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Letting Vision Lie Fallow

Understanding the Dialectical Constitution of the Epistemic Regime
of Global Crisis in Late Modernity – Anxiety and Struggle in
Capitalist Relations of Structural and Productive Power

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Abstract

Throughout the ongoing pandemic, the operational integrity of the political system of the world has seemingly been on the cusp of collapse, raising questions about the institutional and normative vitality of this system. Moreover, this global moment draws attention to the epistemological conditions that shape global policy frameworks often consulted to devise agendas that address challenges of global magnitude. This thesis aims at understanding the epistemic regime of global crisis dialectically as a way of discerning the systemic specifications of globality in late modernity in terms of structural and productive power. Critical discourse analysis is applied to UN Human Development Reports from 1990 to 2020 to reach insight about the non-discursive and discursive social mediation of capital and the adhering ideological validity it necessitates. The study finds that the epistemic regime of global crisis is based in using the narrative functionality of differentiable subjects and a spectacle of equality to perpetuate the primacy of socially constituted meaning embodied in expressions of late modern symptoms, all of which are rooted in the hegemony of unfettered transnational capital. It finds that profound systemic transformation is only possible through embracing modern anxiety as freedom thereby proactively creating new imaginaries of political community.

Keywords: capitalism, epistemology, global crisis, productive power, structural power

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Abbreviations

CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
DOG	The Discourse Order of Globalization
GDP	Global Discursive Practice
GSP	Global Social Practice
HDR	Human Development Report
IMF	International Monetary Fund
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
RIS	The Real of Institutional Security
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Is the world becoming more postmodern? Many contemporary thinkers wrestle with this idea. Given the fragmented nature of modern society and increasing frustrations with conventional loci of knowledge, such as generally recognized global institutions like the UN, it may seem as though common frames of interpretation are steadily disintegrating thereby paving the way for vast relativization of notions of truth. This evolution is often decried for being dangerous and calls for returning to a stable lens of interpretation to re-instill a sense of stability are made. But in many ways, this evolution is right in line with the late modern zeitgeist. Late modernity is characterized by separation between time and space, the disembedding mechanisms of systems of expertise, and institutional reflexivity conferring flexibility upon the social processes of managing knowledge (Giddens, 1991: 10-34). The reflexivity of institutions allows for the constitution of space, emptied of time, to be done in the image of capitalist individualization and the sparse ideas of authenticity that can be derived from it – an alienating condition fostering certain regimes of behavior, such as idealized consumption, to stymie anxiety. Calling for a return to a common frame of interpretation is, therefore, not so much a critique of a postmodern world as it is a crisis of institutional reflexivity and the wider scheme of social relations distinctive of capitalism in late modernity. The coveted common frame of interpretation represents a putative return to objectivity, but any given frame used to understand the world is destined to comprise a certain level of hypostatizing (reifying) wherein the production of knowledge, as in statistics and numbers, implicitly reflects certain pre-conceived notions of the correct order of the world (Gould, 1983). Consequently, knowledge is political and value saturated, but this is not an issue in itself. It only becomes an issue when there is an unwillingness to interrogate the frames of interpretation used as templates for analyses thus making any potential critique devoid of a deeper account of power and adverse social relations.

The anxiety of late modernity reinforces the seeming impossibility of impugning the relational map encoded into the social purviews in which life unfolds. The status of the individual is fragile, constantly needed to be reasserted via the plentiful but unfulfilling tools of late modern capitalism, making any systemic critique rather arduous to even begin to conceptualize as it would so thoroughly disclose the superficial anchorage of the self in the modern age. Crisis, as a concept constitutive of processes threatening whatever stability that has been forged, denotes a point in time when the regimes of meaning, i.e. the social codification of normativity utilized to filter the events of the world, start crumbling. Crisis is part of historical normality; the constant reconstitution of the social and the political suffused with the contingency of the passage of time (Hont, 1994). The regimes of meaning from which knowledge is derived and reality made to be perceived are always in flux, but certain central aspects are always maintained, and when their leverage wanes, the institutions of established knowledge may converge in a conviction of crisis having entered the relevant spaces of human affairs. The current global moment, supposedly defined by a pandemic conjoined with an economic crisis, highlights a point in time where the global institutional

agents – congregating in the platform offered by the UN – agree that “crisis” has entered the sphere of valid concern as these events damage the systemic integrity of *modern globality*, i.e. the broad notion of the legitimate conceptual regime from which global relations are formed and the common frames of interpretation are shaped.

Common frames of interpretation, or regimes, function to reproduce general guidelines for appropriate social and political relations further specified and concretely disseminated in the work of recognized institutions operating within the framework of established knowledge, such as the UN and its institutional partners. To question this late modern arrangement is often derided, but it may be useful to regard this system of epistemology – this regime of the parameters of global knowing - as accommodating the processes of systemic violence, i.e. the implicit violence of domination embedded in the relational structure of the social world (Zizek, 2009). Calling into question the systemic forces that impel institutional operations, means turning the supposed fixity of the relational arrangement into something contingent, which has implications for where and how struggle can be conceptualized and realized. Crisis and struggle, expressions of and reactions to capitalist anxiety, and concepts that are integral to a systemic critique, will be the main themes of this thesis.

1.2 Purpose and Research Questions

The concept of power provides an accessible path towards the end of situating crisis and struggle in systemic, and thereby global, epistemology. Power in the global arena has tended to be wedded to rationalist approaches since it was intensely invoked during the Cold War and the subsequent liberal world order characterized by institutional consensus-politics (Barnett – Duvall, 2005: 1-5). It is, however, precisely because of that context that the concept of power should be broadened, deepened, and applied. In this thesis, the constitutive kinds of power, meaning power constituted in subjects and the power they have to do or be something in their social context (ibid.: 7-10), will be employed. Furthermore, the relational specificity of constitutive power can be distinguished between direct power, i.e. *structural power*, and diffuse power, i.e. *productive power*. Whereas the former informs the conception of subjects and structures that are directly perceived, the latter is concerned with the wider set of conditions determining the constitution of subjects and spaces (ibid.: 11-17). Analyzing structural power reveals the spatiotemporal configuration of the social world as it is directly perceived. Analyzing productive power reveals the social situated-ness of space and time, and thereby shows the constitution of the boundaries of the political perceptions within that spatiotemporal context. When hypostatizing abstract notions of truth, as in the epistemic (conceptual) regime of modern globality, through institutions that generate operational practices for a concrete set of professional and political policies, a distance between abstract values and concrete praxis emerges. It is in this distance that the relational premises of the global system lie, and a complex conceptualization of power can shed light on this relationality and the problems of domination and the potential for transformation that it contains.

By elucidating structural and productive power in the management of knowledge in recognized institutions, it may be possible to discern the interplay between these constitutive

dimensions and thus the systemic processes underpinning the epistemology of historical fixity. Moreover, if anxiety is taken to correspond to the foundation of late modernity, it is imperative to study the tension between the material and the ideational as to locate the conditions of paralysis, but also the dynamics of resistance, mobilization, and struggle (Eklundh et al.: 2017). The material and ideational have to be set into a dialectical relationship with one another in order to obtain a grasp of the political economy of global capitalism, on the one hand, and the conditions of emancipatory transformation in the face of the hegemony of managerialism and transnational capital, on the other (Cox, 1981). The dialectical approach when employing the concepts of structural and productive power is paramount to the understanding of the history of modernity as a continuous process with spatiotemporally specific circumstances; dialectics may hedge against the pitfalls of transhistorical thinking. The material-ideational dialectic is entrenched in the constitution of material capabilities, ideology, and institutions (ibid.). Institutions, then, represent a confluence of the material and the ideational, and the structural and the productive, which is why this thesis will be operationalized on institutional empirical grounds in the form of studying the structural and productive dimensions of the concepts of development and globalization in the work of the UN as this institution, being an institutional focal point of modern globality, both consumes and produces knowledge (epistemology) that informs systemic relations. The concepts of development and globalization are operational indicators.

The research questions of this thesis are as follows:

- How is the epistemic regime of global crisis in late modernity constituted in terms of structural and productive power?
- How can a non-transhistorical politics of transformative struggle be conceptualized given this epistemic regime?

The key purpose of the thesis will be to uncover the aforementioned dialectic as a way of bolstering the understanding of how the dominant global epistemic regime has come to be constituted and what this entails for the construction of a politics of emancipatory transformation. The notion of crisis will be used as an abstraction of the individual anxieties experienced in late modernity – a translation from the individual to the systemic. Crisis is always present since anxiety is always present. Formulating the inquiry in terms of global crisis is simply meant to indicate the need for tracing the sense of global institutional fragility back to undergirding structures. “Global crisis” should, therefore, not be understood in the more literalist associative manner as one might instinctively do, but rather as considering knowledge management in globality to be contingent and requiring an archaeological analytical temperament. This accentuates critical theory – the questioning of the constitution of the social world and the foundation of its justification (ibid.) – as the guiding analytical tenet for this thesis and the conclusions that can ultimately be drawn.

