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# Discursive (re)articulations of development policy in the light of Sustainable development goals: The case of Georgia



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# Discursive change and continuation of development policy in the light of SDGs: The case of Georgia

**Abstract**

The paper analyses the ways Georgian government produced development policy in relation to the changing global and local discursive formations of development. By bringing together post-development theory and Laclau and Mouffe's discourse analysis method, I illustrated that the neoliberal discourse failed to generate meanings regarding social issues that created a danger of the dislocation of the discourse. Against this "lack of meaning", the social democratic ideology inspired political coalition Georgian Dream produced its development policy first as a pre-election player and then as a ruling political party. I argue that in order to deal with the dislocation of discourse, Georgian government incorporated elements such as inclusive economic growth and environmental sustainability from the global discourse of development under its domain. Those elements were articulated in a way that reproduced the same neoliberal economic rationality though under the different ideological frame. Following the critical literature, I illustrated that discursive articulations occur within the existing discursive field meaning that possibilities of social changes, does not matter how radically they attempt to distance themselves from the hegemonic discourse, are heavily influenced by the pre-existing discursive structures.

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## 1. Introduction

Georgia as a post-soviet country has experienced probably the most dramatic neoliberal reforms. Especially since the Roses Revolution when a pro-western political party - the United National Movement (UNM) came into the power. According to the statistics produced by the world bank – the main ideological supporter to the UNM's development policy - a number of people living under the poverty threshold has dramatically increased since 2003[1]. The reasons of this, as critical literature argues, is that UNM was seeing development in very narrow terms mostly as economic growth, ignoring all social dimensions (Rekhviashvili, 2012, p. 5). The country became a laboratory for social engineering programs and reforms that produced various political and social crisis (Jones, 2015). Between 2003 and 2012 Georgia had higher annual GDP growth than many other post-soviet countries and at the same time, it was one of the most unequal countries in terms of the income distribution. Despite its rapid economic development, the overall welfare of the society deteriorated; poverty increased from 18.2 to 26.2 (Gugushvili, 2014, p. 235). Saying shortly, the neoliberalism inspired UNM's development policy failed to overcome the existing social problems in the country.

In 2012, neoliberal development agenda was replaced with a more socially inclusive approach as a ruling political party favoring neoliberal reforms was replaced with a coalition Georgian Dream (GD) officially having social democratic ideology; globally, it was a period of the shift from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). One of the central arguments of the discourse theory interpreting Laclau and Mouffe's notions of contingency and continuity (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 32; Torfing, 2005, p. 23) is that discursive articulations are always contingent but they are never completely open to be shaped freely from the previous discursive structures. Thus, we can assume that Georgian government's discourse of development has been influenced, to the certain degree, by the pre-existing discursive structures and in

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some ways, the discourse incorporated certain aspects from the previous neoliberal discourse under its domain.

Post-development theory argues that discourse has immanent ability to adapt to the changing conditions by incorporating new meanings under its domain in a way that does not change and question its central aspects (Escobar, 1995, p. 44). By illustrating exactly how have the elements of the neoliberal discourse been re-established within the new government's discourse, we can understand whether there was an actual change in the Georgian government's development policy or the change just affected the surface of the discourse, sustained the same neoliberal rationalities under the label of social democracy. The analysis, therefore, would let us identify neoliberal ideological moments within social democratic development policy that, I assume, are seen as unquestionable truths Georgian political elites operate with when designing the development policy (for example, the idea that free market and private sector players are the main driving force of economic growth and the economic growth automatically leads to social wellbeing). The depiction of the ideological moment fixations denaturalizes existing social order that is believed to be the only possible objective reality (Laclau, 1990, p. 34). The deconstruction, following post-development theory (Latouche, 2015, pp. 118-119), decolonizes our imaginary, allowing us to think about alternative projects of social transformations, the ones that are not influenced by the hegemonic Eurocentric discourse of development.

Hence, the overall purpose of this research is to analyze what conditions for social change have been created and what possibilities of transformation have been excluded through discursive practices. To be more specific, while illustrating the ways Georgian development policy has been articulated in relation to the neoliberal as well as global discursive transformations, I will illustrate the aspects of the discourse that have been changed and that have been maintained within the social democratic discourse. I hope, the research will open up new analytical possibilities to generate alternative understandings of social transformations in Georgia and

contribute to the discussions about the ways hegemony of development discourse is established and challenged in local realities by discussing Georgian example.

The guiding question that this research attempts to answer is *how and in what ways has Georgian government produced development discourse in relation to the changing global and local discursive formations of development?*

In order to answer the question and achieve research objectives, I will first construct and analyse three discourses – neoliberal, resistance and global discourses of development - as ideal types. The analysis of the three discourses provides the understanding of the discursive field within which the GD's social democratic discourse of development emerged. The fourth chapter constructs and analyses social democratic discourse of development and identifies the change and continuation between discourses. The last section of the fourth chapter offers an explanation for the discursive change and continuation. The final concluding chapter of the paper aims at discussing the importance of the research findings and putting those findings in the critical dialogue with post-development theory.

## 2. Theoretical framework

### 2.1 Post-structural roots of post-development theory

Conceptualization of development relating issues within social sciences could be divided into three main theoretical traditions (Escobar, 2007, p. 19): modernization theory emerging from liberal political theory, seeing development as a linear process where less industrialized countries are supposed to catch up with their industrial counterparts through creating capitalist social structures (Rostow, 1960); Dependency and world system theories originating from Marxist tradition, understanding underdevelopment not as a lack of capitalism but as a consequence of global capitalism (Frank, 1969; Wallerstein, 1974); and critical approaches to development inspired by the "post-structuralist turn" in social sciences, treating development as a cultural discourse and problematizing the conceptual apparatus liberal and Marxist theories operate with. (Sachs, 1992; Escobar, 1995; Rahnema & Bawtree, 1997).

Before discussing the central arguments of post-development theory that my research uses as a theoretical lenses, I will outline the key moments of post-structural social theory that provides not only an epistemological foundation for post-development theory and informs it with a specific methodological tools but also creates a solid ground to clarify certain theoretical aspects Laclau and Mouffe's discourse analysis method rests on. As Jørgensen and Phillips (2002, p. 4) point out, discourse analysis is a complete package of a theory and a method. Therefore, it is important to illustrate the compatibility of methodological tools with the theoretical framework under which the research is conducted.

While mentioning post-structuralism's contribution to post-development theory, it deserves to be pointed out that it is basically Micheal Foucault and his understanding of discourse/power what is meant. All major classic as well as contemporary post-development texts analyzing development discourses and practices implicitly or explicitly refer to Foucault (see, for example, (Ferguson, 1994); (Escobar, 1995); (Ziai, 2016)). However, I think bringing Laclau and

Mouffe's discourse theory with its various interpretations (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002; Torfing, 2005; Howarth, 2005) can contribute to generate an interesting analysis of development discourse and avoid limitations that a Foucault inspired methodology could face with due to the fact that Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory and method have been developed by drawing together early post-structuralist (including Foucault) and post-Marxist theories, deconstructing their inner contradictions (Torfing, 2005, p. 8) and in that sense, it offers solid theoretical and methodological ground for analyzing discourses. Thus, in the interpretation of post-structuralism, I will mainly refer to Laclau and Mouffe's version of poststructuralism since it has overcome shortcomings of other discourse theories.

In contrast to structuralism, post-structuralist social theory argues that language is not a stable, totalizing structure and a meaning is never ultimately fixed. Signs acquire their meanings in relation to each other as it was understood by structuralists, but for post-structuralists, the configuration of signs can change and therefore, the meanings of signs can also be changed (Laclau, 2007, p. 545). The understanding of structure as unfished and always open to the change rests on the post-structuralist anti-essentialist ontology and anti-foundationalist epistemology, stating that there is no any pre-determined underlining principle, self-determining essence, or the "centre" that while organizes all identities within a stable and closed structure, escapes structurality – as Derrida says, paradoxically, it was believed to be "within the structure and outside it" (1978, p. 279). The rejection of essentialism logically leads us to argue that every meaning articulation process and partly fixation of meaning is *contingent* process, saying it with Laclau and Mouffe's (2014, p. 84) words, "society and social agents lack any essence, and their regularities merely consist of relative and precarious forms of fixation which accompany the establishment of a certain order". Based on this ontological premises, Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory seeks to understand possibilities of the social within contingently constructed discourses (Torfing, 2005, p. 10).

Here, the discourse theory goes beyond Marxist economic determinism and based on Gramsci (1971) argues that the political has primacy, it is a constitutive force

that creates certain social order (Laclau, 1990, p. 33). Political articulations determine and constitute the ways through which society is constructed. Hence, The overall aim of discourse theory is to show the contingent nature of meaning articulation process that is masked as the only objective social order (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 36) and in that sense, the discourse analyse deconstructs it, turns "the text against itself" (Torfing, 2005, p. 20)

## 2.2 Post-development theorization of development discourse

Post-development theory emerged within this theoretical context. Post-development theory offers to treat development as a cultural discourse that means to see it not only as a set of practices aiming at bringing social changes to the "underdeveloped" areas of the world but above all, it is a cultural construct, a way of producing social orders[2]. According to the central argument of the post-development theory, development discourse brings space into existence that is defined by "a set of relations and discursive practices that systematically produce interrelated objects, concepts, theories and strategies" about social changes (Escobar, 1995, p. 42). The concept of discourse itself could be defined as a temporary closure, the fixation of meaning in a particular way through various struggles and negotiations over meaning (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014, p. 91). Development functions as an "empty signifier" that could be filled with any meaning (Ziai, 2009). Hence, development discourse in the 21th century can be conceptualized as a "network of interrelated and partly competing (sub-)

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[2] Based on the post-structuralist ontology, post-development theory argues that material objects, to a certain extent, are discursively constituted (Escobar, 2007, p. 22). Here, post-development theory mainly refers to Michel Foucault's theorization of discourse that draws line between discursive and non-discursive dimensions of the social processes and against Marxism, recognizes the former's influence on the later. However, I will follow a more radical way of theorizing the relationship between discursive and non-discursive practices that is to reject any difference between the two. Namely, as Laclau and Mouffe (2014, p. 91) showed, any "non-discursive complexes" such as institutions are just more complex forms of discourses and they could be explored in the same way as discourses. Thus, by studying the discourse of development, we study development as a material entity and by analyzing discursive practices we analyze actual "real" practices that have the power to produce the state's actions.

discourses" (Ziai, 2014, p. 8)[3]. What are the specific ways through which discourses interrelate each other and re-articulate themselves in new forms is a context-specific question, open to an empirical investigation that my research tries to address by analyzing the case of Georgian government's development policy.

Therefore, based on the post-development theorization of development discourse, I will treat development as a set of discursive practices shaped in very specific historical contexts of the post-2003 Georgia. Having the open definition of the concept gives analytical possibilities to capture as many meanings of development as possible and illustrate what concrete configurations of meanings about social changes have been established discursively in the development policy of Georgian government.

## 2.3 Theorization of change and continuity

Although post-development theory argues that the basic structure of the development discourse shaped in the early post second world war period, it is far from seeing development discourse as monolithic and static entity cemented once and reproduced with the same form everywhere. As Escobar argues, there is an ability of an "immanent adaptability" of the discourse to changing conditions that helped it to survive up to the present day meaning that while some elements of the discourse changed throughout the time, other central aspects of the discourse remained the same (1995, p. 44). This is well compatible with the theorization of continuity and change by post-structural discourse analysts. As Torfing (2005, p. 23) argues, discourse theory takes into account both discontinuity and continuity

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[3] It is worth mentioning that early post-development thought portrayed development discourse as a singular hegemonic project and put less accent on the contextual specificities development discourse was circulated within. By essentializing development discourse and seeing it as a monolith, the theory was limited to problematize potential changes the discourse could undergo due to the context. This moment of the theory has been criticized by many scholars (Moore, 2000; Arce & Long, 2000) and partly acknowledged by some post-development scholars (Escobar, 2000), saying that exploring the ways development discourse was contested and hybridized on the ground was not the overall purpose of their theory. This answer was more self-defense rather than an attempt of an intellectual dialogue to use the criticism for overcoming the limitations of the theory. Ziai's recent conceptualization of development discourse that I refer to, incorporates the criticism into the theory and offers a much-sophisticated understanding of the phenomenon.

and pays attention to the interplay between "discursive path shaping" and "discursive path-dependency": while there could be a radical discontinuity and the discourse could be rearticulated in a totally different way, in most cases, changes in the discourse only affects the surface and the same logic of discourse is reproduced.

The classic example of the development discourse's ability to adapt changing conditions analyzed by post-development scholars that is relevant for my research is the mainstreaming sustainability and setting environment as the cornerstone of development policy. By bringing "sustainable" and "development" together, the later was legitimized by the former that with its overall aim serves to legitimize the core of the western development model – economic growth (Rist, 2008, p. 195). "It is growth and not the environment, that has to be sustained" (Escobar, 1995, p. 195). The logic of discourse remains the same: poverty is still recognized as the main problem and economic growth as the main remedy for it that paradoxically argues that in order to secure life from the economy it is necessary to promote capacities of life to serve economic reason better (Reid, 2013, p. 108).

