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Trade for Development?

A moral political economy approach to the analysis of
discourse in Sweden's Africa policy

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Abstract

In a globalized world where power-relations are changing, the need to reformulate the framework of global trade and trade-liberalization to be more conducive for development has been increasingly recognized in trade and development forums. This has resulted in increased donor focus on trade related development assistance and the moral justifications of trade-relations. This thesis set out to question possible assumptions made by the Swedish government on the moral purposes of global trade. Based on a moral political economy approach and critical discourse analysis, the central policy for the Swedish government's African relations regime; 'Sweden and Africa - a policy to address common challenges and opportunities' is analyzed. Findings indicate that the discourses used in the Swedish policy contribute to the construction of ideologically hegemonic understandings of greater and deeper economic integration into the global trading system as essential to national development. It also finds that the discourses in the Swedish Africa policy seem to present freer trade and more open economies as a self-evident element of the future African development, excluding alternative notions of development and the role of trade in that process.

Keywords: Aid for Trade, Trade, Development, Sweden, Africa, Moral Political Economy

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

The last five decades have involved an increased emphasis on the importance of a ‘development dimension’ to the global trade regime, where the traditionally rather detached sectors of aid and trade have come together, with the goal of bridging trade liberalization to poverty reduction goals. The popular slogan of the 90’s; “trade not aid” and the view of trade liberalization as sufficient in itself for the generation of gains from trade, has now gradually shifted to “aid for trade”. This shift illustrates that the trade community, which traditionally have addressed development concerns through mechanisms of trade is now increasingly turning to the aid community for trade facilitation, in light of the perceived need for a greater development focus of global trade (Njinkeu and Cameron, 2008).

Development, which previously held a marginal role in forums such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) rounds, have now become an explicit goal of the organizations’ work and the current round under the Doha Development Agenda (DDA), which was launched in 2001. A landmark for this development is the ministerial conference of the WTO in 2005 in Hong Kong, where ministers officially launched a new ‘agenda’ of global trade; aid for trade (AfT), a concept that has come to permeate global trade and development discussions as a new buzzword (Ismail, 2008). This new focus of the global trade agenda and these revised discourses can arguably be seen as stemming from the crisis of the earlier global liberalization regimes of the *Washington consensus* (Holden, 2014). The recognition of the adverse effects they have brought to the development in the Global South has created a need for the existing system of the ‘post-Washington consensus’ to adapt to a changing world, where power-relations are shifting and there is a need for the more powerful actors to take the concerns of developing countries into account (Langan and Scott, 2013).

1.2 Aim and significance

Of interest to this study is the legitimization of economic relations, more specifically the

legitimization of trade relations through their linkages to development purposes and objectives. The central actor under study is the Swedish Government, and the aim of this study is to investigate how the discourses in the central policy for Swedish-African relations ‘Sweden and Africa - a policy to address common challenges and opportunities’ (Gov.Com. 2007/08:67) understand the moral purposes of trade and what links are made between trade and development. The thesis will be guided by the methods of critical discourse analysis and the application of a moral critical economy approach, and seek to discern the discursive embedding of developmental norms in economic relations, questioning potential gaps between norms and material outcomes. With this approach as a point of departure, the objective is to investigate whether the language used in the selected material contributes to the construction of a ‘grand narrative’, reinforcing the hegemonic discourse of what modernization and development is and ought to be achieved, excluding alternative ideas about prosperity and how it might be attained.

The AfT agenda was launched as an instrument to enable change and transform the international trading system to become more equal and less discriminative, more conducive to the well-being of ‘the poor’ (Stiglitz and Charlton, 2006). However, history has many times shown dissonance between what is generally acknowledged as harmful and what we are ready to do in order to change it. This makes the study of this proposed ‘change to the better’, in this case the AfT agenda, important as it is presented as the way forward for global trade. In particular it is important, and the focus of this study, to investigate the ways in which the rationalising of the new agenda create and cement ‘common sense’ understanding of what development is and how it is ought to be achieved, excluding other understandings. It is this concern that has formed the foundation for the formulation of the aim and research question of this thesis.

The choice to focus on Sweden is motivated by several factors. Sweden is a major international donor and is internationally upheld as being at the forefront of, and one of the most committed donors when it comes to development assistance¹. The whole-of government approach in the the ‘Swedish Policy for Global Development’ (PGD) (Gov.

¹ For example, Sweden is ranked as one of the most committed donors in the index of the Center for Development Group. <http://international.cgdev.org/initiative/commitment-development-index/index> [accessed 2015-05-20].

Bill 2002/03:122), emphasizing that not only aid, but *all* policy areas should work towards an *equitable* and *sustainable* development, permeated by a human rights perspective and the perspectives of the poor, has received a great deal of interest internationally. The image of Sweden as a ‘moral superpower’ (a phrase coined in the 1980’s by the then-Undersecretary of State Pierre Schori); a role-model in the international community is still of relevance and being promoted in Swedish foreign politics (Dahl, 2006). Also, Sweden has traditionally held a strong stance on free trade as conducive to and essential for a sustainable global development and a central tool for the promotion of poverty reduction, human rights, peace and stability (Björling, 2010:1: Gov. bill, 2002/03:122) Trade is the foremost channel between Sweden and developing countries, and the country is actively involved at different levels, forums and discussions of the AfT agenda internationally, to some extent taking the lead in discussions on AfT in forums such as the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF)²(Andersson, 2007; Björling, 2010 p.5) This makes Sweden an interesting case for the study of moral discourses, especially as this study focuses on the moral justification of economic structures. Also, the academic literature with specific relevance to Swedish development policies is lacking (Odén and Wolgemuth, 2009a), a gap which this thesis acts to fill.

Development in Africa is seen as one of the foremost foreign policy priorities of the Swedish Government (Utrikesdepartementet, 2014), and both aid and trade are central sectors in the relations between Sweden and Africa³, with Africa being of special focus to Swedish development cooperation (Sida, 2013). Hence, the choice of focusing on the Swedish relations to Africa was taken.

² The EIF is one of the key components of the AfT agenda, a multi-donor program aiming at facilitating the least developed countries to engage more actively in the global trading system.