1.3 Earlier Research and Intended Contribution

Having surveyed scholarly work on epistemic regimes and knowledge generation on the inter- and transnational stage, i.e. the global stage, some insights from earlier research will here be

presented in the hope of contextualizing this thesis further and clarifying what the intended contribution will be. All pieces have been conducted in the spirit of critical research.

The first thing to note is that epistemic communities – constellations of scientific competencies gathered into networks of operational divisions, constitute a vital part of the constructed-ness of global coordination (Haas, 1992). Such communities are characterized by uncertainty, interpretation, and institutionalization, and drive the epistemic fortification of normative and causal convictions inducing specific delineations of domains of expertise and knowledge that in turn perpetuate certain structural tendencies (ibid.). The normative affirmation and principle-conformity of these epistemic communities engender spaces of operation that are inherently value laden and that are circumscribed by bounded rationality concealed by the conceit of objectivity. This is exactly why matters of global coordination are never just technical – they are infused with the limitations of bounded rationality and the parochial aspirations of the different communities answering to different fragments of a wider constructed globality replete with power. This leads to epistemic communities not having the ability to be constituted as fully independent entities only submitting to the rationale of objective science, but rather as echoes of the stratified global community within which they operate and interpret the world. The uncertainty of this interpretation is what eventually becomes institutionalized but it is obscured by the insularity of the epistemic production of each domain. Haas' account is rather compelling as it captures the constructed-ness underpinning knowledge generated in global space, but it does not illuminate the dimension of power in any extensive capacity. For Haas, power just seems to exist as something that limits the rationality of epistemic communities. This thesis will address power more explicitly as to not reify the constitution of power based in domination.

Another important nuance of global epistemic regimes is the role of hegemony. Epistemic production reflects the wider set of global relations and thus allows for certain epistemic frames taking precedence over others in the general context (Demeter, 2020). Epistemic production needs to be understood against the cultural backdrop of the social, political, and economic conditions that contribute to the molding of permissible and laudable knowledge. Given the core versus non-core structure of the world in a material sense, a similar dynamic is occurring in the ideational sphere of knowledge generation (ibid.). This cultivates an epistemic mono-culture that foments hegemony; an ideal of social relations upheld by structural inequities and reproduced by an embellishment of the neutral sciences pertaining to global affairs. Epistemic production becomes marked by competition – the rationale of the stratified global space – and encourages regimes of knowledge that maintain the insularity of progression worthy of approbation from recognized epistemic establishments, the positions of which are only enabled by uneven competition and the continuous regeneration of epistemic mono-culture (ibid.). Additionally, the measurements and tools used by many global organizations, such as the OECD, IMF, and the World Bank, all of which inform global policy coordination in the UN, produce knowledge and policy templates that fit the model of the relatively powerful entities given that the instruments of gauging supposedly viable and desirable policies derive from those possessing the material capabilities to ensure such standards in their own social spheres at the expense of those presiding over materially inferior ones and who are kept at a structural disadvantage and made to chase the prescriptions of the

dominant players (Nay, 2014). Standardized instruments of measuring success and stability, precipitate a congruence of validity shrouded in the hegemony of structural domination and makes it quite difficult for weaker entities to jettison policy agendas that logically demand their subordination if the wider epistemic regime is to persist. There is a process of normalization at play that superimposes a filter of legitimate interpretation onto the global space thus concealing the ideological propulsion of structural subordination and consigning such matters to an ancillary or fully irrelevant category of concern citing the absolute objectivity of scientific instruments (ibid.). Global hegemony is fueled by expertise, and the subsequent homogenization of all those that cannot mimic the financial and political arrangements of the general West, entails a kind of fragmentation wherein those structurally subordinate can only embark on development policies that most of all help to reinforce this relationality instead of dispensing with it. While these accounts illuminate the ideological dimension of epistemic production and the structural relations that sustains it, they offer no actionable suggestion of transformation and therefore run the risk of turning into transhistorical critiques wherein subjects and spaces cannot be reconstituted in a different way. This thesis will explicitly conceptualize the epistemic regime of global crisis in a dialectical fashion thus hopefully evading transhistorical boundaries in terms of visionary prospects for change.

In delving further into the construction of global epistemic regimes, it is apparent that a geopolitical dimension should be articulated in order to explicate the conditions of epistemic management exhaustively. The global imaginary of viable knowledge is concomitant with the material balance of the world and the kind of political agency propounded by international organizations as suitable for the end of development (Shahjahan, 2016). An integral component of this global imaginary is the notion of coloniality, not only as a concrete geopolitical concept, but as an overarching epistemic scheme of ideational extraction for the perennial expansion of relations of modernity by the financially advantaged part of the world. The way global space is imagined follows from the logic of capital accumulation inherent to modernity and the cementation of relative deprivation, material and ideational, as the common frame of interpretation (ibid.). Modernity and coloniality are, therefore, co-constitutive and function conceptually to fuse capital accumulation and ideas of epistemic superiority together in a process where the spirit of the global is all-encompassing but ultimately serves to enhance the standing of the relatively powerful. International organizations, then, such as those mentioned earlier, deflate the prowess of the materially weaker to aspire to anything else than modernity, thus bracing-up coloniality. In lieu of this, developing states, for instance, would need to ascribe referential primacy to something else external to the system of the international organizations, but such movements are halted by the conceptual hegemony of epistemic management in global space. This account covers the aspects pertaining to the very practical construction of the world and circumvents teleological problems. But transhistorical issues still remain as an account of change is not promoted explicitly, which, ironically, may indicate a significant degree of tethering to the world as it is taken to be from a top-down glance. But as critical theory will implore an analyst to do, the constitution of all potential layers of relationality must be contested if a non-dogmatic, non-transhistorical and

emancipatory politics is to materialize. This, again, points to the need for dealing with power head-on.

With an overview of the main analytical tendencies in dealing with global epistemology out of the way, the intended contribution of the thesis can be contextualized more clearly. The exposition above shows that critical approaches to epistemic production offer much in unveiling the processes rendered immediately visible at the upmost layers, but fail to instantiate a fully profound critique of the management of global epistemology as earlier scholarship tends to lack a dialectical account of these processes as anchored in structural and productive relations of power, and therefore suffer from a bend toward transhistorical theorizing. By adducing Lacanian psychoanalysis as an ontological premise particular to modernity, this thesis will bridge the putative material-ideational divide in a way that makes the dialectic between them seem organic and thus more grounded, making any inquiry into differing notions of power more accessible, too. Global crisis, as an aggregation of individual anxieties enclosed by humanly constructed political structures and regimes, moves to the fore the elusive interplay between subject (e.g. constituted by international organizations and institutions) and object – the desired practices, narratives, and arrangements that may sate the constantly collapsing center of the subject; the subject-object relation is characterized by the subject's inability to identify an object that will quell the anxiety of the self (Burgess, 2017). Going forward with this in mind, this thesis will explicate the constitution of the epistemic regime of global crisis not as something that just happens, but as something that is in line with a psychoanalytical logic. Additionally, and in understanding capitalism as a key conceptual framework in late modernity, this thesis will attempt to meet the criterion of self-reflexivity, as the most fundamental qualitative strength of critical theory, in excavating and exposing the conceptual constitution of global epistemology. Self-reflexivity entails circumspection in drawing general conclusions, and, since notions of reflexive freedom are imperative to generate a critique that does not merely recreate domination but actually discards it, provides a path towards emancipatory transformation that is historically contingent and thus contextually sensitive (Postone, 1993: 3-20, 36-42). Approaching the dialectical features of modern power psychoanalytically, and embracing self-reflexivity to avoid insipid transhistorical conclusions, will make up the basis for the contribution of this thesis.

1.4 Disposition

Since the chosen method for the operationalization of this study is critical discourse analysis (CDA), a separation between method and theory is somewhat misguided as methodological and theoretical considerations overlap heavily in CDA. Yet, for pedagogical reasons, the method will be presented in the following section (section 2) before expounding on theory in the subsequent section (section 3). The aim of these sections is to contextualize the study completely and ensure that everything is in place for the operationalization when applying CDA in the next section (section 4). While this section will include some analysis, as to stay true to the conduct of CDA, the section thereafter (section 5) will offer a deeper analysis in the spirit of critical theory enabled by the stringency of the previous sections. It is the intention of this intellectual endeavor to add to the understanding of the epistemic regime of global crisis with novel insights.