The Sustainable Development Goals have clearly separated three dimensions – economic, social and environmental. However, as Kothari, et al. (2015, pp. 364-5) illustrate, historical and structural roots of problems such as poverty, ecological crisis, inequality, colonialism, and patriarchal hierarchies are absent from the analysis. Modern technology and science are still seen as a panacea for all the problems "developing" countries are faced with, and economic growth under the free market is understood as the only way to "development".

The transformations that the development discourse has undergone throughout the last five decades resulted in incoherencies and contradictions due to the fact that some newly emerged concepts (for example, environmental sustainability) are not compatible with the concepts that were central for the old development discourse (economic growth, for example) (Ziai, 2014, p. 4).

This particular way of theorization of the discursive change/continuity and the above described ontological picture of the social world open an analytical space to

problematize how has the development discourse of Georgia changed in response to the global discursive changes/continuities and local political transformations.

## 2.4 Neoliberalism and Post-soviet transformations

Conceptualization of neoliberalism first requires to analytically distinguish neoliberalism as an ideological hegemonic project spread in the world through transnational class-based alliances  (Hardt & Negri, 2001; Cox, 2002; Harvey, 2007) and neoliberalism as a technology of governance that is spread through time and space with different modalities, co-existing with other rationalities  (Massey, 2005; Ong, 2007; Springer, 2012). I will follow the later conceptualization of neoliberalism that, in my opinion, instead of offering monolithic understanding of neoliberalism, gives more analytical possibilities to problematize complex nature of the "actually existing neoliberalism" (Brenner & Theodore, 2002, p. 351) that would not have been captured with the former way of theorization. Ong (2007, p. 5) argues that neoliberal logic could be best conceptualized "not as a standardized universal apparatus, but a migratory technology of governing that interacts with situated sets of elements and circumstances". By having this particular understanding of neoliberalism, I recognize the importance of local variabilities and the role of the agency in reproducing neoliberalism (Springer, 2012, p. 135).

Analyzing Post-soviet transformations in the light of the rise of neoliberal ideology shows that neoliberalism driven political reforms implemented in a variety of forms produced different social and political outcomes that are sometimes fundamentally different from what it was supposed to be by its supporter international organizations and scholars. Attempts of International Monetary Fund and the World Bank to encourage the creation of market-friendly social structures faced with different local institutional legacies in post-soviet countries that produced various results (Hirt, et al., 2013, p. 1247). In some cases, local elites manipulated the key moments of the neoliberal ideology to gain the power and strengthen their own top positions in the social hierarchy of society. In other cases, the neoliberal ideology was resisted based on the free market skepticism and socialist nostalgia (Ghodsee,

2010, p. 3). Therefore, during the "translation" process of the neoliberal ideology into the post-soviet realities, some basic elements of the ideology have been fundamentally modified while others have been eliminated from the policy (Hirt, et al., 2013, p. 1248).

## 2.5 Literature review: Georgian encounter with Neoliberalism

Georgian post-soviet transformation has been analyzed from different theoretical angels. Since UNM represents a ruling political party that started implementing neoliberal reforms in Georgia, the main accent of critical scholars was put on the period of the United National Movement's governance.

A quantitative study *Do the Benefits of Growth Trickle-Down to Georgia's Poor? A case for a Strong Welfare System* by Dimitri Gugoshvili illustrates that although Georgia experienced rapid economic growth between 2003-2012, the overall welfare of the society deteriorated (Gugushvili, 2014, p. 231). Based on the poverty measurements designed by Gugushviili (2014, p. 235), under the neoliberal governance of the United National Movement, poverty increased from 18.2 to 26.2. That shows a paradox of neoliberal development policy supported and promoted by the international organizations such as the World Bank and IMF in developing countries that economic growth is not directly translated into the well-being of the population unless there is a proper social policy addressing social problems. As Gugoshvili argues, the market failed to solve any important social problems the society was faced with, all the improvements the poor had seen was owing to the state support (Gugushvili, 2014, p. 235).

Another important contribution to the research on Georgian government's development policy is a qualitative study *Development and the Role of the State; Visions of Post-Revolutionary Georgian Government* by Lela Rekhviashvili that applies discourse analysis method to the problem. Rekhviashvili like Gugushvili is focused on 2003-2012 years, so-called "neoliberal era" of Georgian development, coming up with the same conclusion that in 2003-2008 Georgian government was seeing development in very narrow terms mostly as economic growth, ignoring all

social dimensions (Rekhviashvili, 2012, p. 5). As Rekhviashvili argues (2012, pp. 28-9), even though there were some changes in the government's development discourse in 2008-2012 (for example, the government started addressing social problems in its rhetoric), the discourse did not change while defining solutions to the problems. The private sector was still seen as the main provider of welfare. The same conclusion with respect to development policy and the environment is made by Ia Eradze (2014, p. 23) arguing that economic growth was the main organizing principle while creating environmental policy by the United National Movement in 2003-2012.

United National Movement inspired by neoliberal ideology set economic growth as the main objective of the state and defined a free market as the main provider of welfare. Joel Lazarus's (2013, p. 262) research on the linkages between globalization, transnational capital, and neoliberalism in Georgia illustrated that UNM's reforms were driven by the interests of the transnational capitalist class that could be understood in the wider picture of global neoliberal hegemony. In particular, Lazarus argues that Georgian political elites have successfully socialized into the global capitalist elites and produced politics that served the interests of the international organizations such as the World Bank, IMF and neoliberal think thanks - the Cato Institute, European Stability Initiative, Heritage Foundation, to name but a few. Those institutions and organizations had "unparalleled influence" on the Georgian government's labour policy, for example. Georgian Labour Code deviates from the international labour standards that has often become the reason of being criticized by international labour organizations and EU (Lazarus, 2013, p. 276). However, UNM's reforms were supported and encouraged by neoliberal institutions. As an example, Georgia was ranked as the top global reformer by the World Bank (2006, p. 1) and the country sustained this status until 2012.

Christian Timm indicates much-complicated interface between neoliberalism and UNM's development policy. As Timm argues, in order to sustain political power, after the introduction of the neoliberal non-interventionist politics the party realized a need of informal interventions in the economy: Non-regulated markets gave more

power to already powerful market participates who were closely connected to the former political regime and were a danger for the UNM. As a result, UNM started regulating market not by creating formal, institutional constraints that would have been noticed by their transitional capitalist allies but the government started informal interventions in property rights, freedom of contract and restricted access to the resources (Timm, 2013, pp. 27-8). This created a state that was based not on the Washington Consensus but the opposite: the governance of UNM represents an example of "unintentional anti-Washington Consensus" (Timm, 2014, p. 17).

Timm's argument well illustrates the above-discussed theorization of neoliberalism and shows that neoliberal ideology has experienced fundamental modifications when implementing in Georgian reality. On the one hand, it removed institutional constraints on market regulations that increased the well-being of an only very small number of people while the overall level of poverty and inequality deteriorated. This was inspired, supported and legitimized by the transnational capitalist class. On the other hand, it triggered various informal interventions into the market, resulting in the creation of a Janus-faced state that hardly could be defined as a "classic" example of state based on neoliberal principles.

As it is obvious from the above discussion, Georgia's "neoliberal age" is a well-researched topic but the period after the 2012 elections has not problematized in academic circles from the critical perspective. It has been pointed out that discursive articulations always occur with the available elements, discourse always draws some elements from the previous discursive structures. Thus, problematizing and analyzing the ways Georgia experienced neoliberalism provides a solid ground to understand GD's development policy.

# 3. Methodological Framework

Post-development theory has not only different theoretical premises than other critical theories but it also operates on the different epistemological ground with different methodological tools. As I showed in the previous section, with respect to the methodology, discourse analysis is the central method post-development research uses to conduct empirical research. A philosophical approach under which post-development research operate with is constructivism (Ziai, 2017, p. 9). In this chapter, I will first discuss key concepts Laclau and Mouffe operate with, then develop an explanatory framework based on which the ways one discourse influenced another will be analyzed. Finally, I will outline the analytical steps through which the research will be conducted.

## 3.1 Critical explanation in discourse theory

The aim of my research is to illustrate the ways Georgian government's discourse of development has been influenced by discursive structures created by the previous government as well as by the global discursive transformations. This requires addressing the issue of explanation in discourse theory.

Under the constructivist paradigm, the explanation is understood in a fundamentally different way than positivist and critical realist approaches offer. Discourse theory as it is formulated by Laclau and Mouffe is compatible with the constructivist ontology and epistemology. Thus, in order to epistemologically ground my attempt to explain the ways one discursive structure influenced another, I will develop an explanatory framework by bringing together some key constructivist reflections about explanation (Kratochwil, 2008; Jackson, 2011) and discourse theorists' attempts to generate the "logics of critical explanation" (Torfing, 2005; Howarth, 2005).

In contrast to positivism that tries to make "explanatory interferences" by connecting cause and effect (Hempel, 1965, p. 233) or critical realist attempt to identify causal mechanisms governing social processes (Bhaskar, 2008, p. 35), constructivism sees explanation more like a "narrative than a simple casual

account" meaning that a researcher always does contingent claims that hardly can be generalized in a way that establishes a "general law" or "predicts" the future developments of the social processes (Kratochwil, 2008, p. 95). Patrick Jackson offers the term "singular casual analysis" that allows "the logical independence of a particular casual claim" (Jackson, 2011, p. 149).

In a similar vein, the post-structuralist discourse theory seeks to explain how and why are particular discursive formations constructed, stabilized or transformed. To do so, discourse theory calls for contextual studies of historical conditions under which discourses emerged (Torfing, 2005, pp. 19-20). David Howarth (2005, p. 322) offers the notion of logic that is "the basic unit of explanation" in discourse theory. In particular, Howarth distinguishes social and political logics[4]. While the former concept notes the "conditional and historically specific systems of sedimented practice", the latter refers to the practice that *constitute*s and *contests* the social logics. To say it with other words, the social logic is the *explanandum* – a phenomenon whose characteristics are expected to be explained by research (Howarth mentions the logic of the market as an example. in our case, we can consider the logic of development as a social logic); And political logic is *explanans* – discursive processes having a constitutive function rising a concrete form of social logics. Different political forces and interests compete with each other for hegemony that through the intersected logic of difference and equivalence organizes and structures conditions for the social logics. Hence, the *impossibility* or *failure* of an existing order creates conditions for re-articulation of meanings in a way that makes alliances between differently positioned actors possible. As Howarth claims (2005, p. 323), "it captures the process by which actors link together a disparate set of particular demands in a common discourse so as to construct a more universal political project". This particular moment of theorizing

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[4] It is noteworthy that in addition to the social and political logics, Glynos and Howarth (2007, p. 145) offer the notion of fantasmatic logic that is expected to bring out the ideological dimension of the discursive processes. However, in my research, I do not introduce this concept due to its lack of analytical functionality. It is unclear whether the concept possesses any analytical function at all and how it can be deployed in concrete empirical research (Marttila, 2015, pp. 122-3).

the notion of explanation directly refers to the Laclau and Mouffe's ontological assumption about the primacy of the politics, as discussed in the previous chapter. Hence, in order to explain the logic of development (the social logic), we need to understand the logics of politics since the later works as a constitutive force for the former. In a certain sense, we can say that explanation in discourse theory calls for bringing together synchronic and diachronic analyses: while the logic of social (synchronic analysis) allows understanding more or less stable pattern of the practice in a given time, the logic of politics (diachronic analysis) depicts the ways a particular social logic has been rationalized (Marttila, 2015, p. 121).

We can conclude this section by saying that it is possible to argue one discourse influenced another only in a sense as Max Weber (1958, pp. 91-2) was using the term elective affinities when he was indicating the relationship between protestant ethic and spirit of modern capitalism. This is not direct causation – we cannot reduce an effect to the single cause - but such kind of analysis illustrates certain aspects that one cultural form incorporated from another one.

## 3.2 Key Concepts and research framework

I have discussed the logic of explanation for the post-structuralist discourse theory and located it within the constructivist epistemology. The next step is to develop a concrete empirical research framework through which the research problem will be analyzed. Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory provides not only valuable theoretical foundations for empirical research but it also offers conceptual toolkit to analyze hidden systems of meanings and illustrate how some possibilities of the social are established as the only possible objective order and others excluded through discursive struggles and negotiations (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, pp. 36-7). In this chapter, first, I will discuss the key concepts the discourse theory operates with and then, based on those conceptual tools, develop a research framework.

As indicated, the central argument of post-structural theory is that signs acquire their meanings in relation to each other and they are always open to gain new meanings by putting in connection with other signs. The discourse analysis as a method, saying roughly, tries to analyze the ways set of meanings are produced through generating different sign configurations. In the language of Laclau and Mouffe, *discourse* is a "the structured totality resulting from the articulatory practice" where *articulatory practice* denotes the process of establishing a relation among *elements* (any signs that are not discursively articulated), fixing them as *moments* ("the differential positions, insofar as they appear articulated within a discourse").

In addition to the concept of discourse, authors operate with the concept of *the field of discursivity* (a surplus of meaning, everything that is excluded from the specific discourse). Discourse is always constructed in relation to the field of discursivity through exclusion and inclusion of meanings under its domain.

