

Global capitalism and change in Higher Education: dialectics of language and practice, technology, ideology

Norman Fairclough
Lancaster University

This paper originated in an invitation, and a puzzle. The invitation was to give a plenary paper at the 2007 annual meeting of BAAL (British Association for Applied Linguistics), the puzzle was the conference theme, 'Technology, ideology and practice in Applied Linguistics'. BAAL has long been associated with a broad and inclusive understanding of Applied Linguistics, so I had no difficulty in seeing the sort of work I do as potentially relevant. The puzzle was what might have been intended, and what might be meant, by conjoining the three terms 'technology', 'ideology' and 'practice' with each other and implicitly with 'language'. I quickly gave up speculating what might have been intended, though I did at one point ask Alan Davies. In any case, what is actually made of conference themes on the day, especially broad-ranging and relatively open ones, tends to leave intended meanings behind. I began from the apparent paradox that while each of these terms (and categories) construes a particular facet of the social process, and while these four facets would seem to be genuinely different and none of them would seem to be reducible to others, they are far from being discrete, for when I think about any one of them theoretically and in terms of analysis, it would seem that each of the others sooner or later need to be brought in. Take for instance the category which would seem to have the widest purchase with respect to the social process, 'practice', which in its most general sense subsumes human 'doing' as such. Practice includes and sometimes virtually amounts to language, technologies are specialized forms of practice, and practice sometimes has an ideological character (of the four categories, 'ideology' is the only one that can be reasonably - though not in my view rightly - dispensed with).

My aim in the paper is to discuss how relations between these categories can be theoretically conceived and analytically addressed within the approach to *critical discourse analysis* which I have been developing in recent research (Fairclough 2003, 2006), whose objective is to use critical discourse analysis to give a semiotic focus in social research. 'Semiosis' means here signification or meaning-making as a facet of the social process. 'Discourse' is generally used in this sense as well as others, and it is partly to avoid common confusions between different senses of 'discourse' that I prefer 'semiosis'. The general epistemological stance can be characterized as *methodological relationalism* (Jessop forthcoming), which is based upon the ontological claim that relations are prior to objects or individuals (Harvey 1996), and there is a more specific commitment to a *critical realist* philosophy of social science (Fairclough, Jessop &

Sayer 2004). The focus for theory and analysis is not on semiosis as such, but on the relations between semiotic and other elements of the social process, including semiotic dimensions of the social construction of social life. These relations are viewed as *dialectical*, which allows us to address the apparent paradox I referred to above. Ontologically, the social process is conceived as relations between different but non-discrete 'moments' which 'internalize' other moments (a dialectical relation, Harvey 2006). Methodologically, research is necessarily interdisciplinary, and one of a number of possible 'points of entry' into interdisciplinary research is the *semiotic point of entry*, which focuses on dialectical relations between semiotic and other moments (cognitive and psychological, social and institutional, and material). I shall approach the question of dialectical relations between semiosis, practice, technology and ideology historically, discussing these relations first in transhistorical terms, then in relation to modern societies, and finally in relation to contemporary societies. To concretize and particularize a rather abstract theoretical presentation, I refer in the final part of the paper to dialectical relations between semiosis, practice, technology and ideology in contemporary changes in Higher Education (HE), with Britain particularly in mind, although contemporary trajectories of change clearly have a partly transnational character.

The paper in outline proceeds as follows. First, I give an initial illustration of the direction I am taking in the form of comments on an extract from Rose (1999), dealing with 'enterprise' in Britain in the 1980s. Second, I offer initial working understandings of the key categories: practice, technology, ideology. Third, I give a transhistorical account of 'the dialectics of discourse' (Harvey 1996), dialectical relations between semiosis and other social elements. I then turn (fourth) to modern societies, discussing first *cultural political economy* as one appropriate interdisciplinary methodology for addressing the matters at issue, then the dialectics of semiosis and practice, technology and ideology in modern societies. I then move (fifth) to a discussion of contemporary social formations particularly in terms of *global capitalism* as a way into to my (necessarily somewhat schematic) analysis of the dialectics of semiosis, practice, technology and ideology in recent changes in HE.

Initial illustration

To give a preliminary indication of how I will approach these dialectical relations, let me briefly comment on a text which I think can be fruitfully interpreted in terms of (or 'translated' into) the position which I shall develop below, a short extract from Rose (1999) in which he discusses 'enterprise' in Britain in the 1980s:

the notion of enterprise underpinned an abstract political critique of bureaucracy .. but was also translated into a variety of specific strategies for reforming economic policy ... reorganizing

hospitals and universities, transforming the pedagogic programmes of schools.

Translation links the general to the particular, links one place to another, shifts a way of thinking from a political centre ... to a multitude of workplaces, hospital wards, classrooms ... Thus national programmes of government can render themselves consonant with the proliferation of procedures for the conduct of conduct at a molecular level across a territory.

