Communicating anti-racism

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Introduction

“Two academics are sailing down a river in the Amazon rainforest. All of a sudden, one of them falls into the river and is attacked by a crocodile. ‘Help me!’, he screams, ‘I’m being eaten by a crocodile!’ The other academic hesitates for a moment and then replies, ‘Esteemed colleague, that can’t possibly be a crocodile. Crocodiles have a much broader snout. They also have two teeth in their lower jaw that protrude noticeably. This one does not. It might be an alligator, but I’m not sure. It might also be a caiman. We need to define the terms of the problem correctly before we can start thinking about a solution!”

Our common sense warns us about the downsides of an academic preoccupation with concepts, definitions and theories. Like the crocodile attack in the joke above, racism is generally seen as a problem that requires immediate action rather than a lengthy session of academic contemplation. However, fundamental disagreements persist about the kinds of speech, behaviour or (media) texts that should be regarded as racism and which ones should not (Augostinos & Every, 2007, Taguieff, 2001). Disagreement also persists about the kinds of action that are required to challenge racism effectively (Anthias & Lloyd, 2002; Lentin, 2004; Taguieff, 2001). Anti-racist policies and campaigns in the 1970s and 1980s have been criticized for a number of conceptual shortcomings that resulted in ineffective and at times even counterproductive practices (Gilroy, 1992; Lentin, 2004; Rattansi, 1992; Solomos & Back, 1996, Taguieff, 2001). While these shortcomings have been widely acknowledged, arguably few advances in anti-racist theory and practice have been made since (Williams, 1999). At present, therefore, an urgent need exists to develop new effective forms of anti-racist theory and practice.

In this dissertation, I will argue and demonstrate that rethinking contemporary anti-racism crucially involves a reconsideration of the role of communication. Communication is defined here as those processes through which discourse is reproduced, disseminated and challenged in society. This deliberately broad definition includes practices that range from interpersonal
conversations to mass media communications. These practices are central to the ways in which the meaning of racial, ethnic and religious difference in public and private life are created, shared and negotiated (Hall, 1997). Therefore, communication processes are a crucial factor in the reproduction of racism. By the same token, they are also essential to anti-racism and the production of ‘non-racist’ meanings of racial, ethnic and religious differences. At present, however, the role of communication in anti-racism has not been investigated empirically or theoretically in much detail.

This dissertation examines the role of communication for anti-racism in contemporary multicultural societies. It does so by investigating the content and consequences of six recent communication campaigns that explicitly or implicitly sought to challenge racism or promote the social inclusion of racial, ethnic and religious minorities. The study limits itself to communication campaigns held in the domain of popular urban culture. Two campaigns are situated in the domain of soccer (the Nike campaign ‘Stand up Speak up’ (Chapter 3) and the Dutch multicultural soccer tournament ‘the Amsterdam World Cup’ (Chapter 8)). The four other campaigns address a general urban audience through mass media entertainment (the multicultural television show ‘West Side’ (Chapters 4 and 6) or through appeals to a shared urban life and identity (the campaigns ‘We are Londoners, we are one’, ‘What are you doing for the city’ (Chapter 5) and ‘We Amsterdammers’ (Chapter 7)).

The following questions will be answered by analysing these six campaigns: First, how do audiences give meaning to the selected communication campaigns? Second, to what extent are these communication campaigns effective in the struggle against racism? Third, what can be learned from these empirical cases about the potential of communication for anti-racism?

The answers to these questions contribute to anti-racism in two ways. First, they are intended as a contribution to the further development of anti-racist theory. As was mentioned above, the criticism of anti-racist practice and theory has crystallized some time ago but little advances have been made in the development of new theoretical perspectives on anti-racism that build on and learn from these critiques (Williams, 1999). By considering the role of communication in anti-racism in specific campaigns, the chapters that follow are intended to offer a starting point in this respect. Second, this dissertation addresses the potential role of communication in both state and NGO based interventions that seek to improve intercultural tolerance and harmony in a multicultural society. Such interventions increasingly focus on citizenship, social cohesion and the integration of minority groups in social, economic and
cultural domains of society (Shukra, Back, Keith, Khan & Solomos, 2004). In so doing, the fact
that racism constitutes a serious obstacle to minority participation in each of these domains can
be overlooked (Ibid.). This dissertation investigates the ways in which racism is currently
addressed implicitly by communication campaigns that focus on citizenship, social cohesion and
integration and contrasts this with more ‘head on’ approaches to anti-racism. It assesses the anti-
racist potential of such campaigns in order to contribute to the ongoing discussions about the
ways in which state and civil society may contribute effectively and responsibly to the
development of a racially, ethnically and religiously inclusive society.