As said, a crucial difference between structuralism and post-structuralism is that the latter sees structures not as fixed spaces but on the contrary: every meaning fixation is partial and always open to being re-articulated. Hence, discourse is a temporary fixation of meaning - there is always a possibility that new meanings emerged from the field of discursivity and destabilize existing discourses. Discourse never reaches its ultimate fixation but it is a permanent, temporary closure that could be changed through the re-articulation of signs. Thus, there is always an ongoing struggle between different signs to fix new discursive structures. In fact, the main methodological advantage of Laclau and Mouffe's approach is that it offers theoretically well-grounding comprehensive conceptual toolkit to identify a *social antagonism* and analyze the ways it is overcome. *Social antagonism* occurs when two identities are in conflict with each other (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014, pp. 97-98).

The conflict is dealt with by *hegemonic intervention* that is the fixation of moments as elements in a new way that subordinates previously conflictual identities under the one common political project, represent contingent meaning articulations as the only objective reality. The purpose of the discourse analyses, as has been noted, is

to illustrate the contingent nature of discursive articulations and by doing so, to *deconstruct* those articulations (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014, pp. 120-121).

To conduct an empirical research, I will basically follow a guideline outlined by Jørgensen and Phillips (2002, p. 50) and Howarth and Stavrakakis (2000, p. 11-16) while interpreting Laclau and Mouffe's theory: First, the *key signifiers* will be identified in the texts that are *nodal points* (organizing text), *master signifiers* (organizing identities) and *myths* (organizing social spaces). By analysing the ways the key signifiers are linked with other signs, the forms of constructed identities and the social spaces will be illustrated.

At this stage, we can identify only a *nodal point* that is the main sign around which discourse is organized. To say it with Slavoj Zizek's words (2008, p. 105), nodal point "unifies a given field, constitutes its identity: it is, so to speak, the word to which 'things' themselves refer to recognize themselves in their unity". In our case, development could be identified as a nodal point since all other signs acquire their meanings in relation to it. A close look at the empirical material will show what other nodal points could be identified at the following stages of the research.

*Master signifiers* are "nodal points" of identities. They represent signs that organize identities (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002, p. 42). The *myth*, saying with Laclau's words, is a "space of representation which bears no relation of continuity with the dominant "structural objectivity" (Laclau 1990: 61).

Secondly, the *chains of equivalence* and *difference* through which identities and representations are constructed will be explored. Through creating the chain of equivalence, equivalential identities are constructed that "express pure negation of a discursive system" (Howarth & Stavrakakis, 2000, p. 11). For example, while various marginalized social groups have different identities, their internal differences could be weakened and organized as "the poor", by opposing to "the rich". The new emerged identity the poor would not be suitable to the existing discursive structure that creates danger for depicting a contingent nature of discursive structure and in that sense deconstructs it. The logic of difference, on

the contrary, functions to dissolve existing chains of equivalence by bringing the new elements into an expanding order (Howarth & Stavrakakis, 2000, p. 11). For example, the poor will become the part of the discourse by linking the poor to the "transition process" from planned to the market economy, stating that poverty is a natural condition for the transition process that will be ended through the market reforms.

Thirdly, *conflicts* (antagonisms and hegemonic interventions) will be illustrated and analyzed. The analytical strength of Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory, as mentioned, is that it allows a researcher to identify social antagonisms and the ways those antagonisms are dealt with through hegemonic interventions – articulating different identities that are in conflict with each other into a common political project where conflicts are excluded. For example, by using the concepts of social antagonism and hegemonic intervention, it could be illustrated how conflicts emerged in the Georgian neoliberal discourse of development and whether those conflicts have been solved through hegemonic interventions, and if so, how?

The fourth concept from Laclau and Mouffe's theory that will be used for the empirical analysis is *dislocation* that indicates a process through which "the contingency of discursive structures is made visible" (Howarth & Stavrakakis, 2000, p. 13). Dislocation, on the one hand, is a "traumatic occurrence" since it represents the failure of the political project, on the other hand, it is "the foundation on which new identities are constituted". It creates a "lack" on the level of meaning that triggers possibilities for new discursive formations. As Yannis Stavrakakis interprets Laclau and Mouffe's (2014) "theory of dislocation", the theory allows a type of political analysis that is based on a negative ontological framework: "understanding of society is not equivalent to understanding what society is (describing the positive forms our social constructions take) but what prevents it from being". The force that prevents it from being what it aims to be is a force of dislocation that generates new discursive attempts to reach this "impossible goal". For example, while analysing the Georgian neoliberal discourse of development,

the failure of the discourse could be indicated as the foundation of new meaning articulation process occurring in the social democratic discourse of development.

However providing the methodological tools and the epistemological ground, Laclau and Mouffe's theory does not offer a clear understanding how to draw lines between different discourses that in our case makes it difficult to identify discourse of development. As has been noted the authors operate with two concepts *discourse* and *field of discursivity*. Identifying a line between the discursive field and discourse is problematic. As a solution, we could refer to Philips and Jorgensen (2002, p. 56) who introduce the concept order of discourse – "a social space in which different discourses partly cover the same terrain which they compete to fill with meaning each in their own particular way" - locating in-between of a discourse and the discursive field. By this distinctions, we, on the one hand, could sustain the understanding of social phenomena (that in our case is development) as contingent and fundamentally open to change (potentially, every element could emerge and fixed as moments in the development discourse) and, one the other hand, analytically establish its limits.

## 3.3 Discourses as ideal types

The next step is to define how shall we separate those three levels empirically. In order to solve this problem, following constructivist epistemology, I would treat discourses as objects constructed by a researcher rather than objects existing, in reality, a researcher can "discover" (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 143). Discourses could be seen as ideal types, mental constructs and utopias in a sense that they can not be found empirically anywhere in reality. As Max Weber (1949, pp. 91-92) states, "an ideal type is formed by the one-sided *accentuation* of one or more points of view and by the synthesis of a great many diffuse, discrete, more or less present and occasionally absent *concrete* individual phenomena, which are arranged according to those one-sidedly emphasized viewpoints into a unified *analytical* construct". This is a typical constructivist approach to the concept formation process where analytical categories are seen as "second-degree constructs" -

scientific constructs of social and cultural constructs (Schuetz, 1953, p. 3). The construction of "thought objects" through which "a model of a sector of the social world" is created makes it possible to study a research phenomenon (Schuetz, 1953, p. 28). A critical question here is to explain how, based on what criteria, can we justify the ideal type creation process. I will address this question under the section of ethical considerations.

Thus, discourses are instrumental idealizations of a phenomenon created by a scholar to capture research phenomenon. At this moment, we can say that decisions about where does one discourse end and another begin as well as about constructing an order of discourse could be seen as strategical choices inspired by the theory the research is based on.

As an analytical tool, I use the concept of floating signifier to identify an order of discourse. In our case, a floating signifier that different actors struggle to fill with different meanings is "development". Therefore, "development" could be seen as an order of discourse within which the identification of different discourses and analysing the relationship between them is possible. Based on the theoretical framework developed in the previous chapter and taking the research question into account, I construct four discourses of development as ideal types: (1) Neoliberal discourse of development; 2) SDGs discourse of development; Social democratic discourse of development within which I distinguish two ideal types – the party Georgian Dream had (3) before the election and (4) after coming into the power[5];

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[5] By making this distinction, I would like to capture the discourse of resistance to the neoliberalism in Georgia. I assume there is a difference between the ways Georgian Dream positioned itself against the United National Movement and the policy the party has implemented after winning the elections. Georgian Dream's election promises that made the party to defeat United National Movement in the elections could be a good source to illustrate what meanings of development were mobilized against the neoliberalism and then how those meanings rearticulated in official governmental development policy.

## 3.4 Research material

As has been pointed out, Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory rejects the distinction between discursive and non-discursive processes (2014, p. 93) that allows a researcher to look for not only textual materials but opens possibilities to study literally everything as a form of discourse. Since the main aim of my research is to analyze the Georgian government's development policy in relation to the local and global discursive transformations, official documents produced by the institutions addressing development will be analyzed. The reason to choose documents as a research material rests on Dorothy Smith's (1984, p. 64) claim that "documentary" and "textual practices" represent a significant dimension of political practices through which power is exercised in today's world. Namely, Smith (1974, p. 257) argues that "a documentary reality is fundamental to the practices of governing, managing and administration" of society. Political actions are reliant on reality constituted in the form of documents. Saying it with other words, documents are always "resources in schemes of action" (Prior, 2003, p. 13). Therefore, by analyzing documents, I assume we can capture the Georgian government's development policy that has a constitutive power to produce concrete societal changes.

According to Lindsay Prior (2003, p. 2), the status of material whether it could be considered as a document "depends not so much on features intrinsic to their existence, nor on the intentions of their makers, but on factors and processes that lay beyond their boundaries". This definition gives analytical flexibility to choose different forms of documents for the research.

The next step is to define the sample size. As Jonathan Potter and Margaret Wetherell (1987, p. 161) point out, the considerations about sample size is probably the issue where discourse analyze "diverges most radically" from other social science research methods. There is neither a pre-determined scheme on how to decide the sample size nor an established number of documents that a researcher needs to analyze. As the authors argue, the sample size plays the least role in the "success" of the discourse analyze research. The "success" depends on "the reader

assessing the importance and interest of the effect described and deciding whether it has vital consequences for the area of social life in which it emerges and possibly for other diverse areas". I will go back to the problem of "success" under the validation section.

| Ideal type | Research material |
|---|---|
| The neoliberal discourse of development | President's Annual reports to the parliament |
| The social democratic discourse of development before the election | Election promise |
| The social democratic discourse of development after the election | Georgia 2020; Freedom, Fast Development and Prosperity; |
| The global discourse of development | SDGs document |

Those assumptions and especially the definition of documents offered by Prior help to solve the problem regarding finding a document based on which the neoliberal discourse of development could be constructed. Whereas there are official development documents regarding development strategies issued annually since 2012, there is only one very short document addressing development policy issued by the Georgian government between 2003 and 2012. It would be difficult (if not impossible) to construct the neoliberal discourse of development based only on the single document. The fact that there is no "official" development strategy produced by the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development itself could say a lot. The power of the president's institute was enormous: According to the Georgian constitution, as it was re-approved by the United National Movement, the president had an extensive executive power before 2012. President Saakashvili was a key speaker communicating the Georgian government's positions to the citizens of Georgia, as well as to the international audience. Due to the fact that the president's institution was the strongest institution in the country during 2003-2012 and it was Saakashvili personally who heavily influenced the trajectory of the country's development, I will analyze annual reports (nine documents in total) given by the

President to Georgian parliament from 2004 to 2012 in order to construct the neoliberal discourse of development. Annual reports that the president was giving to the parliament, as Saakashvili himself said once[6], was the most important report that a president gives publicly. Based on this, we could see the annual reports as valuable documents reflecting not only the president's opinions but the whole ruling party's understanding and visions of the country's development.

The second ideal type in relation to which the Georgian Government's development policy will be analyzed is what we can call the global discourse of development. Here, it is important to point out that by saying "global" I mean development as it is articulated in Sustainable Development Goals. Seeing SDGs as a research material that allows constructing the "global" discourse of development could be justified based on the various academic reflections defining SDGs as a "new global development paradigm" (See, for example, Gore, 2015; Scholte & Söderbaum, 2017).

In order to construct "a resistance discourse" to neoliberal development discourse, I will analyze Georgian Dream's election promises issued as a document that, as has been mentioned, gives the possibility to see what meanings of social changes have been produced against neoliberal discourse.

With respect to constructing government's discourse of development that is the main interest of the research, first, the official development strategy *Georgia 2020* designed by the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia in 2013 will be analyzed. This is institutionally produced "official" document that offers a framework for the country's development. The document gives a good starting point to uncover what was the first encounter between neoliberal and social democratic discourses of development and what meanings were mobilized to establish much "inclusive" development policy. Moreover, the documents "freedom, fast development and prosperity" issued annually by the government of Georgia since 2012 (seven documents in total) will be analyzed to illustrate the

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[6] https://www.president.gov.ge/ka-GE/Mikheil-Saakashvili.aspx

dynamics of change/continuation of established discursive structures. Besides, the analysis of those documents allows showing in what ways (if any) has the global discourse of development influenced the local discourse of development.

## 3.5 Ethical considerations

One of the crucial differences between positivist and constructivist approaches, as indicated above, is that the latter does not see research process as something based on the universal ground that can generate objective knowledge, free from any subjective meanings attached during the research process. Research conducted under the constructivist epistemology, having "emancipatory ideals" should acknowledge the ways particular theoretical moments as well as a researcher's social location informed and shaped the research process. As Lincoln and Cannella (2009, p. 279) argue, critical research ethics should be a reflexive ethic that is critical towards itself and readable throughout the research.

I am aware that post-development and Laclau and Mouffe's theories with their various interpretations shaped the ways research problem has been defined, ideal types constructed and analysed. Theoretical premises and assumptions fundamentally informed the research process and framed it within particular intellectual boundaries. The same problem could be analyzed in different ways from different theoretical perspectives or even the problem could not be identified with other theoretical approaches at all. In order to indicate the ways theoretical framework influenced the research process, I tried to make the ways the intellectual tradition influenced the research visible throughout the paper. Where possible, I tried to reduce the extent of this influence by having, for example, more open definitions of concepts such as *development* and *neoliberalism* that allowed me to capture different aspects of the research problem. Despite this attempt, I am well aware of the fact that it is impossible to escape from the "moment of choice" (Heylighen, et al., 2007, p. 17) when analysing empirical material. My attempt here,

again, was to make visible those "choices" and the ways they influenced the research as much as possible.