First, the 'notion of enterprise' is in semiotic terms a *discourse*, and the semiotic moment of a general *strategy* for social change which is 'translated' into the 'specific strategies' Rose refers to. Second, although Rose does not go into the question, this discourse might I think be shown through analysis to be an *ideological* discourse, understanding ideology in the way I propose below. Thirdly, Rose's 'translation' conflates two categories of critical discourse analysis (Fairclough 2003, 2006): *recontextualization* (of discourses) in diverse social *fields* (eg work, health, education, Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992) and at diverse *scales* (Jessop 2002) of social action (national, local, global etc), and *operationalization* of discourses ('putting them into practice') in diverse social *practices*. Fourthly, changed practices are constituted through *technologies* including the *human technologies* which Rose himself discusses, in his terms 'procedures for the conduct of conduct ... imbued with aspirations for the shaping of conduct'. I have taken liberties with Rose's text, but while my own 'translation' goes against the letter of his analysis I don't think it travesties the spirit.

Practice, technology and ideology

I understand practice as *social practice* broadly in Wenger's sense (1998): 'The concept of practice connotes doing, but not just doing in and of itself. It is doing in a historical and social context that gives structure and meaning to what we do ... practice is always social practice.' There is a common ambivalence associated with practice which can be seen as implicit here: it is all the diverse concrete instances of doing, but also socially constituted and sometimes institutionalized ways of doing, and the former are conditioned (though not determined) by the latter. Furthermore, practice can be seen as a level of the social process which is neither as abstract as structure nor as concrete as action/events, which mediates the relationship between structure and action/events. There are various modes of practice, including 'lay' or 'lifeworld' practice, professional and expert practice, and theoretical practice (Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999). Semiosis is a moment of practice: doing and ways of doing are partly semiotic, and practice is reflexive – people do, and they construe (including theorize) what they do.

Technology 'originated as prosthetic aids for the human organs or as physiological systems whose function is to receive data or condition the context.

They follow a principle of optimal performance: maximising output and minimizing input. Technology is therefore a game pertaining to ... 'efficiency' (Lyotard 1984). A definition appropriate for modern societies is 'use of scientific knowledge to specify ways of doing things in a *reproducible* manner' (Brooks 1971, Castells 2000), with the proviso that technology has only been properly science-based since the mid 19 century. Contemporary technologies include of course ICTs (print, radio, TV, internet) but also increasingly 'human technologies' 'technologies of governance' (Rose 1999), 'social technologies'. A social technology 'has its origins in the social sciences, and although it may incorporate some material artifacts such as computers, ultimately its purpose is to produce changes in human behaviour; in the case of clinical budgeting' (the concern of their paper) 'the behaviour of clinicians' (Pinch, Ashmore & Mulkay 1997). Or *audited self-assessment* in quality assurance systems (in for instance HE).

Thompson (1984) glosses *ideology* as 'meaning in the service of power', in my terms a dialectical relation between semiosis and relations of domination. In viewing ideology as an aspect or modality of power relations, this belongs broadly in the family of critical views of ideology, as opposed to non-critical and often relativist views (Eagleton 1991). Ideology is a historical category specifically applying to class societies and associated with their need for legitimacy (Habermas 1976). I shall give a somewhat fuller critical account of ideology below in discussing modern societies. We can say (indeed, confess) that ideology is much used in a 'lazy' way, but claims about ideology actually need to be supported through complex analysis.

Transhistorical formulation of 'the dialectics of discourse'

What Harvey (2006) calls the 'dialectics of discourse', dialectical relations between semiosis and other elements or moments of the social process, is a transhistorical aspect of human societies, ie not tied to any specific historical epoch. We might formulate it in a very general way as follows:

- *Semiosis*, *social practice* and *materiality* are different moments of the social process
- Dialectical relations obtain between these moments, which are different but not discrete, which internalize and are internalized in each other

This abstract trans-historical formulation needs to be elaborated in specific ways for different and historically specific social formations.

Social practice subsumes social (inter)action in all its historically and spatially variable forms, and the moments differentiated by Harvey (1996):

- Social relations
- Power
- Beliefs/values/attitudes
- Institutions/rituals

Social practice internalizes material moments (eg in dialectical relations between power and property, institutions/rituals and tools, techniques, technologies), and semiotic moments (eg in dialectical relations between beliefs and discourses, institutions and genres, power and ideologies).