In the remainder of this introduction, I will argue that academic theory about (anti-)racism
suggests two related ways in which communication campaigns may benefit anti-racism. On the
one hand, communication may aid in the popularisation of a shared sense of community that is
inclusive of racial, ethnic and religious differences. On the other hand, communication can be
used to facilitate an ongoing democratic negotiation about the role of cultural diversity in society.
These two starting points are explained below in a number of steps. First, a definition of racism is
postulated and discussed. Next, the criticisms levelled at anti-racism are discussed in more detail.
This is followed by a synthesis of the various theoretical suggestions for new theoretical
approaches to anti-racism and the role of communication in them. The introduction ends with an
overview of the various chapters that follow.

**Defining racism: the problem and the causes**

Racism can be defined as social exclusions based on racialized constructions of racial, ethnic or
religious difference (Goldberg, 1993). This definition assumes that racism does not only concern
groups habitually defined as biologically distinct (i.e. blacks or other ‘racial’ groups). It may also
affect groups that are defined as inherently and naturally different in cultural terms (i.e. racialized
ethnic or religious minorities) (cf. Barker, 1981; Miles, 1989). These different forms of racism
are grounded in a shared assumption that certain racial, ethnic or religious groups are essentially
incompatible with others in a cultural sense (Mason, 1994). Culture is defined here as the
discourses and practices through which a society or community organizes and understands itself
(cf. Donald & Rattansi, 1993; Jaggar, 1999). Different forms of racism can be ordered along a
continuum depending on the ways in which this cultural incompatibility of groups is discursively
constructed (Rattansi, 1992). On the one end of the continuum are those forms of racism in which
this incompatibility is constructed as a biological fact. Such a construction can apply to groups
generally perceived in racialized terms such as blacks, but also to racialized ethnic or religious minorities, such as the Jews in Nazi Germany that were constructed as a distinct biological ‘race’ (Miles, 1989, St.Louis, 2005). On the other end of the continuum, racisms are found that construct this incompatibility in cultural terms (Rattansi, 1992). This involves the social exclusions faced by ethnic and national minorities because of their presumed cultural incompatibility with the dominant society. It also concerns discrimination against religious minorities that are constructed as inherently and naturally different, such as the present Muslim communities in Western Europe (Fekete, 2004).

Expanding the concept of racism to include discrimination based on notions of inherent and fixed cultural difference does not deny the different historical trajectories of these various forms of social exclusion. It leaves room for the possibility that these different forms of racism are expressed and reproduced in different ways and will affect different kinds of groups in different ways. Racism therefore does not have to be grounded in essentialist discourses of ‘race’ and its common sense ‘base grammar’, which constructs whites and blacks as essentially different in terms of rationality and sexuality (Hall, 1997; Nederveen Pieterse, 1992). It may also be grounded in naturalized and fixed constructions of ethnic or religious differences (Anthias, 1990; Barker, 1981; Gilroy, 1987; Goldberg, 1999; Rattansi, 1992; Sefa Dei, 1999). Racism may also be grounded in, for example, essentialist multicultural discourses that construct ethnic communities as mutually exclusive, internally homogeneous and determined by superficial cultural practices (cf. Jaggar, 1999). It also includes essentialist discourses that construct eastern or Muslim communities and their cultural differences as essentially different and antithetical from Western societal norms and values (Said, 1978).

