Power and Ownership
A critical analysis of the Bretton Woods Institutions’ Country Owned Poverty
Reduction Strategies

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Abstract

Previously, studies in the intersection of power and development have predominantly concentrated on power as domination; how powerful actors can force recipient countries into embracing specific policies due to economical asymmetries. Yet, with the introduction of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) approach to development employed by the Bretton Woods Institutions (BWI), conditions on certain policies have decreased and it is said that the approach allows for country ownership as development strategies are written by the countries themselves. As a critical response, the conception of power is broadened here through the separate employment of governmentality theory and neo-Gramscian International Relations theory. They share among them a theoretical premise which allows for an understanding of power that extends beyond domination to the realm of discursive practices which, it is argued, allows for influence despite the notions of ownership and without power as domination.

The object of this thesis is to suggest how the discourses of the PRSP regime can influence subjects whom they addressed. The two theories have different assumptions here. More specifically, the neo-Gramsccian theory argue that discursive practice may render ideological issues as common sense why they can come to be embraced by subjects, whereas the governmentality theory assume that discourses can, perhaps without conscious recognition, reshape the very identities of subjects. The theories differences are retained and bracketed when a discourse analysis of the PRSP regime is conducted which concludes that the BWIs require that suitable skills are embraced by subjects appropriate for a good governed market economy. These skills are located to basic capacities in calculating, accounting and social capital accumulation. Thereafter a practical example of discursive practice in a capacity building mission is reviewed to explicate how these skills are actualized through training modules enabling influence towards preferred standards of the BWIs without power as domination. The two theories are brought in for a discussion on how these discursive practices may be understood according to their respective premises, but also to discuss the usefulness of these theories for studies of this kind.

It is argued, among other conclusions, that the neo-Gramscian understanding of power as operating on the conscious level can fruitfully be coupled with the proposition of governmentality that powers also work on an unconscious level for understanding practises of capacity building. As concerning the weaknesses of the theories it is put forth that the neo-Gramsccian theory suffers from an assumption of class identity presented as a “brute fact”
before the realm of the political, whereas the governmentality theory suffers from an exclusive focus on discourse and leaves behind how different actor constellations may seek to appropriate discourses. To remedy these weaknesses, the thesis concludes with an argument that a combination of these theories can provide a lucrative foundation for further studies.
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<tr>
<td>BWI</td>
<td>Bretton Woods Institutions</td>
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<tr>
<td>CDC</td>
<td>Community Development Committees</td>
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<td>CDD</td>
<td>Community Driven Development</td>
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<td>CDF</td>
<td>Comprehensive Development Framework</td>
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<td>CESI</td>
<td>Community Empowerment and Social Inclusion Learning Programme</td>
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<td>CSO</td>
<td>Civil Society Organization</td>
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<td>CSC</td>
<td>Cooperative Service Center</td>
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<td>DPG</td>
<td>Development Partner Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>East AFRITAC</td>
<td>East Africa Regional Technical Assistance Center</td>
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<td>EC</td>
<td>European Commission</td>
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<td>FDI</td>
<td>Foreign direct investment</td>
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<td>HIPC</td>
<td>Heavily Indebted Poor Countries</td>
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<td>IBRD</td>
<td>International Bank for Reconstruction and Development</td>
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<td>IDA</td>
<td>International Development Association</td>
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<td>IMF</td>
<td>International Monetary Fund</td>
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<td>IR</td>
<td>International Relations</td>
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<td>LLI</td>
<td>Lifelong Learning Initiative</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-governmental Organization</td>
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<td>PRS</td>
<td>Poverty Reduction Strategy</td>
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<td>PRSP</td>
<td>Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers</td>
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<td>RSSP</td>
<td>Rural Sector Support Project</td>
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<td>SIDA</td>
<td>Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency</td>
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<td>UNDGO</td>
<td>United Nations Development Group Office</td>
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<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
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<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations Children’s Fund</td>
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<td>WBI</td>
<td>World Bank Institute</td>
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Introduction

The development of what was then termed underdeveloped countries was established as a political goal and an economic discipline more then fifty ears ago. Representative for that era was the US president Harry S. Truman’s four point speech where he dedicated the fourth point to the development of underdeveloped regions of the world (Truman 1949). It was seen as the responsibility of the rich to share their wealth and their knowledge with the poor. This spawned immense attention from various disciplines, not least economics which over the years has presented different solutions as how to modernize these parts of the world (Escobar 1995). Gradually the optimism of the early years faded, on many accounts the poor didn’t get richer and the hungry didn’t stop suffering. Drastic measures were taken, in the eighties the BWIs forced what was then termed developing countries to abide to strict fiscal discipline and deregulate their economies under the banner of structural adjustment (Gibbon 1992). Another attempt a decade later saw the introduction of the still popular good governance agenda (Orlandini 2003). That time it was the governments of the developing countries that needed discipline as it was argued that ‘[u]nderlying the litany of Africa’s development problems is a crisis of governance’ (World Bank 1989:60). Accountability, transparency and decentralization were the buzzwords of the day that would keep away corruption and ensure that the market would function properly to grant the economies their much needed growth. The anticipated results didn’t materialize and the latest attempt is what this study concerns; the intorduction of the partnership regime.

In 1999 the then World Bank president Wolfensohn introduced the Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF) and the related PRSPs which aimed at some very substantial changes in the aid relationship. Instead of an emphasis on conditionalities there are now notions of local ownership, participation and of putting the recipient ‘[c]ountries in the driver’s seat’ (World Bank 2000). This is to be achieved by having the recipient countries writing their own PRSPs which are thought to be the central documents that guide development planning for recipient countries, and through which loans from the BWIs and, possibly, aid from donors, will be fuelled. It is defined by the World Bank (2004) as (1) country-driven as the authors are the recipient governments; (2) comprehensive as it should incorporate a wide range of policy issues; and (3) partnership oriented as development partners in bilateral and multilateral donors and international NGOs and local civil society participates in formulation, implementation and monitoring of the strategy. The CDF and the
PRSP is thus a system which is supposed to be more flexible and country driven. The rhetoric of partnership and ownership signals a shift in power relations, from a relationship based on economical dependence towards a partnership between equals. This new take on development also allows for a focus on poverty wherein policy is supposed to be formulated in close consultation with “the poor”. These are the central factors that has lead to an increased popularity in the strategy, bestowing the BWIs with a new found legitimacy reflected in the increased harmonization and incorporation of development partners into the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) framework entailing a convergence that, according to Lie (2006:1), has allowed the World Bank to become ‘close to hegemonic in delivering development problems and solutions’. However, though ‘in the driver’s seat’, the countries have a thick guidebook on policy suggestions elaborated by the BWIs at their disposal. Also, conditionalities are still there, although more subtle, as the BWIs needs to approve the PRSPs before the country qualifies for lending programmes (Lie 2006).

As many of the new country driven PRSPs has been finalized it has been revealed that the policies within the PRSPs do not deviate much from the macroeconomic policies advocated by the BWIs (Abrahamsen 2004). The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) noted in their 2001 PRSP progress review that ‘in several cases countries put forward macroeconomic and structural policies that were similar to those of the recent past’ (in Wilks and Lefrançois 2002:20), and in 2004 another review noted that ‘[t]here is as yet relatively little evidence of a broad-based and open discussion of macroeconomic policy alternatives in PRSPs’ (World Bank and IMF 2004:19). It may seem surprising that there has been no major policy shifts when such major changes in the production of policy has been advanced. For instance, should not the fact that the countries themselves write their PRSPs, or that the civil society is involved in the process, affect the final outcomes? This draws attention to how the PRSP policy process is governed. To what extent can we speak of a true partnership between equals where the policy formulation is owned by the recipient states?

The BWIs argue that the lack of shifts in macroeconomic policies is attributed to the recognition on part of the governments of the soundness of these policies in sustaining economic growth and hence reducing poverty (World Bank and IMF 2001). While this may be an accurate explanation it is argued here that it fails to acknowledge the asymmetrical relationship that still exists due to the prevalence of conditionalities and the severe dependency that many of these unstable economies have towards the BWIs. Neither does it take note of the immense surveillance that these countries are subjected to. In essence, it fails
to understand what powers are in play in the relationship and, thus, how ownership is constituted.

**Four forms of power in the PRSP process**

A variety of scholars share this scepticism and has written critical studies concerning how one should conceptualize power in this relationship to better understand ownership. These scholars have taken different theoretical starting points in their studies. By elaborating on Lukes (1974) three dimensions of power, Abrahamsen (2004) shows how this critique can be mapped into three ways of conceptualizing power in the PRSP process. The first category corresponds to domination; how the BWIs and donors can force the recipient states into writing policies they normally would not sign up to. These scholars treat the PRS framework as nothing but a rhetorical device. Interventions in policy formulations are still pervasive and the talk about partnership is there to regain the legitimacy that was lost under the era of structural adjustment (ibid.; Fowler 2000).

The second line of arguments focuses on the power of agenda setting. Here the institutional setup of international organizations with their economically weighted voting rights work to disfavour poor countries opportunities of setting the political agenda (Beitz 1999; Crawford 2003). This has the consequence of solidifying the main themes of economic liberalism embodied in these institutions and their policies and strategies.

While these two dimensions of power constitute a large portion of the critical debate on the PRSP process, some scholars have come to extend their arguments to embrace Lukes’ third dimension of power. This form of power is thought to function through ‘shaping perceptions, cognitions and preferences in such a way that they [i.e. subjects] accept their role in the existing order of things, either because they can see or imagine no alternative to it, or because they see it as natural and unchangeable, or because they value it as divinely ordained or beneficial’ (Lukes 1974:24). This form of power can be exercised by making the ideology of the BWIs appear as “common sense” in order to draw in the subjects of the recipient states into a preferred ideology (Cox 1983). Such a strategy may be achieved by rendering political issues as non-political and by emphasising advantages as apposed to disadvantages of the policy regime, and through the infusion of preferred norms via media and the education system. Here the ‘global capitalist system is seen to shape actors’ ideology in ways that ultimately serve the interests of capitalism’ whereby ‘poor countries are prevented from realising their “real” interests due to the hegemonic ideology of neo-liberalism’ (Abrahamsen
Abrahamsen argues that Harrison’s (2001) work on contemporary aid relations, though not explicitly theorized, approaches such a viewpoint as severe pressure on parts of government’s cause countries to internalise neo-liberal values. Here we may also add Harrison’s (2004) later work and that done by Gould and Ojanen (2005).

Finally, some scholars argue that we must go beyond Lukes’ three dimensions of power to incorporate the concept of governmentality originally developed by Foucault (e.g. Abrahamsen 2004; Gould 2005a; Lie 2006). Governmentality refers to the conduct of conduct, to steer and discipline people by working through their freedoms (Dean 1999). Here certain rationalities, or discursive fields, are thought to direct various techniques to be employed in order to work upon subjects conduct. This has the consequence of disciplining people without their conscious recognition. These techniques works through discursive practises such as interactions between people, utilization of texts and symbols, education and surveillance in the form of audits and benchmarking that help constitute and reshape the subject’s very identity so that its conduct gets moulded in order to suit specific purposes (Abrahamsen 2004; Dean 1999). This form of powers is particularly favoured by a liberal climate as the conduct of conduct depends on free subjects who then can be governed to act in certain ways but under the liberal banner of freedom (Hindess 1996). In the partnership regime this form of power can be thought to work through various techniques of auditing, benchmarking, education and evaluations that are imposed on subjects in order to conduct their conduct without the use of power corresponding to domination (Abrahamsen 2004).

These four understandings of how power operates give us different explanations to how ownership may be tempered with. One must acknowledge that all these understandings of power are connected to conceptual frameworks that depict the world differently and, inevitably, through simplifications. As Allison and Zelikow (2005:2) argue, ‘what we see and judge to be important and accept as adequate depends not only on the evidence available but also on the “conceptual lenses” through which we look at the evidence’. In this process certain ‘fam[ilies] of simplifications becomes convenient and compelling’ since they have proven to do ‘real work’ and hence has become accepted (ibid:8). In this case Abrahamsen (2004:1458) argue that explanations’ favouring the first two faces of power ‘tends to predominate’. The argument here is that the favouring of these explanations herald from the structural adjustment era where forceful conditionalities prevailed, why there was no need to study the field of international development through alternative theories of power since power as domination was out in the open. But now the practice of development is changing, we are entering into a phase of post-conditionality (Harrison 2001) characterized by a decrease in
conditionalities but also a dramatic increase in various forms of surveillance and missions of technical assistance and capacity building where citizens, from governments to rural villages, are surrounded by BWI employees, NGO personnel and donor representatives (Harrison 2004).

In this setting it becomes important to challenge the predominant scholarship on these issues. Allison and Zelikow (2005:8) argue that in situations where one pair of conceptual lenses dominates 'it is even more essential to have at hand one or more simple but competitive conceptual frameworks to help remind the questioner and the answerer what is omitted'. Hence, our aim is to partake in this endeavour through presenting two conceptual frameworks that calls the assumptions of the prevalent theorizing into question. This will be done by comparing one theory from Lukes third face of power, namely neo-Gramscian IR theory, with Foucault’s concept of governmentality and apply them to this field of research in order to suggest how one may understand power through their conceptual lenses. Both theories are considered particularly apt for this process as they suggest that power may be exercised, on the one hand, through making an ideology appear as common sense, and on the other, through the conduct of conduct. The argument of these theories is that one can govern, and hence tamper with ownership, without the presence of power in the direct form of domination. Rather, to allow for some simplifications until the research program will be spelled out more clearly, the two theories articulation of power focuses on discursive practice, and more specifically on how knowledge may be altered and tempered with and also how knowledge may be inserted into people so that they will comply with prevalent discourses such as neo-liberalism. Put differently, both theories can be applied to focus on ‘the way in which discourses of development help shape the reality they pertain to address, and how alternative conceptions of the problem have been marked off as irrelevant’ (Nustad 2004:13).

**Central Aim**

The purpose of this thesis relates to the above quote; *we are interested in investigating how the discourses of development as embodied in the BWIs PRSP approach shapes the subjects whom they address.*

The two theories have different focal points within this field of research. With the neo-Gramscian theory we can understand the discourses of development as a way for certain actors to try to extend a certain ideology and this is done by making some policy options
appear as common sense, while others are closed off. The governmentality theory, on the other hand, goes on to argue that discourses can shape the very identities of the subjects to which it is addressed. This purpose materializes itself in a two pronged analysis where the BWIs’ discourses of development are analyzed first and here focus will be on the subject in discourse; how it is characterized and what is required of it. The underlying assumption of such a focus is that an understanding of the subject in discourses is linked to how subjects are acted upon through discursive practices such as education. Secondly, and related, a practical example of capacity building in rural Rwanda put forth by the World Bank\(^1\) will be reviewed, which includes forms of discursive practices that may be comprehended according to both our theories understandings of discourse. Here the second underlying assumption is that by understanding these practices according to any one of these theories, it can provide insights into how ownership can be tampered with without the direct imposition of power as domination which is on the decrease. In this vein the thesis concludes with a discussion of the strengths and weaknesses on part of both theories for understanding problematizations of ownership as exemplified through the capacity building mission. The PRSP production phase or state apparatuses will thus not be the focal point in this analysis; rather, we will settle with an investigation into the usefulness of the two theories that may suggest grounds for further studies that more directly targets the PRSP policy process.