Semiosis is meaning-making, drawing on semiotic systems (languages, orders of discourse, codes for visual semiosis etc). It internalizes material moments, though in complex ways which cannot be reduced to crude theories of 'reflection'. For instance, in the face of the proliferation of discourses, it would seem that particular lexicons (lexical aspects of particular discourses) will tend to be selected and retained (whereas others are not) for their 'practical adequacy' (Sayer 2000) in so far as they are shaped by the material world, non-deterministically but also non-arbitrarily related to it, ie in so far as they construe it in practically adequate ways (such that, for instance, acting on the basis of them leads to outcomes they would seem to predict). Semiosis also internalizes social moments: what are identified in critical discourse analysis as 'orders of discourse' (Fairclough 1992, 2003, 2006) can be understood as forms of the social structuring of semiotic variation.

Finally with respect to *materiality*, we may say that the material world internalizes social practice and semiosis – it is in part socially and semiotically constituted.

Modern societies: Methodology

I shall begin my discussion of modern societies by briefly describing one framework (by no means the only available or conceivable one) which I have found useful for interdisciplinary research: *cultural political economy* (CPE, Jessop & Sum 2001, Jessop 2004, Fairclough 2006). This is appropriate for researching modern (and contemporary) societies, for instance in its capacity to deal with the separation out of economic, political, social and cultural systems, fields and institutions, and the complex interconnections between them.

The version of CPE which I have used, developed by colleagues in Sociology and Politics at Lancaster University, is a synthesis of three main elements (Jessop 2004), which I shall just name without going into: a 'regulation approach' to political economy, a Gramscian state theory, and critical discourse analysis. It builds upon but goes beyond older forms of political economy through researching economies as not only politically and socially but also culturally and semiotically conditioned and embedded. The 'cultural turn' in political economy is presented by Jessop as ontological as well as methodological: for instance, economic 'objects' (an example would be the now widely heralded 'knowledge-based economy') are regarded as having a semiotic character, and as constituted through and as 'economic imaginaries' (Jessop 2004, forthcoming b, Castoriadis 1975). This version of CPE incorporates Jessop's *structural-relational* approach (Jessop forthcoming a) with its

focus on relations between structures and strategies, both of which have semiotic dimensions. Thus discourses and narratives are an irreducible moment of strategies, which are necessarily selective and reductive with respect to the extreme complexity of, for instance, real economies – hence the view that economic strategies semiotically incorporate economic imaginaries.

A distinction is necessary between the semiotic *construal* and *construction* of aspects of the world (Sayer 2000): not all construals have constructive effects, and whether or not they do depends upon sets of conditions some of which are non-semiotic. Semiosis is viewed as both causally effective (subject to such conditions) and meaningful, though this requires a 'non-Humean' view of causality which differentiates it from regularity (Fairclough, Jessop & Sayer 2004). The contingency of constructive effect of semiosis is addressed in terms of the *variation, selection, retention* of discourses (Jessop 2004): discourses proliferate (vary), some are (eg institutionally) selected (subject to material, social, semiotic conditions), and some are retained through processes of *recontextualization* and *operationalization* which enable constructive effects. Recontextualization is understood as the structural and scalar dissemination of discourses, a dialectic of colonization-appropriation (Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999), operationalization as comprising the *enactment* of discourses in ways of (inter)acting (and genres), their *inculcation* in ways of being/identities (and styles), and their *materialization* in the material (physical) world. For instance, the discourse of the 'knowledge-based economy' was one of many discourses which emerged in the wake of the crisis of economic 'Fordism' as would-be imaginaries for a 'post-Fordist' economy, it has tended to be selected over others on the basis of a range of factors (the degree to which it encapsulates real emergent features of economies, its applicability to a wide range of sectors, fields, scales and differing national economies, the speed with which it has been adopted and promoted by powerful agencies and institutions), and its retention has been secured by extensive recontextualization and effective operationalization (including for instance enactment in new practices in Higher education). See Jessop forthcoming b.

Modern societies: Dialectics of practice, technology, ideology and semiosis

Anything like a full account of this complex of dialectical relations is well beyond the scope of this paper, and I shall limit myself to indicating a line of approach by commenting on a number of relations within the complex.

Practice and semiosis

Practice has a semiotic moment, dialectically related to others. At the level of concrete doing, concrete actions and events, *text* is the semiotic moment of practice, using text in an extended sense to include not only written text but also speech and the various 'multi-

modal' types of text (combining language with other semiotic modes including visual image) in print, television and internet. At the level of socially constituted ways of doing, *orders of discourse* are the semiotic moment of (networks of) social practices, for instance the network of social practices which constitutes contemporary HE. Orders of discourse themselves are constituted as relatively stable articulations of genres, of discourses, and of styles, ie semiotic ways of interacting, of construing, and of being (identity).

Practice and (networks of) social practices are moreover semiotically construed and these construals can be stabilized as ways of construing, discourses and associated semiotic imaginaries, which can contingently (subject to certain conditions) be operationalized and have constructive effects (eg construals/discourses of Higher Education as markets), and be disseminated across structural and scalar boundaries through processes of recontextualization.

