriptions and evaluations of existing states of affairs (Circumstantial premises), and problematizations that posit 'difficulties' as effects or consequences of 'problems'; and political actors in the course of deliberating over what should be done critically question practical arguments that have been advanced (by themselves and others) in ways which include evaluation of advocated courses of action in terms of their possible or likely consequences. Moreover, this account shows how the consequence-based evaluations of political actors are integrated with their advocacy of and struggles over goals and imaginaries for social change as ways of solving problems that are posited in the course of evaluation, and it also indicates how this argumentative and deliberative process is itself integrated with political decisions and action.

This suggests that the semiotic moment which Morera (1990) indicates as a necessary part of political activity in his account of Gramsci's historicism is best conceived in a way that gives primacy to practical argumentation and deliberation, and that hegemonic struggle should therefore be conceived and analyzed in a way that includes this conception.

## Notes

1. Isabela Fairclough discusses the approach to argumentation in detail in a forthcoming paper in the journal. I am grateful for Isabela's comments on my paper.
2. The multifaceted character of semiosis is to an extent acknowledged within CPE (especially Sum 2004, 2009), but important consequences that I discuss here are not recognized.
3. Jessop (2009, p. 339) distinguishes four 'interrelated aspects' of the contingently possible constructive effects of 'construals': 'semiosis, agency, technologies, and structuration.' But in a CDA perspective, agency, technologies and structuration all have a partly semiotic character.
4. The proposal to focus policy analysis on practical argumentation is already established in interpretivist policy analysis (see especially Fischer 2003, 2007).
5. Isabela Fairclough will discuss in more detail the implications of our approach for CPE in a forthcoming paper.
6. I have only touched on part of Jessop's (2009) discussion of the crisis – he also, for instance, compares different capitalist regimes in terms of their interpretations of and responses to the crisis.
7. The extent of critical questioning in actual deliberation is however variable: sometimes debates are merely over means for achieving goals in existing states of affairs, sometimes debates are also over such goals and states of affairs themselves. This allows us to incorporate both the recontextualization of goals and imaginaries, means, and representations, interpretations and problematizations of states of affairs (as well as the discourses which inform them) within and between lay, social scientific and political/governmental argumentation, and the contestation of them (including 'problematization of problematizations').
8. The 'analyst's model' for critical evaluation is based upon the critical questions that social actors pose in various contexts, but it systematizes them in accordance with our particular account of the nature and structure of practical argumentation.
9. This view of critique is developed in Fairclough and Fairclough (2012b).
10. The term 'deliberation' may give rise to misunderstandings. Any practical argument that involves a 'weighing' or evaluation of reasons for or against a proposed action is deliberation. Deliberation is not necessarily democratic, not necessarily oriented to consensus, often dominated by people with power, reasons which have more to do with exercising or maintaining power often have more purchase than 'the force of the better argument' (Fairclough and Fairclough 2012a, pp. 13–15).
11. While such Gramscian positions accentuate hegemonic struggle and are opposed to a view of democratic politics as essentially directed to achieving consensus through rational means, this does not exclude a commitment to deliberative democracy as a normative ideal and desirable objective. Democratic politics includes both conflictual and cooperative elements: struggle for and against particular forms of hegemony, and the building of alliances which necessarily involves deliberation oriented to achieving consensus. One element of democratic politics is a search for forms of deliberation that can facilitate the latter which is driven by a normative ideal for deliberative democracy. What is problematic is not a view of democratic politics that includes deliberative democracy as a normative ideal; it is an ideological view that reduces democratic politics to a search for consensus.

## Notes on contributor

Norman Fairclough was Professor of Language in Social Life at Lancaster University (UK) and is now Emeritus Professor. He has published many books and papers on critical discourse analysis, including *Language and power* (1989), *Discourse and social change* (1992), (with Lilie Chouliaraki) *Discourse in late modernity*, and more recently *Analysing discourse* (2003), *Language and globalization* (2006) and (with Isabela Fairclough) *Political discourse analysis* (2012).

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