Defining racism as a social exclusion implies that it can be expressed through individual (speech) acts as well as institutional policies and societal practices that limit or exclude people from civic, economic or political forms of participation. This aspect of the definition distinguishes it from others that define racism exclusively as an ideology (Miles, 1989) or a wider set of racialized discourses (Rattansi, 1992). It assumes that racism is a discursive practice that cannot be reduced to language (i.e. as some form of ideology or discourse) or to a set of specific acts that can be ‘objectively’ and acontextually identified as racist. As a discursive practice, racism is constituted by meaningful (but not necessarily intentional) exclusions. Such meaningful exclusions are based in racialized discourses about racial, ethnic or religious differences that circulate in a particular cultural context (Murji & Rattansi, 2005). When a culture contains
discourses of essentialized racial, ethnic or religious group differences, this in itself is not racist (cf. Anthias, 1990). However, it does constitute a necessary precondition for the performance of racist exclusions. Therefore, this cultural context is part of the problem of racism that needs to be addressed as well (Blokland, 2003; Mason, 1994).

The problem of racism is thus rooted in the wider social, cultural and historical contexts in which it is being expressed. In order to address racism at its root, prohibiting or challenging overt expressions of racism alone is insufficient. It also requires an engagement with those processes through which racial, ethnic and religious groups come to be regarded and treated as biologically or culturally different in an essentialist way (Miles, 1989, Williams, 1999). These processes have been referred to as ‘racialization’ (Banton, 2005; Miles, 1989; Murji & Rattansi, 2005; Rath, 1999). Racialization can be conceptualised as a historical development (Miles, 1989) as well as an everyday practice (cf. Blokland, 2003). Viewed as a historical development, the notion of racialization is used to theorize the relations between racism, power and the state. For instance, neo-Marxist scholars like Miles (1989) have argued that a racialized perception of migrant labour legitimatize their integration in the economy in an exploitative subordinate position. The notion of a hierarchy of ‘racial’ groups has therefore historically been crucial to the legitimization and development of a capitalist economy (cf. Murji & Solomos, 2005). Viewed as an everyday practice, on the other hand, racialization links expressions of racism with the everyday practices through which ‘race’ or essentialist constructions of cultural difference are reproduced and become salient in everyday life (Blokland, 2003). Through the repeated signification of ‘race’ or essentialist constructions of ethnic or religious differences as a central marker of difference, unequal social relations between racially, ethnically and religiously different groups are reproduced and legitimatised. Such a perspective is particularly helpful to understand how individuals that do not subscribe to racist ideologies nonetheless may become emotionally invested in racialized constructions of their own identity and community (Frosh, Phoenix & Pattman, 2000).

The concept of racialization suggests that historical developments and everyday social practices are crucial factors in the reproduction of racism. The problem of racism should therefore not be addressed outside of its wider socio-historical context. More specifically, it suggests that the everyday discourses and social practices of a racialized culture are crucial entry points for anti-racism. Thus, anti-racism faces the challenge of not only fighting racist exclusions
but also challenging the processes of racialization that precede them and make the meaningful performance of racism possible.

Anti-racism

While racism has always received academic attention, anti-racism has been relatively understudied (Lentin, 2004; Solomos & Back, 1996). Alastair Bonnett has remarked that anti-racism is generally assumed to be the inverse of racism, 'fit only for the platitudes of support or denouncement' (Bonnett, 2000, p.2). Like racism itself, however, anti-racism cannot be approached as a unitary or unproblematic phenomenon. Anthias and Lloyd define anti-racism as ‘a set of polycentric overlapping discourses and practices which combine a response to racism(s) with the construction of a positive project about the kind of society in which people can live together harmony and mutual respect’ (Anthias & Lloyd, 2002, p.xx). Broadly speaking, two general approaches to anti-racism can be discerned within these overlapping discourses and practices. On the one hand, anti-racism has been conceived as the struggle for equality. This approach can be called the ‘classic’ or equality based approach to anti-racism (Adler, 1999). On the other hand, anti-racism has been conceived as the struggle for the right to be different. This approach can be labelled as the ‘multicultural’ or difference based approach to anti-racism (Shukra, Back, Keith, Khan & Solomos, 2004).

The equality based approaches to anti-racism are critical of state institutions and policies as well as individual prejudices that reflect the ideological interests of the dominant class (Lentin, 2004). The notion of distinct biological ‘races’ or inherently and naturally different ethnic or religious communities is rejected as a false idea that stands in the way of recognition of the fundamental equality of all humans. The central goal of this form of anti-racism is to challenge the ways in which racialized social relations and racial prejudice are implicated in the reproduction of structural social inequalities (Rattansi, 1992). The main focus of this approach has been on challenging racist practices in housing, schooling, education, employment and immigration policy and challenging the ideology of racism through ‘race awareness trainings’ (Rattansi, 1992).