Technology and society

Mumford (1934) notes that 'while technics undoubtedly owes an honest debt to capitalism, as it does likewise to war, it was nevertheless unfortunate that the machine was conditioned ... by these foreign institutions and took on characteristics that had nothing essentially to do with technical processes and the forms of work'. (Mumford 1934). Feenberg (1999) conceives the relation between technology and society as 'primary' and 'secondary instrumentalization': the technical development of a function requires abstracting it from the social process, decontextualizing it, reducing it; its use requires re-embedding it in the social process. These are conceived not as *stages* but as *moments* – thus secondary instrumentalization may be and commonly is pre-empted and pre-visionsed in primary instrumentalization. The general position is methodological relationalism: social analysis is analysis of relational complexes, and analytically isolable elements such as technologies are always socially embedded.

A distinction needs to be drawn between the affordances and constraints attaching to technologies as such and to social codifications for technologies as they are socially embedded. For instance, both Chouliaraki (2006) and van Leeuwen (2007) identify 'semiotic regimes' or 'semiotic systems' which socially delimit the affordances and constraints of communication technologies in particular institutional settings. Chouliaraki for instance discusses the 'analytics of mediation' for television 'as a space of appearance that presents ... human suffering within particular regimes of pity' as selective appropriations of the allowances of available communication technologies, and van Leeuwen describes the repeated pattern of euphoria followed by disillusion in response to perceptions of the technical allowances and the possibilities for human well-being of for instance first radio, then internet, and of how these technical

allowances were socially reduced and controlled in the emergence of semiotic regimes.

Technology and semiosis

Technologies are in part semiotic in character, and human technologies have a strongly semiotic character. Changing communication technologies and associated semiotic regimes change semiotic affordances, potentials and constraints in ways which impact upon orders of discourse, for instance in the emergence of new genres on the internet, the changing possibilities for and characteristics of *genre chains* (Fairclough 2003) – systemically interconnected genres which for instance constitute semiotic conditions of possibility for the 'action at a distance' which has been taken as a defining feature of globalization (Giddens 1991) – the proliferation of forms of 'multi-modal' texts which combine different semiotic modes. There is a tendency within contemporary societies for the social codification of semiosis to intensify, a process I have referred to elsewhere as the 'technologization of discourse' (Fairclough 1992), the application of technical-instrumental rationality in processes of designing and redesigning semiotic 'objects', for instance interview genres in various institutional contexts, or telephone sales talk (Cameron 2000). Finally, all technologies are subject to construals and imaginaries which may contingently have constructive effects upon them as well as figuring in 'rhetorics of technology'.

Ideology, truth and power

I proposed above a critical view of ideology as a modality of power relations tied to the problem of legitimacy in class societies, and I now need to elaborate this by bringing in the question of truth and sketching out an account of legitimation. Ideologies can be understood as construals of the world which are limited in adequacy without simply being false – while they do construe *real* 'forms of appearance', they do not construe underlying or 'essential' relations which these are 'forms of appearance' of - *and* which contribute to relations of domination (Sayer 1979). Merquior (1979) argues moreover that the contentious claim that ideological construals constitute 'false consciousness' can be sustained provided that they are understood as a 'veil' which covers over for those who hold power self-interest which can be shown through analysis to inform their activities, rather than as a 'mask' which imposes on those who are subject to domination construals of the world which are at odds with their interests. On this basis, ideological analysis can contribute to elucidating how 'every established order tends to produce ... the naturalization of its own arbitrariness' (Bourdieu 1977: 164). Habermas (1987) has argued that social integration and coordination as relations of domination in modern class societies are largely secured through 'steering media' (eg money) which partly but never entirely obviate the need for legitimacy, and that where legitimacy is needed it may partly be 'engineered', but always needs to be secured to some degree in communicative action. We may say that ideologies figure in engineering legitimacy (in the

outputs of the 'public relations industry', Chomsky 2005), and may be operationalized and embedded within steering media (see discussion of 'quasi-steering media' in the next section).

Dialectics of technology + ideology

Marcuse (1968) famously argued that 'the very concept of technical reason is perhaps ideological. Not only the application of technology but technology itself is domination', and in response Habermas (1971) conceded that while 'old' ideology in traditional societies appealed to a 'central world view' (God, freedom etc), 'new' ideology in modern societies is 'technocratic consciousness', which is not a matter of technology itself being domination, but rather technocratic systems rationality colonizing the lifeworld and communicative rationality. Also claiming that it is social instrumentalizations of technologies rather than technologies per se that can be ideological, Feenberg claims that for instance 'efficiency' can be defined in purely technical terms, but in socially manifest technological systems construals of 'efficiency' have a social content and may have ideological effects, though where primary instrumentalization pre-empts secondary, technical categories per se may have an ideological character. A final point is that human technologies can be seen as operationalizing ideological discourses and so naturalizing them as what one might think of as 'quasi steering media', for instance in the procedures and habits of 'self-monitoring' which are a part of contemporary technologies of the self, and evident for instance in quality assurance systems.