2 Method

2.1 Ontological Considerations

In defining the material-ideational dialectic, it is paramount not to regard these dimensions as fully disparate. Likewise, they should not be seen as affecting one another in equal ways as that would negate any notion of time as an axis of constant motion wherein material capabilities and ideological configurations accrue in a process that structures reality. Hence, the most appropriate manner of conceptualizing this historical dialectic of modernity in its most basic form, is to approach social phenomena as being constituted by a material core and ideational shell; ideas and discourses diffused in political space are bound together in a complex codification and spring from the interaction with the material conditions of the world, which may be hidden by the seemingly independent ideological and discursive formations in which colloquial life is enmeshed (Lister, 2004: 7-8). It is important not to conflate this with the base-superstructure model as that would suggest an analytical approach that ignores the intricacies of the temporal aspects of power and may, thereby, risk failing to devise a truly non-transhistorical critique that encompasses the entire scope of the dialectic. The point is to unmask and to reveal the composition of meaning in the social world as to discover the regimes of implicit meaning (Wagenaar, 2011: 3-7). The core-shell metaphor should be regarded as an ideal type that is meant to maintain the archaeological temperament by seeking understanding beyond the directly observable, including directly accessible discourses.

On a fundamental level, the ontology espoused in this thesis is one that leans towards anti-foundationalism while simultaneously not dismissing foundationalism. The material-ideational dialectic necessitates a hermeneutic spirit of analysis, and since this implies partial generalizability on the part of the analyst, this thesis will have to be sensitive to the confinement of existing constructed-ness in which the study is operationalized, which is right in line with the idea of self-reflexivity. Put differently, the social world is characterized by a double hermeneutic; interpretations of the world are conveyed as truths, and the analyst then interprets interpretations (Marsh et al., 2018: 177-185). Having the ontology sit between foundationalism and anti-foundationalism is, therefore, meant to provide access to the ideational layers surrounding the material foundations of human life. The point is not to establish the veracity of these ideational layers, epitomized in discourses, as that does not invite a willingness to go further, but rather to broaden the understanding of the complex relation between the material and the ideational veiled by the dominant frame of interpretation. And it is in this context that politics, as a vessel of power, needs to be situated.

Politics is not a discrete enterprise, it is a perpetual process structured in space and time, and institutional subjects, defined as relational subjects, are integral to this structuring (Hall, 2016). Politics is rendered by spatial and temporal contingencies, and it is not manifested exclusively in economic or ideological relations, but in sociological dynamics in which normative convictions and organizational arrangements militate against relinquishing a specific frame of interpretation. This further reinforces the analytical utility of the dialectic described above and the need for addressing power. Furthermore, institutional subjects and

their historical malleability make them amenable to exogenous changes, of course, but also to endogenous ones in terms of shifts in normative and organizational frameworks. This entails a paradox of plasticity; the changeable nature of institutions makes it hard to see why they would be so important for shaping the politics of the world (ibid.). However, this plasticity is precisely why a focus on the historical contingencies of normative predilections as points of organizational clustering is so valuable as it elucidates the intrinsically value laden and meaning-constructing nature of institutions as political agents – the supposed objectivity of institutional operations is a mirage emerging from the conceit of historical fixity. Operational preferences derive from the specific spatial configuration in the specific temporal frame, and thereby concatenates the components of a historically contextual spatiotemporal trajectory of politics.

It may seem unhelpful to interject psychoanalysis in the ontological considerations of this thesis, but it is firmly believed that it clarifies the material-ideational (or core-shell) relation further. For what is it that enables the ideational dimension to attain such preeminence in the first place, when all it supposedly does is to obfuscate and mislead? The modern human condition is steeped in uncertainty as it is impossible to know exactly what will make one achieve a sense of fulfillment of the self. The self, in a way, is also defined by the material-ideational dialectic but does not have the ability to fully know what the material core of the self – the Real, the original and truly personal realm of experience – is and how it is reached. The self, the subject, experiences an emptiness – an ontological lack – and only has fantasy at its disposal to try and identify objects in the form of narratives, identities, natural resources or anything else that can alleviate this lack (Eberle, 2019). Due to the elusiveness of the Real, this process of trying to appease the unknowable desire of the self never actually rectifies the predicament, and anxiety, therefore, becomes the primary foundation of human affairs. The Real constitutes a myth of stability, and entices the self to strive for it with the hope of escaping the struggle of the transience of life. All there is to recreate the Real is a symbolic order of signifiers that shape the terrain of the fantasmatic search for stability, and the imaginary of the perceived pertinent context that welds together a sense of a unified whole of the social world (ibid.). And any infringements upon the particularities of this Real are perceived as ontological transgressions that subvert the so yearned for stability. The global system can be said to be characterized by a similar dynamic in which the putative objectivity of institutional operations engenders ideational constructions of desired stability casted in the continuation of a certain set of relations that underpin the Real of modern globality and all relations inherent to it, including ones of domination.

2.2 Epistemological Considerations

Given the ontology outlined above, the epistemology of this thesis will have to align with interpretivism. This entails distilling the meaning inscribed into constructed concepts disseminated in socially constituted space (Marsh et al., 2018: 177-185). More specifically, an interpretivist approach enables the opportunity to conduct analysis in terms of intentional explanation, i.e. meaning that is generated from active action justified by intent, and regimes of objective meaning, i.e. the general normative frames of interpretation used as filters for all subjective endeavors (Wagenaar, 2011: 15-24). Since intentionality is entangled with the

wider schemes of contextual normativity, interpretivism allows for divulging the relation between the seemingly independent actions and prescriptive notions floating around in the social ether. Furthermore, with an analytical tilt in favor of anti-foundationalism, and given the purpose of this thesis, epistemology and ontology overlap in a way that situates epistemic consumption and production – like in discourses - as the most vital parts of the constitution of the ontological edifice. Since the social world is reached through continuous intervention via the epistemic frame adopted by the observer as a filter of validity that directs attention to the appropriate aspects of reality, knowledge and the conditions of its management in global policy agendas must be centered. Altogether, this implies an epistemology of critical realism; an acknowledgement of certain aspects of social phenomena being constituted independent of the human interpretive gaze, while other, and equally crucial aspects are concealed by ideational constructions that inform the interpretative configuration of a social context (Blatter – Haverland, 2012: 9-13). Thus, it is only possible to know as much as the contingency of the context permits. This might seem like a major problem, but it only becomes a problem if ignoring to grapple with the underlying contingencies becomes the impetus for the analysis as this inevitably yields transhistorical thinking.

As a part of complying with self-reflexivity, the analysis of the epistemic regime of global crisis will have to take into account systemic domination very explicitly as to eschew an analysis that reverts to mono-epistemology; an insular regard for knowledge strongly influenced by a perception of the cultural supremacy of Western institutions at the expense of potent political agency of those historically deemed subaltern and inferior (Richmond, 2016). Self-reflexivity is the only defense against a sort of benevolent contribution to a global epistemic regime indirectly foisted onto others, reproducing a universal template of objective meaning that is anchored in unjust power relations. Moreover, psychoanalysis can be used here as well to reinforce the aptness of critical realism and infuse it clearly with the material-ideational dialectic. Due to the perpetual structuring of politics and the spatiotemporal and normative contingencies guiding such developments, ideology becomes an integral part of not allowing the anxiety of instability to become overwhelming. Ideology – the fantasmatic construction of the social world – corresponds to the very practical process of structuring politics as it functions to sift through the proximity of possible objects and join the object, such as a narrative, with the anxious subject thus recreating some semblance of reality and a supposed rapprochement with the chaos of the world by inching towards the Real (Wilson, 2017). Ideology enables the identification of *sublime objects* – objects that restore the completeness of the self – as a way of merging the *raison detre* of the material conditions of the world with the individual social position of the self. Being able to locate sublime objects is a vital part of knowledge as the pursuit of knowledge is not only about redressing technical issues, more importantly, it is about justifying the social spaces humans inhabit and the anxious relations between them – a dynamic that festers in all modern human constructions, including global institutions. By employing critical realism, the sublime objects of global epistemology will be exposed.

2.3 Methodological Implications

As has been alluded to earlier, this study will be of qualitative character. In delineating the constitution of the epistemic regime of global crisis, *dialogical meaning* will be espoused as a way of analyzing partial and incomplete renditions of the world as all that can ever be offered in terms of interpretation of reality, is a more or less well-nuanced account of the social world (Wagenaar, 2011: 195-208). Complexity, conflict, and emergent time are inherent to interpretation (ibid.: 279-294), and dialogical meaning aims to illuminate the interplay between different points of interpretation and also provides an actionable path for creating continued and improved conditions for maintaining analytical dialogue as a way of overcoming conflict and achieving novel understanding at higher levels of abstraction. One way of discerning and fostering dialogical meaning is through the analysis of narratives – as these are relational – and how they advance certain systems of meaning (ibid.: 216-222). Narratives can be studied with respect to their functional usage as this opens up for the identification of areas of understanding and transformation. The empirical material of this study will, therefore, be approached with dialogical meaning and narrative continuity in mind in order to ascertain as profound a dynamic of relational power as possible, and to obtain insight about the conditions for emancipatory transformation. The empirical study is, because of its illumination of power and meaning, intrinsically valuable (Saeidi, 2012). And since praxis and theory are intimately intertwined in critical theory, the analysis as a whole – the presentation of theory, application of CDA, and final analysis – will be done in line with an abductive spirit, utilizing theoretical deduction and practical induction to attain meaning on a higher level of abstraction continuously. The full picture will, therefore, emerge successively.