The difference based approaches to anti-racism, on the other hand, do not reject ‘race’ or racialized constructions of ethnic or religious communities. Instead, they seek to change the meaning of these social categories and the role they play in everyday life. Racism is assumed to be a matter of individual prejudices that is less related to structural inequalities than to ignorance
and irrationality (Shukra, Back, Keith, Khan & Solomos, 2004). The general solution to this
problem is to provide prejudiced individuals with a mix of knowledge about ethnic groups and
positive intergroup experiences that could produce empathy and affection. This remedy is
administered mostly through broadcasting television programmes with (positive) representations
of racial, ethnic and religious minorities as well as by organizing events and festivals that
celebrate the cultural differences of these groups (Horsti, 2005; Rattansi, 1992).

Both of these approaches have received considerable criticism within and outside
academia (Gilroy, 1992; Lentin, 2004; Rattansi, 1992; Solomos & Back, 1996; Taguieff, 2001;
Williams, 1999). Critics have argued that the political language of both forms of anti-racism
reflect an ideological perspective on racism that leads to theoretical and practical dogmatism and
inflexibility. The equality based approach has been criticised for its assumption that it is engaged
in a confrontation with a coherent racist ideology of biological inferiority. This has left it unable
to account for or engage with changing forms of racism that are increasingly couched in terms of
cultural rather than biological difference (Gilroy, 1992). Moreover, it also cannot account for the
contradictions and ambivalences that are produced by the fact that racism is a situated social
performance. For example, it is unclear how to explain or deal with white individuals who engage
in racist behaviour in one context but simultaneously have Black or Asian friends in another
(Rattansi, 1992). The notion of an ideological confrontation between anti-racism and racism
furthermore produces an unhelpful dualist conceptualisation of society as made up of anti-racists
on the one hand and the rest of the world (i.e. individuals that have not yet accepted the truth of
the anti-racist ideology) on the other (Adler, 1999). Through the opposition between the two
ideologies, people that seek slow reforms or even resist the anti-racist project altogether can come
to be seen as culturally doped or even ‘racist’. The ‘race awareness trainings’ that took place in
the UK to challenge this presumed ideology of racism have backfired and are now known for
their ‘moralistic excess’ (Gilroy, 1992). Moreover, many of the anti-racist campaigns appeared to
be so intertwined with (local) state power that they were unable to challenge those forms of
racism in which the state itself was implicated (Ibid.). These criticisms have led to a steep decline
in state based anti-racism of this kind and a switch in policy orientations towards the difference
based ‘multicultural’ approach to anti-racism in the 1980s and 1990s (Shukra, Back, Keith, Khan
& Solomos, 2004).

However, the political language of the ‘multicultural’ difference based approach to anti-
racism has also come under increasing criticism. It has been accused of merely celebrating the
superficial manifestations of culture (what Donald & Rattansi have called the 'saris, samosas and steel drum' syndrome (Donald & Rattansi, 1992)). As a result, these practices fail to engage with social, economic and political differences and inequalities (Ibid). Moreover, the discourse of multiculturalism reproduces unhelpful essentialized conceptions of ethnic groups as mutually exclusive, internally homogeneous and tightly bound communities (Jaggar, 1999; Horsti, 2005). This conceptualisation of cultural diversity has been criticized for naturalizing current group differences and assuming the cultural authority of the national majority under the banner of intercultural ‘tolerance’ (Rattansi, 1992; Shukra, Back, Keith, Khan & Solomos, 2004). As such, it obscures the ways in which current racialized relations are produced by and are conducive to the power of elites in these communities and society at large (Anthias & Lloyd, 2002; Jaggar, 1999). By celebrating group differences uncritically, such approaches risk reproducing the very social categorizations on which racism relies (Jaggar, 1999).