³ ‘Africa’ will hereon refer only to Sub-Saharan Africa, as North Africa is either treated separately or clustered with the Middle East in the Swedish policies referred to in this study.

1.2.1 Research question

How is the relationship between trade and development depicted in the Swedish government's African relations policy regime: 'Sweden and Africa - a policy to address common challenges and opportunities'?

1.3 Delimitations

As will be discussed in the next chapter, AfT as a concept is highly ambiguous, and the role of trade for development is a complex issue that relates to debates on questions of what 'development' is and ought to be. This question pertains to abundant literature from a multitude of academic disciplines and schools of thought, making delimitations in scope crucial. This study does not aim to define what development is or ought to be, but rather problematize and scrutinize the construction of dominant discourses on the role of trade for development. This is done with the theoretical delimitation of the moral political economy approach through critical discourse analysis, and the empirical delimitation of the central policy for Swedish relations to Africa. The policy presents a broad approach to Swedish relations with Africa and stipulates the government's position in a wide array of interrelated fields such as trade, aid, security, climate and environment, health, social development and economic growth. Even if trade is interrelated with all these other fields, the delimitation has been made to an analysis focusing primarily on the 'trade' element in the policy.

2 Overview of existing research

This chapter will, together with the theories used, form part of the theoretical lens through which the analysis will be viewed. As such, this chapter will highlight issues in the debates on development aid in general, AfT, and Swedish development cooperation with Africa in specific, which have been central to the authors' conceptualization of the problem.

2.1 The 'grand debates' on development aid

The period from the late 1980's until the end of the 1990's witnessed a growing concern about the effectiveness of aid and North-South development cooperation broadly defined, a debate that was heated up by the disappointing performance of the structural adjustment programmes in particular and the *laissez faire* policies for development of the Washington Consensus (Kayizzi-Mugerwa et al., 1998). This emerging 'aid effectiveness debate' stemmed from an increased dissatisfaction in donor nations and a corresponding sense of frustration in recipient countries, as a result of the poor outcomes of decades of development cooperation to deliver sustainable and meaningful development. Rather, it seemed to be the case that as development cooperation increased, its effectiveness declined; there were strong sentiments expressed for the need to re-evaluate the foundations of development cooperation, its conceptualizations, content and practice. Some of the problems brought forward in this debate concerned aid dependency in recipient countries, the failure of aid to encourage relevant local technical skills and local initiative, and the tendency of aid to reinforce local power-relations obtrusive to democratic governance and accountability (Havnevik & van Arkadie, 1996).

In the 2000's the debate on aid, its effectiveness and ramifications was revitalized and again, and a great amount of major influential works have been written presenting fierce criticism against the current international system of aid, discussing the 'failure of aid'. William Easterly, Dambisa Moyo, Jeffery Sachs and Paul Collier are a few names to mention of great importance to this debate. Susan Engel (2014) is one of few authors that have tried to assess and analyze this aid debate of the 2000's, contending that even though the debate might seem great and critical, there are few authors who actually

contribute to our understanding of development and aid, or advance the debate itself, in a substantial or original way (Engel, 2014). Her study shows that little has actually changed in the analysis of poverty and ‘underdevelopment’ in the debate on aid of the 2000’s, from that of the mainstream literature of the 1960’s, with the only presented path out of poverty continuing to be the pursuit of increased and more active engagement with neoliberal capitalism.

2.2 Perspectives on the AfT agenda

The linkages of trade and development in regards to national economic growth and poverty reduction is a controversial issue, the causal links are complex, and has for a long time been subject to a heated debate. This topic has received increasing attention with the enlarged development focus of the DDA and the launch of the AfT agenda at the WTO ministerial conference in 2005. The AfT agenda was presented as a commitment to make the participation in the global trading system more development-friendly and equally profitable for more nations, and academia presents a wide array of strategies of how this ought to be achieved. Here I will outline some of the issues brought forward in the debate on AfT.

Scholars from a wide array of fields and perspectives have published on how AfT should relate to development. Some stress that it ought to function as a form of ‘national compensation’ and redistribution of resources between nations. In order to level the playing field, aid that helps developing countries reduce the negative impacts of liberalization and the costs of subscribing to the international trade rules and regulations needs to be increased (Prowse, 2010; Morrisey, 2006; Te Velde, 2008). Others accentuate the creation of productive capacity and market access and the removal of internal trade barriers, arguing for the importance of increased aid to the development of the private sector and trade-facilitating infrastructure, which would strengthen developing countries’ position in international trade (Stiglitz and Charleton, 2006). Yet another focus of some authors is the importance of strengthening the multilateral trading system, by invigorating poorer countries’ capacities to comply with international trade regulations, and through doing this, prevent more powerful actors from resorting to unilateral measures. This creates an environment with conditions for all countries, weaker ones in particular, to be

treated fairly in trade relations and disputes, reducing risks of discrimination (Ismail, 2008).

Comprehending the scope of AfT and what the concept actually involves can prove challenging as it is somewhat imprecisely defined. Following the Hong Kong ministerial conference, a WTO task force was created in 2006 which formulated recommendations for the implementation of AfT defining it as:

- Technical assistance and capacity building for trade policy (to help countries negotiate and/or to implement trade agreements).
- Trade development (assistance with trade promotion, market analysis and other forms of support for private sector businesses).
- Assistance in dealing with trade-related adjustment costs.
- Development of the productive capacities of the economy of the recipient state.
- Development of trade-related infrastructure.
- Other trade-related issues.