2.4 Material and Delimitations

The empirical material of this thesis will consist of a series of UN Human Development Reports (HDR) stretching from the year of 1990 – the first year of publication, until 2020, the last available report, with CDA being applied to the following reports: 1990, 1995, 2000, 2010, 2016, and 2020. This sample is defined by practical accessibility. The motivation for the selection of this particular material is that the UN is a global institutional amalgam whose work reflects local and global analytical acumen of disparate context brought together in a general explication of the state of global affairs, consuming and producing social- and discursive practices that shape the normative disposition of modern globality. A textual analysis aligns with the purpose of this thesis as it, in the form of CDA, enables the identification of the complex of the material-ideational dialectic in an appropriate manner given the ontological and epistemological considerations of the study. The material will be approached historiographically, on the one hand, and through interpretative discourse analysis, on the other; the former signifies the analysis of primary sources which themselves contain analysis, and the latter informs the explicit search for meaning as elicited and/or propagated by discourses (Vromen, 2018: 249-252). The analysis is delimited to the given time period as it captures the ostensible conceptual break from the Cold War and its rather unimaginative renditions of power that were carried over to the liberal world order from the 1990s onwards through narrative continuity. The textual analysis will only concern those parts

of the reports dealing with framing of global problems and solutions as these are the most substantive in terms of appraising power.

2.5 Critical Discourse Analysis

In CDA, as propounded by Norman Fairclough, power, struggle, and ideology are the most central themes that should pervade the analysis (Wagenaar, 2011: 158-176). And it is in the intersection between these dimensions this thesis has been situated. The social world is constituted by a dialectic of discursive and non-discursive elements that reproduce or restructure ideological configurations towards the end of maintaining capitalist hegemony (Winther-Jørgensen – Phillips, 2000: 25-28). Fairclough draws on disparate thinkers, such as Gramsci, Foucault, Giddens, and Althusser, to reach a sense in which power, struggle, and ideology interact (*ibid.*: 70-72, 93-96). In essence, power and discourse are not distinct, they flow into one another and constitute a dialectic of the discourse generated in local contexts and a broader array of discourse orders that inform and maintain hegemony via technologies of ideology, many of which are themselves embodied in discourse (Fairclough, 2010: 1-22). Differently put, there is a structure-event dialectic in which ideology shapes material conditions and vice versa; the material and ideational structure of a broader social domain is asserted through hegemony which both informs and is informed by individual discursive events unfolding in specific contexts (*ibid.*: 56-68). The kind of discursive articulation enabled in a given context hinges upon the ideological configuration and the wider relations of power.

CDA is conducted in three steps. First, the discursive practice of the specific communicative event, i.e. an element of textual rendition (the HDRs in this case), is determined. This means finding out if the discursive practice of the communicative event conforms to the pertinent discourse order, i.e. the arrangement of established discourses pertaining to a certain social domain (Winther-Jørgensen – Phillips, 2000: 76-79, 85-87). It is done by studying the level of interdiscursivity, i.e. the extent to which the discursive practice aligns with the established discourse order or strays from it by invoking other discourses. High interdiscursivity indicates broader social change while low interdiscursivity denotes the opposite (*ibid.*). Second, the linguistic identity of the text is determined. In this case, it will be done by analyzing transitivity and modality. Transitivity regards the way in which subject and object are linked and how agency is formed, and modality regards the way this linkage happens at all at the level of affinity, i.e. ideological or emotional dedication to the linkage (*ibid.*: 87-90). Third, the social practice, i.e. the broader codification of practices, including non-discursive ones, is set into relation with the discursive practice to address the dialectical features of the discursive and non-discursive thus achieving novel insights about the power-struggle-ideology intersection (*ibid.*: 90-92). Social practice, promulgating the ideological configuration of hegemony, informs nodal points and their discursive articulation as a way of precipitating and maintaining historical blocs that engender the rigidity of invidious power relations that should be countered (Fairclough, 2010: 56-68, 126-145). CDA is, therefore, ineluctably prescriptive.

2.6 Operationalization and Validity

As with any interpretative method, validity is a central concern, especially given the abductive character of the analytical conduct as it may seem as if conclusions are only made through unsubstantiated extrapolations. But since CDA operates from the stance of critical realism and emphasizes the role of power, it is contended that this thesis will satisfy a stringent design. Theory, operationalization, and analysis are presented in different sections but should be seen as closely interwoven. In the theory section, the social practice of global affairs will be defined with the aim of proposing an account of the discourse order against which the HDRs will be compared. The outline of the global social practice will be made by sketching the salient capitalist codification of late modernity. Then, structural and productive power will be explicated to address the dimensions of constitutive power within the purview of global politics explicitly. The UN as an institution is regarded as a focal point of macro-structures and micro-interactions, which makes the HDRs a helpful nexus of structural and productive power in the pursuit of approximating the epistemic regime of global crisis in the following operationalization section through analyzing the discursive practice of these texts. The identified discourses make up the central signifiers of the symbolic order pertaining to the Real of late modernity, and correspond to the imaginary, or narrative continuity, of modern globality. In order to retain the validity of the study, the benefit of hindsight must be kept in mind as to avoid teleological reasoning; as was stated earlier, time is an emergent property of interpretation and may entail a perception of reality as being constituted by a linear chronology of political evolution (Wagenaar, 2011: 284-289). But if the spirit of dialogical meaning, and thus self-reflexivity, can be upheld, the risk of simply retelling a narrative of global evolution instead of looking beneath its bonnet will diminish significantly.

2.7 Critical Potential

A well-known piece of criticism often levied against CDA is that it lacks a clear point of reference regarding social practice and the non-discursive elements of power (Winther-Jørgensen – Phillips, 2000: 93-96). And in a similar vein, the dialectic between the discursive and non-discursive is somewhat taxing to delineate as there is no clear demarcation separating the two (*ibid.*). But this seems to miss the point with dialectics; the dialectical dynamic only makes sense relationally – it cannot be conceptualized completely if there is an insistence to make easily noticeable distinctions between the non-discursive and discursive, and such calls for clearer separation dismantles any notion of the presence of constitutive power. This is, however, more of a theoretical point. It is accurate that CDA does have some practical problems in terms of operationalization by analyzing transitivity and modality. Of course, these aspects can be said to follow strictly linguistic analysis thereby retaining stringency, but if this is so, it seems CDA refrains from integrating an awareness of the non-discursive all too much in the study of discursive practice. The linking of subject with object does not just happen linguistically, there has to be some intentional explanation impelling such linkages. If a spirit of dialogical meaning is to permeate the operationalization and analysis, this issue cannot be disregarded as it would encroach upon the very principle of always keeping power, struggle, and ideology in mind to make visible areas of conflict and tension without retelling the narrative, without making the analysis transhistorical. The psychoanalytical contributions

to the methodology are, therefore, paramount in dispelling any transhistorical risks when analyzing the epistemic management of meaning underneath transitivity and modality. Discourses are active parlance and productive mediation of power – they reflect and construct wider social practices – and this is a strength that should not be undermined by a poor rendition of dialectics or an overly linguistic approach, defeating the very critical purpose of CDA. As a final point, and needless to say, no claim to universal generalizability can be made using CDA. But then again, the standard of generalizability is not appropriate for the kind of critical theory championed here.

3 Theory

3.1 Global Social Practice

Before turning to the dimensions of power enveloped in politics, the spatiotemporal contingencies of global politics will have to be established as to gain sufficiently grounded perspectives on ideology and struggle. Consequently, the initial part will cover those aspects, corresponding to the global social practice (GSP) of modern globality, thus paving the way for integrating notions of power in a cogent manner later on. The first three segments of this part represent an exploration of the GSP, constituting the basis for the deduction of the relevant psychoanalytical dynamic and the adhering discourse order proposed in the final two segments.