The criticisms of both the equality based and the difference based approach to anti-racism indicate that the conceptualisation of the anti-racist project as a whole needs to be reconsidered. Goldberg has argued that the central goal of a society free of racism is unrealistic given four centuries of racialized development (Goldberg, 1993). The ways in which such a racism-free society is imagined makes clear the main conceptual shortcomings. In the two approaches above, it would amount to a society in which either difference has become entirely irrelevant (as everyone is recognized as completely the same) or entirely unproblematic (as all difference is a cause for celebration). At best, such a perspective constitutes a naive utopia. At worst, it is a dangerously misguided excess of political correctness. According to Gilroy and others, the shortcomings of the ‘classic’ and the ‘multicultural’ approaches to anti-racism noted above are compounded by the fact that their rhetoric calls for ‘equality’ and those for ‘the right to difference’ have proven vulnerable to cooptation and abuse by new right parties seeking to play into xenophobic sentiments (Anthias & Lloyd, 2002; Gilroy, 1992; Patel, 2002; Taguieff, 2001). Furthermore, both visions imply that racism can be eradicated without addressing other forms of social exclusion and inequality such as class, gender or age. This ignores the ways in which these different forms of oppression overlap and produce complex and situated forms of social exclusion (Gilroy, 1992; Williams, 1999).
Equality and difference reconsidered

The problematic nature of the main theoretical and practical approaches of anti-racism has led Paul Gilroy to declare that the ‘end of anti-racism’ had arrived (Gilroy, 1992). Since these criticisms of racism have become widely known, both academics and policy makers have shifted their attention from ‘anti-racism’ to other kinds of engagements with questions and problems associated with cultural diversity such as anti-oppression, social cohesion or equal opportunities policies (Shukra, Back, Keith, Khan & Solomos, 2004; Williams, 1999). However, the criticisms above are no reason to abandon anti-racism just yet, especially since some of the problems facing anti-racism may also be confounding these successors (Ibid). What is needed instead is a thorough revision of the theories and (institutionalised) practices of anti-racism (Anthias & Lloyd, 2002). On a theoretical level, this involves a reassessment of the central paradox in the anti-racist project between the two apparently opposing ideals of equality and difference. As was discussed above, this has resulted in both an equality centred approach (i.e. ‘traditional anti-racism’) and a difference centred approach (‘multicultural’ anti-racism), which were ineffective, incommensurable and vulnerable to cooptation and abuse by political opponents.

This dilemma between equality and difference is not unique to the project of anti-racism and has similarly confronted and confounded the second wave of the women’s movement (Scott, 1988). Scott has argued that feminism was confounded by the fact that it consisted of the contingent and therefore contradictory demands to treat men and women equally as well as to acknowledge and respect their differences. The resulting contradictions were exploited by political opponents who could deny claims for equal rights by simply repeating feminist arguments to respect the biological differences between men and women. They could also deny acknowledgement of special needs of women by repeating feminist demands for equal treatment. The conceptual problem causing these contradictions was that equality and difference are understood by feminists, as well as its political opponents, as two ends of a single dimension ranging from equality to difference (Ibid). In so doing, equality is mistakenly reduced to sameness. The challenge then is how equality and the right to be different within a community can be articulated without compromising each other. Such a reconceptualisation would in turn allow for the conceptualisation of the anti-racist project in which the needs for equality and difference are addressed coherently and simultaneously.
A reconceptualisation of the goals of anti-racism requires considering the questions of equality and difference on separate analytical levels. The equality of members of a community needs to be conceptualised without assuming that the community is culturally homogeneous (Shabani, 2002, Southpommasane, 2005). This crucially involves grounding the equal membership in a community on some meaningful shared aspects of a shared existence that do not privilege or exclude groups because of racial, ethnic or religious differences. Different authors have proposed to conceive of this community of equals in non-cultural terms that range from shared life in a city (an urban ‘cosmopolis’, Sandercock, 1998 c.f. chapter five) to shared adherence to the constitution (‘constitutional patriotism’, Shabani, 2002, Southpommasane, 2005) and shared membership of the human race (‘a common humanity’ (Gilroy, 2000)). At present, an inclusive sense of community that guarantees equality despite cultural differences is not yet institutionalised in the fabric of society. The dissemination and popularisation of such an inclusive sense of community can thus be defined as one of the central goals of a contemporary anti-racist campaign.