(WTO, 2006)

These broad categories do not make it clear what should be included under each, and they basically enable anything that a developing country is prepared to accept as it to be labelled as AfT. Holden (2014) illustratively describes the definition of the AfT agenda as being fluid and with multiple ownership, and connects AfT to the notion of a ‘floating signifier’, being “[...]a concept that has no fixed meaning, and its political utility flows from this variable and nebulous nature (it is always replete with possibilities and easily adaptable).” (Holden, 2014 p.93)

This broad definition on one hand allows for the ‘mainstreaming’ of AfT in the policies of a wide range of development and trade actors, and enables mobilization of great amounts of financial resources (Brown, 2008). AfT has indeed resulted in great donor interest and mobilization of capital, however this is arguably not enough of a verification of actual change in donor practices. Just as in the wider debate on aid, questions arise about how you can know how much has been spent on, and the effects of

the AfT agenda if you can not clearly define what it is⁴ (Holden, 2014; Hallaert, 2013, Huchet-Bourdon, 2009). The vague definition of the project might allow for minimal change in donor practices and the bare ‘re-labelling’ of discourses and existing projects, in order to demonstrate enthusiasm for the change towards an increased ‘development dimension’ of trade, while making little actual change in practices (Hallaert, 2013; Holden, 2014; Langan, 2009). As such, the broad definition of AfT allows for actors primarily motivated by self-interest to label their actions as ‘moralized’ and ‘for the poor’ while keeping an agenda that primarily serve their own interests (Langan and Scott, 2013), while framing their behaviour as ‘politically correct’ (Taghdisi-Rad 2010 p.47).

It is widely recognized within earlier academic works that that the AfT agenda emerged as a response to the failures of the prevailing global trade regime. However, its broad definition provokes questions of how much of an actual transformation this new agenda might possibly bring in what Langan refer to as the ‘Post-Washington Consensus’ (2014). Authors such as Langan and Scott (2013) and Holden (2014) point to this when arguing that the AfT discourse merely is a ‘side payment’ to lower the voices of actors that are not satisfied with the current system in order to prevent fundamental changes. They denote how the new discourses are used strategically in entrenching asymmetrical power-relations between advantaged and disadvantaged actors, between North and South. This strategic use of the discourse removes the focus from the fact that little is being done in changing policies in the Global North that are unfavourable for the Global South, and relies heavily on a ‘trickle-down’ approach to what is framed as ‘pro-poor’ development.

2.3 Swedish development cooperation with Africa and the international context

Bertil Odén and Lennart Wolghemouth (2009a, 2009, 2013) are two of the main authors that have published substantially on Swedish development cooperation and aid, recognizing an information gap on academic material with special relevance to Swedish development policies. As such, different and nuanced perspectives are not easily found in the academic literature on Swedish development cooperation, and the bulk of

⁴ This is also a topic highlighted by Engel (2014) as a problem to the wider aid debate in her article ‘The not-so-great aid debate’ presented in section 2.1.

publications on the topic originate from agencies engaged in development cooperation themselves, such as Sida and Forum Syd, or civil society organizations (SCO's). However, much of this literature point to the importance and relevance of the development policies of the EU for Swedish development cooperation, a topic on which there is a greater wealth of theoretical literature to be found. Accordingly, this section will problematize some key issues on the role of the EU in Swedish trade and development relations to Africa.

As a member of the EU, Sweden partakes in the policies stipulated by the union, which also serve as guidelines for Swedish policy. However, the EU's policies are also being developed in processes that Sweden is involved in, holding the opportunity to promote its own policies and interests. In the context of policies towards Africa, the treaty instructing the EU's relationship and development cooperation with Africa, together with the Pacific and the Caribbean (the ACP countries) is the Cotonou Agreement. The agreement was signed in 2000, replacing the Lomé Convention which had been the basis of ACP-EU ties since 1975 (Karlsson et al., 2009). The new agreement was broader in scope and designed for a duration of 20 years.

The trade element of this agreement consists of the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA's). These aim at assisting the integration of the ACP's into the world economy to "share in the opportunities offered by globalisation" (EC, 2013), promote trade between the EU and the ACP's, and "through trade development, sustainable growth and poverty reduction" (ibid) and claim to go "beyond conventional free-trade agreements, focusing on ACP development, taking account of their socio-economic circumstances and include co-operation and assistance to help ACP countries implement the Agreements" (ibid). The agreements aspire to achieve this through the creation of free-trade areas and the opening of the African markets (Karlsson et al., 2009). For the last 3 decades the EU's trade relations with Africa were not based on reciprocity in market access, and the ACP countries were granted considerable access to the European market, without having to open up their own markets for European imports. However, this system was perceived by the European Council (EC) to have failed at stimulating growth and boosting the local economies of the ACP's. As such, under the Cotonou Agreement, the new EPA's intend to create reciprocity in market access and the gradual

opening up (the goal is to open up 80 per cent of the market) for European exports in the ACP countries markets, within the time-span of 15 to 25 years⁵ (EC, 2013).

On the one hand, there has been optimism expressed about the approach in the EU-ACP relations under the Cotonou Agreement and its broad perspective on trade relations, bridging trade and development for goals of poverty reduction as the new free-trade agreements are perceived as more responsible, in contrast the laissez-faire regimes of liberalisation of the Washington consensus (Sunassee Lam, 2008). On the other hand, a body of critical literature has emerged questioning the accounts of the EU-ACP relations as development-friendly and the component of poverty-reduction in the agreements. Both from within civil society organizations (CSO's) and academia, authors have argued that the EPA process and the agreements reached leave little room for the ACP countries to be alone decide over their own development, protect sensitive parts of their markets, and decide at what pace they open up their markets for European goods (Karlsson et al., 2009, CONCORD Sverige, 2014, Langan, 2014). One of the main critiques is directed towards how the EPA process has come to agreements through stronger states subjection of weaker ones, rather than being a result of dialogue. This relates to issues such as the ACP's lacking ownership of the process, and the outcomes of the agreements having questionable developmental, even negative effects for the ACP's (Bilal and Stevens, 2009). Exemplifying this is how the EU have brought up issues on the agenda that through the advocacy of large groups of African nations have been removed from the WTO discussions, through the 'backdoor' in the EPA's (Karlsson et al., 2009).

One interesting contribution of the critical academic literature on the subject is the work of Hurt (2003), who analyses the EU-ACP ties from a neo-Gramscian perspective, discussing the neoliberalization of the relationship. He gives attention to the rhetorical use of *partnerships* as a central component of the construction of acceptance and a 'common-sense' compliance to neoliberal regimes. He examines how the notion of partnerships presents a risk of becoming only shift of rhetoric but not of practice, veiling the reality of asymmetrical power-relations. Storey (2008) adds on to this argument by pointing out how the EU's strategic use of rhetoric and diffusion of norms serves as

⁵ With the exception of countries listed as least developed countries by the UN, which have the possibilities to resort to other agreements for preferential access.

possible tools of coercion, making the ACP's purse policies such as free-trade schemes, which are not beneficial to them in the long term.