Dialectics of ideology and semiosis

The claim that discourses (construals/imaginaries) may be ideological is familiar in semiotically-oriented ideological analysis, for instance within critical linguistics and critical discourse analysis (Fowler et al 1979, Fairclough 1989/2001). This corresponds to what Habermas calls 'old' ideology, and in so far as one accepts Habermas's analysis one might wonder to what extent this form of ideological analysis is really relevant for modern and contemporary societies. However, 'old' ideologies is arguably a misnomer. Does not for instance neo-liberal discourse feature an ideological 'central world view' that 'freedom' (open competition in free markets) will, given time and 'growth', transform the ancient 'grievance' of the poor against the rich, and its 'archaic' modern manifestation in 'class struggle', into 'problems' and 'challenges' which 'we' can overcome (Bourdieu 1998, Rancière 1995)? Although perhaps no longer dominant, 'old' ideology is not displaced in modern societies. With respect to 'new' ideology, we should recognize from a semiotic perspective that genres and styles may also be ideological, for instance as the semiotic moment of human technologies as quasi-steering media (eg genres and styles of the 'entrepreneurial university').

Contemporary social formations

I shall move towards contemporary change in Higher Education by way of three summary observations

about contemporary social formations. First, *global capitalism* can be seen as the currently emergent form of capitalism resulting from the latest of the periodic restructurings which have marked the history of capitalism. Global capitalism can be characterized in terms of a configuration of dominant features – it is post-Fordist, neo-liberal, globalizing, information/knowledge-based, and so forth – which however co-exist with other features. For instance, neoliberal capitalism is dominant globally, but it is associated most with certain powers (eg USA, Britain), whereas Japanese, Chinese, Indian and much of European capitalisms arguably are not predominantly neoliberal, though they do have neoliberal features which in some case are becoming more prominent. Second, contemporary social formations can productively be characterized and researched as CPE processes – roughly, changes in 'fixes' between economic forms, political forms and forms of state, and culture. Third, contemporary social formations (like all social formations) are characterized by contradictions which contingently allow of diverse developments, so it is not appropriate to view contemporary tendencies in a deterministic way, nor with the intense gloom and despondency which so often characterizes reactions to them.

In Britain and certain other countries most affected by neo-liberalism, there has been a discernible shift in the character of the state from welfare state to *competition state* (or, in Jessop's (2002) more precise formulation, Schumpeterian competition state). Part of this shift is a transformation of the relationship between the state and HE, and of HE strategy and policy (Muldergig forthcoming). Contemporary HE in Britain (for instance) can be characterized as a complex and contradictory configuration of features and tendencies with certain dominant ones (entrepreneurialism, competitiveness etc) but also others which make it open to the pursuit of diverse strategies, eg for the university as public sphere (Delanty 2001), or as a centre for 'critical being' (Barnett 1997). Moreover, within the European Union, strategies for change in HE are now being developed and pursued on a European as well as a national scale (as well as the scale of individual universities), for instance the Bologna strategy for a European Area of Higher Education (comprising a move towards the 'competition university', standardisation of quality assurance procedures, etc).

Aspects of change in Higher Education

I shall illustrate a semiotic point of entry into interdisciplinary social research on change in HE, referring specifically to two aspects of change in HE, the 'marketisation' of HE (in the 'entrepreneurial' or 'competition' university, Fairclough 1993), and 'quality assurance'. I shall treat semiotic analysis as framed within CPE and thus oriented to dialectical relations between semiosis and other elements of the changing political economy of HE (economics + governance) subsuming dialectical relations between semiosis and practice, technology, ideology. One

aspect of the semiotic moment is that key terms in construals are ambiguous, diversely interpreted and contested – eg *competition*, *competitiveness*, *enterprise*, *quality* (Barnett 1992). See the discussion of quality below.

Let me summarize focal concerns associated with pursuing a semiotic point of entry into these relations:

- ('Nodal') discourses (construals/imaginaries) of enterprise, competition, quality etc in for instance policy and strategy texts as moments of strategies (strategic *practices*) for political-economic change of HE.
- Variation in discourses and associated strategies, and (factors germane to) selection amongst them.
- Processes associated with retention of selected discourses as moments of (strategies for) political economic change: recontextualization (structural/scalar) of discourses (eg between European, national and local scales); operationalization of discourses (enactment, inculcation, materialization) in *practices*.
- 'Intrasemiotic' aspects of operationalization: enactment of discourses as genres (eg competition discourse as advertising genre), inculcation of discourses as styles (eg entrepreneurial discourse as the entrepreneurial styles of managers and 'leaders').
- The semiotic moment of *technologies* associated with the operationalization of discourses in political economic change (communication and human technologies).
- The *ideological* effects of semiosis (see Barnett 2003 on ideologies of contemporary HE: 'the entrepreneurial university', competition, quality, 'the academic community').