Separated from the question of equality, the question of difference can also be reformulated. This involves, first of all, acknowledging that this question cannot be settled once and for all (Jaggar, 1999), let alone by experts, policymakers or anti-racist campaigners alone (Gilroy, 1992). The question of cultural difference in society is socially and historically contingent and requires an ongoing process of negotiation (Jaggar, 1999; Werbner & Modood, 1997). Changing social, political, cultural circumstances suggest that solutions that work for the present moment will not be adequate for all possible future developments. The question of when which forms of racial, ethnic or religious differences ought to be acknowledged and respected cannot be answered for all domains of social life in the same way or at the same time. In a democratic and evolving society, such questions need to be posed continuously in all social domains. Their answers should be derived from democratic processes of negotiation in which participation of all relevant groups and institutional actors is assured (Stevenson, 2003). The question of cultural difference should therefore be approached in anti-racism by attempts to strengthen what can be called a community’s cultural citizenship (Miller, 2006, Ong, 1999, Pakulski, 1997; Stevenson, 2003, see also Chapter 6). Cultural citizenship can be defined as the right to be different within a community and the obligation to respectfully engage with the difference of others. The performance of cultural citizenship involves the democratic negotiation of the role of cultural difference in everyday life (see Chapter 6). This approach shifts attention
away from attempts to change the meaning of existing differences top down in anti-racist campaigns. Instead, anti-racist efforts should be directed at facilitating and democratising communication between members of a community about the role of various aspects of its cultural diversity in everyday life (Jaggar, 1999; Stevenson, 2003).

In summary, a reformulation of the anti-racist project crucially entails reconceptualising its engagement with equality and difference in complementary rather than contradictory terms. First, this involves disseminating and popularising the basis of equality on a non-cultural basis through defining and instituting new senses of inclusive community. Second, it involves an engagement with the facilitation of the democratic negotiation of the role of cultural difference within an inclusive community rather than normatively proscribing a particular role for cultural difference in society in advance. At present, it is unclear how these goals may best be achieved.

Communicating anti-racism

It is perhaps important to emphasize here that the need for anti-racist legislation and law enforcement are not rendered any less crucial to the anti-racist project by popularising an inclusive sense of community or increasing the level of cultural citizenship in a community. However, in order to address the wider problem of racism beyond its direct and socially recognised expressions, anti-racism needs to seek wider cultural changes. In the way they are formulated above, the twin goals of an inclusive community and the performance of cultural citizenship are the two general areas of intervention through which communication may challenge the wider racialized culture within which racism thrives and transform it in more inclusive and democratic ways.

The greatest challenge of such a reconceptualised anti-racist project is its practical realization. Communication can contribute to this practical implementation in at least two ways. Communication is, first, crucial to any effort to institutionalise a more inclusive sense of community based on non-cultural terms. As the work of Anderson has shown, any imagined community depends on a set of shared representations of that community (Anderson, 1983). Currently, representations of an inclusive community, which is defined without reference to racial, ethnic, or religious differences, are not readily available in everyday life. Therefore, (mass mediated) communication campaigns might intervene in this regard by disseminating such representations of an inclusive community in a persuasive manner. At present, however, the possibilities and threats of using communication for anti-racist purposes in this way remain
unknown. Little is known about the ways in which such an inclusive community should be conceptualised and represented in practical terms. Moreover, it is unclear how such appeals to an inclusive community are received by audiences and how they relate to people’s existing senses of belonging to ethnic and national communities (see Chapter 5).

Second, communication is also central to the aim of increasing the democratic negotiation of the role of cultural difference in everyday life (what has been termed above as the performance of cultural citizenship). Such communication does not involve attempts to define the meaning or place of cultural diversity from the top down as the multicultural approaches to anti-racism have sought to do. The potential of communication lies more in the facilitation of communication between different individuals and groups about the problems and potentials of the role of cultural difference in everyday life. However, it is unclear how the performance of cultural citizenship can be stimulated through anti-racist communication campaigns. Moreover, it also remains to be investigated how such an engagement can be made sensitive to the locally and historically contingent needs for the acknowledgement, ignoring or challenging of particular (democratically decided) problematic or unproblematic forms of difference.