The importance of Sweden's role in pushing for fairer and more coherent European trade policies in achieving the goals of the PGD recognized in both the PGD and the Swedish trade declaration (Prop. 2002/03:122, Björling, 2010). However, reports and evaluations from Swedish CSO's have presented recurring critiques towards the Swedish government for not doing enough on this point (CONCORD Sverige, 2010, 2012, 2014). A case in point is for example how, even though Sweden has critiqued export subsidies, the Swedish agricultural minister voted in favour of new export subsidies on milk and butter in 2009 (Karlsson et al., 2009).

3 Theoretical framework

The moral political economy approach, coined by Andrew Sayer (2007), has provided the theoretical underpinnings of this thesis. Applications of the theory have been greatly inspired by readings of Mark Langan (2009, 2014) (and Langan and Scott, 2013) who were mentioned in the section on academic literature on AfT. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) has served as the theoretical and methodological tool for analysis. As such, the moral political economy approach has been applied through CDA.

3.2 The moral political economy approach

The moral political economy approach suggests a critical perspective to the study of economic life, which moves beyond the mere critique of injustices, and rather aims at explaining and understanding how they have arisen and are preserved in economic structures. It seeks to study how the ‘rules’ of economic life creates moral norms and ‘common-sense’ understandings of how economic relations should and must function, and if these moral norms and ‘common-sense’ understandings might veil actual material consequences of economics on human well-being (Sayer, 2007).

As Sayer states, the conjunction of the words ‘moral’ and ‘economy’ might seem contradictory, as “economic behaviour is strongly associated with power and the pursuit of self-interest; economic forces often act regardless of moral concerns”(Sayer, 2007 p.261) and that the capitalist system is not driven by the goal of enabling the well-being of people, but rather does so by virtue of a side-effect of profit making. However, he defines the ‘moral’ of the economy to be the constitutive moral dimension that any social relations or practices have, instructing and legitimizing the responsibilities and rights of different actors (with different levels of reasonability) and the effects that they generate, having ethical implications. In this view, the moral dimension consist of the codes of conduct and circumstances to which actors must apply in order for the specific social relation to exist, and this is the case also in the social relations of economic life (ibid).

Central to Sayer’s approach are Gramsci’s understandings of common-sense and hegemony (Langan and Scott, 2013). Gramsci describes common-sense as ‘the philosophy of non-philosophers’, an understanding of the world that is absorbed uncritically by diverse social and cultural environments. Dominant groups exercise

hegemony and the maintenance of economic systems not only through material force, but rather through a combination of ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ power, a blend of force and consent (ibid). Soft power is for example practiced through the intellectual (re)inventing of moral legitimations of common-sense conceptualizations of how economic systems should function, and the existing structures –status quo- as part of that common sense understanding. The production of this intellectual (re)inventing becomes ‘organic’ as it arises ‘organically’ from inside dominant groups. As such, the construction of common-sense understandings of the moral purposes of Swedish trade relations to Africa is not only applicable to the 'external' observers of the global trade regime (as in the general public), but crucially to the 'internal' actors, involved with policy formulation and implementation and the (re)creation of the trade regime. For hegemony to be maintained, there is not only a need for the economic sphere to be dominated by the particular ‘common-sense’ understanding, but this should also permeate the cultural sphere (Sayer, 2007).

Consent is constructed as the interests of the groups over which hegemony is exercised is taken into account by the elite, it is a process that Sayer describes as ‘intellectual co-opting’ of ideas and notions stemming from sources of dissent, through the establishment of progressive images of certain economic. This, Sayer argues, creates the consent to and acceptance of the status quo and the moral fabric of the existing economic system (ibid) and also in settings where economic structures produce asymmetrical power-relations, there are generally attempts to morally legitimize them as fair and just. From this perspective, it becomes appropriate to investigate how discourse is used in the creation of the common-sense perception of the need to seek a 'pro-poor' and 'development friendly' free-trade regime. As the common-sense understandings are constructed through discourse, the analysis of Sayer’s moral economy is bound to discourse analysis (ibid).

3.2 CDA as theory

Discourse is a concept that holds no clear definition and is being used in various ways by different actors within different fields. The definition of discourse that will be used here is the one presented by Jørgensen and Phillips (2008 p.1),“a particular way of talking

about and understanding the world”, or aspects of the world. This implies that discourse plays a key part in how we interpret and view the social world around us, and provides the patterns within which we act, and understand the world. Since this thesis seeks to comprehend how trade is discussed in Sweden’s Africa relations, the analysis of discourse suits the purpose well.

This paper will mainly be guided by the methodological tools and theoretical framework presented by Norman Fairclough, referred to as the main and most prominent theorist within the field of CDA (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2008 p.60). In discourse analysis, theory and method are intertwined, as expressed in Jørgensen and Phillips (2008 p.4) it is a “complete package”. By adopting CDA as a method, the researcher also adheres to certain philosophical and ontological premises. All approaches to discourse analysis originate from social constructionism. Firstly, this implies the rejection of an objective truth. Knowledge and representations of the world can never be reflections of some objective reality ‘out there’, but are products of discourse; results of how we categorize and understand the world. Second, knowledge is perceived as contingent; our understanding of the world is historically and culturally constructed. It is *social practices* that maintain ways of understanding the world, and also change these over time, through social interaction where new and competing common truths and knowledge are constructed. The construction of knowledge and truth has social consequences, as it leads to different social practices through the creation of the perceptions of some actions as natural and others as unthinkable (Jørgensen and Phillips 2008 pp.4-6, 8-9, 62).

