(Re-)Constructing “public debates” with CLARIAH MediaSuite tools in print and audiovisual media

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Debate Research Across Media (DReAM)

• CLARIAH research pilot 2017-2018
• Testing and developing elements of the CLARIAH MediaSuite
• “How can public debates on drugs and regulation between 1945 and 1990 be researched across print and audiovisual datasets?”

<www.clariah.nl/projecten/research-pilots/dream/dream>

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research interest

• The interaction between national drug debates and drug regulation in The Netherlands between 1945 and 1990
• Access to large amount of digitized cultural heritage documents (newspaper, television, radio) “as big data”

The research is part of overarching research project The Imperative of Regulation: <www.nwo.nl/en/research-and-results/research-projects/i/46/13546.html>
The Media Suite tools offer the core functionalities needed for performing scholarly research tasks with audio-visual media and contextual collections. Tools available in this version of the Media Suite enable metadata inspection, exploratory browsing, search, visualization, and analysis (annotation support).
leveled approach

• distant reading methods (keyword search, timeline graphs & word clouds) **signpost** to relevant material for close reading

• tested/used in previous tools on the newspaper dataset (National Library of The Netherlands)*

• incorporating television and radio (Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision) → **insights from media studies can help historians to critically bridge the gap between distant and close reading of different digital media sources to reconstruct public debates**

leveled approach

- **Macro**
  - Focus: All results
  - Tool: Timeline

- **Meso**
  - Focus: Subselection (based on timeline)
  - Tool: Word cloud

- **Micro**
  - Focus: Individual results
  - Tool: Close reading
“public debates”

historical research

*careful contextualization of events that does justice to the actors involved*

media studies

*identifying discursive relations*
combined datasets as public debates

- how to combine different media into one analysis interface
- distant reading methods (textual emphasis)
- close reading environment (no textual emphasis)
analysis level / meaningful focus point

• public debates as defined by:
  _agenda setting (production history analysis)
  _what is *in* the sources (textual analysis)
  _as received by media consumers (reception research)
analysis level / meaningful focus point

• public debates as defined by:
  _agenda setting (production history analysis)
  _what is *in the sources* (textual analysis)
  _as received by media consumers (reception research)
theoretical approach

• artificial nature of public debate requires explicit theoretical approach
• historical contextualization of discursive relations or *strands*
• word clouds/frequency lists allow formulation of thematic queries:

  e.g. (xtc OR mdma OR ecsta*y) AND (acid OR house OR acidhouse OR dance)
  e.g. (xtc OR mdma OR ecsta*y) AND (politie OR inval OR laboratorium OR onderzoek)

* word cloud functionality has not been incorporated into the MediaSuite yet, but word clouds can be generated with a Jupyter notebook
conclusion

• conceptual approach to “public debates” that
  - is not aimed towards re-constructing particular debates “as they happened”
  - focuses on discursive strands and processes
  - is a result of critical reflection on the research infrastructure
thank you

further reading


DReAM
<www.clariah.nl/projecten/research-pilots/dream/dream>
<mediasuite.clariah.nl>
<vimeo.com/280716736> CLARIAH summer school 2018 video

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