3.1.1 Struggle and Stability

Emancipation may seem a reasonable enough aim. Yet the praxis of emancipation may be conceptualized in widely differing ways as notions of injustice and struggle vary. It is generally accepted that violence should be resisted, but the manifestation of violence is often quite subtle. As implied in the introduction, violence is relational and does not belong to the singular action; it is a systemic specification of the level of social engagement and therefore means that injustice is a far more extensive problem (Zizek, 2009). The stratification of society, stemming from constitutive conceptions of viable political agency, circumscribes the leeway for engagement and confines individual subjects to subscribing to already existing constellations of power that inculcate their primacy into populations via coercive social structures. States, constituting one of the most central of such constellations, construct the shape of the civic sphere and its conduits for channeling the will of the state through venues of social engagement (*ibid.*). This renders action delineated by the structures that be and makes meaningful action tenuously realizable if at all possible. The ability to act meaningfully – to have a reasonable chance to affect the social context in which one lives – is the basis for a sound ethical basis applied to the constitution of human societies (Arendt, 2016: 499-598). Capitalism, as a conceptual regime of economic and social production, engenders other systems of meaning, such as imperialism and thereby racism, that beset political purviews exposed to unequal global relations hence curtailing the flourishing of meaningful action (*ibid.*).

States, constructing their people, possess the means to project its popular will outwards onto the global stage, e.g. via imperialism, as a way of maintaining the rationale of structural coercion by turning other spaces – other territories – into the arenas of settling grievances. The spectacle of state coercion – the performativity of approved violence – is a symptom of sovereign anxiety originating from the impossibility of knowing exactly how to subjugate unwanted subjects permanently therefore necessitating shows of force (Dillon, 2017). The stability of states translates to the curbing of struggle, the subjects of said struggle sense having violence done against them but being unheeded. This denigration of the struggle against systemic violence is sustained by discursive practices; discourses harbor the constitution of subjects filtered through the social practice of ideology hence cloaking

inequitable political conditions (Wagenaar, 2011: 107-111). Thus, emancipatory struggle is pulled towards physical resistance as justified struggle – as it is generally accepted in the civic sphere - can only be realized in the image of the bourgeois subject who will not impugn the position of states and their role in abetting the ascendancy of transnational capital (Fanon, 1969). The sovereign anxiety of states operates as an undertow of the motion of transnational capital and amplifies the performative need for justified struggle in the name of stability. This amplification in turn entails an intensification of the discursive cloaking of politics to rid the venues of political strife of the agency of those subjects whose struggle threaten the tenability of stability constituted as anxious projection of conflict.

3.1.2 The Space of Relational Globality

The spatial organization of the world, packaged and purveyed in imaginaries of political order, is based in values and not objective facts (Hurrell, 2007: 1-21). The pluralism of actors, policies, and aims speak to the historical situated-ness of values and their construction of ends to be pursued in variegated ways on the global scene (ibid.: 25-56). The ensuing fragmentation, which is particularly pronounced in modernity, has weakened the relative strength of the state as an independent agent (ibid.). Yet, this does not imply a collapse of sovereignty as some states still enjoy material supremacy over other states thus positing some values – or broader normative schemes, i.e. institutions of meaning, as preferable. Such institutions of meaning, epitomized in war or other conflict dynamics inducing tension patterns, are constructed and made to inform the purposes and practices of global organizations, like the UN (ibid.). States, then, are not on equal footing with one another, but this state-based relationality is itself embedded in a wider globality in which the unequal standing of formally recognized primary actors – states – is utilized to feed a more intrusive systemic configuration, i.e. a world-system. The dominant paradigm of global capitalism as a universal disposition of economic and social interaction, is what drives the perpetuation of the inequality between states by making financial edicts impede resolution of the internal contradictions of weaker states, many of which still bear the brunt of the colonial legacy, and hampers attempts to sever the ties to the national effigies of the righteous bourgeois subject embodied in structural commodification and institutionalized repression (Prasad, 2010: 153-250). This is necessitated by a world-system, maintained by core-periphery relations of production – material and ideational – and fosters a universality of capitalism imbued with the defense of undisputed logic and which is to be installed everywhere (Wallerstein, 2004: 23-41). However, this universality is actually undergirded by anti-universality as historical inequities are rendered immutable via the transhistorical inclusion of inferior subjects (ibid.). The realm of relational globality is, therefore, based in a paradox but not a contradiction; the putative fixity of capitalism can only be anchored in the perennial inclusion of the historically subordinated subject, such as subjects of colonialism, by continuously offering the global institutional scaffolds of extractive core-periphery production (ibid.: 1-22). Buttressing this system ideologically, is the institutionalization of a geoculture; a frame of interpretation that conforms to the precepts generated by capitalism and which is made to influence the channels of political agency heavily (ibid.: 60-75).

The configuration of the capitalist world-system restricts the construction of independent political agency and therefore reinforces the primacy of certain subjects or agents as being the only suitable mediators of social engagement. In spite of the modern relative weakness of states, the emergence of global institutions still reflects the institutions of meaning (the lines of conflict) of states and the historical context of the formation of their relations. In other words, it is not a far-fetched inference to suggest that global institutions, ideologically and practically, often reproduce injustice by implicitly consulting an ethical foundation based in coercion and repression. Global institutions, in this respect, do not constitute a transcendence of political agency based in active domination, they simply regenerate these relations by using the inclusion of universal capitalism as a framework for passive exclusion in terms of subjects imprisoned in the spatial ideals of the past. This is where space and time of globality converge; the paradox of the capitalist world-system enables the instantiation of historical relations, regarding the organization of space and the subjects that exist within it, through constantly deferring to the past as the model for the present and the future. This is especially distinctive of modernity.

3.1.3 The Temporality of Modernity

The intellectual roots of modernity are found in the Enlightenment – a period of grand theorizing aimed at exalting the human mind to the highest echelons of universal reason and objective rationality. The Enlightenment was meant to decouple cerebral exertion from mythology, but instead, a reproduction of a rather specific kind of mythology, or ideology, has occurred under the pretense of liberation (Horkheimer – Adorno, 2010: 19-136). In nascent modernity, the bourgeois subject came to constitute the most appropriate embodiment of social and political relations serving the ends of rational liberation. Over time, then, this informed the design of spaces of interaction – such as areas of production and consumption – that embedded bourgeois liberation in the societal constitution of progression (ibid.). This supposed modern liberation has streamlined political agency towards a very particular ideal and the temporal frame of interpretation that modernity proposes is, thereby, not about actual emancipation – it is about the suppression of the agency of unwanted subjects. The reality of modernity is not as real as it is ideological; the very insistence on the putative objectivity of modern rationality is a testament to the fundamentally ideological nature of this reality (Zizek, 2001: 17-64). This by no means negates any material component to reality, it simply suggests that the perception of what is real is covered in inherently ideological layers that perpetuate the conditions of historically specific relations in the structuring of political and social space.

The notion of objective rationality – rendered as a transhistorical phenomenon of modernity – functions to substitute the limitation of human knowing with the universality of a certain set of social relations. The accessible lens of interpretation, refracting the sphere of social constitution through the prism of the codification of modernity, attains precedence in the social world as the pertinent objects of that world, used to inform the rationale of the social relations they precipitate, have surpassed the subjects of said world in terms of the ability to actively shape the continued trajectory of the political agency of modernity (Baudrillard, 1994: 75-79). Objects instruct notions of freedom and liberation, not subjects, and this centrality of commodification has become ever more accentuated in late modernity wherein

modern rationality has no referential proficiency beyond referring to the legitimacy of itself. Therefore, the universal aspirations of modernity are only as universal as the parochial spirit of its temporality. Moreover, due to the disembedding mechanisms of reflexive institutions which leave the self of individual subjects de-territorialized and redirected to dispense with the anxiety this brings by engaging in the ephemeral satisfaction of the immediacy of hedonistic kinds of sensation, often in the form of consumption, fantasy becomes a basis for asserting the self given the systemic sequestration of human experiences and the kind of non-fulfilling, late modern meaning that is generated from them (Giddens, 1991: 144-180). People, the multitude of subjects, are presented with a pre-conceived template of suitable behavior pegged to the temporality of modernity and its ideology of universal rationality. In a sociological sense, people act in accordance with the Thomas theorem; if people are made to believe that something is real, they will embrace actions that comport with the constitution of that reality (Malesevic, 2019: 21-25).

3.1.4 The Real of Institutional Security

Given the spatiotemporal calibration of modern globality, the processes by which political stability is achieved are marred by existential anxiety emanating from the impossibility of reconciling the flow of time with the mythological rootedness of the self. Hence, stability – surviving with anxiety – is induced via performative leaps of faith that insert anxiety into the very foundation of stability (Arfi, 2020). In the aftermath of the Cold War, the United States emerged as the seemingly irrevocable hegemon of the world, in several senses of the word, but has had to conduct itself as an empire of insecurity as the formal aspects of its global standing have been aimed towards increasingly nebulous goals (Hurrell, 2007: 262-285). The reshuffling of structural forces, such as ones pertaining to transnational capital, has reinforced informal facets of empire as constituted in global institutions and their practical filtration of endeavors considered viable (*ibid.*). The ostensible security derived from global hegemony is, therefore, anchored in the informal, or veiled, levels of global ideological validity embedded within global institutions. The stability of such institutions is upheld by social coalitions that impel the relative preeminence of certain normative dispositions infused with certain relations of scientific competencies (Hall, 2016). The importance of these social coalitions and the informal aspects of global hegemony has grown with the abandonment of the easily defined stages of development in favor of the more amorphous concept of globalization (Wallerstein, 2004: 76-90). Globalization is a process that is not as clearly linked to states as it is a process that is more in line with the demands of the capitalist world-system and the utilization of informal avenues for extending and deepening the reach of its rationality.