Marketisation of HE: strategy and discourse

Marketisation can be seen as a strategy for transforming the political economy of HE externally (through integration into the market economy) and internally (through the constitution of 'quasi-markets' in HE) with a semiotic moment – a 'Discourse' (Gee 1999) constituted as a structured nexus of discourses (eg *enterprise*, *competitiveness*, *quality*). In Britain since the 1980s (for example), a complex set of internal/external, discursive/non-discursive factors have contributed to the selection and hegemony of this strategy and Discourse over others (notably 'traditional' and '60s-democratic'). This Discourse has become dominant but it is not exclusive; it coexists with others in relations of competition, compromise etc which are evident in the hybridity of discourses associated with processes of recontextualization (such that for instance 'quality' in HE is similar to but not identical with 'quality' in manufacturing). Marketisation strategy and Discourse have been extensively recontextualized across structural and scalar boundaries. Structurally, they have been recontextualized in various public sector domains (not only HE, also for instance the Health Service). In terms of scale, they have been recontextualized at national,

local and transnational (eg EU) scales. Recontextualization is a *colonization/ appropriation dialectic* (Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999): the Discourse is liable to transformation in new contexts, wherein it becomes embroiled within existing strategic conflicts and struggles, with outcomes which cannot be fully predicted or managed (eg the recontextualization of Bologna discourse in member and candidate countries of the EU, see Wodak & Fairclough (forthcoming) for a comparison of Austria and Romania).

The Discourse of marketisation is in one moment is an 'imaginary' (or rather set of 'imaginaries') for HE. In so far as it becomes hegemonic (and, through recontextualization, hegemonic in multiple domains at multiple scales) it may be operationalized. Operationalization subsumes enactment in practices, inculcation in identities, materialization in the physical world. Market discourse is enacted in new or changed practices in HE, for instance the emergence of strategic planning, and such changed practices have a semiotic moment, ie changed genres, styles and discourses. The strategic plan for instance can be seen as a complex genre which subsumes various sub-genres (eg mission statement, tabulation of performance indicators). Changed practices also transform previously existing genres eg advertisements for academic jobs (Fairclough 1993). Market discourse is inculcated in changed identities in HE – eg those of university managers – and changed identities have a semiotic moment, changed styles. For instance the styles of managing, teaching and recruiting of staff and students have undergone changes associated with marketisation. This is however by no means a simple make-over: identities and styles in contemporary HE are hybrid, contradictory, and sometimes deeply problematic.

The operationalization of market strategy and Discourse effects changes in the political economy of HE which are also changes in technologies (on the historically close links between change in technology and in political economy, see Innis 1951, Graham 2007). Political economies are distinctive in terms of space and time, and change subsumes change in spacialization and temporality associated with technologies. Marketisation of HE is re-spatialization and re-scaling of HE – institutions operate in national, international and global markets – as well as changes in temporality (including 'speed-up', de-accentuation of duration/continuity). Re-spatialization is constituted through change in communication technologies: universities increasingly operate (advertise, teach, research, network) in markets through ICTs. The semiotic moment of change in practices associated with enactment of market Discourse is in part change in semiotic affordances, potentials and constraints associated with ICTs (eg genres associated with internet, email). Inculcation of market strategy/discourse is constituted through changed human technologies eg technologies of quality assurance. And the semiotic moment of change in practices associated with the operationalization of

market discourse is in part change in semiotic affordances etc associated with human technologies (eg genres of self-evaluation).

Discourses within 'market Discourse' may be ideological in helping engineer legitimacy. For instance, while the discourse of 'accountability' construes relations between the university and the wider society with limited adequacy (we may say that there has indeed been real failure in being accountable, and a real need to be accountable, *in a sense*), it is arguably part of a misconstrual of the essential relations of the hegemonic strategy, the interests involved and the interest-based objectives being pursued, and as such contributes to securing relations of domination. Human technologies which operationalize discourses (eg those associated with quality assurance) may be ideological as quasi steering media, reducing the need for communicative legitimation through normalizing and naturalizing procedures (eg developing and standardizing procedures and mechanisms for quality assurance). However, such solutions to legitimacy problems are prone to be fragile, and demands for communicative legitimation tend to recur.

Quality

'Quality' is a contested concept in HE. There are diverse strategies for evaluation, and diverse discourses of quality. Barnett (1992) suggests for instance that different social forces with a stake in HE tend to favour particular orientations to quality assessment – academics tend to favour peer review, the state favours performance indicators, and the market favours market judgements. 'Internal' concepts of quality which originate within HE can be differentiated from 'external' concepts which originate outside HE, and in the recent past it is 'external' concepts emanating from the state and the market which have been more influential, concepts which resonate with the marketisation of HE.