These issues are addressed in this dissertation by investigating contemporary anti-racist engagements with communication both on the level of communicating an inclusive sense of community as well as the level of facilitating the democratic negotiation about the role of cultural difference within this community. The process of communication in these campaigns are conceptualised in the terms set out by the encoding-decoding model by Stuart Hall (Hall, 1973). This model emphasizes the social, political and cultural context of both the production and the reception of messages and emphasises the role of power in both processes. The production process of media messages is termed ‘encoding’. This term emphasizes that a media text is produced through the negotiations between multiple actors involved in the production process. Each of these actors operates within a particular social and historical context, has particular resources at their disposal and faces distinct limitations and opportunities. The reception process or ‘decoding’ assumes that the meaning of a media text for any particular audience or viewer depends on the cultural resources they have at their disposal to make sense of the text (Ibid.). Although the media text itself may be structured to facilitate particular ‘preferred’ readings within particular audiences, the meaning of a message inheres not in the text but in the situated interpretive process as a whole. The text only plays a partial role in this respect but it is by no means irrelevant (Michelle, 2007). Both encoding as well as decoding involve processes of
situated negotiation and struggle about the meaning of a text and are therefore caught in the dynamics of power. This emphasis on power in processes of communication is especially pertinent in anti-racism campaigns that communicate messages with the aim of changing society and its power structures. The role of power in the production and reception of the campaigns thus forms a central theme throughout the chapters that follow.

In order to study the reception of the selected anti-racist campaigns from this perspective, a mixed method approach was used in which qualitative data collection and analysis techniques were complemented, where appropriate, with quantitative methods. Furthermore, because the context of reception is crucial for the both the analysis of reception in the encoding/decoding model in general and the analysis of the role of power in particular, two studies were conducted in which common sense ideas and negotiations about racism in the everyday life of the audiences of anti-racist campaigns were charted.

**Setup of the dissertation**

The chapters that follow were originally written as separate papers for publication in academic journals. Chapters 3 through 8 cover the content and reception of six recent anti-racist communication campaigns in the domain of popular urban culture. This domain was chosen because popular urban culture has a wide appeal across racial, ethnic and religious groups in society and continues to be one of the most common domains for anti-racist communication campaigns. Campaigns were selected within this domain based on four criteria. First, campaigns were selected that sought to challenge racism or address the wider meaning of racial, ethnic or religious differences in society through communication. Second, campaigns were selected that were held over the last five years in order to guarantee that they constituted the state of the art in anti-racist communication campaigning. Third, campaigns were selected that addressed the general public rather than a particular community or interest group. Fourth, campaigns were selected that focused either on mass communication of a particular message of tolerance or anti-racism (chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6) or on facilitating communication about the role of cultural difference between members of different racial, ethnic and religious groups (Chapters 6, 7 and 8).

The chapters of this dissertation are grouped in four parts. In the first part, the reception context of anti-racism communication campaigns is discussed. In the second part, two studies are presented from two different anti-racist mass media campaigns that sought to challenge individual attitudes and behaviours related to racism. In the third part, two studies are presented
on the potential of mass media campaigns to communicate a sense of inclusive community and to stimulate the performance of cultural citizenship. Finally, the fourth part investigates campaigns that facilitate communication in everyday life directly by bringing people together in projects for intercultural encounters (see Table 1 for an overview).

Table 1. Overview of the dissertation set up

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PART</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Cases</th>
<th>Main question</th>
<th>Main method</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>The reception context of anti-racist communication</td>
<td>Everyday talk about racism</td>
<td>How is ‘racism’ understood and challenged in everyday life?</td>
<td>Focus groups &amp; In-depth-interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>Mass media communications promoting individual changes in attitudes and behaviour related to racism</td>
<td>Stand up, speak up, West Side</td>
<td>How do campaigns affect racist attitudes and behaviours?</td>
<td>Content analysis, Survey &amp; Experiment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>Mass media communications for a sense of inclusive community and cultural citizenship</td>
<td>We are Londoners, What are you doing for the city?, West Side</td>
<td>How do campaigns promote inclusive communities and cultural citizenship?</td>
<td>Focus groups &amp; In-depth-interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>Campaigns that seek to facilitate interpersonal communication</td>
<td>We Amsterdammers, Amsterdam WC</td>
<td>What kinds of communication are facilitated through arranged intergroup contact?</td>
<td>In-depth-interviews &amp; Participatory observation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The individual chapters of this dissertation were all written as single, theory driven explorations of different aspects of the potential role of communication for anti-racism. As can be seen in Table 1, the studies presented here used diverging methodologies and their results are not to be read as a cumulative exploration of a single or ideal kind of communication campaigning. Instead, these studies together present a multi-method exploratory study on the potential of communication for anti-racism in general.