Central to Fairclough’s approach is the view that, while discourse reflects the social structures of the world, it also shapes and reshapes them. Discourse both constitutes the social world and is constituted by other social practices through a dialectical relationship. Inherent to this view is the position that all social phenomena are not of linguistic-discursive character, and a division between ‘discursive practices’ and ‘non-discursive practices’ (Fairclough, 2003 pp.21-23, Jørgensen and Phillips 2008 p.142). It is partly through discursive practices that the social and cultural reproduction and change takes place, through a reciprocal relationship between discourse and social structures. Discourse contributes to the creation of social identities, social relations, and systems of knowledge and meaning. Discursive practises are not viewed as neutral, but

crucial in creating and changing the social world. When contributing to the creation, reproduction or transformation of unequal power-relations, discourse becomes ideological, ideology being defined as “meaning in the service of power” (Fairclough, cited in Jørgensen and Phillips 2008 p.75). However Fairclough perceives hegemony not only as dominance, but also as a negotiation process out of which a consensus of meaning emerges. Both hegemony and consensus are constantly changing and incomplete, only occurring as a contradictory and unstable equilibrium, and consensus only being a matter of degree (Fairclough, cited in Jørgensen and Phillips 2008 p.75). As such, there is a perceived opportunity and ability for people to transform power-relations.

Social change is central to the analysis of Fairclough, and it is in relation to this that the ‘critical’ part of CDA becomes apparent, as it gives special attention to power-relations. Through looking both at the way that discursive practises construct representations of the world, social relations and social subjects, and the role of these practices in advancing certain interests of different social groups. CDA is thus not an approach that positions itself as neutral, but rather politically committed to social change, supporting oppressed social groups, aiming to uncover the role of discursive practices in upholding or contesting unequal power-relations (Jørgensen and Phillips 2008 p.63).

Important in the use of CDA is the inclusion of other theories, since discourse analysis in itself is not sufficient for the analysis of the wider social practice, as it includes both discursive and non-discursive elements (Fairclough, 2003 pp.7, 2-3). As such, the use of a moral political economy approach and CDA is complementary, and the moral political economy approach will serve as the analytical lens guiding the CDA, connecting the analysis to the wider social practice, which is also the purpose of chapter two, presenting an overview of existing research. Focusing the analysis on the normative underpinnings of economics structures through the moral political economy approach can accordingly assist in uncovering the ways moral norms and discourses might establish “progressive images of economic exchange that downplay obscure ‘real’ material consequences for human well-being”(Langan and Scott, 2013).

4 Method

4.2 Research design and strategy

This paper has a qualitative, exemplifying case-study design (Bryman, 2008 p.70) as the objective is to exemplify the broader social practice of Swedish trade promotion, through the analysis of how the discourses in one central document connects trade to development objectives. It also holds an intrinsic case study design (Punch, 2005 p.144), where a greater understanding of the case itself is important, as the policy is central for the implementation of both aid to and trade with Africa, which are key sectors constituting the Swedish-African relations, and Africa being the foremost recipient of Swedish AfT, (Utrikesdepartementet, 2014; Sida, 2013) making it an important example to investigate.

The thesis relies on a post-modern perspective to research (Punch, 2005 pp.138-140), which in line with social constructivism comprehends knowledge as “constructed, contested, incessantly perspectival and polyphonic”(ibid p.139), and bound up with power and cohesion. Knowledge is perceived as the invisible reflection of the success of a particular way of seeing the world (Halperin and Heath, 2012 p.312). Departing on this approach, the objective is to question whether the language used in the selected material reinforces hegemonic discourses and the construction of a ‘grand narrative’ to what modernization and development is and how it ought to be achieved, excluding alternative ideas defining prosperity or how it might be attained.

4.3 Material

Analysis will focus on the central government policy-document stipulating Swedish relations to Africa, ‘Sweden and Africa - a policy to address common challenges and opportunities’ (Gov.Com. 2007/08:67), which was presented to the Parliament in March 2008. To investigate the Swedish-Africa policy was decided on as it stipulates the relationship in broad terms, and influences a wide array of policy areas and actors. It presents the foundation on which trade and aid, as well as AfT from Sweden to Africa ought to be implemented. As such, this policy lays the foundation for the Swedish government’s African policy regime, and the discursive practices of this central policy become of particular interest as the ‘truths’ and ‘common-sense’ understandings

presented here are highly likely to affect the practices and discourses of most other Swedish actors involved in these issues.

The process of defining what material to use as primary material for analysis in this thesis has not been straightforward. This struggle is worth acknowledging, as it has not only posed difficulties for me as a researcher interested in AfT and how it relates to Swedish development cooperation, but it also sheds light on the wider problematic structure of the management, implementation and accountability of Swedish development cooperation. This relates to several points. Firstly to an issue that has received critique from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), that of the architecture of Swedish development cooperation being grounded on a plethora of thematic and sectoral policies without clear-cut defined hierarchies and linkages (OECD, 2005), and secondly to the more practical issue of complicated and multifaceted web-pages and search engines, which makes the search for and navigation of information and documents a tedious task. These two issues combined, and the latter in particular presents difficulties for an outside researcher like me, but is likewise a problem inside organisations such as Sida (Goppers and Lindahl, 2009). Another contributing factor is the complexity of the topic itself. As discussed in chapter two, AfT is an elusive concept and a cross-sectoral issue interrelated with a wide array of fields of study and practice, and actors are plentiful, making the delimitations and the focus of a study like this a difficult, but important exercise.

4.4 CDA as research method

Analysis of the material has been done through a combined reading of the moral political economy approach and CDA. CDA suggests an analysis of what is written and the social consequences that distinct discursive representations of the social world have. However the specific techniques for analysis through CDA do not have any exact rules, and different authors present different methods. For this thesis I have chosen to draw on the techniques of Fairclough as presented in Jørgensen and Philips (2008).

Accordingly, the analysis has centered on Fairclough's three dimensions of discourse that every communicative event involving language use consists of:

- Social practice; the wider social, political and economic context of the

communicative event. In this analysis this is understood as the existence of both the AfT agenda and asymmetrical power-relations in international trade. Chapter two and the moral political economy approach serve as the contextualization of these wider social practices.

- Discursive practice; implies the production (creation) and consumption (receiving and interpretation) of discourse. The discursive practice mediates the wider social context into texts. In this analysis, the discursive practice is perceived as the pressure of the wider social context on policymakers (in this case the Swedish government). The discursive practice also includes interdiscursivity and intertextuality, being the explicit or implicit relations one discourse or one text have to other discourses and text
- Text; consists of the actual writing, the policy under study.

(Jørgensen and Phillips 2008 pp.68-69).