Barnett (1992) further suggests a correlation between concepts of quality and orientations to quality assurance, the interests of particular social forces, and the way in which 'higher education' is construed as the object of quality assessment. We might say that discourses of 'quality' and their operationalizations in quality assurance systems are ideological in so far as the interests and the assumptions about HE which they are associated with are suppressed, ie remain (relatively) unarticulated in rationalization and argumentation. In the case of currently dominant approaches to 'quality assurance', for instance, the view of 'higher education' which might be seen to be implicit in indicators established to measure quality, and the interests of the state in achieving control of HE through instituting continuous comparisons between universities, would seem to have remained relatively unarticulated in official rationalizations of quality assurance systems.

The dominant discourse of 'quality' is operationalized in practices of quality assessment and assurance organized as 'human technology'/'technology of governance' systems centring upon *audited self-assessment*. Metagovernance (Jessop 2002) of these systems, in the sense of the 'governance of their governance', coordinates institutional, national and trans-national (particularly European Union) scales of governance, eg the University of Lancaster, the Quality Assurance Agency for HE (QAA) and the European Quality Assurance Agency for HE (ENQA), within a new political economy of HE with changes in spacialization and temporality. Audit can itself be regarded as a form of metagovernance (Power 1994)

A semiotic point of entry might constitute its object of research (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992) as multiscale systems constituted semiotically as orders of discourse, distinctive configurations of genres, discourses and styles. Focusing specifically on genre, analysis of genre would include analysis of *genre chains* or networks (Fairclough 2003), systemically connected genres between which are constituted recontextualization relations involving habitual processes of recontextualization and transformation, both within quality assurance systems at different scales, and between them (between the systems of particular HE institutions and national systems, between national systems and trans-national systems). The main generic elements of these genre chains, repeated for instance in staff appraisal within particular universities, QAA academic review, and ENQA assessment of national quality assurance entities, are:

- Self-evaluation of assessed entity
- Discussions between assessors and assessed (and between assessors)
- Assessment report.

This generic format can be seen as operationalizing the discourse of audited self assessment, and as a case of what I referred to above as 'quasi-steering media' which can contribute to naturalizing ideologies.

Conclusion

I have argued that semiosis and other facets of the social process are different but non-discrete moments which are dialectically related. This indicates methodological relationalism, placing the emphasis in semiotic research on dialectical relations between semiosis and other moments of the social process. Cultural political economy is one framework for researching these dialectical relations in modern societies, allowing a specifically semiotic 'point of entry' within interdisciplinary social research. Within this framework I have addressed in particular dialectical relations between semiosis and practice, technology and ideology, and I have illustrated how a focus upon these relations might contribute to interdisciplinary research on recent changes in HE.

One limitation of the paper is that, in seeking to present a general approach to these dialectical relations in terms of CDA and CPE, it is high on abstraction and

low on detail. Although I have not undertaken detailed semiotic analysis (which would include textual analysis) of aspects of concrete practices in contemporary HE (eg the quality assurance systems of particular universities), the paper has such concrete analyses in view and is written in the hope that it will prove to be a useful resource for those who do undertake them.