Part I
In Chapter 1, an empirical study is presented on everyday understandings and negotiations of racism in order to chart the context of the reception of anti-racist communication campaigns. Starting from a social constructionist perspective, it examines how the recognition of certain incidents, experiences and social phenomena as racist is socially achieved. In Chapter 2, the results from the first chapter are complemented by a case study on how Dutch soccer fans and players define racism in their shared sport culture. Moreover, it presents an analysis on the ways in which the dominant discourses about the nature of racism shape the social relations between those people who feel they might have suffered racial abuse and those who have engaged in contested racialized behaviour.

Part II
After charting the reception context of anti-racist campaigns in the first part of the dissertation, the second part continues with two case studies of mass media communication campaigns that each intended to communicate anti-racist messages in their own specific ways. In Chapter 3, an analysis is presented on the campaign ‘We can’t do it alone’ by the multinational sports company Nike. This campaign can be described as a ‘traditional’ anti-racist campaign as it seeks to confront racism head on through the dissemination of messages about the immorality of racism. The analysis focuses both on the visual and discursive content of the campaign as well as on the ways in which it is received among Dutch soccer audiences. In Chapter 4, another mass media campaign is investigated in the form of a multicultural television series. This series was intended to communicate anti-racist messages of intercultural tolerance and understanding implicitly through television entertainment. Using an experimental design, the chapter analyses the extent to which exposure to and identification with dramatised positive depictions of Muslim minorities can be a way to stimulate tolerance of cultural diversity among non-Muslim viewers.
Part III
In the third part of the dissertation, two chapters are presented that deal with the potential of mass communication to popularise a sense of inclusive community and to stimulate cultural citizenship. In Chapter 5, a case study is presented on two campaigns that explicitly seek to communicate a new sense of community that supersedes racial, ethnic and religious differences. These two campaigns, called ‘We are Londoners, we are one’ and ‘What are you doing for the city’, both take the shared residence in a city as the basis for a culturally inclusive community. The analysis in this chapter focuses on the ways in which urban residents from various racial, ethnic and religious backgrounds find the core notion of an urban cosmopolis convincing and seductive and what potential it has to function as a foundation for anti-racism. In Chapter 6, the programme *West Side* is examined again using a different theoretical and methodological approach. This time it is approached as a communication campaign that could also facilitate the communication between members of the audience. Using a qualitative research design, the chapter analyses audience reactions to the programme and how these might contribute to the development of personalized negotiations about the role of cultural difference in the viewer’s everyday lives.

Part IV
In the fourth part of the dissertation, two case studies are presented on campaigns that seek to facilitate communication between members of a particular community. In Chapter 7, an analysis is presented of a campaign for intercultural encounters called ‘we Amsterdammers’. This campaign consisted of a range of different projects that sought to bring Amsterdammers from various racial, ethnic and religious backgrounds into personal contact with each other. The article examines the underlying discourse surrounding the trope ‘interpersonal contact’, as it was expressed by the organizers of this campaign. Next, it analyses the kinds of events and practices this discourse was translated into and the ways in which this relates to the goals of facilitating the democratic negotiation of cultural difference in everyday life. In Chapter 8, the anti-racist strategy of facilitating communication about cultural difference in everyday life is further explored through a case study on a multicultural soccer tournament called the Amsterdam World Cup. This annual event is set up to promote intercultural tolerance by drawing on the social powers of sports. The chapter examines the content and role of this central discourse of the
powers of sports and analyses what practical consequences it has for the way such a campaign for interpersonal contact through sports is organized and the experiences that participants take home from them.

These four parts are followed by a summary of their results and a conclusion in which the main questions posed in this introduction are addressed. The dissertation ends with a reflection on the actual and potential role of communication for anti-racism in contemporary multicultural society.