Based on this approach and the research question, the moral economy approach and the previous research, the reading of the material focused on pre-identified topics of concern. Through the reading of the material, categories within those topics were identified and units of content from the texts, mainly sentences and paragraphs, were labeled within the identified categories. As such, the data was reduced to themes and subcategories, allowing for the mapping out of ideas, norms, relations between actors and underlying meanings present in the material. With a focus on expressions of power-relations, the question whether the discourses reproduced or challenged “the existing order of discourse” (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2008 p.69) and what implications the particular use of discourse in the policy might have for the broader social practice has been central to analysis. More particularly, the aim of the analysis is to examine the role of the discourses used in the Sweden-Africa policy in solidifying or challenging the common-sense understandings of the moral objectives of North-South trade relations.

4.4. Methodological limitations

The critique frequently directed toward case studies concern questions of generalizability, when basing a study on solely one case, is it possible to draw general conclusions that are applicable in a wider context? However, as stated in Punch (2005 p.146) generalizability should not necessarily be the goal of all research. This study focuses only on the role of one aspect, and one policy, in the promotion and legitimization of the Swedish Aft agenda and can as such not possibly make any wider claims. However, this is done as the researcher believes in the importance of greater understanding of the Swedish Government's approach to be vital, considering the importance of that actor, and the centrality of the document selected for analysis.

Another aspect to be aware of in the reading of this thesis is the role of the researcher; in line with what has been discussed above in the sections on social constructivism and post-modernism, the epistemological premises of this research is that reality and knowledge is socially constructed. This leads us to the question of how to treat our own knowledge? The researcher cannot be objective in analysis and is also part of the society and culture under study and I will, in this research just like every other discursive activity, also create reality as I am representing it. However, this is acknowledged and I seek to be reflexive on my own role as a researcher (Jørgensen & Phillips 2008 p.175) and at the same time aim at distancing myself from the material under study, in order to find the 'taken for granted' assumptions. I will also seek to be transparent in the methods of analysis in order for the reader to be able to understand how I reached my conclusions through the material (Punch, 2005 p.195).

5 Analysis

5.1 Production and consumption of the Sweden-Africa policy

As discussed above in the chapters on methodology and theory, the analysis of a text within the CDA framework must consider how the text is situated within the wider social context, and the theory of moral political economy combined with the discussions in chapter two (the overview of existing research) has broadly served this purpose. However, this section aims to discuss the more specific discursive practices particular to the Sweden-Africa policy; central forces that have affected its development and what role the discourses of the policy play for the surrounding world.

In 2007 the new government that had taken office the previous year appointed a group from within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the task of preparing a background report for the formulation of a new policy for Swedish relations to Africa. The report was developed with assistance from the Nordic Africa Institute and consultations with non-governmental organizations (NGO's), the business community and the academic community (Wohlgemuth and Wallnöfer, 2009 p.77). This material, and additional seminars in Africa and Sweden would form the basis of the final proposal that was presented in the Parliament by March 2008.

The current Swedish policy for Africa is the successor to the first policy explicitly concerned with Swedish relations to Africa, adopted in 1998. The necessity to formulate a policy for Swedish-African relations had emerged at this particular point in time following some major developments that urged the re-formulation of the ties between Sweden and the continent. Before this, relations had been implicitly based on the goal of strengthening trade relations and aid for development, as well as the political support to the liberation struggles from colonial power and the fight against apartheid in South Africa (Wohlgemuth and Wallnöfer, 2009 p.77). As such, two events occurring in the 90's were central in creating a need for changed politics toward Africa; the end of apartheid in South Africa, and the 'aid effectiveness debate', discussed in chapter two (ibid). References to historical ties preceding the first policy are still present in the new policy and described as offering "an exceptional platform and excellent conditions for a coherent policy for Africa" (skr. 2007/08:67 p.22). The image of Sweden in Africa

remains associated with the assistance it delivered during the liberation struggles and the extensive support it provided in the following independence. The fact that Sweden holds no colonial past in Africa is perceived to create conditions under which “Sweden is well placed to influence, cooperate and act” (ibid).

There are a number of central documents that serve as points of reference to the policy and to which the intertextuality is made explicit. The Swedish Policy for Global Development (PGD) is a point of departure, and the Swedish Africa policy adheres to the goal of an equitable and sustainable global development that the PGD provides, and the principles of a rights-based perspective and the perspective of poor people on development. Also the guidelines of the UN and the EU are presented as the foundation on which the Swedish policy is framed and ought to be implemented. The guidelines and conclusions on development cooperation that are provided by the EU “are of central importance to Sweden’s actions, and Sweden has been seeking to ensure that these reflect Swedish policy” (ibid p.26). The normative work of the UN and the platform for dialogue between Sweden and African countries that the institution provides are perceived as central, helping to achieve the UN Millennium Goals (MDG’s) is a central priority. MDG number eight, which aims to “develop a global partnership for development through closer cooperation between rich and poor countries on development aid, the environment, trade and debt cancellation” (ibid p.6) is of special relevance to the focus of this thesis, and the policy also states that Swedish trade-related development cooperation ought to increase and is to be based on the AfT strategy of the EU.

As such, there is an evident intertextuality of the Sweden-Africa policy with a great many policies and documents which also construct understandings of the moral purposes of North-South trade relations on a wider scale. It is probable that the common-sense representations of North-South trade relations in the discourses of international institutions such as the UN and the EU to a large degree are imported also into the Swedish policy, as these institutions present frameworks that the policy is based on.

In line with the PGD, the Swedish policy for Africa emphasizes coherence and coordination throughout all policy areas, and a broad approach to development where “security policy, aid policy and trade policy, and initiatives in areas such as climate and the environment, economic growth, social development and health are viewed, and

treated, as an integrated whole”(ibid pp.1-2). Accordingly, the common-sense representations of the social world (including trade relations) are expected to constitute the foundations of, and permeate the framing and implementation of a wide array of policy areas. This includes both development assistance in broad terms, and AfT. The policy also provides the understandings that Sweden’s actions and positions within the central international institutions such as the EU and the UN ought to be based on, and in that way the discourses used in this policy have the opportunity to both challenge and contribute to the current understandings of the moral purposes of global trade within those institutions.