References

- Ronald Barnett.** 1992. *Improving the University: Total Quality Care* The Society for Research into HE & Open University Press: Buckingham, UK.
- Ronald Barnett.** 1997. *Higher Education: A Critical Business* The Society for Research into HE & Open University Press: Buckingham, UK.
- Ronald Barnett.** 2003. *Beyond All Reason: Living with Ideology in the University* The Society for Research into HE & Open University Press: Buckingham, UK.
- W E Bijker & John Law** 1992 *Shaping Technology/Building Society* Cambridge: MIT Press
- Pierre Bourdieu.** 1977. *Outline of a Theory of Practice.* Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, UK.
- Pierre Bourdieu.** 1998. *Contre-feux: propos pour servir à la résistance contre l'invasion néo-libérale* Raisons d'Agir: Paris, France.
- Pierre Bourdieu & Loic Wacquant.** 1992. *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* Polity Press: Cambridge, UK.
- Deborah Cameron.** 2000. *Good to Talk? Living and Working in a Communication Culture,* Sage: London, UK.
- Manuel Castells.** 2000. *The Rise of the Network Society.* 2nd ed. Blackwell: Oxford, UK.
- Cornelius Castoriadis.** 1975. *L'institution imaginaire de la société* Éditions du Seuil: Paris, France.
- Noam Chomsky.** 2005. *Imperial Ambitions.* Hamish Hamilton: London, UK.
- Lilie Chouliaraki & Norman Fairclough.** 1999. *Discourse in Late Modernity.* Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, UK.
- Lilie Chouliaraki.** 2006. *The Spectatorship of Suffering.* Sage: London, UK.
- Gerard Delanty.** 2001. *Challenging Knowledge: the University in the Knowledge Society.* The Society for Research into HE & Open University Press: Buckingham, UK.
- Terry Eagleton.** 1991. *Ideology: an Introduction.* Verso: London, UK.
- Norman Fairclough.** 1992. *Discourse and Social Change.* Polity Press: Cambridge, UK.
- Norman Fairclough.** 1993. Critical discourse analysis and the marketization of public discourse: the universities. *Discourse & Society* 4, pp133-68.
- Norman Fairclough.** 2006. *Language and Globalization.* Routledge: London, UK.
- Norman Fairclough, Bob Jessop & Andrew Sayer.** 2004. Critical realism and semiosis. In Jonathan Joseph & John Roberts eds. *Realism, Discourse and Deconstruction.* Routledge: London, UK, pp23-42.
- Andrew Feenberg.** 1999. *Questioning Technology* Routledge: London, UK.
- Roger Fowler, Bob Hodge, Gunther Kress G & Tony Trew.** 1979. *Language and Control.* Routledge: London, UK.
- James Gee.** 1999. *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis.* Routledge: London, UK.
- Anthony Giddens.** 1991. *Modernity and Self-Identity.* Polity Press: Cambridge, UK.
- Phil Graham.** 2007. Political economy of communication: a critique. *Critical Perspectives on International Business* 3.3
- Jürgen Habermas.** 1971. Technology and science as "ideology". In *Towards a Rational Society.* Heinemann: London, UK.
- Jürgen Habermas.** 1976. *Legitimation Crisis.* Heinemann: London, UK.
- Jürgen Habermas.** 1987. *Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason. Theory of Communicative Action* vol 2. Polity Press: Cambridge, UK.
- David Harvey.** 1996. *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference.* Blackwell: Oxford, UK.
- Harold Innis.** 1951. *The Bias of Communication.* University of Toronto Press: Toronto, Canada.
- Bob Jessop.** 2002. *The Future of the Capitalist State.* Polity Press: Cambridge, UK.
- Bob Jessop.** 2004. Critical semiotic analysis and cultural political economy. *Critical Discourse Studies* 1.2, pp159-74.
- Bob Jessop.** 2007. CPE of competition, competitiveness and the competition state (paper at 2007 Cultural Political Economy workshop, Institute for Advanced Studies, Lancaster University).
- Bob Jessop.** Forthcoming a. *State Power: a Strategic-relational Approach.*
- Bob Jessop.** Forthcoming b. A cultural political economy of competitiveness and its implications for Higher Education. In Norman Fairclough, Bob Jessop & Ruth Wodak eds *Education and the Knowledge-Based Economy in Europe* Sense Publishers: Amsterdam.
- Bob Jessop & Ngai-Ling Sum.** 2001. Pre-disciplinary and post-disciplinary perspectives in political economy. *New Political Economy* 6 pp89-101.
- Jean-François Lyotard.** 1984. *The Postmodern Condition: a Report on Knowledge.* Manchester University Press: Manchester, UK.
- Herbert Marcuse.** 1968. Industrialization and capitalism in the work of Max Weber. In *Negations: Essays in Critical Theory.* Beacon Press: Boston, USA.
- J. G. Merquior.** 1979. *The Veil and the Mask: Essays on Culture and Ideology.* Routledge: London, UK.
- Jane Mulderrig.** Forthcoming. From the problem to the vision to the plan: evolving discourses of the knowledge economy in education policy. In Norman Fairclough, Bob Jessop & Ruth Wodak

-
- eds *Education and the Knowledge-Based Economy in Europe* Sense Publishers: Amsterdam.
- Louis Mumford.** 1934. *Technics and Civilization*. Routledge & Kegan Paul; London, UK.
- Trevor Pinch, Michael Ashmore & Michael Mulkay.** 1997. Technology, testing, text: clinical budgeting in the UK National Health Service. In W. Bijker & John Law eds *Shaping Technology/Building Society*. MIT Press: Cambridge Mass, USA.
- M Power.** 1994. *The Audit Explosion*. Demos: London, UK.
- Jacques Rancière.** 1995. *On the Shores of Politics*. Verso: London, UK.
- Nicholas Rose.** 1999. *The Powers of Freedom: reframing Political Thought*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK.
- Andrew Sayer.** 2000. *Realism and Social Science*. : Sage: London, UK.
- Derek Sayer.** 1979. *Marx's Method*. Harvester Press: Brighton, UK.
- John Thompson.** 1984. *Studies in the Theory of Ideology*. Polity Press: Cambridge, UK.
- Theo van Leeuwen.** 2007. Critical Discourse Analysis conference, Birmingham, June 2007.
- Etienne Wenger.** 1998 *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning and Identity*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, UK.
- Ruth Wodak & Norman Fairclough.** Forthcoming. Recontextualization of the Bologna strategy in Austria and Romania.