Finally, I understood critique not as an intellectual reflection from some pre-established normative order but as a deconstruction that, quoting Jacob Torfing again (2005, p. 20),  is "a kind of internal critique that turns the text against itself by showing that the binary hierarchies are not consistently sustained, but rather problematized in the name of a non-totalizable openness". By operating this particular understanding of critique, I created more analytical possibilities to analyse discursive processes without too much influence of the existing critical literature.

# 4. Analysis

## 4.1 Introduction

The analytical part is divided into five main chapters. In the first three chapters, the Neoliberal, election, and SDGs discourses of development are analysed and ideal types constructed, respectively. The main aim of those three chapters is twofold: first to create the ideal types as analytical constructs that allows comparing discourses, and the second to map out the field of discursivity wherein the struggle over defining *development* occurs. The critical explanation in the discourse theory, as indicated, requires to illustrate how are social logics constituted and contested by certain aspects of the political logics. Thus, by analysing the three discourses, I depict the political logics that produced the logics of development. In the fourth chapter, the Georgian government's "social democratic" discourse of development as an ideal type is constructed and analysed in relation to the three discourses. The main aim of the fourth chapter is to illustrate what aspects of the neoliberal, resistance and global discourses of development have been incorporated under the social democratic discourse and how has the struggle between different political objectives been dealt with through hegemonic interventions. The last section of the fourth chapter aims at analyzing the constitutive logic for social democratic discourse and discusses why were certain aspects being incorporated from the field of discursivity whereas others were ignored.  The fifth, concluding chapter aims to briefly summarize the main findings of the research and in reference to the post-development scholarship, discusses what conditions for social change have been created and what possibilities of transformation have been excluded through the discursive practices.

## 4.2 The neoliberal discourse of development

United National Movement came into power through the Roses Revolution in 2003. Since the very beginning of the UNM governance, the party set "development" of the country as its main objective. It could be said that this was the very first attempt

to generate a comprehensive development policy in the history of independent Georgia.

In this chapter, I will illustrate that the neoliberal development policy was created from Eurocentric perspective, understood mainly as an economic growth where the fast and high GDP growth is the only indicator of development; social objectives were defined from economic perspective, mainly as a material support to the vulnerable social groups; Nevertheless, by the end of the UNM's government, signs denoting social crisis emerged within the discourse that created a social antagonism between economic and social objectives. My argument here is that the failure of the neoliberal discourse to deal with this crisis through hegemonic interventions created the danger of the discourse dislocation that, in turn, opened space for new discursive articulations.

Based on the following quote from the president's report, I identified three nodal points around which the neoliberal discourse of development is organized – *state development, economic policy* and *social policy* - "*our development formula is to achieve political freedom for the state, economic freedom, and equality of opportunities for the citizens*" (President's report, 2006, p. 39 translation mine). This chapter follows the same logic and analyses the ways signs are articulated around the three nodal points. As a concluding section, I will discuss the antagonism between social and economic objectives and its relevance for understanding the Georgian government's current development policy.

### 4.2.1 State development

In the neoliberal discourse of development, the state acquires its meaning in relation to two elements - the Soviet Union and a European country. While elements such as *civilized, progress full, democratic* and *modern state* are fixed in moments around the sign *Europe*, the *Soviet Union* is defined with signs such as *corruption, nepotism*, and *tribalistic consciences* (President's report, 2005, p. 9 translation mine). By opposing the meanings, a new space for development is constructed. Structural reforms that the state is supposed to undergo are meant to create a

*European state*. In that sense, UNM development policy is fundamentally based on Eurocentric understanding of development. It constantly addresses Europe as a reference point according to which the country should be changed. The form with which the political freedom for the country is expressed is the transformation process to *European democracy*.

Europe, therefore, could be understood in Laclau and Mouffe's (1990, p. 61) terms as a myth – a floating signifier that creates an imaginary totality, a horizon for political actions. In fact, all the political objectives relating to development are defined within the imaginary boundaries of Europe.

### 4.2.2 Economy

Another nodal point that organizes development discourse is *economy*. *Economic freedom* constitutes the central element of the neoliberal development discourse articulated by the UNM. The following quote from the president's report in 2007 is a good starting point to identify what signs are articulated to define economic development:

*Georgian economy with its liberalism, free and non-corrupted environment, business owner-oriented tax code, and good investment environment were so attractive for the investors that the foreign investments in the Georgian economy almost tripled last year. [...] this is the most solid guarantee for a stable and fast development and this is the most obvious proof that Georgia's development path is right* (President's report 2007, p 6 translation mine).

Being liberal and creating a free market economy are central components for economic development. Hence the logic of discourse: free and liberal economic policy leads to foreign investments in Georgian economy that in turn leads to development - the more liberal country's economy, the more successful its development policy. In this section, I will analyse the central components defining economic development that are **deregulation, foreign investments, privatization, freedom of negotiation**, and **low taxes**.

To begin with, **regulations** are seen as synonyms for *monopolies* and *corruption* (President's report 2005, p.10). In order to establish legitimacy for the deregulation as a political objective, regulations are linked to the bureaucracy that in the best scenario makes economic activities difficult to be accomplished and in the worst scenario favours the interests of the elite, creates monopolies. For attracting **foreign capital** to the Georgian economy, reduced or eliminated (where possible) regulations are understood as critically important. For example, regarding creating liberal working code the president states that none of the investors would be interested in a country where labor relations are controlled only by the law and employer cannot define working conditions:

"*Our aim is to guarantee that working conditions will be defined through the negotiations between employer and employee, each part should decide the forms of labor relations. This is the only way we can make foreign investors interested in our county*" (President's report, 2006, p. 14 translation mine).

As we see, the **freedom of negotiation** over working conditions is articulated in relation to attracting foreign capital to Georgian economy that itself is a precondition for economic development.

The same logic applies to t**ax reduction**. By reducing and removing taxes more money is left in business that means the increased levels of economic activities. "*We want to have one of the most liberal tax laws in the world, with one of the lowest taxes that means our entrepreneurs and people will have more money left*" (President's report, 2007, p.9 translation mine). Here the state excludes itself from the economic activities, denies having any social responsibility and portraits the market as the only provider for the well-being. Since the state is not an economic player it gives all its property to private business owners to encourage economic activities - "***privatization*** *is the best way to attract investments in the economy"* (President's report, 2005 p. 7 translation mine). As a result of the privatization process, many new jobs will be available. Saying shortly, high taxes and regulations are linked to corrupted bureaucracy, while the meanings of the liberal and free economy are connected to employment and well-being of Georgian citizens.

### 4.2.3 Social policy

The next component of development policy articulated by the UNM is "equal opportunities for the citizens" that I refer as social policy - the second nodal point organizing the development discourse. By mobilizing signs around social policy it is basically two sets of elements – improving **the health care** system and providing **subsidies to the poor** - that are articulated as moments, defining the neoliberal social policy. In this chapter, I will analyse those two aspects of the neoliberal development discourse.

Since the coming into the power, meanings relating to the improvement of social conditions permanently emerged in the UNM development discourse. My analysis shows that those meanings were rearticulated through hegemonic practices in a way that the neoliberal rationality was sustained.

Meanings of *fairness* and *equality* of opportunities emerged within the context of **health care**, created a precondition to destabilize the neoliberal economic agenda. The first attempt to deal with the danger of dislocation of the neoliberal discourse by social policy objectives was to mobilize meanings about health care relating to infrastructural projects.

*By building new hospitals in different regions of Georgia, we extended not only the geography of health care but also created a strong mechanism for social equality. […] hospitals that did not exist for people living in the regions of Georgia now are built in the different parts of the country meaning that it is not only the elite of Tbilisi who has access to the modern health care but people living in rural areas as well* (President's report, 2012 p. 9 translation mine).

Building new hospitals was established as an indicator of the improvement of social equality in the health care sector. "Having access" to health care services was meant to be a question of whether a concrete medical service is presented and offered to a person and not whether one can afford the service. Hence, social equality is understood to be achieved when hospitals with modern infrastructure are built in the regions of Georgia and are not only concentrated in the capital.

This way of framing development policy very well confirms to the post-development reflections about the technocratic and autocratic nature of development project that takes the political dimension of problems away and reduces the whole their complexity to technical fixes. To use James Ferguson's (1994, p. 251) words, development functions as an anti-politics machine, it de-politizes even the most politically sensitive problems.

To develop this point further, we can pay attention to an even more radical way of exercising hegemonic intervention: after building new hospitals by the government, hospitals were expected to be given to private collectives. Here we see how the meaning of privatization is rearticulated to cope with the social challenges. Health care is argued to be developed by private initiatives: "*This is the only way to offer not only high quality but also the most affordable services to Georgian citizens*" (President's report, 2010 p.16 translation mine). Through the hegemonic intervention, neoliberal economic discourse incorporated social issues under its domain and set economic logic as the main underlining principle for social policy - competition between different private hospitals is presented as a way to set the fairest prices for costumers and make health care services available for as many as possible.

The second aspect of social policy that has been articulated within the neoliberal discourse of development is relating to **poverty**. Identity of the poor is organized in a way that poverty was understood in purely material terms as a lack of income - living under the below line of poverty (President's report, 2006 p. 3). Thus, poverty as it is articulated in the Georgian neoliberal discourse of development, has only one, monetary dimension. This is dramatically reflected on the Georgian neoliberal development discourse while articulating meanings regarding designing social policy addressing the poor. The policy was mainly defined in providing material help by offering different subsidises (for example, food and electricity subsidies) (President's report, 2009 p. 12), ignoring all social, cultural and political dimensions of poverty.

To sum up this part, social problems were defined in economic categories and consequently, the solution to the problems was articulated in economic terms. The antagonism between the meanings of free economy and the social policy was overcome though incorporating meanings relating to social equality under the economic domain and rearticulated social objectives in accordance with the neoliberal economic logic.

### 4.2.4 The conflict between economic and social objectives

Fixing elements in moments through hegemonic interventions are not the ultimate fixations but as has been discussed while contrasting post-structuralism to structuralism, the meanings are only partially fixed, always open to being re-articulated as a response to the new emerging elements from the field of discursivity. In Georgian neoliberal discourse of development, the above-mentioned hegemonic formations have been challenged when new meanings about social equality emerged that made the contingence nature of the Georgian neoliberal discourse visible. In this final section, by referring to the Laclau and Mouffe's (2014, p. 113; Howarth & Stavrakakis, 2000, p. 13) concepts of dislocation and chain of equivalence, I will analyse the "failure" of the neoliberal discourse to achieve hegemony. This, besides its relevance for understanding the Georgian neoliberal discourse of development that will be compared to the social democratic discourse of development, has analytical importance for my research since it explains the background against which social democratic discourse emerged.

In 2011 and 2012, the neoliberal discourse of development has undergone tremendous changes. The central assumption of the neoliberal economic ideology that economic growth automatically leads to the social well-being of the society has been questioned and the necessity of making economic success available for the broad circle of the population has been recognized. Economic growth was not seen as the only goal of the development process anymore, but signs denoting the importance of the social well-being have emerged within the discourse. The following quote indicates those changes well:

"*We should do our best to make sure that economic growth reaches every family in Georgia. Even though there is a rapid growth of a number of people working in the private sector, many Georgian families still live in poverty. Many people do not have jobs"* (President's report, 2012 p. 3 translation mine).

Even though the meaning of poverty and the way to escape from it is still sustained as it was articulated during the previous years, the signs indicated the crisis has emerged. The next quote from the president's report intensifies the antagonism between economic and social objectives even further, where president tries to see the problem from the perspective of the poor: *"Why should I care about economic growth and attractive business environment for investors if this does not change anything for me?* […] *"Why do I need a modern clinic if I cannot afford treatment there?"* (President's report, 2012 p. 3) And the solution to the problems articulated by the discourse is that "*politicians know about those problems, they listen to their population and care of them*" (President's report, 2012, p.3 translation mine). Here we see the lack of meaning relating to the social policy. The discourse did not manage to mobilize elements addressing the solutions for the social crisis and created a precondition for the dislocation.

This point becomes better visible when analysing the chain of equivalence through which Georgian population is divided into two groups of people – rich (Entrepreneurs and businessmen) and the poor (people living under the poverty line, unemployed, people living in the rural areas) (President's reports 2011; 2012). The chain of equivalence, as has been noted, creates equivalential identities that are a threat to the discursive stability. Articulated meanings around a sign *the poor* express a threat for the development neoliberal development discourse because by recognizing the existence of poverty that the economic growth could not overcome, the legitimacy of the development policy that sets economic growth as its main objective is questioned.

While previously statistics and the international organizations' positive assessment of the neoliberal development path adopted by the UNM were seen as the only reference point to measure the country's success in the early period of UNM

governance (President's report, 2006 p. 6), in 2011 and 2012, new elements emerged within the discourse, established as moments that re-articulated discourse in a way that defined the success of the country "*not based on abstract data but on the well-being of its citizens*" (President's report, 2012 p. 4). Economic development was not seen as the only measurement of development anymore as it was in the previous years but social protection and stable income for a big number of the population were understood to be the main constitutive parts of development: "*Only GPD growth does not have any value if population of the country does not feel improvements in their daily lives*" (President's report, 2012 p. 4 translation mine).

