

Chapter 4

Methodological and Theoretical Assumptions for Conducting Research on the Cognitive Dimension of Narratives on “Development”: The Method

ABSTRACT

This chapter describes, explains, operationalizes, and contextualizes how critical discourse analysis together with secondary approaches to qualitative and quantitative research; develops a coherent methodological resource for enquiry of ideology, meaning and the overall semantic horizon of normative macrostructures at the level of international institutions. After explaining the adoption and the use of the methodology, the chapter further provides the method for conducting research on the two dimensions of political asymmetry, cognition and ideology (formal power sphere).

INTRODUCTION

This chapter constitutes a methodological section for conducting qualitative and quantitative analysis of normative constructions within selected biographical periods of international institutions. The long term goal of the project addresses the identification, deconstruction and theoretical framing of the norm of “modern development” at the Bretton Woods Institutions. This section is a complementary chapter of the ontological and theoretical assumptions of the book. For conducting a concrete case study research on normative meaning, this section elaborates in fundamental epistemological advantages in which Discourse semantics and Critical Discourse Analysis can potentiate the study of politics and ideology within grey literature of international institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

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The approach developed is complementary to the theoretical and historical contributions of the book, framed within the assumption of the problematization of the construction of norms under conditions of political asymmetry. Finally, the chapter aims to depict an operational path to dig further in the study of normative meaning, as well as to embrace this task within a defined empirical case study. This goal is oriented to reveal the role of political asymmetry in both, the cognitive and the ideological dimension of the norm of “modern development”.

Periods of Analysis

Considering the evolution of structural transitions at the Bretton Woods Institutions (Eichengreen, 2008) and following chapter 2 and chapter 3 of this book, the following chapter contextualizes this study upon three historical periods. First, the period between the end of the Second World War. This period covers the foundation of the institutional architecture, to the beginning of the 50’s decade. This era encompasses the global transition of the world in adopting an international institutionalized commerce system, formally established with the constitution of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the approval of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. It also takes into consideration the events that surrounded the reconstruction of Europe and the particular role of the western world in implementing the necessary policies to rebuilt their industrial capacity, acquiring the financial support of the United States and strengthening political relations at the back of a world deeply scarce of capital.

The second period goes back to the decade of the end of the Bretton Woods convertibility system. This decade formally began within the years 1971 and 1973 (Lewis, 2011) (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2013) (Eichengreen, 2004), tracing the ideological and political effects of the widest GATT round for the expansion and progressive liberalization of trade since the adoption of the treaty on the Tokyo round (1973-1979). This round was held with the representation of more than 100 countries, covering fundamental sectors of domestic political and economic institutions of the signatories. It was inspired by the 1974 declaration of the United Nations General Assembly for the “Establishment of a New International Economic Order” (Chimni, 2006) while during the same decade, the World Bank released for the first time the “World Bank Development Report”, which settled the ground for further institutional approaches to the notion of “development” at the level of the Bretton Woods architecture (Weaver, 2010).

The third period of the study covers the last decade (2005-2015), which is characterized by the rise of new actors in the global political arena, the recognition of upcoming scenarios of global warming, global depletion of fundamental natural resources, new critical phenomena attached to the development of globalization (Wade, 2003), increasing levels of nation states uncertainty in dealing with a highly unstable global economic environment (Leiteritz & Moschella, 2010) (Stiglitz, 2004), complains over undemocratic conventions of the international institutional architecture (Sturm, 2006) (Leech, 2004) (Eichengreen, 2004) (Khan Haider, 2008) (Barro, 2005) (Rodrik, 2001), and a growing awareness of populations about how certain global policies are unable to be carried out solely by isolated nation-state entities (Park & Vetterlein, 2010).

Media Focus

The media focus of the present study is divided into three broad written sources. First: the institutional publications on “development” at the Bretton Woods Institutions. The decision to make use of this material lay in the high levels of accessibility and global influence of such institutional record issued by

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