**The usefulness of two theories**

The object of approaching the discourses of development from two perspectives of power is not to conclude that one theory is correct and the other incorrect. The two theories rest on different meta-theoretical frameworks where the basic ontology of power differs. To say that one is correct and the other is not is thus rests on an individual preference for a specific ontology and epistemology why, instead, to quote Rosenau and Durfee (2000:10), ‘they are neither right nor wrong; rather, they are either useful or not useful depending on what one wishes to emphasize and accomplish through systematic enquiry’. However, while we do not seek to scrutinize their abstract arguments, the adoption of more then one theory has the consequence of putting their theoretical structure, from abstract to less abstract arguments, in a comparative contrast to each other and such an approach may alert us to ‘hidden assumptions, prejudices and biases about how the social and political world is and what it can

\(^1\) The project is, as will be seen, jointly employed by the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), but the educatory components are the sole responsibility of the World Bank.
be’ (Burnchill and Linklater 2005:17). Thus while analyzing how ownership may be questioned through our two theories, we simultaneously ‘discover just how distorted and distorting [our two theories] world-view may be’ (ibid.).

**Delimitations**

A central feature of these theories is that through power struggles subjects may uphold specific ideologies as common sense or they may be disciplined through the conduct of conduct. The macroeconomic frameworks of the PRSP writing countries have not changed much, which according to critics is explained by the imposition of power of some sort. But to single out how effective these discursive practices are cannot be attempted for two reasons. First, we will not directly be concerned with the PRSP policy process; a thorough review of such a process in any state would demand more space then is available here. Second, a comparison of discourses of the BWIs and the recipient states, for instance, does not prove causal effects from one discourse to another. Hence the study will be delimited to focus on the articulation of the subject in the discourses of development, and to suggest, through the respective theories, _how_ discursive practices work to “frame” the subjects subjected to them, but not to proceed with attempts to empirically verify success or not
Meta-Theory

This chapter aims at presenting the theories meta-theoretical foundations and their view of power. The neo-Gramscian theory will be presented first and thereafter the governmentality theory will have its turn. To be able to apply them to a discourse analytical framework and to understand how power is connected to discourse it is important to be clear on their epistemological and ontological underpinnings and how these differ between the theories. It is therefore considered appropriate to comment on their historical origin, situate them in the structure/agency debate, and elaborate on their view of the constitution and operations of power. The chapter will end with a short comparison between the two and some notes on the critique levelled against them.

Neo-Gramscian IR Theory

There are considerable differences concerning the formulation of theory and the interpretation of Antonia Gramsci among scholars studying in the field of neo-Gramscian IR (Morton 2003). This and the following section will primarily draw on Robert Cox, who first transferred the writings of Gramsci to the field of IR, and his colleague Stephen Gill, but will recourse to their intellectual influences in Fernand Braudel, Gramsci and Gaimbattista Vico when needed.

Though diverging in many senses, neo-Gramscian theorists in the field of IR share parts of their research program with the critical theory elaborated by the Frankfurt school thinkers, especially Max Horkheimer (Devetak 2005; Wyn Jones 2001) These commonalities are a normative stance espousing that the object of critical theory should be emancipation in the sense of removing domination in favour of freedom, justice and equity; that an understanding of the present must be rooted in a study of the historical formation of contemporary society; and that traditional or problem-solving positivist theories are not only theoretically flawed, but also dangerous in that they normalize a state of domination.

In a groundbreaking article Cox (1981:129) utilized Horkheimer’s distinction between traditional (but calling it problem-solving) and critical theory and forcefully argued that the former, in the form of neo-realism, has several weaknesses in that it is ahistorical since it ‘posits a continuing present (the permanence of the institutions and power relations which constitute its parameters)’. This it does since ‘[i]t takes the world as it finds it, with the
prevailing social and power relations and the institutions into which they are organised, as the given framework for action’ (ibid:128), and tries to correct malfunctions within this framework. In this way it works to produce an ‘ideological bias’ since it is ‘comfortable within the given order [ending up] serving particular national, sectional, or class interests’. (ibid:129) By treating the balance of power regime as a logical consequence of international system of states it automatically serves as a legitimizing force for this system. Further, neo-realism claims to be value free and non-normative in its treatment of the anarchic state system (Ibid:130-2), which is represented as an inevitable fact, impossible to change through human thought and institutions, thereby embracing a positivist epistemology stemming from the Cartesian dualism separating the subject from the objective world.

Against this backdrop Cox launched his version of critical theory which rejects the Cartesian dualism. Cox (e.g. 1981; 1983) is explicit in that he draws much of he’s ideas from Gramsci who has argued that ‘[w]e know reality only in relation to man, and since man is historical becoming, knowledge and reality are also a becoming and so is objectivity’ (Gramsci 1971: 446). In this interpretation any claim that the world “out there” as in a given system of states is an unchangeable fact is considered with scepticism. Instead, by drawing on Vico, Cox argues that the state system should be thought of as a historical construction of humans: ‘this world of nations has certainly been made by men, and its guise must therefore be found within the modifications of our own human mind’ (Vico 1970:62 in Cox 1981:132), why one cannot ‘abstract man and the state from history so as to define their substance or essences as prior to history’ (Cox 1981:133).

With this understanding any historical configuration of social, political and economic structures can be referred to as an historical structure realized through ‘persistent social practices, made by collective human activity’ (Cox 1987:4). It follows that the balance of power regime should not be treated as a “brute fact”, but rather as a particular historical structure influenced by certain ‘thought patterns, material conditions and human institutions’ (Cox 1981:135).

By adopting Cox’s view of historical structures we can posit this version of critical theory in the structure/agency debate. By drawing on Braudels three rhythms of social time, Gill (2003:42-44) argues that we should divide structures into three broad categories. The first, called ‘event-time’, which Gill refers to as the ‘continual flow and succession of actions and events in the movement of history’ (ibid:42) may be thought of as those structures that are instantiated in every day interaction. The second, and most durable is the longue durée which is comprised of ideas, habits, interactions, institutions and expectations, but also
‘philosophical and theological systems as well as conceptions of space and time’ (ibid.). This structure may last for an ‘infinitude of generations’. Gill argues that capitalism, and more concretely the practise of exchange relations is a good example. The third form of structures, which can be situated between the other two, are called ‘conjunctural time’ which are those social structures and institutions that may last for generations, for example mass cultures and forms of state (Ibid:43). These overarching structures, which we refer to as historical structures, are of a historical becoming and formed by ‘repeated [human] actions that form regularities [which] constitute and constrain the limits of what is politically possible’ (ibid:42). In this way, structure and agency should not be treated as separate objects, but rather as mutually constitutive and not reducible one to the other. The transformation, but also sedimentation, of these structures is a major theme in neo-Gramscian IR theory which we will return to in the following sections concentrating on power. Suffice to note now is that transformation is considered possible through collective human action.

The elements of a historical structures

The theoretical structures of Cox and he’s influences must be understood in the context of their writing and what they wanted to understand. Gramsci’s (1971) Prison Notebooks, written during he’s imprisonment by the fascists between 1929 and 1935 sought to understand how the dominant class worked to establish hegemony of their social vision in state and civil society, while Cox (1981; 1987) sought to understand how world orders was established and maintained by a transnational managerial class through state/society complexes and dependant on a dominant mode of production. This often involved theorizing about how hegemony was sought to be sustained by the dominant groups through a mixture of coercion and consent in order to reify prevalent conditions, but also how change may come about. At the base of these notions is the understanding of human beings thoughts and desires as existing in a historical structure. More accurately, ‘[t]hese structures do not determine people’s actions in any mechanical sense but constitute the context of habits, pressures, expectations and constraints within which action takes place’ (Cox 1981:135). Cox defines the elements of historical structures as a reciprocally interacting combination of ideas, material capabilities and institutions. While similar to the concept of historical structures in the former section, Cox, following Gramsci, argues that material capabilities are a major determinant of continuity and change in these structures. In his methodology, Cox models historical structure as a heuristic devise representing a simplified illustration of a more
complex reality that represents a particular field of human activity in a specific historical situation. In any situation when we confront these structures, we may ‘move with the pressures or resist and oppose them, but [we] cannot ignore them’ (Cox 1981:135). Cox prefers to catalogue the elements of a structure into three broad reciprocally interacting categories: material capabilities, ideas and institutions. These categories are also heuristic devises without a predetermined hierarchy. Material capabilities include both technological and organizational capabilities, but also natural resources and wealth. Ideas should be understood broadly. They include intersubjective meanings in the form of ‘shared notions of social relations which tend to perpetuate habits and expectations of behaviour’ (ibid:136). These are historically specific, our shared notions of the conduct of war has changed in the past and may change in the future. Furthermore, ideas include collective images of social order (ibid.), for example, what we mean with human right, justice and basic needs. These images may acquire different meaning in varying contexts and periods and may continuously be challenged by other images. Finally, institutions are amalgams of material capabilities and ideas (ibid.). Cox argues that these institutions ‘encourage collective images consistent with [the prevailing] power relations’ whereby they function as ‘perpetuating a particular order’ (ibid).

The three components of a historical structure should not be thought of as separate objects but rather as ‘always bound together, mutually influencing one another, and not reducible one to the other’ (Cox 1983:168). Change occurs continuously within the structure as the heuristic devices interact and evolves but the structure may also be challenged by another counter-structure in a related sphere of activity (ibid.). There may also be forces working to perpetuate structures in a given order. It is when stability is reached that hegemony prevails, a point we will come back to in the following section.

**Power, hegemony and international institutions**

The articulation of the operations of power in Gramsci’s and Cox’s work has its centrepiece in Gramsci’s notion of hegemony. In the formulation of hegemony as a combination of coercion and consent, Gramsci drew intellectual energy from Machiavelli’s *The Prince*, wherein power is conceptualized as a centaur: half man and half beast (Cox 1983). In Cox’s (1983:167) reading Gramsci had understood that there was a ‘reciprocal relationship of the political, ethical and ideological spheres of activity with the economic sphere’ why one had to work broader than just through the use of coercion if one was to
secure a particular social vision, and here consensual practices working through the ideological, ethical and political spheres become important. These notions informed how Gramsci thought that the dominant bourgeoisie spread their social vision on consensual terms involving ‘concessions to subordinate classes in return for acquiescence in bourgeois leadership’ but also through institutions such as the school and press helping to elaborate on ‘certain modes of behaviour and expectations consistent with the hegemonic social order’ (Cox 1983:163-4), making it appear as ‘common sense’. These practices may then result in subjects ‘accept[ing] their role in the existing order of things, either because they can see or imagine no alternative to it, or because they see it as natural and unchangeable, or because they value it as divinely ordained or beneficial’ (Lukes 1974:24). Behind this consensus was always the threat of coercion should it be perceived as necessary. The practice of establishing hegemony thus entails an understanding of power as emanating from a social base much broader than just the state, and as involving not just the economic sphere of activity, but also the ideological, political and ethical. When the interest of the dominant class becomes upheld as universal principles and the interests of the subordinate classes align with these, hegemony is complete.

If we return to the historical structures, hegemony is established when there is a coherent conjunction between the three heuristic devices. A hegemonic structure is one where the power relations are hidden in favour of what appears to be a consensual order. In this way Cox makes a distinction between non-hegemonic structures fraught with conflict and hegemonic consensual ones. Though consensual they should not be thought of as static and immobile since they can, as stated above, be challenged and transformed in a number of ways, why hegemony should be seen as ‘a site for struggle’ (Gunn 2006:707).

Power is always present in historical structures, and thought to work in and between the heuristic devices, which grants us an understanding of it as relational (Sum 2004). It is when we interact that power is present, and conversely, power does not exist in a vacuum or by itself. Cox argue that ‘power is seen as emerging from social processes rather than taken as given in the form of accumulated material capabilities’ (1981:141). But as material capabilities is a vital part of Cox’s heuristic devices and in Gramsci’s theorizing it must be thought of as an important factor in determining power relationships. Thus, to take the historical structure of capitalism as an example, those who hold the means of production is

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2 This quote is not directly related to the works of Gramsci. It is, however, considered particularly relevant. For a discussion on the relationship between the works of Gramsci and that of Lukes, see Lukes (2005).
more likely to establish hegemonic structures and exert influence over ideas and institutions than those who do not.

These notions of hegemony and historical structures have been utilized in the international field, first by Cox (1981; 1983) but also by other scholars such as Gill and Law (1988), Gill (1995) and Taylor (2004). Here international institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF functions as a mechanism ‘through which the universal norms of a world hegemony are expressed’ (Cox 1983:172). More specifically

(1) they embody the rules which facilitate the expansion of hegemonic world orders; (2) they are themselves the product of the hegemonic world order; (3) they ideologically legitimate the norms of the world order; (4) they co-opt the elites from peripheral countries and (5) they absorb counter-hegemonic ideas. (ibid.)

In this theorizing the dominant national class is substituted by a transnational managerial class comprised of the mentioned financial institutions, elite politicians and private business working to extend their hegemonic ideology in neo-liberalism through mechanisms of coercion and consent (Cox 2002; Taylor 2004).

This study will embark from these theoretical presuppositions and offer the suggestion that a practical mission of rural capacity building can be thought of as an instance of consensual practices working to portray ideological practice as common sense. We will suggest how this works more thoroughly in the next chapter. Now it is time to present Foucault’s concept governmentality in a similar manner to this presentation.

**Governmentality**

The use of Foucault’s concept governmentality has in the 1990’s proliferated throughout the social sciences and, more recently, in various international fields of study (Larner and Walters 2004). The theoretical framework guiding these investigations has varied considerably, perhaps due to Foucault’s indeterminism as to his own epistemological and ontological foundations (Lukes 2005) or perhaps since he’s remarks on the governmentality concept was ‘rather provisional’ (Gould 2005a:65). This section will draw for the most part on Foucault’s genealogical period, from 1979 and onwards, where he’s work started to move away from structuralism (Fairclough 1992), and governmentality scholars elaborating on the notions of power, agency and structures in his work.
Instead of thinking of a historical structure as a specific combination of institutions, ideas and material capabilities, Foucault used the concept discourse. Discourse as explained by Foucault’s early works, ‘constitutes the object of knowledge, social subjects and forms of “self”, social relationships, and conceptual frameworks’ (Fairclough 1992:39). A discourse embodies rules for making some statements (assertions, questions, utterances) possible and others impossible. It also embodies rules for objects of knowledge and subject positions (ibid.). These rules determine the episteme which implies the epistemological field that denotes the forms of knowledge and statements that are accepted as valid and true (Peet 2000). Discourses, then, allows for certain forms of knowledge and truths pertaining to a particular domain, while disabling other forms of knowledge and truths. The episteme for the medical discourse, for instance, previously incorporated methods based on occult rituals while today they are for the most part excluded from the epistemological field. Discourses produce, transform and reproduce these forms of knowledge and in this constitutive way, ‘discourse is in an active relation to reality … language signifies reality in the sense of constructing meaning for it’ (Fairclough 1992:42). These transformations of knowledge are pictured as an effect of relations between discourses, but also of non-discursive practices. For instance, ‘economic discourse, in the Classical period, is defined by a certain constant way of relating possibilities of systematization interior to a discourse, other discourses that are exterior to it, and a whole non-discursive field of practices, appropriation, interests and desires’ (Foucault 1972:69).

In this early period Foucault treated subjects in the same way; they are positioned by the rules of discourses. Thus subjects are also produced, reproduced and transformed through discourses and discursive interlinkages. In this way, as Fairclough (1992:45) recognizes, Foucault positions ‘subjects as an effect of discourse’ whereby he ‘excludes active social agency in any meaningful sense.’ This position is softened in his later works, and also by other governmentality scholars and, as we will see, this study will draw more on this latter period.