Hence, the neoliberal development policy was slightly modified in the last years of UNM governance. The main objective of development was not only to create a wealthy society but also a wide circle of people who get gain from this wealth. However, the discourse did not manage to mobilize meanings around social policy in a way that overcomes the antagonism between social and economic objectives. I would argue that the lack of meaning regarding the well-being of society is the main precondition for the emergence of social democratic discourse in the field of discursivity that will be analysed in the next chapters.


## 4.3. Resistance discourse: Election promise of Georgian Dream

### 4.3.1 Introduction

In 2012, six political parties created a coalition Georgian Dream that defeated United National Movement in the election. In fact, those six parties represented all main Georgian oppositional parties by the time. Therefore, since its very beginning, the coalition was very complex, eclectic political entity, uniting parties with different visions and political agendas under one political project. The main purpose of my research is to analyse GD's as a ruling party's development policy but I assume there could be a difference between GD as a pre-election political player and GD as a ruling party's visions about development. By analysing GD's election

promises, I think it is possible to capture what meanings were mobilized against the neoliberal discourse of development that made the party win in the election. The ideal type that could be constructed based on the GD's election promises could be seen a resistance discourse representing a "radical" meaning configuration about development that a field of discursivity allowed by the time. Moreover, the document illustrates the radical clash between the neoliberal and the social democratic discourses struggling to define development and legitimize their political agendas. The analysis of the document shows that GD articulated much complex set of signs regarding development than UNM. The main change identified here is that the state intervention as an organizing sign emerged that re-configured certain moment fixations within the discourse. Nevertheless, I will illustrate that the central aspects of the neoliberal discourse have not been changed.

In this chapter, I will first clarify how was development being defined by GD in its election promise document and then analyse how were meanings of development organized by two nodal points – *economy* and *social policy*.

### 4.3.2 Idea of Development

In the neoliberal development discourse, as it was shown in the previous chapter, development was understood mainly only in terms of economic growth. However, from time to time, meanings relating to social issues have emerged within the discourse. The meanings addressing social problems have been incorporated into the neoliberal discourse through hegemonic interventions in a way that the meaning configuration of neoliberal economic development was not modified. As I argued while analysing UNM's development discourse, the failure of the discourse to rearticulate a new set of meanings created a lack of meaning about social issues that established a space for new discursive articulation. GD articulated its development policy exactly within this space.

Within GD's election promise, UNM's economic policy was seen *oligopolistic* and *traditional* that is controlled based on the *authoritarian governance* creating a solid ground for the *elite corruption*. What was seen as modernity in UNM discourse,

within the new configuration of meanings, became traditional *oligopoly* that is responsible for the high prices on food, petrol, medicines, electro energy, and different communal services. The oligopolistic model was established through the *market fundamentalism* that was seen to be the main reason of making people poor (Election promise, 2012, p. 24). Interestingly, in GD's discourse of development constructed in the election promise, oligopoly, authoritarianism, elite corruption, and market fundamentalism were connected to each other to show the reason for poverty and social crisis. The social reforms implemented by UNM as a result of the crisis was seen as populism - "*as a response to poverty, UNM government started superficial social programs to overcome poverty and support the business but it was only a populist propaganda to maintain and sustain the power*" (2012, p. 24 translation mine).

Therefore, the main problem of the UNM's neoliberal economic policy understood by GD is that the free market was seen as the only provider of welfare and the role of the state was largely ignored with this respect. State's main interest was to generate rapid economic growth. In contrast to this, GD articulates its development policy where the state has a responsibility not only for economic but also for social development. In GD's election promise document, social sphere emerges as an autonomous and independent component of development. It is a *socio-economic development* that is referred while discussing reforms relating to development. The following quote indicates this aspect of GD's election promise very well:

*"The growth of GDP does not lead automatically to societal well-being. […] We do not think that GDP per capita is the only goal and measurement of development. All leading countries of the world are interested not only in GDP but also indicators of well-being – how satisfied are people with the living conditions, the level of income and its distribution, working conditions, the quality of education and health care"* (2012, p. 26 translation mine).

Here, we see that in addition to GDP growth, a whole complex of signs addressing different aspects of social life is articulated to emphasize the difference between UNM's neoliberal discourse of development and GD's social democratic discourse,

filling the gap of meaning relating to social issues. GD mobilizes a sign *satisfaction of people* in the several social spheres as the "measurement" and "goal" of development. Social sphere becomes the inseparable component of development. Nevertheless, the interests of the people were also presented in the neoliberal discourse, as I have illustrated in the previous chapter. The key difference between GD and UNM in this regard could be found in the ways the "satisfaction" of Georgian citizens are achieved.

In the resistance discourse, the state is seen to be responsible to the citizens for guaranteeing social wellbeing and social security. The state has responsibility for establishing a "*fundamentally new course of development*" that creates new economic policy based on "*social problems of the citizens and euro integration*" (2012, p. 25). This "fundamentally new strategy of development" acquires its meaning in relation to the concept of *sustainability*. Economic growth is argued to be based on sustainable development principles that are the only way to guarantee a stable and long-term development process of the country.

Saying shortly, an active state that provides welfare to the society is the main sign that organizes other signs and defines the social democratic discourse of development in the election promise document: *"The role of the state should be central in the systemic transformation process. The state should determine development strategy on the level of the main goals and appropriate indicators"* (2012, p. 25 translation mine).


### 4.3.3 Economic development

As has been mentioned several times, none of the sign is self-referential, all signs acquire their meanings in relation to each other. Therefore, sustainable development itself does not mean anything and in order to understand its meaning, we need to investigate signs articulated in relation to it. In GD's election promise document, we see that economic policy is argued to be based on the "free market principles" and "the modern approaches to the role of the state" (2012, p. 25). The later is seen

as a guarantor for the social wellbeing and social security. While mobilizing meaning of *sustainable development* with respect to economic development, the main sign that emerged here is an *intervention into the economy*. Through the intervention, the economy is expected to be in "the service of the people", giving authority and legitimacy to the state to design systematic economic development policy that is a precondition for sustainable and stable development. In this section, I will analyze how is ***intervention***, a central component of GD's pre-election economic policy, articulated in relation to **tax policy**, **consumer rights** and **export** – signs emerged in GD's development discourse (Election promise, 2012, p. 25).

***The intervention*** is defined in a very specific way. The main way the state is expected to intervene in the economy is to support small and middle scale business – *"in order to deal with social problems, non-traditional though well-tried methods will be used that is to encourage small and middle scale businesses"* (2012, p. 40). The "non-traditional though well-tried methods" are *increasing availability of credit*, reducing fiscal restrictions, *creating conditions for fair competition* and *give technical support to entrepreneurs* such as providing the necessary information (2012, p. 40 translation mine). Business initiated by those reforms is referred as a *social business* that mobilizes the potential of society to cope with structural social problems. Within this context, taxes that business pays are seen as restrictions that need to be adjusted in a way that encourages business activities.

**Tax policy** is another sign that constitutes the crucial element of GD's interventionist policy in the election promise. While redefining tax policy, foreign investment still is seen as the main organizing sign. Low level of taxes is understood as a good strategy to attract foreign capital to the Georgian economy. With this respect, none of the existing moment fixations presented in the neoliberal discourse are fundamentally rearticulated. Moreover, in certain fields, the role of the state is minimized. Certain deviations from the law were promised to be decriminalized and the amount of fines also were promised to be reduced. Ironically, this is the main role state sees its responsibility to intervene (Election promise, 2012, 40-42). Paradoxically, in GD's social democratic discourse the core of neoliberal economic

ideology that is *deregulation of the market* is maintained and even strengthened with the name of *intervention*.

Here, we could identify some patterns of social antagonisms and hegemonic intervention that I will discuss at the end of this section. The analyse of how is social policy articulated within the document could give further insights into the encounter of neoliberal and social democratic ideologies in the Georgian political landscape and the ways the resistance discourse was constructed against neoliberalism. Before moving to discuss the social policy, I will analyse two more spheres where state *intervention* as a sign is used to define GD's development policy.

Another field where state intervention is legitimized is **the protection of consumer rights**. Policy based only on the free market principles are not understood sufficient enough to protect consumer rights: *"Free market cannot provide the best solution for the quality assurance for the product. Due to the complex nature of the market, it is impossible for consumers to protect their interest. (…) State's role should be active in this process. The market needs to be monitored by the state"* (2012, p. 47 translation mine) None of the antagonism could be identified here. With respect to consumer rights, the discourse establishes a solid structure of meanings that legitimizes state intervention.

The last aspect of GD's interventionist politics relates to macroeconomic policy. The main conflict here is between whether Georgia should be import or **export-oriented country**. It is argued that Georgia became an import-oriented country that had negative consequences not only for macroeconomic processes but also for the social conditions of the population: *"Many partner countries have a protectionist approach to export – they subsidize the production of export goods that gives those product comparative advantage on the market"* (Election promise, 2012, p. 46 translation mine) Within this context, a concept of structural modernization emerges. In order to be able to become a global player export should be stimulated and imported consumer goods replaced with the locally produced products (Election promise, 2012, p. 46).

### 4.3.4 Social policy

Social policy is another nodal point that organizes development discourse in GD's election promise document. There are four sets of signs organized around social policy (2012, p. 31): 1) **universal health insurance** and **state programs of health care**; 2) **Compulsory accumulative pension** and **special system of state pension**; 3) **Material support to vulnerable families**; and 4) **Social service**; Below comes the analysis of the ways those spheres were defined and articulated as a part of development discourse.

Similar to UNM's discourse of development, ***health care*** constitutes the central component of social policy in GD's election promise. However, a crucial difference between the two is that in GD's discourse, *accessibility* of health care services is the main sign that organizes other signs regarding the health care: *"The state will care of its citizens' health and take responsibility for the accessibility of health care services. […] all citizens of Georgia will be guaranteed with the universal basic package of medical insurance. This package will cover the accessibility of high-quality health care services, the protection from the financial risks and the prevention from diseases as well as the treatment"* (2012, p. 32 translation mine). While in UNM discourse mainly free market and competition between different private players were understood as the best way to provide high quality and affordable services to the citizens, in GD's election promise, the state is responsible to be the main provider of health care services. Nevertheless, the increased role of the state does not exclude the role of private insurance companies and medical organizations. "*Private health care institutions will have a right to provide additional services that are not met by the state*" (2012, p. 33 translation mine).

The second aspect of social policy is **the improvement of the pension system**. Still following the main lines of UNM's social policy, retired people are the primary targets of social policy. Nevertheless, the difference here is that while the central part of UNM social policy strategy was to increase the amount of monthly pension, GD tries to generate a long-term policy strategy in accordance to "the principles established in European Union":

*"The pension insurance scheme working in the European Union will be introduced in Georgia. Through this new system, we will gradually become part of the European social space. The foundations of our new pension system are well-known principles such as solidarity, fairness, and social guarantees"* (2012, p. 34 translation mine).

Europe still functions as an imaginary space that the country tends to integrate with by establishing similar social structures. Europe, as has been noted, is an empty signifier in a sense that different discourses struggle over giving meaning to it. In contrast to the ways Europe is constructed as a myth in UNM's neoliberal discourse, in GD's election discourse, Europe is articulated in relation to the signs such as *social solidarity, social well-being* and *high standards of living*. In fact, the two discourses struggle to fill Europe as an empty signifier with different meanings and make it a new foundational space for their political projects: *"in contrast to the current development policy, our vision is a tendency towards the creation of European institutions. […] our policy is based on western values – human rights, freedom of work, normal living conditions"* (2012, p. 29 translation mine). Whereas Europe as a floating signifier was defined in relation to the signs such as *rapid economic growth, liberalization,* and *deregulation* in the neoliberal discourse, in GD's social democratic discourse, it was articulated in relation to signs such as *solidarity* and *fairness*.

A concrete policy reform intended to be implemented in this regard is to introduce an *accumulative pension system* that is defined in the following way:

*"The pensions system reform will be based on the compulsory pension insurance scheme. Private pension institutions will play an important role in the system. The amount of the pension will be reliant upon the length of the insurance and the contributed installments. The state will have an important regulatory function in this process to maintain the stability of the system. Besides, the state will fill the gap for those who could not manage to accumulate a certain amount of money by the time of retirement"* (2012, p. 35 translation mine).

We see here that the main driving force of the reform is the "private pension institutions" though what is actually meant by this is nowhere defined in the document. What concrete "regularity functions" will be assigned to the state is unclear as well. However, what is clear is that the state will provide "social pensions" to those who do not have enough money accumulated by the time of retirement.

The third and fourth aspects of GD's social policy are closely interlinked. With respect to the **material support to the vulnerable families**, it is the amount of money that is promised to be increased; none of the structural reform is planned in this regard. Regarding the forth, the important element fixed as a moment here is *social services*, that articulates the whole meaning set about *caring* for the socially vulnerable groups. This includes establishing specialized facilities for children in need, elderly and people with disabilities (2012, p. 35). Those are completely new signs emerged within the discourse of development that does not have equivalent in UNM's neoliberal discourse.