5.2 Sweden, Africa and the role of trade

This section sets out to understand what representations are constructed of roles and mandates in the relations between Sweden and Africa, focusing on trade relations, and how trade is explained to relate to development. By focusing on language-use and what is said as well as not said in the policy I wish to investigate what common-sense understandings are created in this relation. First the general aims of the policy will be mapped and the position of Sweden in the promotion of trade relations, following a discussion on the role of Africa in the policy.

“The aim of Sweden’s Africa policy is to support African countries and citizens in their pursuit of peace, democracy and sustainable development. This policy is designed to help Africa take a full and active part in global political and economic cooperation on common challenges. It is also intended to broaden areas of contact between Sweden and Africa and thereby promote both Swedish and African interests.” (skr. 2007/08:67 p.1)

Swedish policies ought to benefit both global and Swedish interests and the development in Africa is presented in the policy as a “common global concern” (ibid p.4). To help Africa benefit from globalization is seen as a common interest, as “distance is of little significance when it comes to climate change, environmental threats, epidemics, international terrorism and war” (ibid p.21), and the argument that Sweden, and the rest

of the world, would benefit from progressive development on the African continent is central.

The policy aims at broadening areas of contact between Sweden and Africa, promoting both Swedish and African interests. The framework within which Sweden acts in its relations to Africa is described as multi-faceted with diverse channels. The relation is and can be carried out through a wide array of instruments, and trade constitute a central pillar, a “powerful instrument for development and the diffusion of economic progress” (ibid p.24). Trade policy is seen as one of the primary instruments in the promotion of an equitable and sustainable development in line with the PGD, and the contribution to the achievement of the MDG’s. To strengthen the commercial, economic and industrial ties between Sweden and Africa is seen to be beneficial to both sides and Sweden seeks to actively promote efforts that enhance trade with, and investments in, Africa through both private and public initiatives.

The principle of free trade is presented as a cornerstone for Swedish foreign policy, and that increased trade and greater integration into the global economy should be part of the future development in Africa is made clear. Trade issues are instructed to be mainstreamed in other relevant Swedish policy areas, and the importance of doing so in policies of development assistance is emphasized (ibid pp.32-33). In line with the globally identified need of increased AFT, the policy establishes that support of efforts taken in Africa to create better terms and conditions of trade, harmonization and regional integration, an improved investment climate, increased productive capacity, reduced dependence on raw materials and diversification, and other activities that create better conditions for participation in the global economy and economic growth ought to increase. The goal is not only to integrate the African countries into the global economy and expand trade with other continents, but also to boost regional trade within the continent. Increased trade and integration into the global economy are not only presented as engines for growth, but are also seen as holding the possibility to prevent conflicts both within and between states (ibid p.30).

In line with the rhetoric used by the EU in its relations with Africa, the relationship between Sweden and Africa is described in terms of ‘cooperation’ and as a ‘partnership’ that is increasingly based on equal terms and the quest for common goals.

The policy emphasizes that Africa is diverse and that development on the continent is heterogeneous between countries and populations, and it is explicit that the policy aims to highlight not only the challenges but also positive changes taking place in Africa. Measures taken from Sweden and the rest of the world should serve to enable the countries and peoples of Africa to realize *their* ambitions and build on the existing foundations and “favorable trends” (ibid p.29) taking place on the continent. Also in facilitating integration into the global economy, Sweden should take the circumstances and development interest of developing countries into particular consideration (ibid p.24).

However, the policy presents little nuance in terms of what the different interests and ambitions of the African stakeholders might be, or how they should be identified, especially considering that the policy should favor the poor people’s perspective to development. The African Union (AU) is identified as the central actor to support for the global and regional economic integration of Africa, however it is not considered whether the AU represents a ‘poor people’s perspective’ on development or not. Rather, the language used in the policy seems to imply that development in Africa ought to be a process similar to that of development in Sweden and the EU. This can be understood from passages expressing that “in many areas the continent still *lags behind*” (ibid p.4), and that “the EU and Sweden must share with Africa their own knowledge and positive experience of open trade” (ibid p.30). Considering this, the following passage shows an interesting view:

“Whether in Sweden or Africa, development is driven by the same underlying factors: peace and security, democratic governance, a society effectively based on the rule of law, concern for the environment, stable macro-economic conditions, *an open economy*, openness to migration including return migration, gender equality, investment in research, education and health.” (ibid p.22, italics added)

This language-use seems to imply that whatever or whomever Africa is 'lagging behind', and thus needs to catch up with, are those countries already 'developed', excluding alternative accounts of what the role of trade in the African development might be. This can, with reference to Fairclough’s ideas on ideology and hegemony, indicate that discourse in the policy contributes to the maintenance of unequal power-relations in the

global trade regime, as it reinforces the perception of a need for the African economies to follow the example of the more advanced economies and integrate further into the global economy. At the same time, there seems to be a contradiction in arguing for the African development to follow the examples of Sweden or the EU while at the same time promoting free trade, as it excludes the acknowledgment of the historical importance of certain protectionist measures in the development of the Swedish and European economies (Andersson, 2007). Instead, an open economy and free trade are treated as self-evident needs for the future development in Africa.

5.3 The role of the international context

Given the important role of the international institutions in the theoretical literature on Swedish relations to Africa, this section sets out to analyze how this is rendered in the policy. The aim is to investigate whether or how the discourses used give attention to the adverse structures and asymmetrical power-relations that perpetuate the global trade regime, contributing to an unequal global development.

The broader international context, by means of institutions and organizations is given a great deal of attention in the policy, and Sweden's work both *within* and *through* international institutions is presented as a central instrument for practical cooperation and relations with Africa. The country's active membership in international institutions, primarily the EU and the UN is presented as an important asset and opportunity to make use of relations to Africa. In relation to the international institutions, the pursuit of greater coherence and coordination between policies and initiatives for increased effectiveness and efficiency is emphasized as integral parts of the Government's work. The ambition to work for free and open trade is not limited only to the African continent, but should be applied in all contexts, and the policy acknowledges the importance to work for greater openness of trade also in the Global North. To work for greater access to the OECD markets for African countries is expressed to be part of Sweden's role both in the WTO and other trade agreements, such as those of the EU.