However, the early period is of significance for this study in that it presents a view of discourse as a selective apparatus, only certain kinds of knowledge counts as true; it constructs meaning for reality based on a particular “regime of truth”. As McCarthy realizes:

It is undeniable that any “regime of truth” involves privileging certain types of discourse, sanctioning certain ways of distinguishing true from false statements, underwriting certain techniques for arriving at the truth, according a certain status to those who
competently employ them, and so forth. In this sense, there is indeed a “political economy” of truth, as there is of any organized social activity. (1990:446)

This turns the Cartesian proposition of the autonomous individual upon its head. What we perceive as objective knowledge is what is assigned by the prevalent regime of truth pertaining to any discourse. The presupposition of positivist inspired theories that objective knowledge is attainable from a world “out there” is thus rejected here.

In later works by Foucault and other governmentality scholars, discourse is decentred in favour of power (Foucault 1991a; Dean 1999; Rose 1999). There discourse is replaced by rationalities of government. These rationalities are discursive fields that guide government. Government should not be understood here according to modern political theory, but rather as the power effects of discourse: government is the *conduct of conduct*. We will take some time to explain these concepts.

Rationalities are certain discourses that ‘attempt to bring *any* form of rationality to the calculation about how to govern’ (Dean 1999:11). Rose calls them political rationalities, and this is considered apposite since these discourses concerns rational attempts of governing people. Rose (1999:26-27) provides a more detailed picture of rationalities. He argues that ‘rationalities are characterized by regularities’ comprising (1) a moral character concerning for example how authority should be constituted and through what ideals (such as autonomy, citizenship, freedom, justice or responsibility) it should be executed; an (2) epistemological character comprising a view on the ‘spaces, persons, problems and objects to be governed’; and (3) they have a specific language. We thus arrive at a pretty complex discourse, and as an example Rose names neo-liberalism. Neo-liberalism can correspond to these regularities. The preferred constitution of authority for a neo-liberal enterprise is a minimalist state ensuring the autonomy of citizens and concerning its epistemological character it includes problems of economy while excluding problems of suicide or madness. It also has specific notions of what is true and false, what is good in society and what is not. Rationalities, then, are discourses on how to govern and as Hindess (1996) recognizes, the rationality to govern through the conduct of conduct, that is, through peoples freedoms by adjusting their behaviour, is but one rationality among others.

These rationalities are not formed by a certain number of individuals that wish to further their own aims. Foucault elaborates:
But if you ask me, 'Does this new technology of power take its historical origin from an identifiable individual or group of individuals who decide to implement it so as to further their interests or facilitate their utilisation of the social body?' then I would say 'No'. These tactics were invented and organised from the starting points of local conditions and particular needs. They took shape in piecemeal fashion, prior to any class strategy designed to weld them into vast, coherent ensembles. (Foucault 1980a:159, quoted in Lacombe 1996:338)

Rose elaborates on the example of neo-liberalism. He says that Margaret Thatcher didn’t adopt a particular political philosophy. What she did was rather to solve problems of governing by drawing on particular instruments and procedures that happened to be available both intellectually and practically. ‘But, in the course of this process, a certain rationality, call it neo-liberalism, came to provide a way of linking up these various tactics, integrating them in thought so that they appeared to partake in a coherent logic’ (Rose 1999:27).

Another characteristic of the rationalities of government are that they are ‘founded on appeals to truth’ (Peet 2000:130), and seeks to ‘establish a kind of ethical basis for its actions’ (Rose 1999:27). Rationalities cannot govern without reason, they must be rational to become accepted in society. They must have an idea concerning what problems to address and in this way rationalities adopt ‘visions and objectives of what they seek to achieve’ (Dean 1999:32)

In order to establish this ethical basis rationalities work as ‘individuating a multiplicity of attempts to rationalize the nature, means, ends, limits for the exercise of power and styles of governing, the instruments, techniques and practices to which they become linked’ (Rose 1999:28). For neo-liberalism as Dean recognizes, this rationalization occur as a critique towards the welfare state, and in favour of the market as Rose ads.

But we are not speaking of political or economic doctrines; neo-liberalism must be understood as a discourse working to underwrite certain forms of truths and subject positions while excluding others. Rose (ibid.) also explain that ‘different political forces infuse the various elements with distinct meanings, link them within distinct thematics, and derive different conclusions as to what should be done, by whom and how’. Political forces (i.e. subjects) derive conclusions out of these discourses. In other words, rationalities can be though of as working discourses instilling subjects with certain thoughts as to what is to be done, how to do it and by what means. While this link is not completely deterministic, it is what is referred to as the conduct of conduct.
The conduct of conduct can be described in quite dramatic words as the discursive techniques whereby subjects get incalculated into a specific discourse, for example neo-liberalism. Foucault names the audit and the confession as techniques which instil a form of discipline on subjects so that they become “docile bodies” (Fairclough 1992). By docile bodies Foucault meant subjects that where in alignment with the current rationality; the Christian rationalities created Christian bodies while neo-liberal rationalities create market friendly people (Williams 1999). Besides audits and confessions, these techniques work by systems of normalization (benchmarking against preferred standards) and through educatory systems and surveillance with the ultimate goal of disciplining subjects conduct (ibid.).

How effective are these discourses? The answer must depend on the specific circumstances wherein they occur. Rose (1999:51) says that ‘it is not a process in which rule extends itself unproblematically across a territory, but a matter of fragile relays, contested locales and fissiparous affiliations’. A subject is thus not per automatic governed by a particular discourse.

From here we can relate to the structure/agency debate. It is clear that these rationalities of government do not completely govern subjects per se. In another view, however, subjects are never free to determine their own becoming since ‘…resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power … one is always “inside” power, there is no “escaping it”’ (Foucault 1980b:95 in Lacombe 1996:343). Foucault thought that there was no escaping of power because power must be thought of as ‘a productive network that runs through the whole social body’ (Foucault 1980c:119). In every practice, production or employment of knowledge, argumentation or other forms of interaction power is always present. This form of power is relational and is connected to discourses. A recurrent example may clarify. Certain knowledge made the medical discourse take form and therein the doctors assumed a more “powerful” position then the patient. The doctor is now in a better position to establish what is true for the patient. From this example we can see that discourses establish relationships of power. So while not only deciding what knowledge is true, it also assigns subject positions in ever recurring power struggles. But, as understood here, discourses are not all-encompassing. While the medical discourse or the discourse of neo-liberalism may have pervasive effects, they do not determine the actions and thoughts of the patient or the citizen in all instances. In McCarthy’s (1990:459) reading this means that subjects may ‘critically and reflectively detach themselves from [cultural and institutional systems and] make creative use of whatever space for self-formation they permit or provide’. And on this we agree here if he means that subjects can revolt against a certain discourses and their powers of subjectification but we do
not agree if he means that subjects can ignore discourses altogether. Subjects are constituted through various discourses, they must work through regimes of truths when understanding themselves and others. Thus, subjects are not totally dominated by a particular discourse but they are neither autonomous. Discourses themselves, are, as exemplified with Thatcher above, created through human activity and we thus argue that one must think of the relationship between discourses and subjects as one of mutual dependence.

**Power revisited**

We have noted two things about power. The first is that power can be thought of as the conduct of conduct, and the second is that power exists in every form of human interaction. It is now time to broaden this view.

While Gramsci and Cox theorized how power operates in quite specific locales, employing a view of power to reach an understanding of specific social, economic and political processes, Foucault sought a transhistorical understanding of power (Sum 2004). This coupled with the extraction of the normative commitment present in the writings of Gramsci and Cox gives Foucault’s elaborations of power a largely different focus even though all authors treats power as relational. We noted earlier that power should be understood as present in interactions. The subject cannot escape these networks of power, but equal weight should be given to the fact that power, in the form of the conduct of conduct, cannot be exercised should there not be a degree of freedom for the subject (Hindess 1996). This is so because the conduct of conduct ‘must operate through their [i.e. subjects] capacity to regulate their own behaviour’ (ibid:105) and should behaviour be totally dominated by some form of power imposition, then it would be impossible to work upon someone’s conduct.

On this matter Foucault (1988) distinguishes between three modalities of power. He characterizes the first of these as a strategic game between liberties. These relationships of power require a degree of freedom on part of the subject and are thought to be unstable and reversible. In comparison with the neo-Gramscian theory we can say that this form of power exist in event-time structures, outside of extreme forms of domination. Foucault gives an example of the unstableness of these powers:

[T]hat I am older and that at first you were intimidated can, in the course of the conversation, turn about and it is I who can become intimidated before someone, precisely because he is younger. (1988:12)
The second modality of power is domination. This type can be thought to be exercised in situations when the subjects ‘margin of liberty is extremely limited’ (ibid.). In these situations, argues Hindess (1996), the dominators are more likely to force their will on the dominated. The third modality of power, which is most central to our concerns here, is what Foucault called government. This modality, which he preferred to situate in between the other two, refers to the conduct of conduct. While this includes the government of the self and many different rationalities of government our concern here will be on liberal rationalities and the government of others conduct.

We have explained how the conduct of conduct is bound up with rationalities that guide techniques aiming at disciplining bodies in order to align with rationalities. We also noted that the design of rationalities are formed from scattered sources and over time wielded into coherent ensembles. It may now be added that this can be thought of as a rather impersonal and even unconscious power. A liberal rationality seek ‘to ensure that people’s public and private behaviour will be conducted according to appropriate standards of civility, reason and orderliness’ (Hindess 1996:130). A subject may embody fragments of this rationality in the form of customs, norms and conceptions of the “good” in society and should a subject stray away from these, be it a criminal or a non-liberal southern country farmer, subjects acting connected to a liberal rationality may try to correct these malfunctions (cf. Williams 1999), but these corrections does not have to be perceived as an explicit attempt to discipline peoples conduct. For example, while a World Bank employee connects to various discourses as a consequence of systems of belief, working climate and schooling etc., s/he do presumably not try to incalculate others into these very discourses when educating Tanzania’s Ministry of Finance personnel in database software. Rather, these educatory practices are employed on subjects in order to correct their agency. They are taken to lack certain qualities that must be satisfied in order to reach stipulated policy goals set up by aid agencies (Gould 2005a). To be able to be partners in the PRSP process, subjects must acquire skills to govern themselves properly in the sense of contributing with statistical data, economic performance outputs and various reports. Through audits they must also have strategic arguments for their policy choices and show expected economic pay offs and balance sheets corresponding to BWIs technocratic indicators of progress. And to communicate they must acquire a vocabulary corresponding to the needs of these practices. The simple argument is that an abundance of these technocratic exercises may through repetition over time instil a form of self-governmental discipline on subjects. But, as Miller and Rose (1990:10) recognizes,
‘government is a congenitally failing operation’; the conduct of conduct does not always produce preferred results, individual traits, personal desires, conflicting discourses etc. may hamper these practices. Hence, while speaking of a form of socialization, the assumption is, on the one hand, that these practices are inherently uncertain, and on the other, that these practises can be traced (though perhaps not directly, and not solely) back to rationalities embraced by the international institutions that have a specific view of how subjects should conduct their conduct. This is why it is claimed that this form of power can be understood as rather impersonal; though these subjects may be disciplined through these activities it may not be through the specific intention of the subjects involved in these practices. Furthermore, in these interactions it is possible for ‘subjects to be formed by practices of which they might be unaware, and to which their consent is neither given nor withheld’ (Li 2007:25). One can in this way say that this form of power can work on an unconscious level.

Finally, we will have a look at the non-discursive realm. Cox and Gramsci had a view of economics as being a vital determinant of a historical structure. Foucault and other scholars in this tradition do not share this assumption. For Foucault (1991b) economics, as any other social concept, is discursively understood. Thus it is not theorized as a determinant per se. But symbols acquire meaning through discourse and in modern society economics are treated as powerful. Foucault argues that discourse can be studied in correlation to extradiscursive dependencies such as the ‘whole play of economic, political and social changes’ (ibid:58). This is taken to imply here that the extradiscursive dependencies should be studied situationally; dependencies should be practically explored and not treated as given.

**Summary: an initial comparison between theories**

The presentation of how these theories think of power, agency and structures reveals both similarities and disparities. On part of the former, the basic ontology of power seems to be rather alike; power is relational and can never be reduced to a material phenomenon. Furthermore, the two theories work under the assumption that the subject cannot act autonomously. In neo-Gramscian language, we are always bound up to historical structures influencing our thoughts and behaviour, and in Foucauldian, relations of power are present in every form of interaction. On part of the latter, neo-Gramscian theory pay a great deal of attention towards economics since material capabilities is a vital determinant for a historical structure. Foucault, on the other hand, would not treat the economy as a determinant. Rather,
the meaning or truth assigned to economy is a discursive construction and must thus be analyzed instead of treated as a determinant.

Another disparity is the notion of agency. Neo-Gramscians sees a dominant class trying to extend their particular ideology through coercion and consent whereas Foucault sees ideologies as part of rationalities of government and the governing of subjects to suit a certain rationality through the use of techniques is not confined to merely a dominant class; rather, a rationality is a discourse through which subjects understand reality why techniques – which may have the effect of disciplining subjects - are understood as the most rational behaviour. It is thus a meta-narrative of the operations of power which leaves open questions of actor constellations such as a transnational managerial class or other political forces.

The last disparity is that of consciousness. Gramsci was quite explicit in that he ‘appreciated power relations that recruited subjects not by duping them, but by producing emergent interests through compromises, consent and coercion’ (Moore 2005:11). This view rests on the assumption that subjects will consciously accept an ideology due to the elaboration of ‘certain modes of behaviour and expectations consistent with the hegemonic social order’ (Cox 1983:164). In our interpretation of governmentality, it is thought that subjects are disciplined into a certain mode of behaviour perhaps without a conscious acceptance.

**A critical note**

The critique levelled against these theories concerns the areas where they most strongly depart. For instance, Sum (2004:3) argues that Cox ‘tends towards economism’ and undervalues ‘ideas, agency and identities’ in his elaboration of historical structures. It is argued that Cox’s leans towards the Marxist interpretation where the economic base rules over cultures, discourses and ideologies in the superstructure (de Goede 2003). Another critique concerns class identity. While class consciousness belongs to the political realm, class identity is thought to precede the political and be presented as a “brute fact” as a consequence of material forces of production (ibid.). As Laclau and Mouffe (in ibid.) realizes, this is highly problematic. These two authors align with Foucault and conclude that ‘[t]hese processes of identification are not exhaustive determined by material circumstances, but have to be articulated through contingent and political discourses.’ (ibid:90). Foucault, on the other hand, is criticised for focusing on ‘micro-capillaries of power’ (Sum 2004:4) articulated in rationalities and techniques and leaving open the ‘actual effectivity of discourses or
disciplines in some situations rather than others’. Sum also argues that a meticulous account of how power operates is favoured over the agency behind implementation of these. In essence, ‘Foucault can tell us something about the how of power but is far less informative about the why of power and its contribution to particular forms of social domination (ibid.).