Hitherto, all world-systems have trended towards crisis; the shift from the formal and static process of development to the informal and dynamic process of globalization, illustrates the adaptability of the capitalist world-system when a reassertion of its geoculture is needed to ensure its continued vitality (*ibid.*). The locus of the spatiotemporal structuring process of globalization is the dialectical interplay between the global and the local – a nexus of relational contexts that together forge a broader dynamic in which some notions of subjectivity become more salient than others (Kinnvall, 2006: 13-25). And it is in this nexus the imaginary of modern globality and its narrative properties exist. With the security that

global institutions offer in late modernity, the geoculture of globalization necessitates the projecting of the veiled insecurity of the system onto those subjects and subjectivities that are confined by a certain set of local circumstances which are justified conceptually by reserving the historically specific reality for them but the transhistorical reality of modern globality and the privileges coming with it for the global, bourgeois subject. There is, it could be argued, a psychoanalytical Real of institutional security (RIS); an idea of the good global configuration being achieved via the universal exaltation of global institutions and the normative regimes of countenanced knowing they accommodate. The RIS renders the global-local nexus as the most appropriate place for contemplating globalization and thus skews assessment to the benefit of the institutional securitization of systemic insecurity – the performative leaps of global faith that only some coalitions of agents, reinforced by epistemic communities abiding by modern globality, may initiate and complete.

3.1.5 The Discourse Order of Globalization

The outline above represents the constitution of the GSP, and it is now possible to identify the discourse order adhering to the political and ideological rendition of modern globality. Globalization, understood as a process of the dialectical construction of social coalitions fomenting global hegemony through the institutionalization of a capitalist geoculture of expansive commodification, corresponds to the nodal point of the discourse order. This discourse order of globalization (DOG) contains a multiplicity of discourses that contribute to the complexity in which crisis and struggle are entangled. Globalization is an institution of meaning; its process crafts surfaces onto which ideology can be projected and power be encapsulated. Global institutions, such as the UN, constitute such surfaces and disseminate regimes of meaning that corral global engagement and make other entities, individual or institutional, exercise deference to the rationality of the system. States are not obsolete in globalization, but their informal agency is absorbed into the agency of global institutions; the latter is just another layer to preserve the rationality of modernity.

The DOG consists of the following discourses: The first discourse is one which stipulates the conditions of acceptable struggle and the forms of possible action that could ever be conceptualized and undertaken. This is a *moral discourse* and functions to vest certain subjects with certain moral justifications for devising the contours of policy-agendas. The second discourse is one which reproduces the configuration of historically specific space via world-system relations and refines vestiges of overt repression to foster a relational normativity of veiled domination. It is an *extraction discourse*, both in terms of material goods and amenities, and ideational biases. The third discourse regards the ideological validity of modern rationality and exerts itself by using the framing of rational progression to confer universal clout on the ideological primacy of the bourgeois subject propelled by the state. This is a *coercion discourse*, albeit an insidious one as it, via the notion of rational liberation, necessitates the implicit coercion of subjects whose actions must be opted in line with the preeminence of commodification lest the organization of global space be dissolved. These three discourses precipitate the dialectical process, or narrative continuity, of globalization structured in space and time. The embellished RIS promises the end-point of this process and thereby encourages the perennial articulation of this discourse order to

attempt to vanquish the anxiety of instigating transhistorical solutions to historically specific issues.

3.2 Power in Global Politics

Having expatiated on political dimensions pertaining to the GSP, power, in explicit terms, will now be addressed to clarify the way in which crisis and struggle should be understood in the upcoming sections.

3.2.1 Structural Power

As was stated in the introduction, structural power concerns the explicit lines of struggle and categories of agents between whom antagonism exists. Global institutions are not so much independent agents as they are representations of the structural, meaning relational, power struggle between different forces. Thus, global institutions are cumulative regimes of norms and practices that unravel from the structural configuration of global order (Hurrell, 2007: 57-94). If global order is taken to constitute a coherent whole, it becomes apparent that capitalism is an integral system of relations where the processes of capital are essential for extending the longevity of this order. The basic premise of modern capitalism is that of exchange value being more central than use value; value is determined by the representation of value which itself is representative of an actual good or service (Harvey, 2015: 15-24). The peculiarity of exchange value is that it is absolutely necessary for the continued accumulation of capital in modern capitalism. When land was expropriated to generate wealth in early capitalism, a process of primitive accumulation was initiated. The novelty of this process was, however, not about efficiency or concentration of wealth, but about an incipient regime of social property relations that evolved into accumulation via dispossession in modern capitalism in which relative extraction of commodities can be maintained by institutional regimes anchored in exchange value and finance capital, hence rampant policies of public retrenchment and privatization (Wood, 2006). The social property relations have become naturalized since the span of their organizational framework permeates all purviews of relevance for capital accumulation. However, it is important to note that capital is not discrete, capital is always in motion and has shaped a dialectic springing from the aforementioned social property relations and informs a historically specific dynamic of structural power that cannot be abstracted to some universal account of the progression of history (Postone, 1993: 267-285). The dialectic of capital accumulation is active and socially mediated in the present, but it is upheld by specific contingencies that enable its processes.

The historical contingencies used to expand capital accumulation can be said to be obscured and thus exalted to universality through hegemony. And this is why states are still crucial for the existence and functioning of global institutions. Hegemony emerges from erecting historical blocs (social coalitions) based in intellectual and moral leadership from the leading classes, forging a state-society complex that can be used as a springboard onto the global stage for the perpetuation of capital accumulation, which is the end this hegemony ultimately serves (Bieler – Morton, 2004). Hegemony can only exist via states as they have the means to devise the conditions of material, institutional, and discursive production in a way that creates a consent-based approach to capital accumulation where the less powerful classes acquiesce

to the relations they are presented with. The hegemony of states, or the hegemony of the forces they advance, entails a global order that is anchored in coercion as the processes of transnational capital restrain any capacity of the weaker groups of the historical blocs to meaningfully influence what transpires in these processes. Globalization is cultural, and this culture derives from the hegemony of Pax Americana and the inter-state configuration it established, laying the groundwork for ceding more power to the global channels of capital accumulation (ibid.). Hegemony comprises material forces, the content of hegemony, and ideology, the form of hegemony, and they shape one another dialectically, constructing regimes of praxis (Gramsci, 2000: 189-221). The hegemony of praxis informs epistemology as it delineates what can possibly be conceptualized, and thereby molds global order through the sites that the historical blocs are provided with – namely global institutions. This means that those global institutions that preserve the structural position of capital will not offer the kind of transformation that subverts the epistemic regime underpinning them as that would summon the harbingers of the demise of the preeminence of capital in global order.

When taking these contingencies into account, or rather the dynamics that form concrete contingencies, it is very important not to hypostatize the historically specific context from which they emerge. Capital must be understood as a socially mediated category of historical specificity which informs a dialectic of structural relations that is particular to the constitution of that social context (Postone, 1993: 385-400). In this thesis, that social context is relational globality in late modernity. That contingencies exist is one thing, but taking seriously the insight that the conditions of these contingencies are themselves contingent is another and is imperative to avoid transhistorical pitfalls. The critical potential of structural power, meaning the power of capital accumulation to shape the epistemology of social relations mediated on the global scene, lies in embracing the contingency of contingency as to elucidate the limitations of the resilience of capital and render profound transformation possible by utilizing self-reflexivity to reshape praxis on the inside with a historically self-aware critique from the outside.

3.2.2 Productive Power

Unlike structural power, productive power focuses not on specific categories of tension through which relational subjects spring into existence (such as the social category of capital), but rather on the conceptual perimeters of space that can be subjected to power and thus broaches questions concerning the ubiquity of power. Power not only constrains subjects; it is also productive of subjects and struggles as it is productive of conceptualizations of space. History unfurls as an evolution of spaces, thus, the management of space, i.e. territory when it comes to the notion of the sovereign state, is enacted through regimes of knowledge as it, on the fundamental level, entails a management of communities and a certain set of social relations (Foucault, 1991b: 239-256). This, again, is precisely why states are still quite relevant; they are necessary to handle the expansion of power by expanding the notion of the community. Neoliberalism, the strain of liberalism dominating late modernity, is characterized by a subordination of the state to the relational universality, or ideology, of neoliberalism and its conceptual regime (often manifested in economic policies), and exploits the ability of states to render spaces governable in order to diffuse the reach of neoliberal

rationality (Lemke, 2001). The supposed withdrawal of the state simply denotes a shift of the state from constituting an independent rationality to constituting a nimble technology of neoliberal precepts. On the global level, then, this dynamic shapes an episteme – a foundational frame of knowledge given the implicit guidelines of the production of subjects and spaces – that contains analytic and normative elements which configure the epistemic validity of the work of global institutions (Adler – Bernstein, 2005: 294-308). The global episteme is not a macro-structure per se, rather it is a conceptual regime of governing technologies that stem from the dominant rationality rising to the top from the constitution of micro-level interactions in already established spaces. The episteme engenders a commonality of governable spaces, descriptively and prescriptively, by disseminating a system of internalized discipline – governmentality (Rose et al., 2006).