### 4.3.5 Conclusion

To summarize and conclude this part, in the resistance discourse of development, some moment fixations established in the neoliberal discourse rearticulated in a new form. However, certain moment fixations were maintained from the previous discourse that I would argue even strengthened the core of the neoliberal ideology within the resistance discourse. As it has been discussed while addressing the issue of change and continuity of the discursive formations, in some cases change occurs only on the surface and the essence of the discourse remains the same.

As far as the change is concerned, GD's resistance discourse articulated economic development in relation to the social development defining it as an autonomous aspect of the development. The *intervention* emerged as a crucial part of the discourse. The state role in solving social problems as well as in stimulating economic activities was seen as a central aspect of the development process. My argument, based on the theoretical framework, is that the need for the emergence

of the "active state" having social responsibilities and long-term vision of sustainable development was created due to the dislocation of the neoliberal development discourse (because the discourse did not manage to articulate meanings about social problems). The lack of meanings relating to the solutions of the social problems was filled by setting the state interventions at the centre of the development discourse. The state was seen to be responsible to provide welfare to the citizens.

Despite the change, the ways some of the new emerging elements were articulated are similar to the moment fixations in the neoliberal discourse. Although the state intervention emerged within the discourse, certain aspects (such as for example, tax policy) were articulated in the same way as it was in the neoliberal discourse. The state's role as it is articulated here is to even reduce taxes that I would argue represents a hegemonic intervention to sustain the same neoliberal logic within the discourse.

## 4.4 The global discourse of development: Sustainable Development Goals

### 4.4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, following the main lines of the post-development criticism, I will analyze the SDGs document to construct the global discourse of development. The purpose of the chapter is to map out the configuration of signs articulated on the global level that allows us to investigate the ways it influenced the Georgian government's development discourse. Needless to say, a deep analysis of the SDGs document would be impossible in several pages. The concept of ideal type as described above allows us to be focused on the certain aspects of empirical reality while, to say it roughly, ignore another aspect since the ideal typification process is "the one-sided *accentuation* of one or more points of view" (Weber, 1949, p. 90).

The analyse of the global discourse of development shows that although there are three separate dimensions of development, – economic, social and environmental – the economic development is the central organizing principle that gives meanings to other signs. While the meanings of the inclusion and the environmental sustainability are articulated on the general level, they are largely missing from the actual targets and indicators. Which confirms the post-development theory's argument that bringing "sustainable" and "development" together is a "semantic trick" reproducing the Eurocentric model of development serving economic rationalities and ignores environmental issues (Escobar, 1995, p. 195) (Rist, 2008, p. 174).

Sustainable development goals, as said, have clearly defined three separate dimensions – economic, social and environmental - around which signs are organized. Thus, those three dimensions could be seen as nodal points. I will follow this logic of sorting the goals and analyze each dimension separately but before doing so, I will briefly outline the understanding of the development produced in the document that brings a general context within which the concrete goals are defined.

### 4.4.2 Idea of Development

Sustainable Development Goals relate to the future. They are *goals* in a sense that they represent desires to bring social order into the reality, seen and defined in a specific way. It is a vision of how the world should look like and a plan how could this ideal world be achieved. The world that SDGs document intends to create is

"*[o]ne in which democracy, good governance and the rule of law as well as an enabling environment at national and international levels, are essential for sustainable development, including sustained and inclusive economic growth, social development, environmental protection and the eradication of poverty and hunger[7].*"

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[7] https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld

In this quote, we see that democracy, good governance, rule of law and environmental protection are fundamental characteristics of sustainable development that could be achieved through the actions named at the second part of the sentence. Thus, sustainable development is defined as the combination of those signs taken together. Already at this stage, we can say that development discourse articulated on the global level is a complex entity including different aspects of human life. Interestingly, *economic growth* as an element is fixed as a moment in relation to other elements such as *sustained* and *inclusive*, constructing sustained and inclusive economic growth. The quote is taken from the general document of SDGs and therefore, gives an understanding of how have signs relating to development been articulated on the general level. The aim of the next three sections is to show how are those general moment fixations articulated on the level of concrete goals and indicators.

### 4.4.3 The economic dimension of development

A vast majority of critical literature argues that the economic dimension constitutes the central aspect of SDGs discourse. Two other dimensions (social and environmental) function as means to legitimize economic growth. From the above-quoted statement, it is obvious, as has been pointed out that two signs that economic growth is articulated with are *sustainable* and *inclusive*. The *sustainable and inclusive economic growth* is defined in relation to the following signs - *decent work and economic growth*; *industry innovation and infrastructure*; *reduced inequalities*; *responsible consumption and production*[8].

Interestingly, a sign "reduced inequalities" is articulated as an economic objective meaning that inequality is understood as a problem caused by the economic processes that could be "cured" through the economic reforms. I would argue that this is the only moment fixation that gives "inclusive" aspect to the economic

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[8] https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld

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growth because there is no any signs emerged within other goals that could articulate inclusiveness in relation to the economy.

In fact, this is a very old pattern of the international development discourse discussed by the post-development scholars, defining inequality mainly as a "market distortion", ignoring its social, cultural and political dimensions, reducing the complexity of the problem to the "technical fixes" (Rahnema, 1992; Sachs, 1992; Escobar, 1995; Latouche, 1997; Rist, 2008; Ziai, 2017). In SDGs, inequality is understood mainly as an *income* inequality but reference to different variables such as age, race, ethnicity, gender, and disability are presented while articulating meanings about targets as well as indicators of reducing inequality. For example, a target 10.2 aims to "*empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status*es". Indicator to measure the achievements of the goal is a " *[p]roportion of people living below 50 percent of median income, by age, sex, and persons with disabilities*"[9]. Hence, an element *income* is fixed as a moment in a way that gives meaning to the inequalities caused on different grounds. In that sense, we can say that income is the main organizing sign articulating meanings as if inequality has only one monetary dimension. Nevertheless, to a certain degree, we see that in addition to the "economic" dimension, there is a reference to the international human rights showing that inequality is not a solely economic phenomenon. A target number 10.3 calls, for example, to "*ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies, and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies, and action in this regard*"[10].

Therefore, with respect to the reducing inequality, there are two central moment fixations – one defining inequality as a matter of economy and another one understanding inequality as a matter of discrimination on the legal ground.

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[9] https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg10
[10] https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg10

However, as mentioned above, a broader context of the inequality relating meaning articulation process is located within the economic development.

The second aspect of the *sustainable and inclusive economic growth* is economic growth itself that is articulated in goal number 8 as *decent work and economic growth*. We see that two signs "decent work" and "economic growth" are articulated together, indicating that economic growth should be achieved through the "decent" work. The main conflict is between those two objectives – to protect the labor rights of workers while having fast economic growth. Having a look at goal 8.5 and its indicators shows how is the conflict solved. The indicators to measure achieving objectives regarding the decent work are 1) *average hourly earnings of female and male employees, by occupation, age and persons with disabilities*; And 2) *unemployment rate, by sex, age and persons with disabilities*; I would argue that there is no actual instrument presented in the document that could operationalize decent work into the real measurable elements. Having the higher employment rates or average hourly earnings themselves do not say anything about the working conditions and the ways the precarious working conditions could be improved. In that way, discourse manages to articulate "decent work" on a general and abstract level, excluding all the signs that could define it from its domain, and it does so due to legitimize "economic growth".

Moreover, the goal 8 is subtitled as follow: "*Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all*"[11]. Interestingly, even though inclusive growth is presented in many places in the general document it is not mentioned in the "target and indicator" section of the goal 8, meaning that while inclusive economic growth as a moment is fixed next to sustainability, productive employment and decent work, it is eliminated from the discourse when it comes to create indicators for measuring achievements.

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[11] https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg8

### 4.4.4 The social dimension of development

Another nodal point that organizes signs within SGDs discourse is *social development*. In this regard, the discourse mobilizes a complex meaning set to denote the social component of the development: *no poverty; zero hunger; good health and well-being; quality education; gender equality; affordable and clean energy; sustainable cities and communities; peace, justice and strong institutions;* On this general level of the sign organization, we see that social development is defined in a very complex way covering different aspects of social changes.

A sign *Inclusive* could be seen as the main linkage between the different goals. In almost all the goals addressing social issues, a sign *inclusive* is articulated in relation to other signs. However, only the fact that discourse articulates the need to include something under its domain does not say anything about the subjects and the ways they are expected to be included. The question that arises here is what identities are constructed as visible subjects within the discourse. Throughout the goals, the *sex* and *age* are articulated as the main signs producing identities who should be included as well as measurements for the goals achievements though other variables are presented in certain moments as well.

For example, in one of the central goals that is *no poverty* while setting goals and measurements, articulates a complex set of signs: "*Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable*" that could be measured by the "*proportion of population covered by social protection floors/systems, by sex, distinguishing children, unemployed persons, older persons, persons with disabilities, pregnant women, newborns, work-injury victims and the poor and the vulnerable.*[12]" The discourse constructs different identities and creates moment fixations in a way that produces a complex structure of meaning, recognizing various social groups' vulnerability to poverty and in that sense, generating a need to address poverty experienced by many different groups of people. Nevertheless, the overall measurement of poverty eradication is reliant on

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[12]  https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg1

the definition of poverty that is measured as people living on less than $1.25 a day and therefore, it is one dimensional, covering only economic, the monetary aspect of the phenomenon. Thus, on the one hand, there is a recognition of the diversity of social groups experiencing poverty, on the other hand, poverty experienced by those people and the ways it could be dealt with are defined solely in economic terms, excluding other dimensions of poverty.

A sign *inclusive* is also mentioned in relation to education. The goal *of quality education* is subtitled as "*ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all*"[13]. Here, besides gender identities, the discourse articulates signs that constructs identities of *people with disabilities, indigenous peoples* and *children in vulnerable situations*, enlarges its domain so that it promotes equal rights for different groups of people to have access to the education.

## 4.4.5 Environment

The third aspect of development discourse is the environment. In order to construct the "environmental" dimension of the development discourse, the discourse articulates the following signs: *clean water and sanitation; climate action; life below water; life on land*. As mentioned above, post-development thinkers argue that meanings relating to the nature are incorporated under the development discourse so that the core of the discourse – economic growth, is not questioned and fundamentally modified. What we could see with this respect through the Laclau and Mouffe inspired methodological tools is that, for example, the signs that could denote economic and political reasons of climate change are excluded from the discourse. Instead, climate change is seen as a naturally occurring phenomenon and the whole "human" dimension of the problem is ignored. The naturalization of climate change is very well readable throughout the goal number 13 (climate change). In the "progress of the goal" section we read – "*the world continues to*

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[13] https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg4

*experience rising sea levels, extreme weather conditions (the North Atlantic hurricane season was the costliest ever recorded) and increasing concentrations of greenhouse gases[14].*" The passive form of formulating the sentence "continues to experience" stands for indicating the events occurring without a subject responsible for the problems. Economic processes and the ways it could affect climate change is not problematized on the level of goals and indicators.

As it was mentioned above, economic growth is articulated in relation to sustainability and environmental protection. However, the signs denoting environmental sustainability and economic growth are configured next to each other mostly on the general level of discourse. With respect to concrete goals and indicators, the environment is largely excluded from the discursive articulations relating to the economic aspects of development. To illustrate the point, in the general document of SDGs we read – "*we recognize that social and economic development depends on the sustainable management of our planet's natural resources. We are therefore determined to conserve and sustainably use oceans and seas, freshwater resources, as well as forests, mountains and drylands and to protect biodiversity, ecosystems, and wildlife"[15].* Nevertheless, when it comes to the concrete goals and indicators those meanings are excluded from the discourse. To go back to the goal number 8, (decent work and economic growth), it is stated that per capita economic growth should be sustained "in accordance with national circumstances and, in particular, at least 7 percent gross domestic product growth per annum in the least developed countries"[16]. However mentioning "national circumstances", the minimum level of GDP growth is fixed that does not take into account cultural, political, economic and environmental contextual aspects of a particular country.

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[14] https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg13
[15] https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld
[16] https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg8

### 4.4.5 Conclusion

To sum up, the global discourse of development generates a complex language about social changes, clearly distinguishes three dimensions of development – economic, social and environmental. On the general level, discourse articulates signs such as sustainability and inclusion in relation to economic growth. However, when it comes to producing concrete goals and design indicators for measuring achievements, those signs are mostly missing. The discourse manages to incorporate meanings of sustainability and inclusion in a way that economic objectives are not questioned. As the change and continuity are theorized by the interpreters of Laclau and Mouffe, "change" (that, for example, could be setting labor rights and environmental issues at the center of the development and do not subordinate them under the economic objectives) in the global discourse of development scratched only the surface and is not presented in actual plans and assessment schemes.