This criticism is sound. These scholars are right in that the governmentality theory omits constellations of political forces, and that the structural backbone of Gramsci’s and Cox’s theorizing is highly problematic. But we are applying these theories in the spirit that both of them can provide some critical insights about how the discursive practices of the Bretton Woods institutions work to mould a specific form of development. Though partial or problematic their insights for this case may be valuable in their own right. Thus we will retain their specificities, reformulate them to be applicable to a discourse analytical framework, and conduct an analysis where we leave open the power effects of the analysed discursive practices. Thereafter we will pick up the discussion of the suitability of these theories in understanding the specific social processes analysed.
Translating theories into a discourse analytical framework

A critical assumption for this study is that discourses are powerful. From a neo-Gramscian point of view, discursive practice may help elaborate on ‘certain modes of behaviour and expectations consistent with the hegemonic social order’ (Cox 1983:163-4), making it appear as ‘common sense’. This may happen, for instance, by downplaying political issues to the realm of expertise or by excluding contentious knowledge and pictures of the world. This is certainly true from a governmentality point of view also, but here discourses can also be seen to reshape the identities of subjects to fit specific rationalities. The object of this study is to approach the subject in the discourses of development as embodied in the BWIs PRSP approach from both these views of power. A discourse analysis will be conducted whereafter one example of discursive practice in a capacity building mission will be exemplified. Thereafter the two theories versions of power will be brought in to explain these events through their theoretical premises. For this to be possible it is vital, not that the power effects of discourse are the same, but rather the ontology so that we can fit them into the same discourse analytical framework. Another point that needs clarification is how the connection between discourse and discursive practice should be thought of as pertaining to the theories. Thus we will attempt to translate these theories into this framework and along the way we will deal with their particularities.

Before the translation some explanations as to how discourse can be understood and how the concept differs between the theories are required. As a starting point we may say that discourses for Foucault works in a way of ‘representing reality in one particular way rather than in other possible ways, constitute subjects and objects in particular ways, create boundaries between the true and the false, and make certain types of action relevant and others unthinkable’ (Phillips & Jørgensen 2002:145). It should be recognized that Foucault has contributed greatly to many popularized discourse analytical methods prevalent today (e.g. Fairclough 1992; 2003), and the word translation may be dysfunctional for governmentality as rationalities are already thought of as discourses. Rather, we will attempt to adjust the concept of rationalities to correspond to discourses of development. For our other theory, the very notion of discourse is not picked up by neither Gramsci nor Cox. However, as we will motivate in the “Translating neo-Gramscian IR theory” section, discourse can be held to correspond to Cox’s collective images and intersubjective meanings as envisaged in his heuristic devises.
If this argument is accepted then we have some important differences to deal with if we are to put these two notions of discourse in the same framework. The first difference concerns economics. Gramsci and Cox believe that material capabilities, or economics, follow an own logic, separated from discourse and, following the framework sketched up by Cox (1981), heavily influences discourse. This latter standpoint approximates Fairclough’s discourse analysis where discourse is separated from, but interacting with, a domain of social practice (Fairclough 1992). On part of governmentality we have argued that the meaning of economics should be understood as discursively dependent and thus not as a determinant. The importance of economics for any discourse should instead be studied situationally. This study is delimited to focus on how the respective theories view the articulation and constitution of power in the discourses of development, and to suggest how these work to “frame” subjects whom are subjected to discursive practice, but not to proceed with attempts to empirically verify whether they succeed or not in this endeavour. On this note we do not have to choose one particular view; the analysis is not dependant on whether the BWIs material capabilities makes it easier to frame subjects or not. Instead, to loosely follow a method of translation from Phillips and Jørgensen (2002:157-163), we will let the field of economics dependencies, which are profound between the BWIs and some of the recipient states (e.g. Harrison 2004), provide the background context wherein the analysis will be conducted, and after the analysis be brought back in in a discussionary manner.

Another point that needs to be clarified is how these theories conceptualize how discourses interact with subjects. In the meta-theoretical sections of this paper we tried to situate both theories in the structure and agency debate. Now it is argued that if conceptualizing social structures as discourses then these theories would end up in pretty much the same position when it comes to how discourses affects subjects and vice versa. Discourses are formed by human activity and human beings are shaped and reshaped through discourse. In essence, we argued for a picture of a mutual dependency between these notions. Discourses should not be perceived as totally determining subjects; they rather ‘constitute and constrain the limits of what is politically possible’ (Gill 2003:42). Thus the “real life” effects that discourses have are characterized in a similar way for these theories. But we do have some differences pertaining to the extension of specific discourses and acceptance of these. The neo-Gramscian understanding of the matter is that discourses, through consensual practices, can take the form of common sense; through these practices, perceptions, cognitions and preferences are reshaped so that subjects actively accept a certain ideology. It is perceived as the best option. Furthermore, in this understanding discourses are actively extended by
certain actors. In the governmentality framework we have seen that people can be disciplined in an unconscious manner and the techniques embodied in specific agents conducting discursive practices such as audits, benchmarking or surveillance does not actively seek to extend a certain discourse. These are differences that concern the materiality of discourse; if and how they can be perceived and managed. This is exactly the difference between these two theories concerning their understanding of power.

Why do we have these differences? For one thing, one must remember that Cox and Gramsci theorized about big fields of knowledge. It concerned the acceptance of the ideology of the bourgeoisie or the extension of a neo-liberal ideology by a transnational elite. This fits well with the source of Gramsci’s understanding of power; Machiavelli’s (1971) *The Prince* was a detailed manual to be used by the king in order to secure leadership through acts of force and compassion. In addition we have seen the Marxist heritage of Cox in the sense that he comes close to embracing the economic base/superstructure claim where those who hold the material forces of production can control social structures. In contrast, Foucault was interested in what Sum calls micro-capillaries of power; an account of power that can answer to every form of interaction in human practices. This may explain why neo-Gramscians argue that those who hold more resources should in some way be more powerful in determining discourse. Hence we should probably not perceive all discursive changes as brought about by an active acceptance from subjects. Instead it is suggested that this theorizing should be restricted to the field for where it was intended: the ‘manipulative and passivity-inducing effects of elite-dominated politics’ (Robinson 2005:469).

But for our specific case, the discourses of development where ideological practices and material asymmetries are prominent, the assumptions of conscious acceptance and intentional practices provides an interesting counterpoint to the assumptions of the governmentality theory. These differences thus provide us with the basis for understanding power differently and both must be treated as possible.

**Translating neo-Gramscian IR theory**

We will here translate the neo-Gramscian theory into discourse analytical terms. The importance of economics has been bracketed and will instead be regarded as providing the background setting wherein the discourse analysis will be conducted. It has also seen that the theories position in the structure and agency debate is rather alike, but due to their different heritages and focuses they have different assumptions as to materiality of discourse. This is
what results in different arguments concerning the nature of power and will thus be retained. We have also suggested that Cox’s collective images and intersubjective meanings can correspond to discourse. Cox (1981:136) argue that intersubjective meanings imply ‘shared notions of the nature of the social relations which tend to perpetuate habits and expectations of behaviours … and constitute the common ground for social discourse’. Collective images, on the other hand, are ‘differing views as to both the nature and the legitimacy of prevailing power relations, the meanings of justice and public good, and so forth.’ (ibid.). Thus collective image on the notion of nationalism may include a view of the world as divided into nations, subjects are thought of as belonging to a particular nation, while excluding other forms of knowledge such as the law on absolute advantages and of the subject as rational and profit maximising. And these do perpetuate behaviour in different instances. They designate and direct attention to specific forms of knowledge where different explanations and different truths are sanctioned while others are not. These two categories taken together may correspond to the Foucauldian understanding of discourse, for discourse also perpetuate habits and expectations and it contain rules as to what knowledge designates the *episteme* of nationalism for instance. A correspondence is thus claimed, but this does not mean that Foucault’s rules for discourse formations, interlinkages and dependencies, which we have only commented upon very briefly, correspond. In fact, we do know that there can be no proper correspondence due to the attention towards economics as a determinant for Cox. But as these rules are linked to their understanding of power, which are to be retained and discussed after the analysis, we need not pursue these rules any further.

The next step is to incorporate power into discourse. Here, the idea of a struggle for hegemony through consensual powers is considered appropriate to translate into discursive terms. Thus focus will be on the consensual practices which aim at trying to elaborate on ‘certain modes of behaviour and expectations consistent with the hegemonic social order’ (Cox 1983:164). It has been noted that this can be achieved by rendering political issues as non-political and by emphasising advantages as apposed to disadvantages of the policy regime, and through the infusion of preferred norms via media and through the education system. Many of these practices are discursive, i.e. they depend on language (spoken, texts and gestures). The BWIs are here assumed as the agents behind these consensual practices as they are clearly theorized as a nodal point within the transnational managerial class (Taylor 2004).

The analysis will be two pronged in the sense that the discourses of development will be textually analysed first and thereafter an example of discursive practice will have its turn. This
approach bases itself on the argument that the discourses of the BWIs may tell us something about the discursive practices in capacity building missions employed by subjects working in these institutions. This argument is somewhat difficult to put forth as subjects are not treated as totally determined by social structures; their actions may not be completely in alignment with the dominant discourses of the BWIs. Thus, we take the discourses of development to be indicative of discursive practices, but not determining. The example of discursive practice that will be analyzed will be spelled out more clearly after adjusting the governmentality theory.

**Adjusting governmentality**

The theoretical structure and notions of power embodied in the concept of governmentality do not need the same translation as the neo-Gramscian theory did. This is so because rationalities correspond directly to discourse why the notions of power are already thought to work in and among discourses. However, it is appropriate to adjust the theory to be applicable to this study and this concerns particularly the relationship between discourses and discursive practice and a comment on the importance of texts in this setting.

The analysis will begin with an analysis of discourse through texts. We must thus relate our understanding of rationalities and techniques to texts. Rose mentioned that political rationalities conform to certain regularities concerning the constitution of authority and the spaces of government. We have also mentioned that rationalities links with political forces in the sense that subjects understand themselves and society through specific working discourses reflecting customs, norms and conceptions of the “good”. Studies of rationalities concerns the historical transformations of Foucault’s *episteme*, that is, ‘the epistemological field that allows for the production of what counts for knowledge at any given moment, and which accords salience to particular categories, divisions, classifications relations and identities’ (Poovey 1995:3). In this terrain, language, including texts, has principally two functions. First, language makes these epistemological fields describable; we can analyze truth and knowledge claims, not in the sense of what a specific word means, but rather how texts makes certain knowledges and authorities possible while excluding other possibilities (Rose 1999). As Rose (1999:31) argues, ‘it is, most often, at this vulgar, pragmatic, quotidian and minor level [i.e. texts] that one can see the language and techniques being invented that will reshape understandings of the subjects and objects of government’

Second, language makes government, in the sense of the conduct of conduct, possible. (ibid.) Most of the techniques originally charted by Foucault such as the audit and the
confession are of a discursive character and would not be possible without language. These techniques are what we refer to as discursive practices here. The link between discourse and discursive practices embodied in political forces is theorized as ‘a congenitally failing operation’ (Miller and Rose 1990:10). Miller and Rose envisage forms of ‘flexible associations [which] may be established between agents across time and space’ through the adoption of ‘shared vocabularies, theories and explanations’, but, as they recognize, these techniques ‘produce unexpected problems [and] are utilized for their own ends by those who are supposed to merely operate them’ (ibid:10-11). Thus, while approaching discourses of the BWIs we are cautioned not to assume that BWI employees are fully in alignment with these.

From this discussion one can draw two conclusions. First, rationalities are visible in texts. Second, texts and language are the means through which techniques work. From texts we may thus perceive what forms of rationalities are in play and a link towards discursive practice of these institutions can also be assumed, however imperfect or weak.

**Analytical methods and Empirical Material**

Phillips and Jørgensen (2002:162) argue that during translation, theories of social practice, such as our theories here, may ‘establish a preliminary idea’ as to where to look for relevant discourses to analyze, and may also provide suggestions of the content of these discourses which can be translated into focal points for further investigation. Our interest is already zoomed in on the discourses of development, and particularly on the BWIs which are the creators of the PRSP process why we can expect to find the discourses articulated in their central texts. Thus one focal point concerns the analysis of the discourses of development, and the second concerns one practical example of discursive practice. It was stated in the introduction of this study that the practical example will concern an instance of capacity building which includes skill optimizing training modules in rural Rwanda. Both our theories suggest that power may work through such discursive practices. From a governmentality perspective Abrahamsen (2004:1460) argue that subjects are acted upon through empowerment where ‘subjects are committed to a range of normalizing, therapeutic and training mechanism’ which, Lie (2006:16) fills in, ‘is actually a means to inscribe recipients into a particular discourse, or mentality of development enabling them to control themselves’. On part of the neo-Gramscian theory it has been argued that one can infuse preferred norms via media and through the education system ‘leading subjects to consent by identifying their particular interests with a general, more universalizing one’ (Moore 2005:11). Scholars from

This study will take note of these insights but the focal point of the discourse analysis will be the subject in discourse as the articulation of subjects is assumed to shed light on the discursive practices within capacity building missions. But the particular ideological or political content is of interest as it may speak of the subject in discourse, for economical models and philosophical arguments are often based on a specific view of the subject (e.g. Blaug 1992), and these models has a way of filtering into policy advocacy documents such as those that will be analyzed here\(^3\). If a text embraces one particular theoretical structure but does not explicitly address the subject, which many policy documents does not do, then it is helpful to have a predefined theoretical structure as a benchmark when trying to locate the subject. The above scholars argue for a neo-liberal theoretical structure, but liberalism is comprehensive and there is disagreement within liberal schools on many issues (e.g. Hall 1987). Liberalism will thus be narrowed down to a working ideology informing economical models and political practices concentrated around the three interrelated, though contested, notions of state neutrality, citizen’s rights and the rational subject (Williams and Young 1994). These three notions have an important place within many economic models (Blaug 1992), including some employed by the BWIs (Williams 1999). The relationship between these notions can be caricatured as follows: Liberalism favours rights over the good, since it is taken to be philosophically impossible to choose between different conceptions of the good (ibid.). As a consequence, the state ‘should not reward or penalize particular conceptions of the good life but, rather, should provide a neutral framework within which different and potentially conflicting conceptions of the good can be pursued’ (Kymlicka 1989:1). This neutral framework should seek to protect the rights of citizens which are commonly grouped in the three following clusters: civil rights denoting the equality of all before the law and the right to liberty; political rights to influence political processes through voting; and socioeconomic rights to education, good health and nutrition in order to have a standard of life shared by all citizens (Hindess 2002). There is considerable disagreement concerning which of these rights citizens should have and how these are to be secured, but in liberal theory it is common to emphasise the two former in favour of the latter (ibid; Evans and Ayers 2006). This, in turn, favours a conception of the subject as rational and utility maximizing.

\(^3\) Cf. Williams and Young (1994:92) who, following Sandel (1992), has gone on to argue that institutions ‘are in a real sense embodiments of theory’.
According to Williams there are debates within this theorizing as to whether rationality embodied in the pursuit of self interest, on the one hand, is a consequence of human nature or not, and on the other, whether this is the way people actually behave or if it is necessary to assume in order to produce economical models. Notwithstanding these discussions, the rational subject is employed in many economical models which have the theoretical effects of producing internally alike subjects without cultural traits, best served by a free-market regime where they can work to secure their own aims in competition with others on exactly the same terms (Williams 1999).