Governmentality, the creation of discipline through the seemingly instinctual drive to organize the world in the spirit of the dominant rationality, decides the navigation of the spaces and the choices of technologies to apply. Among these technologies are discourses, understood as lingual representations of social practice fraught with meaning embedded in textual communication (Wagenaar, 2011: 138-147). Discourses are not neutral, they are value laden and define the setting for struggle, at least to a significant extent. Discourses manifest different subjectivities in unique ways and there are not natural linkages between them, but by embracing the antagonisms between different discourses, a democratic articulation that forges counter-hegemony is possible (Laclau – Mouffe, 2014: 133-178). However, this implies that antagonism can be wittingly overcome discursively and may underestimate the epistemic rigidity of the global episteme for which certain antagonisms in themselves are disciplinary technologies aimed at hindering the recognition of collective identities that can be rallied to challenge the dominant rationality. In other words, if discourse alone is seen as the venue for transformation, there is a risk of individualizing struggle in a way that just foments governmentality and the epistemic validity of late modernity, neoliberal modernity. Discourses are an illuminating place for discerning productive power given their generative properties, but the repressive aspects should not be forgotten as they are part and parcel of the delineation of governable spheres.

The global episteme and the governmentality it fosters is indicative of how integral the notion of expertise is to power in order for power to attain its productive prowess. It is the growth and cementation of expertise, like scientific competencies, that has endowed the formal entities of governing, such as institutions and states, with the technologies – among them discursive ones – to induce regimes of discipline, expressed in governmentality, as implicit constitutions of surveillance that enable the preeminence of a certain rationality by effectively shielding its coercion through circumscribing the ability to conceptualize and thereby produce unwanted subjects (Foucault, 1991a: 135-229; Foucault, 1991b: 214-225). The production of governable spaces and adhering subjects to rule and to be ruled, is the leading dynamic, but it is obscured by an individualization of the social sphere thus clearing the way for the relational rationality of neoliberalism to reach its epistemic apex. This rationality must necessitate a governmentality of individualization as the collective of the state may not inform the normative boundaries of governable space – the state must function at the behest of the rationality that dissolves the potential of the state to ever accommodate a negation to that

rationality. This insight is where the critical potential of the productive power dimension lies. The global episteme produces seemingly insurmountable differences by hiding the political roots of the perpetuation of certain social relations mediated via the medium of space thereby making transformative struggle inscrutable when in fact it can be meaningfully pursued.

3.2.3 Power in Dialogue

The social mediation of domination defines the constitutive adjacency between structural and productive power, and the institution of meaning that is globalization. It would seem as though the dimension of structural power informs the lines of struggle **for** change pertaining to social property relations of capitalism while the dimension of productive power shapes the lines of struggle **against** a disciplinary episteme of universal individualization. The synthesis of these two renditions, of positive and negative struggle, constitutes the basis for transformative struggle. The limiting force of capital is anchored in anachronistic elements of governable spheres, as these elements emerge from the supposed historical fixity of an extolled rationality of neoliberal governmentality, which represents both the durability and the fragility of the global system. Whereas the structural informs the maximization of struggle for increased freedom within the boundaries of the governable spheres rendered perceivable, the productive dimension informs the contestation and reconstitution of these boundaries themselves as a struggle against the constraints of governable spaces that can be imagined for different subjects. This immanent inside-outside dialogue epitomizes the very material-ideational dialectic – the hegemony - that structures the social world, and can supplant compartmentalized transformation with holistic struggle producing both new imaginaries of viable order and tangible results in everyday life. Consequently, the structural-productive dialogue will be conducive for the interpretative quality of the succeeding sections.

4 Application of CDA

4.1 Global Discursive Practice

In the first part of this section, steps one and two of CDA will be completed by determining the discursive practice and linguistic identity of each HDR. This will enable a conceptualization of the global discursive practice (GDP) that will, in the second part of this section, be set into relation with the GSP thus constituting the third and final step of CDA and offering an account of the dialectical interplay between the discursive and non-discursive, thereby elucidating the imaginary of modern globality. The quotes extracted to conduct the first two steps have not been selected to misrepresent the contents of the reports; all of the reports do, in some respects, but far from satisfactorily, articulate venerable ideals and trenchant criticisms that indicate an awareness of structural issues. But since the point is to discern power, quotes that embody certain renditions of power – structural and productive – will be presented and deconstructed. The concept of development runs like a red thread throughout the HDRs; the way development and globalization are situated in the GSP, or more specifically in relation to the RIS, should be kept in mind when observing the analysis of the reports. To reiterate, the GDP and the GSP are not coterminous, but they shape and flow into each other.

4.1.1 HDR 1990

Right from the get-go of the first ever HDR, it is clear that the liberal rationality distinctive of the post-Cold War epoch is settled as the preeminent framing of global development:

“Human freedom is vital for human development. People must be free to exercise their choices in properly functioning markets, and they must have a decisive voice in shaping their political frameworks.” (UNDP, 2021a: 1)

The rather unspecified notion of “freedom” is used to delineate a general track of progression (development) that accommodates the expansion of political choice and thereby civic influence over politics. The people as a subject is linked with the objective of freedom using a declarative modality of definitive affinity. The market is the concrete object which will enable the subject (the people) to achieve rational development Similarly:

“Many overplanned, overregulated economies are now embracing greater market competition. Increasingly, the role of the state is being redefined: it should provide an enabling policy environment for efficient production and equitable distribution, but it should not intervene unnecessarily in the workings of the market mechanism.” (ibid.: 6)

and

“Governments throughout the world have increasingly come to recognise that the private sector can and should play an important role in the development process.” (ibid.: 64)

The instrumentalization of the state and the agency it wields is established as an essential condition wherein the matters of privatization and the embrace of market mechanisms are presented as mere choices that will realize the potential of human subjects. The state is depicted as a means for liberal

rationality – a technology of development. And the process of liberalization is conveyed as a natural one. Recalling the DOG, the moral discourse is embedded in the discursive position of the state as a mediating channel of transitivity that ties together humans and market. The coercion discourse, and the ideological validity it seeks to cement, operates as a kind of background radiation in the description of states having recognized the proficiency of markets; the coercion discourse enables a modal affinity characterized by a seemingly natural progression that can only be declared as being most suitable since saying otherwise would refute the natural order of political and social organization. This dynamic between the moral- and coercion discourse is propped up by articulating the extraction discourse:

“In the 1990s the rich nations must start transferring resources to the poor nations once again. For this to happen, there must be a satisfactory solution to the lingering debt crisis—with debts written down drastically, and a debt refinancing facility created, within the existing structures of the IMF and the World Bank, to foster an orderly resolution of the debt problem.” (ibid.: 5)

and

“If the developing world's new generations cannot improve their conditions through liberal access to international assistance, capital markets and the opportunities for trade, the compulsion to migrate in search of better economic opportunities will be overwhelming—a sobering thought for the 1990s, one that spotlights the urgent need for a better global distribution of development opportunities.” (ibid.: 6)

These two quotes indicate a palpable homogenization of the relevant subject categories of the global world and use the structure of global institutions, such as the IMF, to define the guidelines for these subjects. This shows a stark transhistorical tendency as those guidelines are steeped in formalized extraction; the commodification via markets enables an instantiation of the bias of historically specific relations. “Development opportunities” are rendered from the top, filtered through the competencies of global institutions, and finally encouraged to be implemented by weaker entities. The agency of these entities is simultaneously independent and dependent; the dependency of this political agency is denoted in the conditional discursive transitivity of transference of resources from the affluent to the poor, on the one hand, and the access to global market mechanisms, on the other. Discursively, there is still a substantial distance between the subjects between whom more equality is supposedly sought, and the aforementioned conditionality of the extraction discourse hides this distance – this dialogue of contradictions. Freedom, the core ingredient of the modern notion of human development, translates to the agency of those languishing in squalor being conditionally dependent. Altogether, the interdiscursivity of this report is very low and it aligns well with the DOG, as would be expected given the liberal thesis of globality emerging directly after the Cold War.