## 4.5 The social democratic discourse of development

### 4.5.1 Introduction

After becoming a ruling political coalition, in 2013, Georgian Dream reformulated its development policy and constructed a governmental discourse of development. As mentioned several times, discursive articulations never occur within the meaning vacuum but discourse draws elements from the pre-existing discursive structures. The main task for an oppositional coalition engaged in the pre-election struggle with the ruling party is to attract as many voters as possible, whereas as the ruling political coalition it is "pushed" to localize its understanding of development within the certain institutional order. One of the main aims of the previous chapters was to map out the field of discursivity within which different discourses struggle to produce meanings about development. The three discourses of development – the neoliberal, resistance and global discourses – have been constructed and analysed to illustrate the order of discourse where Georgian Dream's development policy has been constructed. In this chapter, the development policy produced by

Georgian Dream will be analysed in relation to the three discourses discussed in the previous chapters. In particular, first, I will analyze how development as a sign has been re-articulated in the first institutionally produced document about development "Georgia 2020", and then, based on this analysis, I will be focused on the concrete aspects of development that emerged within the discourse. In addition to the document Georgia 2020, I will refer to annual development reports produced by the Georgian government.

The main findings of the chapter are that GD as a ruling political coalition generated much complex language of development than UNM. Economic, social and environmental spheres were set separately, recognizing the need of state's interventions to solve the social problems and improve the well-being of the society. The main step towards dealing with the danger of dislocation was to introduce the concept of inclusive economic growth from the global discourse of development that, based on the contextual specificities, produced very specific development policy. The central argument of the chapter is that meanings of development produced in the resistance discourse have been incorporated under the social democratic discourse in a way that the neoliberal rationalities have been reproduced. And this occurred by mobilizing sings from the global discourse of development.

### 4.5.2 Idea of Development

The document Georgia 2020, issued in 2013, is an institutionally produced official document setting development strategy for the next seven years. The first chapter in the document "vision for development" is a valuable source to understand how GD's development policy was reformulated after becoming a ruling coalition. The opening paragraph deserves to be quoted fully since it captures all central meanings of the development discourse articulated by GD:

"*Economic policy of the Government of Georgia is based on three main principles. The first principle implies ensuring fast and efficient **economic growth** driven by development of real (production) sector of the economy, which will resolve*

*economic problems that exist in the country, create jobs and reduce poverty. The second principle implies the implementation of economic policies that facilitate **inclusive economic growth** – it envisages universal involvement of the population in the economic development process (including Diaspora, migrants, ethnic minorities and other groups), prosperity for each member of society through economic growth, their social equality, and improvement of the living standards of population. The third main principle is based on the **rational use of natural resources**, ensuring environmental safety and sustainability and avoiding natural disasters during the process of economic development*" (Georgia 2020, 2013, p. 3; emphasis added).

The paragraph opens a chapter titled as the "vision for development" though as we see, it starts by stating the principles of *economic policy*. Using *development* interchangeably with *economic policy* means that Georgian government sees economy not as one of the spheres of development, as it is in SDGs discourse, but as if the two concepts are reducible to each other - economic policy equals development policy. Development as a sign is used three times in the paragraph and in all three cases, it is articulated next to a sign economy. Although there are a "social" and "environmental" spheres separately located within the discourse, the meanings relating to those spheres are articulated under the economic development domain. In particular, the first "principle" of economic policy sets economic growth as the central aspect of development policy. Moreover, it articulates *poverty* as one of the "economic problems", similarly to the UNM's neoliberal development discourse where, as has been illustrated, poverty has only one, monetary dimension. The second "principle" of economic policy articulates the concept of *inclusion* next to *economic growth*. *Inclusive economic growth* is defined so that *social equality* and *improvement of the living standards* are seen to be achieved through economic growth by involving the population in the economic development process. Identities of people who are expected to be "included" in the economic process are diaspora, migrants, ethnic minorities and "other groups". Throughout the document, there is no any clear reference to that point, the identities mentioned here are excluded from the rest of the document meaning that the discourse randomly mobilized some signs

to ground the concept of inclusion for legitimizing economic objectives. The third aspect of economic policy is the environment. Here, similar to the first two aspects, signs are configured around *economic development*, defining meanings of *environmental safety* and *sustainability* in relation to economic rationalities.

As pointed out in the theoretical section, the post-development scholars have been arguing that bringing social and environmental objectives under the development discourse serves to strengthen the essence of the development – economic growth. In the UNM's neoliberal discourse of development, as has been illustrated, all major social problems, as well as solutions to them, were defined in purely economic terms. In Georgian Dream's development discourse, while signs such as environment, sustainability, and inclusion emerged (in contrast to UNM's discourse), they were discursively articulated in a way that set economic growth at the centre of the discourse and legitimized it with additional ideological foundations (*environmental sustainability* and *inclusive economic growth*).

A hegemonic intervention could be identified here. The lack of meaning regarding solutions to the social problems created a possibility for the dislocation of the neoliberal discourse of development. As a result, the resistance discourse articulated various signs denoting social issues filling the lack of meaning. The new emerging meanings of social equality created antagonism between economic and social objectives that have been overcome through hegemonic intervention – the two opposite objectives were articulated under the one political project that is a *sustainable and inclusive economic growth*.

A shift from the neoliberal development discourse to the social democratic development discourse follows the main lines of theoretical argument generated by post-development theories about the discourse's immanent ability to adapt to changing conditions. Discourse incorporated meanings articulated within the resistance discourse under its domain in a way that, on the one hand, dealt with the lack of meaning of social issues and on the other hand, legitimized economic growth and re-set it as the main driving force for the country's development.

After showing this general picture of the ways social democratic discourse rearticulated meanings of development from the neoliberal discourse, I will engage more detail analysis of the Georgian government's development policy. In particular, in the next three chapters,  I will analyse the above discussed three "principles" – economic growth, inclusive economic growth and environmental sustainability that could be seen as nodal points – organizing signs and giving meanings to them.

### 4.5.3 Economic growth

Economic growth constitutes the first and most important aspect of the development policy generated by the Georgian government, in both UNM as well as GD's discourses. However, the economic policy defined by GD is modified in many important respects. In the very first document about development policy issued by the Georgian government the principles for economic development are defined in the following way:

"*The guiding principle of the country's strategy for economic development is establishing the necessary conditions for a free private sector operating under an optimal, efficient and transparent government. This means the establishment of an economy in which the private sector will be free to make its own decisions, in which the supremacy of property rights will be guaranteed, and in which the private sector will be the main driving force behind economic development. Free market relations will be combined with the optimal model of state regulations. The state will ensure the prosperity of each citizen*" (Georgia 2020, 2013, 4).

The very logic of economic development produced within the neoliberal discourse is maintained in the social democratic discourse exactly in the same way as it was articulated by the UNM. Private sector operating under the free market principles is seen as the main driving force for economic growth. Signs articulated for defining economic development are all drawn from the neoliberal discourse of development. The role of the state in the economic growth process, similar to the UNM's neoliberal discourse is to minimize its interventions into the economic processes.

The whole interventionist policy constituting the central aspect of the economic policy generated in the resistance discourse is eliminated from the social democratic discourse.

The elements integrated from the neoliberal discourse, fixed as moments in GD's development discourse are reproduced exactly in the same way as it is in its first development strategy document (see for example, governmental reports on development 2014 p. 15; 2015 p. 29; 2016 p. 3; 2017 p. 16; 2018 p.15). To illustrate the point, we can draw an example from the 2016 document:

"*Economic reform will focus on the promotion and strengthening of the private sector. In this regard, the government has a whole package of initiatives, which will make doing business in the country more attractive and profitable. Important tax incentives will be developed, and property taxes will not apply to businesses, in case of reinvestment of profit. Due to the reforms, hundreds of millions of GEL will remain in business, which will promote investments, accelerate economic growth, and create thousands of jobs"* (p.4).

In fact, GD started to implement the same neoliberal reforms that were articulated in UNM's discourse, reforms that give even more economic freedom to private sector players and reduce the state's role in economic processes. The fiscal system reform was already given in the early period of GD's governance in the document Georgia 2020:

"*In order to ensure that Georgia still enjoys the status of an attractive place for doing business in future the current low tax pressure policy will be preserved going forward. It fully corresponds with the Organic Law of Georgia on Economic Freedom, according to which the existing taxes can be raised, or new taxes can be introduced only through a referendum"* (2013, p.14).

The Organic Law of Georgia on Economic Freedom that is also called The Economic Liberty Act of Georgia was introduced by President Saakashvili in 2009 and adopted by the parliament of Georgia in 2011. According to the act, Georgian parliament cannot vote for any changes regarding raising existing or introducing

new taxes but raising taxes is possible only through the public referendum. Georgian Dream, a social democratic ideology based ruling political coalition, does not question and follows UNM's understanding of economic development that is to have as few state restrictions on the private business players as possible.

There are six signs named as the "main concepts" Georgia's economic growth model is based on (Georgia 2020, p. 12): *Private-sector-driven growth, equal government; equal opportunities for businesses; state investment policy facilitating growth*; *free competition*; and *openness to trade*; It is only one out of ten "concepts" that puts state as an economic actor in the context of economic growth. "The state investment policy facilitating growth" basically is defined as a "technical assistance" to the private sector in generating economic growth.

### 4.5.4 Inclusive economic development

Inclusive economic growth or "universal involvement of the population in the economic development process" indicates a social aspect of the Georgian government's development discourse. As it was discussed in the first section, "the social" is fundamentally defined from the economic perspective. In fact, there are three main sets of meanings articulated around three signs – **health care**, **social care**, and **education** – constituting the essence of social policy generated by the Georgian Dream.

**Health care** constitutes an important part of each development discourse discussed in the previous chapters. Meanings about health care are articulated in the neoliberal and resistance as well as social democratic discourses. However, health care represents a social space which experienced the most changes, meanings regarding it have been radically redefined. While in the neoliberal discourse, the competition between different private health care organizations was seen as the best way to provide high quality and accessible services to the Georgian citizens, in social democratic discourse, the health care as a sign is articulated in relation to *universality*, fixed in a moment as a *universal health care system*. Since 2013, in each document produced by the government, the elements health care, universality,

and accessibility are strongly fixed together as moments (2013, p. 2014, p. 21; 2015, p. 39; 2016, p. 29; 2017, p. 36; 2018, p. 49)

**Social care** is also articulated within each development discourse. However, in contrast to health care, the discourse in that regard did not experience any significant changes. Social care is mainly defined as a provision of material assistance to socially vulnerable groups.  With respect to the social care, GD articulates the same signs in social democratic discourse articulates as in resistance discourses. The "inclusive" aspect of the discourse is mainly reflected on the call for the engagement of socially vulnerable groups to the economic processes:

"*Government's policy in the social welfare sector is directed to ensuring dignified living and work conditions for people through creating social protection system, decreasing social risks associated with poverty and old age and enabling the disabled and other vulnerable groups to participate in the country's social and economic life*" (Georgia 2020, p. 49).

Interestingly, and this is a point that I will develop further in the concluding chapter, while articulating meanings about the inclusion of "vulnerable groups", gender is excluded from the discourse. In SDGs' discourse, as I have illustrated, gender and sex represent two central identities that are targeted to be included in the development programs. But nowhere – neither in the neoliberal, nor resistance or social democratic discourses, the signs denoting gender issues are articulated. Identities produced in the GD's social democratic and resistance discourses are more diverse, covering more social groups than the UNM's neoliberal discourse. However, as we see, those are the *poor, elderly* and *the disabled people* that constitute the "inclusive" dimension of the discourse. Moreover, this aspect of the discourse could hardly be seen as a change; In the annual governmental development reports there is no any concrete policy plan or strategy that actually include those groups in the "country's social and economic life".

Nevertheless, the change about the social policy that could be identified here is that if in the neoliberal discourse, social policy was largely seen as a residual category,

a safety net to catch up those who are excluded from the economic processes, in the social democratic discourse, it is understood as a way to provide necessary skills to the people that would make them able to engage in the economic process.

By mobilizing meanings about **education** those are basically signs denoting the instrumental purpose of the education, portraying it as a mean for economic growth. Education is mainly understood as "development of human resources" – "*the development of human resources and the efficient use of existing potential are two of the most important factors contributing to comprehensive economic growth*" (Georgia 2020, 2013, p. 39). Education, therefore, is a tool to produce a particular kind of human subjects that serve the neoliberal economic rationality.

Referring to Michael Foucault's (2008) notion of biopolitics, we can argue that Georgian social democratic government produced the whole set of "normalizing" disciplinary strategies to constitute a neoliberal economic subject – one with necessary skills compatible with the free market demand of "*human resources*". The highest accent on vocational training programs is a good proof for this: *"within the vocational training program, dual, work-based education approach will be implemented through the partnership with the private sector. According to this model, employers will be involved in the creation of vocational education programs as well as in the implementation process*" (2018, p. 36). Moreover, the reforms regarding higher education are also defined in relation to economic objectives: "*It is of crucial importance for higher education to meet the requirements of the labor market. Under the reform of the higher education, a new funding model will be introduced that provides financial support for the university programmes contributing to the development of the country, the society, and the economy*" (2018, p 37). Thus, the government provides financial support to the academic programmes that are compatible with the development framework. The purpose of the education whether it is a vocational education or higher education is defined as an instrumental tool for economic development.

Hence, meanings about health care, social wellbeing and education are articulated in a way that they serve the economic reason – healthy and educated citizens are seen as "resources" that could be used for economic purposes.