The point of using this model as a benchmark is that it requires certain capacities of subjects; in theory it requires rationality. In policy documents, however, it is unlikely that subjects are articulated as rational. Should they be then there would be no need for the educatory components that we will review as subjects could ‘truck, barter and exchange’ (Smith 1986:117) if only suitable background conditions were in place. Rather, as our two theories argue, subjects must be worked upon to align themselves with the dominant discourse. Thus, state neutrality or a liberal conception of rights does not denote that the texts envisage subjects as rational, but rather that the texts are influenced by economical models which require suitable capacities if subjects are to function in the society envisaged by these models; a liberal market regime. We can thus, as a consequence of the link between discourse and discursive practice, begin to understand the goals of skill optimization by analyzing whether these liberal notions are visible in the discourse or not. However, Foucault (1980b:101-2) has emphasised that ‘[d]iscourses are tactical elements or blocks operating in the field of force relations; there can exist different and even contradictory discourses within the same strategy; they can, on the contrary, circulate without changing their form from one strategy to another, opposing strategy’. Quite simply, discourses are not easily investigated and to suggest that the whole apparatus of development as embodied in the BWIs draws on but one discourse is to simplify the case. Fairclough (2003:124), who has elaborated on Foucaults ‘messiness’ of discourse argue that ‘discourses differs in their degree of repetition, commonality, stability over time, and in what we might call their ‘scale’, i.e. in how much of the world they include’. Texts of these institutions may have diverging views as to how subjects are spoken of and how they are to be acted upon. It may in this sense be possible to discern different voices in texts, different discourses that connect to a particular word, such as the citizen, the worker or the poor. Thus, Phillips and Jørgensen (2002:151) argue that one can approach the analysis of discourse by posing questions such as ‘[w]hat characterizes the different voices of the text? When does each voice speak? What meanings do the different
voices contribute to producing?’ By posing such questions we can begin to categorize how subjects are understood differently.

The strategy employed here approaches the subject from two directions. First, an analysis against the benchmark of liberalism will be conducted. By focusing on the proposed policies of the PRSP sourcebook concerning state neutrality and the rights of citizens we may, as argued, begin to understand what the goal of skill optimization is. But, this strategy does not in any detail describe how subjects are to be worked upon; it can only tell us in what kind of society subjects are required to function. Even if discourses are based on economical models craving a rational subject it is not proven by causality that subjects are skill optimized to reach this theorized state of rationality. Furthermore, as the above scholars suggest, any text may be embodied by multiple discourses approaching subjects with different articulations. Two strategies need to be employed if we are to understand skill optimization better. First, in order to single out the most prominent discourses, the strategy comparison is employed (Phillips and Jørgensen 2002), which amounts to comparing different but related texts to each other in order to build an apprehension of salience in discourses. It will allow for an investigation as to whether the benchmark holds over several texts.

Second, subjects also need to be approached more directly because a dominant discourse does not tell us very much of the desired skills subjects must acquire. By analyzing texts one can render clearer what specific capacities subjects are thought to require. This can be done by treating the subject as a *nodal point* (the center) which different *floating signifiers* (categories) of the subject such as “the poor” or “the worker” seek to fixate the meaning of (cf. Phillips and Jørgensen 2002). These signifiers then work to link the subject to other elements in discourses; the poor may be associated with hunger and the worker with productivity for instance. By analyzing how these signifiers are articulated and how they are connected to different forms of capacitates and requirements, which may be visible in texts, we may further the understanding of what skills the desired subject should acquire.

Thereafter it is time to provide one example of how consensual practices, or governmental techniques, works to enable the desired subject as suggested by the previous analysis. In practical terms, this involves a content analysis of two manuals of skill optimization that will be textually referred to and commented upon during analysis. Thus, to clarify, after translation and towards the analysis our two theories converge into a discourse analysis and example of skill optimization in a capacity building mission to rural Rwanda. But, we emphasize, these practices can be understood separately according to both theories with all their presented differences. Thus, for instance, techniques of capacity building can, as
well as being an output from agents operating from rationalities or working discourses without the explicit intent of incalculating subjects into a specific discourse, also be the work of conscious construction with the aim of creating specific preferences for subjects so that they would accept an ideology as common sense. One can in this vein understand the powers that emanates from these discourses according to the assumptions of any one of the two theories. In this way, we will not conduct separate analyses, but rather keep them together in one framework where theoretical comparisons are withheld in favour of the analytical strategies. Then, after the analysis, the theories will be brought in for a discussion on how helpful these theories are in understanding the discursive practices which have materialized during the analysis of the partnership regime.

The discourse analysis will thus be conducted as providing the groundwork for understanding skill optimization but it must be stressed that no causal links are argued for. Subjects conducting skill optimizing training are not governed by one discourse, rather, how subjects connects up to specific discourses is a complex affair where individual traits such as political affiliation and personal interests may have profound impact. However, while we shy away from these casual links it is argued that an analysis of this kind may provide valuable information into how subjects are persuaded into specific discourses which, if one allows, can be understood as a form of power that governs without the direct presence of power as domination and despite the notions of “partnership” and “ownership”.

**Empirical material**

The empirical material will be gathered from the website of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Predominantly the material will revolve around the very large guide book which is supposed to be used as ‘a guide to assist countries in the development and strengthening of poverty reduction strategies’ (World Bank 2007a). The book includes chapters on all areas of policy why it provides a good understanding of the discourse of development with its correlative articulation of subjects as present in the PRSP initiative. But attention will also be given to capacity building and learning documents as the assumption is that those particular documents may embody notions of the capacities and requirements of subjects. Finally, we will delve into a more detailed description of a joint World Bank UNDP capacity building project conducted in rural Rwanda in 2004 which contains detailed skill optimizing training modules.
Analysis: the discourses of development in the PRSP regime

This analysis will be divided into three parts. The first part is a short introduction where we comment on the economical asymmetries that prevail between recipient countries and the BWIs in this partnership regime. These asymmetries are not part of the discourse analysis but considered during the summing up discussion. The second part covers the discourses of development focusing on the articulation of subjects as present in the PRSP regime. Lastly, one practical example of how powers can be thought to operate to change behaviour and preferences for subjects is presented.

The introduction of the partnership formula: prevailing asymmetries

Just before the turn of the millennium the then World Bank President Wohlfensohn introduced the Comprehensive Development Framework, a new strategy for doing development which was to be operationalized in country owned Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers. The World Bank (2004:3) argues that this strategy is:

- Country-driven, involving broad-based participation
- Comprehensive in recognizing the multi-dimensional nature of poverty
- Results-oriented and focused on outcomes that benefit the poor
- Partnership-oriented, involving coordinated participation of development partners
- Based on a long-term perspective for poverty reduction.

It is comprehensive in two respects. The first is the assertion that ‘PRSPs should serve as the framework for all external assistance geared toward poverty reduction’ (World Bank 2004:2-3). To achieve this end the World Bank and the IMF has harmonized their efforts through the PRSP strategy and bilateral donors and NGOs are urged to align their funding or assistance with the process as well. In this way, cross-conditionalities which occur when recipient states are obliged to provide proof of certain policy standards to several development agencies decrease whereby countries can concentrate on policy matters instead of administrative procedures (Gould 2005b). A further intention of this strategy is to incorporate the civil society (both local groups and international NGOs) in the production of the PRSPs through
selective participation on formulation, implementation and monitoring of policy matters (Hopkins et al. 2000). The second respect in which the strategy is to be comprehensive is the aim to incorporate a wide range of policy issues, not just those related to poverty reduction (ibid.). In this way the PRSPs will be the central document that guides development planning for the recipient countries. This document will be written by the countries themselves, although in close collaboration with donor officials and the civil society (Harrison 2004). These changes can be summed up in a recognition that ownership is needed in order to ensure progress in development. Indeed, the IMF (2001:7) holds that ‘ownership is critically important for successful implementation of policy reforms’. Through partnership countries are to take responsibility for their own policies and “own” their development. Thus the new strategy signals a move away from donor-driven top-down policies towards a bottom-up perspective (Lie 2006). Indeed, it signals the end of a power as domination.

However, the relationship between recipient countries and the BWIs is still asymmetric which places strains on the notions of partnership and ownership. If one by asymmetry denotes economical dependence then the degree of asymmetry differ between countries. In Tanzania 30 % of the GDP depended on external aid during the 1990s, and in fiscal year 2002-3 55 % of the national budget of Uganda was constituted by external aid. (Harrison 2004). In 1994 half of the development assistance towards Uganda came from the BWIs and in 1995 and 1996 this figure was about one third (ibid.). Thus, poor countries are severely dependant on external funding and the BWIs are a major provider. Another cause for asymmetry is the fact that the BWIs have the final say when it comes to approving the countries PRSPs (Lie 2005). This is why the BWIs have the ability to continue to attach conditionalities to loan agreements. Some of the conditionalities on macro-economic performance introduced in the structural adjustment era are still there but under a new name; the Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility has now been renamed to the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (IMF 2004).While conditionalities still exist, they are indeed dropping in partnership regimes. In this way, they exist in parallel with notions of ownership and partnership. Furthermore, the PRSPs are not optional, they are obligatory if the states are to receive debt relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative (World Bank 2004). The BWIs have also introduced surveillance mechanisms so that they, donors and civil society can continuously audit governmental performance. Concerning expenditure, the countries are to align their budgets to what is called a Medium-term Expenditure Framework which has to be in line with certain criteria produced by the IMF, and under a Public
Expenditure Review public accounts are to be made available for donors so that they can routinely audit expenditures (Gould 2005b).

The conditionality system has been modernised in certain respects. Harrison (2004:74) argue that reforms are perused ‘more in the fashion of a “carrot” than a “stick”’. This can be seen on many levels and perhaps most evident in the Performance-Based Allocation System where funds area allocated according to a grading system. If a country performs well on 16 criteria concerning economic management, structural policies, policies for social inclusion/equity and public sector management and institutions, they will receive more money (IDA 2004; 2006). The carrot can also be seen in a desire to fund specific projects (Harrison 2004). This concerns mainly the three pillars of knowledge creation: capacity building, technical assistance and education. It has been realized that a certain knowledge is required to strengthen institutions and defeat corruption. The priorities for technical assistance differs between countries but they often include initiatives (i) to deregulate the economy, (ii) to reform public sector management in areas such as customs, tax administration, or the civil service, (iii) to strengthen "accountability" institutions such as audit bodies, anti-corruption commissions, or the judiciary and/or (iv) to decentralize government structure to bring services closer to the people. (World Bank 2007b)

These practices target both the governmental level (e.g. East AFRITAC 2005) and local areas (e.g. World Bank Institute and UNDP 2004) and they are accompanied by knowledge outputs, recommendations and surveillance. This goes in parallel with the World Bank’s desire to transform themselves into a “knowledge bank” with a specific intention ‘to collect, synthesize, and disseminate knowledge and make it more readily accessible to staff, clients, and partners’ (World Bank 2003a:5). With the introduction of the PRSPs the World Bank have increased their budget for Economic and Sector Work (IBRD and IDA 2001), which is the World Banks collective analytical and advisory service reviewing public and private sector financial management, openness and accountability to name a few areas. These studies feed into a Country Assistance Strategy which determines policy changes that must be conducted in order to obtain funds (Wilks and Lefrançois 2002). In addition, we have the PRSP sourcebook which the recipient countries are urged to use as a guide when composing their PRSPs (World Bank 2007a). Though loaded with advice on poverty reduction, it also presents suggestions on governance, trade and macroeconomic issues.
If we zoom in on a specific country we can see that surveillance is prominent. Tanzania has produced two PRSPs and during production donor groups, often chaired by multilateral institutions such as the World Bank or the UNDP, met with the governments for consultations on policy issues (Harrison 2004). In Tanzania donors have created a Development Partner Group (DPG) to harmonize audits and according to their mission calendar audits occur frequently and on different levels/sections of government (DPG 2007). Kelsall (2002) estimates around 1,000 donor missions to the public service in Tanzania annually, and an output of around 2,400 reports specifically for donors in the same time frame.

The point of this rather one-dimensional conceptualization of the partnership regime is not to provide a full account of the PRSP policy process. Rather it is to highlight the fact that the notion of ownership comes under a lot of strain in practice. Thus, when conceptualizing partnership in the PRSP regime, one should not, to borrow a phrase from Foucault, perceive of it as a strategic game between liberties.

**The rationality of the partnership regime**

It has been noticed that the terms partnership and ownership comes under a lot of strain as a consequence of the prevalence of conditionalities on policy output and other forms of constraints. Another form of influence is that which work through skill optimization. It has been suggested in the theoretical chapter that these practices can be understood as influencing the people subjected to them in profound ways. This section will analyse the discourses of development in the partnership regime focusing on (1) the policies, in order to understand the dominant discourses influencing the PRSP regime. Here the juxtaposition of discourses in this text with liberal theory will be used as a benchmark. Thereafter focus will be on (2) the subjects, and how they are invested with meaning and what forms of skills and knowledge subjects are thought to require.

**The policies of the partnership regime**

In order to determine the dominant discourses within the sourcebook it has been suggested that a comparison should be made with the two notions of state neutrality and a liberal conception of citizen’s rights. These two notions theoretically favour the rational and utility maximizing subject (Williams and Young 1994). However, this comparison is employed more in the sense that these theoretical notions provide a statement that subjects may be
worked upon to function in a liberal society of a neutral state with an emphasis on political and civil rights instead of socioeconomic rights, rather than claiming that subjects are worked upon to reach a theorized state of rationality. In approaching these two notions, we will take of from the “surrounding” policies in order to draw a fuller picture of the society envisaged.

The PRSP sourcebook contains much information, and the following quote from the trade chapter is representative of the whole sourcebook: ‘There is a preponderance of cross-country evidence that trade liberalization and openness to trade increase the growth rate of income and output’ (Hoekman et al. 2002:30). Extensive trade liberalization is advocated for, but in order to sustain high growth rates ‘a key objective of a country’s poverty reduction strategy should be to establish conditions that facilitate private sector investment’ as ‘capital accumulation by the private sector drives growth’ (Ames et al 2002:5). However, all public spending is not ruled out as inefficient; when markets are non-competitive public intervention may be considered rational but ‘all significant programs and projects should be subject to detailed scrutiny’ and should be noted in expenditure frameworks open for donor audits (Fozzard et al. 2002:203). Another important insight is that liberalization and privatization do not equal higher growth rates on its own, they must be followed by ‘key structural measures, such as regulatory reform … civil service reform, improved governance … and baking sector reform’ (Ames et al. 2002:4). As in the eighties, there is thus a strong belief in the market, but there is also the recognition that a good governed state is vital. For instance, when reform of economic policies has been pursued ‘without appropriate complementary policies, it has often either been reversed or has failed to stimulate growth’ (Hoekman et al. 2002:30). Similarly, ‘[w]eak governance compromises the delivery of services and benefits to those who need them most; the influence of powerful interest groups biases policies, programs and spending away from the poor’ (Girishankar et al. 2002:271). A strong state to govern the economy is thus important, as it, on the one hand, ensures the operations of the market, and on the other, provides protection against corruption for the poor who are ‘disproportionately affected by such practices’ (ibid.:273).

For a state to be governed good it has to be accountable, transparent and decentralized. Both external and internal transparency defines an accountable government. Internally, it is defined by ‘the relationship among the executive, legislature, and judiciary, and the extent to which they are able to scrutinize each other’s behaviour’ (ibid.:271). Of importance here is that ‘information based on reliable records and accounts must be generated and reported’ (ibid.:277). Furthermore, ‘[p]arliamentary oversight mechanisms such as independent audit institutions are also critical for fiduciary accountability’ (ibid.:277). Externally, the
information must be available to whoever seeks it so that the civil society and donors can be able to scrutinize governmental affairs. A solid foundation for democracy embodied in the contestability of government office and free press is also fundamental (ibid.). Accountability also increases with an independent and efficient legal system that can ensure the rights of its citizens. Thus a transparent judicial system where ‘[i]nformation on judicial caseloads, budgets, salaries, asset declarations, disciplinary actions and other statistics’ are made available to the public is a vital determinant for a good governed state (ibid.:289).