As an important actor whose decisions affect the African economy and peoples, the EU receives particular attention as an increasingly central "platform and framework" (skr. 2007/08:67 p.25) for the Swedish commitments to Africa. The relationship between

the EU and Africa is, just like the bilateral Sweden-Africa relations, described in terms of *cooperation* and *partnership* and as becoming of increasingly equitable character. Drawing on arguments of the discourses on the global AfT agenda the importance of making the free trade regime of the ‘post-Washington consensus’ more development friendly is maintained. The policy expresses the centrality of promoting closer cooperation between the EU and Africa in international forums such as the WTO. It is also stressed that for African nations to benefit from market access they have available to them, the EU and Africa must; “*work together* to successively harmonise regional trade, tariffs, industrial policies, laws, rules and procedures, and to develop quality controls and standards in Africa that meet international requirements” (ibid p.31, italics added). To work actively within the EU is seen as an integral tool of the Swedish-African relations and “as a participant in the development of EU foreign, aid and trade policies for Africa, Sweden has sought to promote more effective, coherent action in accordance with international goals and shared values” (ibid). Sweden’s openness to trade and the commitment to the removal of protectionist measures that distort trade between the EU and Africa are seen as comparative advantages that Sweden holds in its relations to Africa and the policy specifically addresses a commitment to the liberalization of the EU Common Agricultural Policy.

The trade dimension of the EU-Africa partnership, the EPA’s is described as having the aim of protecting the African development interests and being based on mutual respect. It is stressed that Sweden must seek “to ensure through the EU that implementation of the EPA process promotes development and supports Africa’s integration agenda” (ibid p.32) and provide trade-related development aid to ensure that Africa can benefit fully from the EPA’s. Although accentuating the need to ensure the development preferences of Africa in the EPA’s, the policy does not shed light on the question of how power-relations affect the negotiation process or the risk of use of coercion by the internationally more powerful actors.

The use of the notions of partnerships and cooperation may, as discussed in chapter two, veil the realities of asymmetrical power-relations and actually serve as a tool of coercion, making less powerful actors pursue policies and agreements which are not beneficial to them in the long term (Hurt, 2003, Storey, 2008). As such, the question of

how much the relationship, both bilaterally (Sweden-Africa) and multilaterally (EU-Africa) actually rests on a basis of 'equal terms', 'partnership' and 'cooperation' becomes an important question. This forms particular interest to analysis of the Swedish Africa policy as the elements of partnership and cooperations are emphasized, while little attention is given to the extent to which asymmetrical power-relations form those partnerships and cooperation. Especially considering the amount of critique that has been directed, both from academia and international and Swedish CSO's toward the coercive nature of the EPA's under the Cotonou agreement.

Discourses in the policy acknowledge flaws and inequalities in the international trading system that Sweden partakes in by recognizing the adverse effects that trade distorting measures taken in the more advanced economies, such as the EU, might have on African markets. However, this recognition is concurrent with the strong stance taken on the importance of deeper integration of the African economies into that system, expressing a great belief in the opportunities that this would present for Africa. When identifying shortcomings in the wider trading structures, such as the protectionist measures taken by the EU in the Common Agricultural Policy, the policy expresses it as the duty of Swedish actors to work for its liberalization. However the rationale behind this argument does not refer to the asymmetries in power or the injustices of the international trading arrangements, but rather to the principles of liberalization and free trade as a moral compass.

6 Conclusions

The aim of this thesis has been to problematize the way the relationship between trade and development is depicted in the Swedish government's African relations policy regime, through the investigation of the policy: 'Sweden and Africa - a policy to address common challenges and opportunities'. The question of whether the representations of trade and development in the material reinforces or challenges ideologically hegemonic understandings has been central to the analysis. Through the analytical lens of the moral political economy approach and CDA, the thesis finds that the discourses used to a large extent reinforce the discourses of the AfT agenda of free trade and an open economy as fundamental conditions for development. Reinforced is also the perception of a necessity of greater integration and involvement on the global economy for development purposes, while recognizing the need of support and assistance in order for the African nations to be able to undertake such an endeavor and benefit from it. The idea is for the EU and Sweden to share with Africa their own knowledge and positive experience of open trade, however, the discourses used do not disclose the historical importance of protectionist measures to these economies. The policy maintains the importance of supporting African ambitions and a 'poor people's' perspective on development, but with little reflexivity on how this ought to be ensured or identified.

Both the multilateral EU-Africa and the bilateral Sweden-Africa relations are described in terms of partnerships and cooperation that are mutually beneficial and grounded in common interests. However, this framing might veil asymmetries of power and function as a tool of coercion, serving as ideological underpinnings of dominant representations. Although it is declared important to protect the development interests of African nations, the risk of use of coercion from internationally more powerful actors in negotiation processes is not defined. A case in point is the negotiation process of the EPA's, which has received a great deal of attention from observers due to its coercive characteristics, however the risks of the agreements not protecting the development interests of the African nations is not elaborated on in the policy. The policy recognizes flaws in the global trading system, such as trade-distorting protectionist measures taken

in the economies of the Global North, and even if the discourses in the policy express a commitment to change these, it remains questionable to what extent this commitment is put into practice. Rather than referring to unjust structures and asymmetrical power-relations, the rationale behind this expressed commitment rather lies in a strong belief of free-trade as conducive to development, and despite the recognition of shortcomings in the global trading system, the policy maintains the importance of greater integration of the African economies into that system. As the policy aims to provide the framework and basis on which Swedish relations to Africa should be practiced, it influences and governs the work of a wide array of actors. Common sense imaginings constructed here are highly likely to be imported into the conceptual and practical frameworks of both public and private Swedish trade and development actors.

As the recognition of the need to make the global trading system more development friendly is receiving increasing attention in global discourses and agendas, it is affecting and altering the conceptualizations and operationalizations of global development politics. Effectively, it is a topic of great importance for further research, and there are a large number of stakeholders involved that would be interesting for further investigation. Considering the lack of perspectives in the academic debate on Swedish development cooperation, it is a topic that needs further attention. One interesting feature of the AfT agenda to investigate is the increased importance given private actors in order to make international trade ‘development friendly’, and the augmented allocation of public development funds toward actors from the business sector.

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