### 4.5.5 Environment

Discursive articulations about environmental safety and sustainability could be located within the same critical context. In the social democratic discourse of development, environment, as it has already been pointed out, is seen as one of the central components of the economic policy meaning that environment, likewise the education, is largely subordinated under the economic objectives. In the theoretical section, I discussed some critical literature arguing exactly the same that it is basically economic growth that should be sustained through "rational use of natural resources" and not nature. Like humans, nature is also seen as a resource for economic growth. The "rational" moment here is to manage the use of "natural resources" in a way that does not exclude future possibilities to use the same resources – hence the sustainable. In UNM's neoliberal discourse, there is no environment articulated as a component of development. in that sense, there is a change in development discourse. However, regarding the concrete policy plans, it is approximately 2 pages (out of around 50 pages) that address environmental relating issues in each annual development report (2014, p. 32; 2015, p. 50; 2016, p. 27; 2017, p. 27; 2018 p. 27) meaning that no concrete plans are generated that could translate the abstract sign articulations into the concrete practical development policies.

# 5. Explaining the discursive change and continuation

Critical explanation in discourse theory requires to contextualize discourse. As discussed in the methodology chapter, social logics (that, in this case, is the logic of development) are constituted by the political logics. I identified two historical shifts – the ruling party change in Georgia and the SDGs emergence on the global level - within which the Georgian social democratic government's discourse of development has been produced. The local failure of the discourse to generate meanings addressing the social crisis in the country and the changing global discursive structures represent the political logics that have a constitutive power for the logics of development - the logic of development has been contested and reconstituted by the political logics. My argument here is that the interplay between those two political logics constituted the logic of Georgian development discourse.

In particular, the concept of *inclusive economic growth* could be seen as an element integrated from the global discourse of development that I would argue, helped Georgian political elites to redefine development policy in a way that on the one hand, dealt with the danger of the dislocation of the discourse and on the other hand, maintained the very logic of the development discourse created in the UNM's neoliberal discourse of development. Saying it otherwise, the conflict between social and economic objectives identified within the neoliberal discourse has been overcome by the hegemonic intervention - incorporating meanings such as inclusion and environmental sustainability from the field of discursivity under the Georgian social democratic discourse where conflictual moment fixations have been re-articulated under a common political project that is the *inclusive economic growth*. The global discursive articulations provided the necessary meaning set to the Georgian government to sustain the neoliberal status quo in Georgian development policy.

The question that arises here is why have some elements from the global development discourse and the resistance discourse been incorporated and fixed in certain moments under the Georgian social democratic discourse, whereas other elements have been ignored. To be more specific, we saw that there is a complex

of meanings relating to *inclusion* in the global development discourse that is absent from the social democratic discourse. *Gender equality* as a sign, for example, is actively mobilized, giving meaning to the *inclusion* in SDGs discourse. In contrast to this, in Georgian social democratic discourse, as has been noticed, the gender as an aspect of development is missing and the meaning of the inclusion is defined by mobilizing other signs.

My answer to the question is based on the notion of "logics" discussed in the methodology chapter. Referring to Laclau and Mouffe (2014, p. 100) again, discursive articulations are always contingent, there is no any transcendental logic that could explain particular meaning configurations. Neither there is any "essence" pre-given in the nature of elements that dictates the rules and forms of discursive articulations. The ways "the local" discursive articulations of development are influenced by "the global" discursive changes are reliant upon the specific historical contexts. In the case of Georgia, there was no social antagonism, conflict or the meaning lack regarding *gender equality* and therefore, this aspect of the global discourse of development has been ignored. Other moment fixations of elements such as *poverty* and *health care* were in the conflict with economic objectives and therefore, the discourse drew the elements to fill in the lack of meaning and it did so in a way that sustained the logic of neoliberal economic rationalities. *Economic growth* – the central element of the neoliberal discourse, threatened by the lack of meanings relating to the social issues - has been re-articulated in relation to *inclusion* and *sustainability* so that its central moment fixations have been reproduced without fundamental modifications.

Since the critical explanation in discourse theory is based on constructivist epistemology, we could not argue for the direct correspondence between cause and effect (say, for example, that the only reason *inclusive economic growth and environmental sustainability* emerged in Georgian social democratic development discourse was the global discursive articulations) but the explanation offered here follows Max Weber's (1958, pp. 91-92) concept of "elective affinities" that allows us to indicate similarities between the different discursive structures and the logic

they are organized around. Needless to say, the explanation that is more like a narrative rather than a strict casual account leaves analytical space for different analysis, indicating other aspects that could influence Georgian government's development discourse. As David Howarth (2005, p. 328) offers, discourse analysis research findings could be seen as only "candidates for truth or falsity". They could be counted as "potentially true" if they fit with ontological and epistemological premises research is based on and therefore, they are always open to being criticized and replaced with other findings. This hardly could be considered as a weakness of the research. To say it with Kratochwil's words (2008, p. 97), accepting "the plurality of possible interpretations" allows us freeing ourselves from the "mistaken identification of explanation with one of its forms".

Research grounded on the post-development theory, conducted with the Laclau and Mouffe's theory has a political dimension. It is "emancipatory" research in a sense that it intends to illustrate hidden systems of meanings that produce a certain kind of social order as the only objective reality. The purpose of the research, therefore, as pointed out, is to deconstruct the meaning configurations by illustrating its contigent nature and the political logics it has been constituted that allows us to discuss what possibilities of the social changes have been excluded from the discourse. This is the main guiding question for the final, concluding chapter.

# 6. Conclusion

In the concluding chapter, I will first briefly summarize the main findings of the research and locate those findings within the current post-development scholarship, discuss its relevance and contribution to the development studies. Since critical theory such as post-development theory has political objectives, this discussion also requires to answer what could be the "political" importance of my research findings. Finally, I will outline the directions through which future research could be conducted.

In this paper, I illustrated that since the very beginning of the United National Movement's governance the economic development has been set at the centre of Georgian government's development policy. In the neoliberal discourse, deregulation, foreign investments, privatization, freedom of negotiation, and low taxes were seen as the main driving forces for economic development. Social problems were defined in purely economic terms. Poverty was seen as a one-dimensional phenomenon, as a lack of income that was believed to be dealt with by achieving economic objectives. Needless to say, the encounter of neoliberalism with Georgian reality produced various social crisis (Gugushvili, 2014).

I identified antagonism between economic and social objectives in the late years of UNM's governance: the recognition of the fact that poverty still exists and Georgian citizens suffer from social problems questioned the legitimacy of the neoliberal development policy. The failure of the discourse overcome the antagonism through the hegemonic intervention created the danger for the dislocation. My central argument here was that this danger of dislocation was the main background against which the Georgian Dream's resistance discourse was produced that after becoming a ruling party was crystallized into the GD's social democratic development discourse.

I located the neoliberal and resistance discourses as two extreme poles of moment fixations relating to development. My assumption, at the beginning of the research, was that the resistance discourse mobilized the radical sign configurations against the neoliberal discourse. As we saw throughout the analysis, "radical" has a relative

connotation. In Georgian context, the resistance discourse mobilized "radical" meanings of development as far as the existing field of discursivity allowed it to do so. This point, in fact, challenges post-development theorization of the issue of alternatives. Namely, post-development theory, especially its early formulations (Sachs, 1992; Escobar, 1995; Rist, 2008), argues that there is a possibility of a "radical break" with Eurocentric discourse of development. In contrast to this, I illustrated that when it comes to the mobilizing even the "radical" meanings against the neoliberal development discourse, the articulation process always occurs within the existing discursive field meaning that the discourse is heavily influenced by the previously existing discursive structures. Saying otherwise, the alternative visions of development could not be "innocent", fundamentally different from what it is against.

The third discourse analysed in this research that I would say represents a reservoir from which social democratic discourse of development drew elements is the global discourse of development. Post-development theory since the very beginning of its emergence has been arguing that the concept of sustainable development is an oxymoron, a political move to bring two "old enemies" together to legitimize the development project that has economic growth set as its central component (Rist, 2008, p. 174). My research enriched this point by finding that while discourse mobilized signs regarding *inclusivity* and *environmental sustainability* on the general level, when it comes to the actual targets and indicators those meanings are largely missing.

GD's social democratic discourse has been produced within this discursive field. The main challenge for GD as a ruling political coalition was to address the conflict between social and economic objectives constructed within the neoliberal discourse. Namely, one of the important challenges GD faced was the fact that only economic growth lead by the free market players does not generate the well-being of the society and the state needs to be an active player in solving economic as well as social problems.

As I suspected at the beginning of the research, the analysis has shown that there is a difference between the ways GD articulated its development policy before and after the elections. In the election promise document, as we saw, GD mobilized a sign *state intervention* around which the complex meanings of social and economic development were produced as a response to the dislocation of discourse. After coming to power, the *state intervention* still remained within the coalition's discourse but it did not hold the central place anymore. State intervention, the central moment fixation of the resistance discourse, was largely ignored and excluded from the social democratic discourse. While defining economic development strategies, for example, the role of the state is referred only once out of ten concepts relating to economic development. Free market and the private sector are still seen as the main driving forces of economic growth.

My finding here was that the social democratic discourse mobilized elements about *environmental sustainability* and *inclusion* from the field of discursivity to deal with the danger of dislocation. The ways those elements were articulated in the global discourse were fundamentally modified in the Georgian social democratic discourse. In the GD's governmental discourse, *gender*, for example, as a component of *inclusion* was completely ignored, whereas other elements such as *health care, poverty,* and *social inequality* have been actively mobilized to cope with the danger of dislocation. My explanation, based on the theoretical framework, was that the GD's governmental development discourse has been constituted by the political logics. The GD's governmental discourse drew elements from the global discourse of development, the ones that were necessary to reproduce the neoliberal discourse without fundamental modification of its essence and ignored other signs. Post-development theory, as indicated, argues that discourse has immanent ability to adapt to the changing conditions (Escobar, 1995, p. 44). My research confirms this by discussing the Georgian case and demonstrates the logic of discursive processes through which the neoliberal discourse of development has been reproduced in Georgian reality.

Despite the continuation, I identified the change too. That was mainly an increasing role of the state in providing social welfare (the health care sector experienced the most changes in that regard). Nevertheless, a path dependency between the neoliberal, resistance and social democratic discourse is much stronger than I assumed at the beginning of the research.

The central topic arising here is what possibilities of social changes have been produced and what have been excluded from the discourse. As argued throughout the analysis, the meanings of development produced within all three discourses – neoliberal, resistance and social democratic – are fundamentally Eurocentric, recognizing rapid economic growth under the free market as the main driving force of development. The crucial issues such as, for example, the introduction of a progressive tax system, the recognition of the gendered dimension of development, and seeing dangerous consequences of economic growth to the nature are largely missing from the discourse. *Europe*, as illustrated, is a myth. It constitutes an imaginary horizon within which Georgian ruling parties, as well as opposition parties, produce their development policies making the development policy of Georgia fundamentally Eurocentric.

From where, then, could alternative visions of development emerge if the very ways political actors generate development policy are fundamentally influenced by the existing Eurocentric discursive structures?  Taking my research findings into account, while answering this question, I would distance myself from post-development theorization of the issue of alternatives and refer to the post-colonial thinkers, such as Spivak (1990, p. 135)  and Bhabha (1994, p. 185) arguing that possibilities for the agency to articulate alternative visions to the hegemonic discourse lie within the same hegemonic discursive matrix and one needs to explore the nature of the discourse to illustrate its ideological dimensions. My research was an attempt to illustrate the contingent nature of development discourse produced by the Georgian governments. The meaning fixations that could be seen by Georgian political elites as unquestionable truth (the economic growth leads to social well-being, for example) are the consequences of the concrete discursive processes.

Saying with the words of Laclau (1990, p. 34), they are contingent articulations of signs, masking reality as the only objective reality. Post-development theory (Latouche, 2015, pp.118-119) argues that in order to think about alternatives to the western-centred development model, it is of crucial importance to decolonize our minds from the Eurocentric understandings of development. The decolonization process is intertwined with the deconstruction of the hegemonic discursive formations that was the overall aim of my research. The denaturalization of the development project could be a precondition for opening new analytical possibilities for the discussions about social transformations in Georgia. The critique of the development discourse produced by the Georgian government contributes, to use Escobar's (1995, p. 14) words, "the liberation of the discursive field so that the task of imagining alternatives can be commenced".

Based on this, we could identify directions for further research. My research, while deconstructing development discourse and showing discursive path dependency between neoliberal and social democratic discourses, did not address the problem of alternatives though by analysing the resistance discourse, I illustrated the weakness of post-development theory to address the issue of alternatives and argued for the necessity of bringing the post-colonial reflections into the discussion. The future research regarding Georgia's development policy could furthered my research findings by analysing what identities of social groups have been produced in relation to the discursive transformations in Georgia. How is, for example, the self-perception of "the poor" produced under the hegemony of the neoliberal development discourse? what are the possibilities for those discursively produced identities to organize themselves as resistant movements? And how, to what extent, can those movements destabilize the hegemonic model of development?

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## Appendix 1: Research Material

President's annual reports to parliament by years (from 2004 to 2013): https://www.president.gov.ge/eng/Mikheil-Saakashvili-en.aspx

Sustainable Development Goals: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs

The document Georgia 2020: https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/linked-documents/cps-geo-2014-2018-sd-01.pdf

Georgian Dream's development program by years (from 2013 to 2018): http://gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=41