Another mechanism of accountability is decentralization which figures prominently in the text on the grounds that it would to a greater extent allow ‘the poor’ to participate in political and administrative processes, ‘debate and potentially influence broad policy directives, budget priorities, and program design’ (ibid.:275), and in this way ‘accountability shifts downward if household can turn to locally elected leaders to demand better public services’ (ibid.:280). The importance of these policies is manifold. Perhaps most frequently mentioned is the good these policies do in decreasing corruption which distorts the proper functioning of the market and disproportionately hurts the poor, which is achieved by all the oversight external donors and the civil society gets through the adoption of these policies. These actors become, so to speak, the checks and balances of the government.

In much the text echoes former World Bank chief economist Joseph Stiglitz critique of the Washington Consensus; that is, the consensus driving the structural adjustments in the 1980’s. He argued that the Washington Consensus ‘fail[ed] to understand the subtleties of the market economy, to understand that private property and “getting the prices right” (that is liberalization) are not sufficient to make a market economy work’ (World Bank 1998a:9). The critique did not concern the consensus as such, but rather the necessity of proper institutions and regulatory framework to guide liberalization. It can be seen in the text that this critique has been taken seriously; a good governed state to ensure the proper functioning of the market economy is of central importance. As has also been seen, an impressive system of surveillance is also advocated for. The state should be under a constant “gaze” so that it conducts its assignments properly. Thus, concerning policy advocacy, the partnership regime resembles the economical policies from the eighties and the good governance policies from the nineties.

State neutrality and citizens rights
In short, the policies of the sourcebook embrace the dictum ‘the market needs the state just as the state needs the market’ (Picciotto 1995:10), but how does the BWIs treat competing visions of the good? We have argued that in liberal theory it is emphasised that the state ‘should not reward or penalize particular conceptions of the good life but, rather, should provide a neutral framework within which different and potentially conflicting conceptions of the good can be pursued’ (Kymlicka 1989:1). This neutrality is to some extent internally embraced by the BWIs. The World Bank’s Articles of Agreements states that:

The Bank shall make arrangements to ensure that the proceeds of any loan are used only for the purposes for which the loan was granted, with due attention to considerations of economy and efficiency and without regard to political or other non-economic influences or considerations. (IBRD 1989; Article III 5b)

It thus draws a distinction between the realm of economics and that of politics. However, the sourcebook clearly promotes a specific political vision and herein the state should allow the citizen to pursue its own good within pretty liberal guidelines as set out by the state. Included in these guidelines should be the ‘development of a regime that encourages investment and competition, including openness to foreign direct investment (FDI), so that business services are supplied at competitive prices’ (Hoekman et al. 2002:30). Here ‘[t]he state plays a central role in defining and enforcing the rules governing access to private markets’ (Girishankar et al. 2002:276). More practically:

Governments may need to enact legal and regulatory reforms to deepen market access, clean up inspectorates and revenue authorities, and actively disseminate information to the poor on opportunities for employment, asset ownership, and local and international prices. (Girishankar et al. 2002:276)

Other responsibilities are also advocated fore. For instance, the sourcebook contain advice on taxation systems and redistributive policies. However, the latter policies should not be emphasized as it is argued that ‘[i]n countries that are preparing a PRSP, economic growth is more important than redistribution for improving well-being and reducing poverty’ (Wodon and Yitzhaki 2002:95). A minimalist state is thus not envisaged; good governance is fundamental. Yet within this regime of governance the state should allow citizens to pursue their own visions of the good; the market in the form of a catalyst for employment, growth
and prosperity is a cornerstone of the sourcebook. A form of neutrality is thus advocated for, but, despite the Articles of Agreement, it is also, to some extent, forced upon the recipient countries. The BWIs use their mechanisms of conditionality to ensure that some of the advocated policies are instituted. We have mentioned the Performance-Based Allocation System where funds are allocated according to a grading system. These include structural policies on trade and business environment, and governance policies on property rights, transparency and accountability (IDA 2006). In this way the BWIs limits the opportunities for other forms of social organization; should other ways of organizing the state society complex be pursued, then less funds would be allocated. Thus, they allow for neutrality and competing visions of the good life, but only after the role of the state has been defined according to the principles of good governance, and only after the social organization has been reordered to allow for a market economy (cf. Williams and Young 1994). Other forms of organization are closed of through the suggested mechanisms of conditionality and surveillance. Neutrality is thus advocated for, but only in the defined limits of an anterior conception of the good life.

The World Bank recognizes in a report on human rights that the above statement in the Articles of Agreements decrease the possibilities to tackle issues of human rights (World Bank 1998b). Yet, they claim that their approach to development works towards civic and political rights, but also socioeconomic rights. It is argued that:

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\text{The Bank contributes directly to the fulfilment of many rights articulated in the Universal Declaration. Through its support of primary education, health care and nutrition, sanitation, housing, and the environment, the Bank has helped hundreds of millions of people attain crucial economic and social rights. (ibid:3)}
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The PRSP sourcebook contain policy suggestions towards the realization of all three forms of rights. We have seen the emphasis on civil and political rights in the good governance imperative. Democracy, free press, judiciary free from corruption, transparency, accountability and participation are directly linked to ensuring the civil and political rights of citizens. There is also a rigorous emphasis on poverty, inequality, vulnerability and education; much of the sourcebook is dedicated towards suggestions of how to analyze and remedy the four just stated categories (Aoki et al. 2002; Coudouel et al. 2002). However, if looking at the language of the sourcebook then the word \textit{rights} is seldom used, and when it is it concern the right to free elections, free press and, most often invoked, the right to property (Girishankar et al. 2002); the right to organize and to do business (Dongier et al. 2002); the right to participate
and legal rights (Tikare et al. 2002). Rights are never used when it comes to hunger or living standards. The sourcebook limits itself to suggesting methods for countries to produce rigorous goals of reducing poverty themselves, but it also exhibit, separate from advocacy, an ‘overall goal of reducing poverty’ (Christiaensen et al. 2002:153). Furthermore, the Performance-Based Allocation System’s governance criteria implies that more funds are allocated should goals aiming at securing political and civic rights be satisfied, while socioeconomic rights are not advanced in the same manner. The sourcebook thus embodies the liberal stress on the two former rights while regarding the socioeconomic right more as a goal or aspiration.

**The naturalness of the market**

The BWIs are directing the recipient states into embracing neutrality under a good governed market economy were all forms of rights are advocated for but where political and civil rights are more stressed as a consequence of allocating criteria. We have said that some economical models advocated these two notions on the grounds that subject were rational why they were best served by such a regime. Such models have had an influence on BWI policies (cf. Harrison 2004) For instance, Douglass North, a forerunner of New Institutional Economics, has said that this economic theory builds on ‘choice theoretic approaches of neo-classical theory’ (in Williams 1999:85). This approach which assumes that appropriate institutions may lower transaction costs has greatly influenced the BWIs in their pursuit of good governance with an emphasis on strong institutions to defeat corruption and institute proper judicial structures (e.g. Picciotto 1995). Common for models of this kind is that they lend legitimacy to liberal market regimes since subjects are thought to be best served by it (Williams 1999). As a corollary, the installation of such arrangements is considered unproblematic in the sense that subjects does not need adjustment; they can pursue their comparative advantage and, to quote Adam Smith, ‘truck, barter, and exchange’ (1986:117), should only the right institutions be in place.

We contend here that the BWIs to some extent approach these notions. They do, of course, not embrace the theoretical notion of absolute rationality, but the sourcebook does very rarely bring up obstacles to a market regime that concern subjective attributes in the sense of traditions, culture or religion. Predominantly, obstacles concern governmental policies in developing countries, but also market distorting mechanisms such as subsidies on agricultural products from the EU and the US (Hoekman et al. 2002). It also concern
resistance towards reform by “cost bearers”. This can, for example, be bureaucrats losing in power due to decentralization, but the sourcebook gives advice on how to bypass resistance. In the field of educatory reform a useful strategy could be ‘isolating or working around cost bearers or opposition groups such as teacher’s unions by building alliances with other stakeholders, such as parents and communities, school principals, and the business community’ (Aoki et al. 2002:270). The defeat of corruption also belongs to the category of important obstructions to overcome. The last hinder, indication shortcomings in subjects, is the frequent mentioning of the lack of proper education that must be implemented in order to reach a knowledge-based economy (ibid.). Constraints or opposition to policies or education towards the good governed regime in forms of culture, tradition or religion are almost never mentioned. In this sense the sourcebook is inherently optimistic; the proposed reforms will yield the good life. This way of forgetting obstructions that concerns opposition towards reforms in other ways of life explicated through religion, cultures and traditions approaches a choice theoretic approach where subjects are rational.

However, there are some references to cultural or traditional traits of subjects which deviate from the rationality postulate, and should the rationality postulate be fully embraced then education would not be considered necessary. These categories will be the focus of the following sections approaching subjects in discourse more directly.

The subject in the partnership regime

In the section on analytical strategies above it was argued that it was possible to distinguish different signifiers of subjects in texts; signifiers that will connect subjects to other elements in discourses. The PRSP sourcebook has a visible threefold distinction of subjects. The first category, which will be omitted here, is governmental employees to whom the text is directed; the second is those who contribute to the society’s economic growth – “workers”; and the last category is “the poor”.

The Poor

The poor are awarded a particular place within the discourses of the partnership regime. Their interests, needs and characteristics are portrayed as a legitimacy device for the regime. There are three prominent ways in which they figure in the texts. The first way is that the poor
would benefit from governmental reform towards a good governed marked economy. On part of trade arguments similar to the following are common:

The link of overall growth to poverty reduction has been demonstrated both in cross-country analyses … and for individual countries. Trade liberalization can therefore be expected to help the poor overall, given the positive association between openness and growth (Hoekman et al. 2002:30)

And we have also seen that the poor are invoked as the main beneficiaries of decentralization as it enable the poor to participate in policy formulation. One principal insight of the sourcebook is that participation should be advanced during poverty diagnostics, policy formulation, budgeting, and monitoring (Tikare et al. 2002). The rationale is twofold. First, and mentioned, it is to provide policy with a higher degree and surveillance. Second, ‘[t]he PRS process is more likely to be effective if the knowledge and experience of a range of stakeholders including the poor and vulnerable groups, especially women [are incorporated]’ (ibid:239). Participation thus emerges as fundamental to the PRSP process but it is not only the poor who are to participate. Donors, private sectors, local governments, and NGOs (both local and global) are also advocated as useful participants during different stages of the strategy. In this way ownership of the policies jumps scale, both upwards as the donors ‘gain joint ownership over the PRS’ (ibid.:250), and downwards as the poor are included. These were just a couple of examples, but references to the betterment of the conditions for the poor are used very frequently in many chapters of the sourcebook.

The second way in which they are invoked concerns the harm the poor would suffer should reform not be instituted. For instance, as an argument towards trade liberalization it is realized that ‘[l]obbying and protection and subsidies engenders corruption and inefficiencies that hurt the poor’ (Hoekman et al. 2002:32) and ‘[t]he poor will be disproportionately affected by such practices [i.e. corruption]’ because ‘[i]n a corrupt government, social interests and economic priorities play little role in the allocations of public resources.’ (Girishankar et al. 2002:273). In this way, the Southeast Asian model of trade policy which, to allow for some simplification, often includes both tariff and non-tariff barriers in order to protect certain domestic interests ‘is not recommended for most developing countries given institutional capacity constraints and the risk of capture by special interests that will obtain rents’ (Hoekman et al. 2002:32). Thus, the Southeast Asian model, which has proven to be
quite successful on occasion, is associated with ‘capture by special interests’ and this ‘usually benefit powerful interest groups, not the poor’ (ibid.:31).

The third way in which they figure in the texts is that during reform great care must be taken not to cause too much harm to the poor. On this the sourcebook has a separate chapter on gender issues (Bamberger et al. 2002), many of which pertain to the transformative phases of reform. It also gives policy advice to protect the poor during trade liberalization, how to design social insurance policies, and recommends on how to conduct decentralization properly. The sourcebook is thus a very pro-poor text in its focus on the betterment of the conditions for the poor.

The invocation of the poor in this manner has the effect of assigning them a generic interest. There are some exceptions, notably passages of the Community Driven Development (CDD) chapter (Dongier et al. 2002), and the gender chapter (Bamberger et al. 2002) that diversifies the ethnicity, traditions and problems of the poor, but the predominant image serves to generalize their interest towards these particular policies. A market economy is pictured as the best way to consolidate the interests of the poor in economic growth, labour opportunities and technical modernization. This is coupled with good governance which has the dual purpose of, on the one hand, increase transparency and accountability and thereby decrease corruption while also enabling the poor to participate in policy formulation through decentralization. On the other hand, a good governed regime will have the ability to provide social security during the somewhat rough transitory phase to a market based economy. In this way the BWIs sees the poor, to quote Harrison (2004:106) as ‘best served by a programme of good governance which will consolidate their rights and duties as citizens’. Thus development towards a market friendly good governed regime becomes demand driven by the poor.

If comparing this treatment of the poor with the rational subject then we can begin to see that divergences are starting to appear. This can be appreciated by the notion that participation by the poor must be facilitated through capacity building. It is realized that ‘technical assistance for the training of local people, particularly the poor, in participatory processes for poverty analysis and in policymaking’ may be necessary (Tikare et al. 2002:255). It is thus recognized that to realize the advocated regime subjects must be taught specific skills if they are to successfully participate in the policy process. The sourcebook cautions that ‘[w]here appropriate, capacity building should build on existing community strengths, including local organizations, traditional knowledge, and culture-based skills, so that existing capacity is strengthened rather than undermined’ (Dongier et al. 2002:235). We will in the next section try to answer what ‘appropriate’ denotes, what knowledge and skills that are considered
suitable for subjects in the partnership regime, yet this recognition moves the sourcebook away from the realm of economic theory where the rationality postulate is prominent.

The worker

The BWIs also see ‘poor people as assets and partners in the development process, building on their institutions and resources’ (Dongier et al. 2002:303). This reconceptualization is achieved, on the one hand, by the imperative to have the poor participate in PRSP production, implementation and monitoring, and on the other, by perceiving the poor as in a soon-to-be worker mode. While the reforms are advocated on the grounds of enabling economic growth and poverty reduction, it is realized that to reach that end reform must also lead to employment opportunities. To take one example, by reforming rural agricultural practices through mechanisms of technological modernization and microcredits, a principal aim is to ‘break down the barriers of extreme poverty, social isolation, lack of productive skills, and poor self-confidence that previously kept this population from self-employment’ (Cord 2002:97). Forms of grants may here allow the poor to ‘invest time and resources in learning skills and building an asset base, both of which are necessary to improve their income-generating potential’ (ibid.:96). It has also been mentioned that the sourcebook holds that governments ‘must enact legal and regulatory reforms to deepen market access … and actively disseminate information to the poor on opportunities for employment’ (Girishankar et al. 2002:276). Governmental reform is thus an important pillar in enabling employment for the poor, but education is also essential. It is recognized that with the right education to implement specific skills the poor can govern themselves to employment, increase productivity and hence economic growth:

Education directly contributes to worker productivity, and can promote better natural resource management and more rapid technological adaptation and innovation. It is fundamental to the creation of a competitive, knowledge-based economy, not only for the direct production of the critical mass of scientists and skilled workers that every country requires—no matter how small or poor—but also because broad-based education is associated with faster diffusion of information within the economy, which is crucial for enabling workers and citizens in both the traditional and modern sectors to increase productivity. (Aoki et al. 2002:234)
The skilled and competent worker is thus the desired citizen. Production capacity is vital for economic growth. As a consequence of this insight the World Bank has launched a Lifelong Learning Initiative (LLI). A central feature of this initiative, which has already been introduced in parts of the world, is that workers must continuously upgrade their knowledge and skills if the country is to do good while ‘[p]erforming in the global economy and functioning in a global society’ (World Bank 2003b:22), but it is also crucial in order for countries to ‘be able to use global knowledge and technology for their development’ (Aoki et al. 2002:261). These recommendations offer the insight that skill optimization does not only concern participation, but also worker productivity. There is thus a further distancing away from the rational subject in economic theory; subjects cannot just begin to ‘truck, barter, and exchange’, as Smith (1986:117) has it. On the contrary, a vital point of the Lifelong Learning Initiative and the education chapter of the sourcebook (Aoki et al. 2002) is that subjects must be taught the skills suitable for productivity increases in a knowledge-based economy.

The World Bank has in a LLI report directed towards developing countries produced a “wish list” of suitable skills and behaviours for subjects:

 Acting autonomously: Building and exercising a sense of self, making choices and acting in the context of a larger picture, being oriented toward the future, being aware of the environment, understanding how one fits in, exercising one's rights and responsibilities, determining and executing a life plan, and planning and carrying out personal projects.

 Using tools interactively: Using tools as instruments for an active dialogue; being aware of and responding to the potential of new tools; and being able to use language, text, symbols, information and knowledge, and technology interactively to accomplish goals.

 Functioning in socially heterogeneous groups: Being able to interact effectively with other people, including those from different backgrounds; recognizing the social embeddedness of individuals; creating social capital; and being able to relate well to others, cooperate, and manage and resolve conflict. (World Bank 2003b:21-22)

The same text also says that ‘[c]ountries need to respond to these needs by creating education and training systems that equip people with the appropriate skills’ (ibid:xviii; emphasis added). These skills are of importance if peoples are to function in a knowledge based economy and since there is a stress that they must be mastered then one can assume that the
World Bank does not align itself with the argument of a pre-cultural economic rationality. On the contrary, skill and behavioural construction emerges as central for the BWIs.

It has been suggested that discursive practices may be influenced by discourses which, in this case, may be influenced by economic theory to some extent. One can see some of these influences in the specific skills advocated for here. Autonomous action is central to the rational subject in theory where people are pictured as ‘seeking to maximize their utility, subject to the constraints of technology and endowments’ (Blaug 1992:229) in a setting where a neutral state provide the grounds for the pursuit of the good life through the securing of citizens rights. The advocated skill of acting autonomously can to some extent be paralleled by the notion of rationality. ‘[E]xercising a sense of self’ and ‘being oriented towards the future’ with due diligence of ‘one’s rights and responsibilities’ all echoes the subject as pursuing its rational self-interest.

But, as has also been suggested, it is unlikely that the discourses of the BWIs are completely engulfed by just one economic theory, and the World Bank goes further than just to require the autonomous subject. The last of the three points incorporates conflict resolution, management theory, and social capital accumulation. Social capital, which one World Bank working paper defines as ‘the organizations and networks and the underlying norms and values that govern the interactions among people in society’ (Grootaert 2002:3), seem to have a twofold purpose for development. First, the sourcebook realizes that social capital is ‘critical for long-term growth and development [and] also has positive short-term effects on welfare and risk exposure’ (Dongier et al. 2002:308). The World Banks rationale of this statement is that ‘[i]t has now become recognized that these three types of capital [i.e. natural, physical and human] determine only partially the process of economic growth because they overlook the way in which the economic actors interact and organize themselves to generate growth and development. The missing link is social capital.’ (Grootaert 1998:1). The second, and related, value of social capital is that it is advocated for as one of three pillars for enabling community empowerment, where the second constitutes good governance policies to enable the poor to influence, and hold accountable governmental institutions (World Bank 2002:14), and the third concerns removal of social barriers including ‘norms of social exclusion, exploitative relations, and corruption’ (Grootaert 2002:3). In this way, social capital becomes important for both economic growth and community empowerment towards PRSP participation.

The framework that enable the creation of social capital thus emerge as fundamental for developing countries. The practical pursuit of social capital involves ‘strengthening local
organizations and networks and supporting a community-based approach to development’ (Grootaert 2002:3), but also the securing of good governance policies on all levels to strengthen information dissemination, the rule of law and reduce corruption. Yet, we have seen that the sourcebook realizes the necessity of ‘technical assistance for the training of local people, particularly the poor, in participatory processes for poverty analysis and in policymaking’ (Tikare et al. 2002:255). A World Bank working paper on capacity building is more precise: ‘Furthering a climate where civic action can flourish is essential but not sufficient. Capacity building must also entail the actual transfer of knowledge and skills … They generally lack specialized knowledge and the ability to apply it, and the success of their endeavours often hinges on receiving appropriate and sustained technical assistance in fields such as management information and project control, human resource development, and project formulation, monitoring and evaluation’ (Siri 2002:11). Thus, skill optimization emerges as vital for this set of skills also.

This analysis has distinguished two sets of skills that are most prominently advocated for. Social capital skills have been most frequently mentioned in connection to local circumstances such as community, and local authority empowerment and participation whereas autonomy was explicated in the LLI report most clearly. Autonomy, however, is not frequently mentioned in the sourcebook, where instead skills revolving around employment opportunities predominate. These include, for example, literacy, calculative capacities and business accounting (Aoki et al. 2002). Though, it is suggested, these basic skills can be conceptually tied to autonomy which is more of a behavioural state than a skill, because autonomous action requires skills suitable for private enterprises. More straightforward, these skills prepare subjects for the discipline of the market which the policies of privatization and liberalization seek to enable from above. If one allow for these reformulations, then it emerges as more plausible and may also be pursued in connection with social capital skills. This is exactly how the above working paper presents the virtues of capacity building:

Combining the discipline of the market with a climate of horizontal solidarity and social "networks of civic engagement" can create an environment conducive to stronger, more equitable and sustainable economic growth. In addition to benefiting the poor, civil society participation in market activities can benefit the economy as a whole by infusing social capital into the productive process. (Siri 2002:14)
These two sets of skills are by no means the only ones advocated for, but through the method of comparison they emerge as the most prominent ones. To enable skills governmental policies can do a lot; the rule of law, the free play of the market and facilitation of participatory endeavours opens up space for engagement for subjects, civil society organizations and communities, but to further facilitate this regime, it is argued that the BWIs, particularly the World Bank, works to insert skills through capacity building. We will see in the next section how this works in practice by reviewing a recent capacity building project in the rural Rwanda where skills of financial discipline is combined with social capital accumulation. However, this is not to argue that all capacity building projects seek to foster these specific skills. This mission is chosen out of illustrative purposes and no claims are made concerning recurrences of these skills in other missions.

A practical example of skill incalculation

Capacity building can be employed in many instances, from urban to rural areas and on central and local authorities, and is frequently pursued in countries part of the PRSP initiative, particularly in order to institute administrative reform towards standards of good governance (Harrison and Mulley 2007). While the BWIs are major contributors with capacity in the form of resources, technical assistance, knowledge and personnel, other multilateral and bilateral agencies also partake in this endeavour (Harrison 2004). We will here follow a capacity building mission that can, it is argued, be understood according to the premises of both our theories.

In 2004 the joint World Bank and UNDP ‘Community Capacity Building for Poverty Reduction Initiative in Rwanda’, targeted towards a couple of rural provinces was launched (World Bank Institute and UNDP 2004). This mission had multiple objectives, some of which concerned empowering communities by building their capacity in order for them to partake in poverty reduction strategy formulation, implementation and monitoring (World Bank 2007c); the institution of proper microcredit institutions and suitable skills for borrowers; and increasing agricultural effectivity (World Bank Institute and UNDP 2004). It was a large project divided into four parts: an initial needs assessment, a learning component, an action component, and a reflection component. The initial assessment found weaknesses in lack of credit due to poorly functioning credit institutions; lack of knowledge and skills preventing mobilization of Community Development Committees (CDC, i.e. local authorities at the
district level) towards participatory community development; and weak entrepreneurship and marketing knowledge (World Bank Institute and UNDP 2004).

The action component concerned allocating funds in order to institute proper credit services and the World Bank led and funded learning component, which came as a result of the assessment, comprised training in participatory planning targeted towards CDCs and local NGOs; financial and credit management for poor women and associations; and agricultural extension concerning modernization of agricultural techniques (ibid.). These groups, the CDC and the poor women and associations intersect as the latter are also active in CDCs. In this way, the two training modules that we will review will actively contribute with skills towards participatory poverty reduction at a local level. But, while training these people towards PRSP formulation, the training also sought outputs from the CDCs in viable grant proposals to be financed by the World Banks Rural Sector Support Project (RSSP)\(^4\). Together, then, the training contributed to preparing people towards (1) the PRSP process; the production of grant proposals for (2) microcredits; and for the (3) World Banks RSSP (World Bank Institute and UNDP 2004).

The training was outsourced to a local NGO called Cooperative Service Center (CSC) and the training employed a Training of Trainers methodology where local capacities are trained through training modules so that communities can train themselves in the same fashion after project completion (World Bank Institute and UNDP 2004).

**Financial discipline**

The assessment found that before educating CDCs in community development strategies, it was evident that the top priority was to enable these people to get access to affordable credits for their individual or collective crafts which thereafter would release energy towards community development. The training module on financial and credit management was to enable subjects to access this credit why it was hoped that the results of the module will lead to ‘savings mobilization techniques’, ‘business management’ and ‘financing proposal preparation’ (World Bank Institute and UNDP 2004). It comprises training in marketing, cost calculations, accounting, balance sheet operations and credit management (CSC 2004a). Williams (1999) argue that practices of calculations are vital skills

\(^4\) The RSSP is a World Banks program targeted towards rural areas. The main objective in Rwanda is to ‘help the Government of Rwanda achieve its strategic goal of revitalizing the rural economy and thereby increasing rural incomes, reducing poverty, and reinforcing national stability’ (World Bank 2001:3). Estimated cumulative disbursements in 2005 were 48$M (ibid.).
that characterises the theorized rational subject and that calculative training ‘entail an ever-
expanding use of techniques to discipline the self’ into creating ‘a particular form of rational
subjectivity’ (ibid.:92-3). Such notions have been toned down in the analysis. It has been
argued that subjects are not perceived as rational and that skill incalculation does not seek to
enable rationality, but rather financial discipline. To suggest possible behavioural
consequences, which, it is argued, do not deviate from the ontological premises of our two
theories, we will use the resources of Professor Peter Miller who has written extensively on

The calculating self

Financial and credit management is introduced as a consequence of the recognition that
‘many people do not know how to prepare a profitable/bankable project’ (CSC 2004a:12).
The training module thus aims at enabling people to recognize which projects are financially
viable and which are not. In this way accounting including budgeting is introduced to remove
the subjective element in business proposals through economic calculations, having the
consequence that subject are free to pursue the action of choice, but the range of available
options are decided against an economic norm of profitability. Thus the introduction of
accounting can be said to be normalizing as all projects must satisfy certain standards of
profitability. This is pursued by having the subject train with simple assets and liabilities
tables, and through establishing parameters and indicators enabling comparisons, and
calculating marketing strategies in accordance to the state of demand (ibid:3). Business
projects become rational while the irrational are sorted away. There is no need for direct
force, nor is there need for persuasion to align subjects into a particular behaviour since they
act upon their own actions against the economical norm of viability.

Through accounting, then, the business manager, here predominantly the rural poor
women, is awarded a form of ‘responsibilized autonomy’ (Miller 1992:81). The performance
spelled out in one figure at the bottom of the balance sheet enables a new form of self-
evaluation. With the introduction of credit management, this performance evaluation is also
stretched in time. Now the subject knows how much it has to work and in what profession, if
it is to be able to get access to the credit but also if it so be able to pay back the interest. They
must, to quote the LLI report, be ‘oriented toward the future’ (World Bank 2003b:21).
Planning is central. This is supported by a training mechanism on marketing focusing on
analysing demand, competition and product promotion where profitable projects is what
defines a ‘well-built project’ (CSC 2004a:12). The training module reflects on these practices as an ‘administrative science that requires collecting and analyzing information, leading to decision-making’ (ibid:3). By transforming individual managers into decision-makers, it seeks to ‘install responsibility and to remedy deficiencies in rationality’ (Miller 1992:72). The goal to pursue is a positive single figure at the bottom of the balance sheet. As a consequence accounting becomes a very self reflexive technique. Subjects must constantly evaluate their options as concerning costs of raw material in comparison with future profits, competing enterprises, present and future demand, ability to access credit, and costs of marketing strategies et cetera. It follows that positive figures through calculative practices becomes important goals to reach in everyday life. It is accorded with a legitimacy that sets it ‘apart from disputes and political interests’ (ibid.:68). In this sense it may be considered that modes of production and social relations in human capital must be financially viable, entailing the possible that financial feasibility dominates over political or social feasibility; various forms of living, such as subsistence or community production, may be evaluated according to economic criteria.

Calculating others

As the credit institute is facilitated and as many poor women or associations completes training and possibly get access to credit, subjects acquire the possibility to benchmark their projects against other projects. This is enabled by the training module which urges that the ‘study must identify the competitors, their strengths and weaknesses. Similar or substitutional products could impair the normal product flow’ (CSC 2004a:3). In this way, Miller argues, the calculating selves become both the object and the relay of calculations. Performance is, as we have seen, self-assessed continuously through accounting, but through benchmarking subjects are also made the object of calculations by others. In this way, ‘[t]he calculating self thus potentially has both autonomizing and centralizing effects’ (Miller 1992:68).

The projects mission report emphasizes the importance of mobilization towards solidarity groups which is considered critical to the sustainability of microfinance initiatives. (World Bank Institute and UNDP 2004). The common logic of these groups is to cross guarantee loans by having lending occurs on a group basis (Rankin 2001). It thus works as ‘introducing financial discipline through peer pressure’ (Yaron 1991:vii). A consequence is that performance norms are carried collectively. Rankin (2001:31) notes that this may lead to collective identification as women ‘across polarizing social differences’ resulting in ‘critical
consciousness that could lead to collective, overt forms of social action necessary for accomplishing ideological change’ While there is contradicting evidence on this point (see ibid.), of interest here is that financial discipline multiplies as subjects carries the fait of others in their hands. This tendency is reinforced by the creditor who is argued to ‘[k]now the debtor’; ‘[o]rganize visits to his debtor’; ‘[k]now why the reimbursement is late’; and ‘[h]e/she should not rely on guarantees and should take part in the implementation of the financed project’ (CSC 2004a:11). In parallel, subjects are taught to calculate credit reimbursements plans, depreciation tables, operating accounts and cash positions (ibid.). The creditor can use these figures and compare performance both in space, near as well as distant calculations can be made, and in time, present as well as future calculations can be conducted. In this way performance norms are paralleled by creditor surveillance and by the creditor’s codes of conduct. Potential discipline as explained in this way is not an unseen consequence, but rather the foundation for these practices. As the sourcebook has it: ‘Microfinance institutions that demand … discipline from their clients are empowering, whereas those that treat them as “beneficiaries” are more likely to foster a culture of entitlement and dependency’ (Cord 2002:95).

The point is that while these practices are approached as “common sense” in the sourcebook and in industrialized countries, it has the potential of instilling a financial self-discipline that perhaps leads to novel ways of reflecting on ones own actions; they can, as Miller has it, become calculating selves. One can, then, in these practices see that the disciplined freedom of entrepreneurship is the rationale behind the operations. It is an attempt to construct economically disciplined subjects where responsible calculations champions over subjective intuitions by subjecting them to the financial discipline of the market.

**Participatory planning**

The training module on participatory planning was instated on the recognition that that ‘local authorities, particularly Community Development Committees at the District, Sector and Cell level are still very weak. They do not yet fully understand their role, nor are they able to mobilize the population for participatory community development.’ (World Bank Institute and UNDP 2004:4). It was thus deemed necessary to educate the CDC, NGOs and associations in these provinces in order for them to participate in formulating, implementing and monitoring of Poverty Reduction Strategies and to produce viable community proposals to be funded by the World Bank RSSP. The training module on participatory planning is
radically different from the one on financial management. Here the accumulation of social capital skills is the central preoccupation.

In the module it is recognized that subjects must be taught ‘the skills necessary to plan development activities, to be able to implement planned activities, follow them up, and then evaluate them’ (CSC 2004b:2). The training is to produce an inclusive process of community development which is to take note of all the problems and insights of local groups, both state and private organizations. Relationships between groups and diverging interests and potential conflicts are to be assessed in matrices where groups are given one column for ‘their role’ and one for ‘their needs’. Then a problem solving phase begins that focuses on cause and effect relationships and solution analysis where a problem hierarchy is to be transformed into a solution hierarchy through a ‘goal tree’, which is a schematic representation of means, goals and ends (ibid.:8).

They thereafter push on with training towards the development of a logical framework containing goals of specific projects derived from earlier interests and problems of local groups. Within the framework hypothesises are formulated together with indicators, evaluation criteria and resources for execution of projects. An executive schedule for the projects is composed, also in a matrix. Education in participative dialogue follows, where the different groups are taught how to communicate through interviews and questionnaires with people from local groups to review projects and possible problems. Also included is a device on how to analyze the empirical results gathered from the participative dialogue. Results are then to be hierarchically ordered wherefrom responsibility, implementations and deadlines are to be settled. Possibilities of how to get feedback and responses from the population is then discussed. Finally a self-evaluation is conducted on topics such as project profitability, and strengths and weaknesses of projects (ibid.).

The skills to incalculate here do not concern financial discipline. Rather, they can be grouped under the heading of social capital. This training module corresponds to the skills set out in the LLI report. It seeks to teach individuals how to ‘interact effectively with other people’, ‘cooperate, and manage and resolve conflict’ (World Bank 2003b:22). Individuals, then, will be able to gather collectively and put forward well reasoned issues – to empower the local associations - through community development towards World Bank funds and participatory stages of formulation, implementation and monitoring of PRSP initiatives (World Bank 2007c).

**Summary of example**
This capacity building project is an output of the quite recently installed Community Empowerment and Social Inclusion Learning Programme (CESI) of the World Bank Institute (WBI) (World Bank 2007c). It is one progressive project in the midst of many different forms of capacity building initiatives (e.g. World Bank 2005) which seeks to accomplish multiple goals at once. Initiatives like these are frequently being employed at the governmental level, the private sphere and on civil society (World Bank 2005; IMF 2002). Though this example concerned skills that saw its emergence in the discourse analysis, they should not be generalized to all capacity building initiatives as they are employed by different actors and since the capacity to build may be approached differently in other levels of the PRSP process. Instead, what should be argued for from this example is that despite the notions of ownership and partnership, even if fully realized which has been questioned in the early stages of this analysis, the BWIs can work to influence behaviour and policies without the pressures gained through economical asymmetries.

We have drawn links between the development discourses and, on the one hand, liberal theory, and on the other, the incalculation of skills through training modules. But we have not argued for a perfect match with the liberal theory understood as economical models envisaging the rational subject. Williams (1999; see also 1996) reverse the argument that the World Bank portray subjects through these models and instead argue that rational subjects are being created to fit theory. This analysis has to some extent been influenced by Williams. More specifically, our neo-Gramscian theory has exerted the same intentionality as Williams whereas the governmentality theory sought to offer possible explanations to skill incalculations without the same degree of intentionality. However, we have pointed towards skills that go beyond rationality to include social capital which offers the insight that the discourse must be constructed out of a multitude of sources of information. Thus, instead of a singular theory, one can see a mix of different economic and social theories that feed into the assumptions behind skill optimization. Yet, above these multiple influences one can see a consistency in the overall goal of the discourses which through analysis has been rendered visible in a good governed market economy. It follows that the primary intent of skill optimization is, to quote a World Bank working paper, to secure the ‘developing [of] the business acumen latent in all communities, even the poorest’ (Siri 2002:15; emphasis added).

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5 We come back to these arguments in the concluding discussion.
It is difficult to know the effects of these practices. Sorel has taught us that the intent of a statement cannot be equated with what happens in practice (Cornwall and Brock 2006). The same must go for practical education. These forms of knowledge, ways of living and ways of thinking must clash against already existing forms of conduct (Escobar 1995), which may or may not, to a greater or a lesser extent, depart from the conduct of the BWIs. Thus, while the practical and behavioural consequences cannot be assumed without ethnographic studies, it is likely that they will run up to forms of resistance (cf. Roemer and Stern 1981).
A concluding discussion: bringing theories back in

The analysis was based on the discourse analytical framework, into which the two theories have earlier been translated. To do this economics was bracketed alongside the specific power effects of the theories in order to produce a somewhat “neutral” analysis in the limited sense that the power effects could fit any theory that allows for power to be associated with discourse. It is now time to connect back to these specific views of power, to suggest how this author argue that this and similar studies may benefit or be disadvantaged by adopting the conceptions of power as embodied in these theories.

The practical example

Throughout this study it has been claimed that the power effects of discourse can be understood according to both theories. If bracketing the whole theoretical complex behind discourse and just focus on these effects and relate them to the practical example of capacity building then what both theories have to offer seems plausible. The difference is, starkly put, that Neo-Gramscian theory perceive of these powers as working on the conscious level, or as Moore (2005:11) pedagogically puts it: ‘Gramsci appreciated power relations that recruited subjects not by duping them, but by producing emergent interests through compromises, consent and coercion.’ For governmentality, on the other hand, power as in the conduct of conduct, seeks to enable a specific form of conduct and in this understanding it is possible for ‘subjects to be formed by practices of which they might be unaware, and to which their consent is neither given nor withheld’ (Li 2007:25). It is argued that when applied to a practical case like ours, the conscious/unconscious divide is unfruitful.

The behavioural effects of the training modules on financial discipline that were suggested through the writings of Professor Peter Miller must entail both conscious and unconscious effects. For instance, the calculative skills may be consciously accepted as useful and advantageous in order to compose viable business proposals for the instituted credit institutions. Furthermore, social capital skills may be thought of as advantageous in many instances, not least in that it may allow for participation in PRSP policy formulation. On the other hand, possible disciplinary effects arising from group pressure, surveillance or competition and possible new “lenses” through which labour and traditions can be characterized, may not be fully grasped at once. These differences have, in the theoretical
chapter, been located to the respective scholars’ analytical focuses and interests. Gramsci’s and Cox’s macro focus favours their approach whereas Foucault’s transhistorical account require a closer behavioural concern, but as the analytical focus approaches a practical example of capacity building, both forms of power should be embraced. However, some other theoretical premises are not as easy to converge between the theories for understanding the practical example and the PRSP process.

**Neo-Gramscian IR theory**

The neo-Gramscian theory incorporated some theoretical premises which were bracketed from analysis as they deviated from the assumptions of the other theory. This concerned particularly the assumption that those who hold more material capabilities are more efficient in determining social structures. It was also the case that the consensual practices, which have been transformed into discursive practices here, coexist with coercion. Coercive practices are, of course, not very helpful for understanding capacity building as outright force is unlikely to be employed. These notions are more helpful to understand the PRSP system as a whole. It has been seen through the analysis that the BWIs are powerful actors with a lot of resources at their disposal. Coercive practices prevail in the form of conditionalities in the partnership regime, both in the old fashion way of demanding macroeconomic performance but also in the new “carrot” approach where funds are allocated on an output of specific policies. Foremost here is the Performance-Based Allocation system which, as has been argued, urges recipient countries into a specific form of social organization conducive to market friendliness and good governance. The BWIs rewards those who behave nicely and adjust policies while penalizes those who do not.

On the other hand, consensual practices are also prominent. In the theoretical chapter the press and education system was mentioned as consensual practices which presented ideological practice as the best option, or as “common sense”. The sourcebook, with its stress on a specific set of economic and social policies which are presented as the best ones around that will lead to prosperity through economic growth and enabling reduction in poverty levels, can be thought of in parallel to Gramsci’s thoughts of the press and the educatory system. We have also mentioned the “desire” to fund specific reform areas, from the judiciary to the tax administration in the state apparatus (Harrison 2004) to microcredits and training modules on calculation in rural villages, all which can be understood as guided towards a liberal market regime. In this way, the assumption of powers as working through both coercion and consent
seems plausible. Furthermore, through the extensiveness of these practices, the insight that material capabilities help determine discourse is also compelling for this study, both at the governmental level and for capacity building missions considering the presumed dependencies on resources that may be present in many instances. However, while the tendency towards the claim that economics equal more influence is compelling, the fact is that the behavioural or policy impacts have not been studied at all, and for other studies it may be completely wrong to uphold such a claim. Foucault’s argument that the importance of economics for determining discourse should be studied situationally is thus a more cautious approach to subscribe to, even in cases of severe resource dependency as situational factors such as culture, politics and tradition are probable to have unpredictable implications across cases of capacity building.

Neo-Gramscian theory has another presumption which, it is argued, is more problematic, and that is the structural backbone of class identity theorized as a “brute fact” before the realm of the political and ‘brought about by the level of development of the material forces of production’ (Cox 1999:25). This enables the creation of a transnational managerial class to which the BWIs belong and which works to extend a particular ideology in neo-liberalism. This backbone is problematic in two ways. First, it is theoretically problematic since class identity is taken to be a product of a process of identification. Class strategies and allegiance should be studied, not taken as theoretical presuppositions. Second, and in corollary, the imperative for hegemony suggests that all encounters between this class and others is built on a desire to extend the former’s ideology, why our example of capacity building would be understood as a intentional attempt of enabling subjects to approach the dominant discourse in a liberal good governed market regime. Our analysis pointed in that direction; a good governed market regime was clearly argued for in the sourcebook and the texts on skills which explicitly sought to awaken the ‘business acumen’ in subjects or argued that a primary goal of microcredits was to enable discipline as it was empowering also pointed in that direction. However, this thesis has not ventured beyond these findings to confirm or argue against the existence of a transnational managerial class. Instead, while the argument of a class strategy is left unanswered, it can, through the analysis, be claimed that the neo-Gramscian premises with its macro focus fails to deliver a more detailed account in different discursive influences (as our analysis briefly explicated) without the addition of other theoretical premises, such as the discourse analytical tools advanced in this thesis.
Governmentality theory

The governmentality theory, with its corollary in Foucault’s “messiness” of discourse and Rose and Miller’s view of ‘congenitally failing’ practices of the conduct of conduct, allows for understanding the example of capacity building as an endeavour influenced by multiple rationales approaching the subjects from different objectives and problematizations. Here the skill optimization practices may have manifold objectives; the discourse analysis clearly saw an objective in disciplining subjects towards a liberal regime, but also objectives of social capital accumulation in order to institute self-development and surveillance on governmental practices. The neo-Gramscian theory may not object on any of these objectives as all can be argued as guided towards liberalism, but through the governmentality theory and the concept of rationalities we are awarded a richer picture which also opens up space for deviations and uncertainties which are likely to surface in big organizations such as the BWIs. The focus on discourse, which governmentality entails, does, in this sense, provide more detailed tools for understanding practices of capacity building why such concepts should be embraced as a micro level supplement to similar neo-Gramscian studies.

However, while the neo-Gramscian theory is weak on micro levels, the governmentality theory has a sole focus on discourse and thus omits political forces. While the former theory has a clear apprehension of intentionality, this theory, on the one hand, suggests that the conduct of conduct may occur without direct intention, and on the other, omits the political realm in its meta-theoretical focus. Foucault (1991b:60) seems to have recognised this, because he urges that one should pose the question: ‘How is struggle for control of discourses conducted between classes, nations, linguistic, cultural or ethnic collectives?’ The governmentality theory cannot tell us how discourses come to be appropriated and used; it forgets how political forces fights over the meaning of development, but also what specific political or cultural conflicts and interests that may be brewing under the surface of our capacity building initiative. Instead, it settles with an argument that subjects enmeshed in these practices are guided by their attachment to particular discourses of government, such as liberalism, but this understanding omits agendas such as class strategies or certain political goals. Here neo-Gramscian theory steps in with an answer in the form of a transnational managerial class seeking to extend hegemony and a counter pole in civil society (e.g. Cox 1999) but this theory of social practice, which is based on class identity and the struggle for hegemony, should not be approached as a “brute fact”. Instead, for a full account, it must be theorized.
A theoretical combination

From this discussion it is possible to argue for a combination of the two theories if one is to understand these practices of skill optimization more thoroughly. The governmentality theory provides a viable meta-theoretical account with detailed information on the relationship between discourses, discursive practices and subjects. These are insights that can correspond to the metatheoretical narrative of the neo-Gramscian theory if one dispenses with its problems of class identity and the argument that material capabilities determine discourse. Possible class strategies and the importance of economics should be theorized, not accepted as brute facts. With these caveats the theory provides an interesting understanding of social practice to supplement the governmentality theory and answer Foucault's question of how discourses are appropriated and fought over. Neo-Gramscian theory seems particularly relevant for understanding development since the PRSP strategy entails a convergence of actors that, one is tempted to conclude, approaches Cox's description of a transnational managerial class. Indeed, the BWIs are working fervently to harmonize approaches through the PRSP process and harmonization has been widely accepted as being both donor efficient and cost reducing for recipients (SIDA 2003). Though harmonization is by no means complete, it is gaining in recognition. In one meeting between multilateral and bilateral donors it was stated that ‘[a]ll the donors present more or less align their country strategy process, in countries where they exist, with the PRSP’ (ibid:14). However, one should be cautious about awarding this convergence the status of a transnational managerial class without further studies.

From theory to practice

According to the World Bank the outputs of our example of capacity building have been:

(1) one-year community development plans for credit and local socio-economic, infrastructure, and community development projects; (2) proposals for access to commercial bank finance and microfinance services; (3) proposals for sector specific

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6 Attending were multilateral representatives from the World Bank, the European Commission (EC), UNDP, United Nations Development Group Office (UNDGO), United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), and bilateral representatives from Canada, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and United Kingdom.
activities; and (4) enhanced capacity of local partner organization to undertake training on their own. (World Bank 2007c)

It seems, then, that the mission objectives of the capacity building documents have been materialized in political forces who have succeeded in disciplining the subjects under training. However, to further such claims one must go beyond the grounds of this analysis.

The thesis was built on the assumption that such practices could be explained by a link between discourses and discursive practices (such as education) conducted by political forces; we located suitable skills in discourse and compared them to one mission of capacity building where congruence was argued for. Yet, in the theoretical chapter we have cautioned against this kind of thinking; while rationalities travel through different political forces and discursive events (such as text and language) discursive techniques become distorted and they are mixed with other imperatives such as personal profit and conflicting rationalities (Miller and Rose 1990). The neo-Gramscian theory does not probe as deep as the governmentality theory on this occasion due to its macro focus, but through the discussion of the relationship between social structures and agents a loose and dialectal approach has been argued for. In this way, non of the two theories can with a fair amount of certainty explain, on the one hand, how political forces links up with discourses and conduct discursive practice, and on the other, how people subjected to these practices react. Thus, while our theoretical starting points may have their advantages, studies of this kind, that approaches a specific example of skill optimization, must be supplemented with other methodologies such as case studies including interviews if one is to arrive at viable answers to the question this thesis set out to understand; how the discourses of development as embodied in the BWIs PRSP approach shapes the subjects whom they address.
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