4.1.2 HDR 1995

In the next communicative event, the focus on the primacy of market mechanisms is still very prevalent and is heavily emphasized in charting the general path for human development:

“As argued above, access to credit is one of the key elements in empowering people and in enabling them to participate in market opportunities. Since formal credit institutions rarely

lend to the poor, special institutional arrangements may become necessary to extend credit to those who have no collateral to offer but their enterprise.” (UNDP, 2021b: 10)

A discrepancy in financial and thereby development terms, as proper finance is stipulated as a means for human development, is identified, but instead of questioning the arrangement that brought about such a discrepancy, the solution to this major problem is framed as necessitating the expansion of the reach of those global institutional structures that accommodate the salient market mechanisms ensconced at the center of the liberal imaginary steering development policies. The extraction discourse is clearly articulated here and the concept of credit is used as a mediating discursive transitivity for joining the downtrodden subject with the interminable potential of global market mechanisms. This is somewhat peculiar given the discursive conditionality of resource transference observed in the preceding report, but it affirms the centrality of the other side of this conditionality, which is articulated solely here, i.e. the adoption of progressive agency using the instruments of global liberalism and the freedom to choose to be financially and institutionally dependent. The preeminence of commodification, necessary for non-discursive mediation of power in the form of capital, is also articulated here, albeit implicitly, to induce the discursive mediation of proper agency.

However, this report differs from the first in that it produces explicit differentiations between subjects to whom the mediation of agency is linked. In this case, the subject category of women is a unifying theme throughout the text:

“Life choices are expanding as women are progressively liberated from the burden of frequent child-bearing and from the risk of dying in childbirth. Maternal mortality rates have been nearly halved in the past two decades.” (ibid.: 3)

and

“The monetization of the non-market work of women is more than a question of justice. It concerns the economic status of women in society. If more human activities were seen as market transactions at the prevailing wages, they would yield gigantically large monetary valuations.” (ibid.: 6)

At first glance, these quotes may seem to hold no pernicious properties in terms of power in discursive framing. After all, the liberation of women, and all subjects for that matter, is a good thing. But the relational component of liberation should not be overlooked as to not miss what is actually implied. Due to the moral discourse constituting the transitivity here as it is moral concern that impels the need for liberating women, the modality is one of emotional affinity for the justice constituted by the social position and status that women have been robbed of. But this modality, rather than opening up for a discursive reconstitution of political space, promotes a notion of liberation as monetization – a transitivity of market mechanisms that function at the whims of institutional agents that are themselves not all that self-reflexive. The specification of the subject category of women is, in essence, functionally employed to expand the rationality of global liberalism. And this is not just a cynical reading, it simply follows from the relational code discursively imputed to the text. This burgeoning differentiation of subject categories serves as a further sophistication of the concealment of the coercion discourse and thus enables the expansion of commodification and capitalist relations propelled by the extraction discourse:

“None of the economic issues is ignored, but all are related to the ultimate objective of development: people. And people are analysed not merely as the beneficiaries of economic growth but also as the real agents of every change in society—whether economic, political, social or cultural.” (ibid.: 124)

Circling back to the general category of “people”, the ultimate normative purpose of this subject, including the different subject categories it encompasses, is to moderate the relationship between the economic sphere and all the other spheres. Of course, this dynamic is portrayed in positive terms for people here, but the relational implication is one of subordination to the ideological validity of capitalism. The differentiation of subject categories, such as women, functions to split the moral discourse from the coercion discourse thus enabling a modality of emotional affinity for justice and a sense of legitimate struggle. But this struggle is confined by the superordinate extraction discourse and thereby commits the moral appeals to the coercion of the global system, thus allowing for a discursive convergence that maintains the structural instrumentality of human liberation and progressive agency. Consequently, the adamancy of the DOG remains as no significant interdiscursivity is needed here to generate the abovementioned dynamic.

4.1.3 HDR 2000

Much like the previous communicative events, the interdiscursivity of this report is quite low and it accords with the DOG in most central aspects. However, there is a heavier institutional focus, paving the way for some changes to the DOG, although these changes are not fully perceivable just yet. The accentuation of the institutional realm serves to separate the coercion discourse from the moral discourse further thus making the extraction discourse and the processes it emerges from and perpetuates seem all the more appropriate and justified. Observe the following:

“Poor countries need faster growth to generate the resources to finance the eradication of poverty and the realization of human rights. But economic growth alone is not enough. It needs to be accompanied by policy reforms that channel funds into poverty eradication and human development—and into building institutions, shaping norms and reforming laws to promote human rights.” (UNDP, 2021c: 9)

and

“The state has the primary responsibility for ensuring that growth is pro-poor, pro-rights and sustainable—by implementing appropriate policies and ensuring that human rights commitments and goals are incorporated as objectives in economic policy-making.” (ibid.: 11)

These excerpts capture a rather turgid characterization of the kind of vision human development supposedly is meant to realize. The state is back to reprise its role as mediator of the good of economic rationality and the protector against the scourge of poverty. Poverty is, however, not discursively framed in regard to its constitutive specificity, but rather as representing a moral transgression that impinges upon the vague notion of human rights. The economic rationality of global liberalism is here utilized to obfuscate the relational relativity of poverty by referring to a scantily contextualized moral deficit on the part of the global community in terms of human rights. The modality is once again one of emotional affinity for a general sense of justice through equality, but the transitivity between poor countries and prosperity is confined by the horizon of the preeminent economic rationality otherwise manifested explicitly in the extraction discourse. By invoking human rights, institutions,

national but more importantly global ones, are endowed with greater leeway in terms of desirable agency. Human rights are equated with a certain kind of economic development, and global institutions will function to foster and spread norms of this regime thus buttressing capitalist development. The economic is slowly turning into sheer ethics thus veiling an explicit articulation of the extraction discourse. Instead, the moral discourse gains some ground and attains a somewhat higher immediate status within the DOG. The institutionalization of extraction means that the logic of extraction must not be discursively produced as intensively, the consumption of the extraction discourse is still maintained via the moralistic framing of economic development as engendered by proper institutional arrangements. Both states and institutions are means for the dominant economic rationality, and they function as discursive intermediaries in the chain of modern instrumentality that permits an implicit articulation of the coercion discourse for every explicit articulation of the moral discourse, thus edifying the ideological validity of global capitalism in all subjects identified and promoted. The declarative modality, perhaps common for primary sources aiming to understand their contemporary setting, makes this dynamic articulation possible.

4.1.4 HDR 2010

Once again, the centrality of market mechanisms is taken to constitute an integral component of global development:

“New vulnerabilities require innovative public policies to confront risk and inequalities while harnessing dynamic market forces for the benefit of all.” (UNDP, 2021d: 1)

Innovation, a buzzword in the 2010s, obtains its flexibility from market mechanisms and here corresponds to a transitivity-bridge between the vulnerable and conditions of increased equality. The extraction discourse has been fully moralized and perpetuates the declarative modality of definitive affinity for the natural progression of global affairs. And it is the more explicit emphasis on global space that enables this modality and the temporality of modernity:

“Global progress has coincided with substantial variability across countries. This suggests that global forces have made progress more feasible for countries at all levels of development but that countries differ in how they take advantage of the opportunities.” (ibid.: 4)

and

“The scope for empowerment and its expression have broadened, through both technology and institutions. In particular, the proliferation of mobile telephony and satellite television and increased access to the Internet have vastly increased the availability of information and the ability to voice opinions.” (ibid.: 6)

The space of human development is primarily at the level of the global. The global simply exists – it is not qualified discursively in any noticeable manner – and is something to be strived for on the part of individual states. The moral discourse ties the responsibility of achieving progress to the agency of states by stating the variation of contexts of countries not as a source of friction requiring a larger degree of sensitivity for how progress can materialize, but as something these countries must overcome independently as to not commit a moral infraction. Implicitly, this actually implies policy-packages eroding state capacity as the supposedly good channels of progression are to be found in technological leaps and global institutions, as seen in the second quote. Modern globality is modern technology, and

global institutions are the facilitators of this development. The declarative modality of this explication fosters more of a romantic affinity for the notion of the global as something that knows no boundaries in terms of its opportunities.

The accentuation of global institutions as a medium of a rather narrow ideal of development necessitates the advent of a new discourse in the DOG:

“Progress is possible even without massive resources: the lives of people can be improved through means already at the disposal of most countries. But success is not guaranteed, and the pathways to advancing human development are varied and specific to a country’s historical, political and institutional conditions.” (ibid.: 8)

and

“A global governance system that promotes democratic accountability, transparency and inclusion of the least developed countries – and that seeks a stable and sustainable global economic environment – should be broadly applied to such challenges.” (ibid.: 9)

The putative sensitivity to the contexts of different countries is inserted into the uniformity of a certain rendition of global governance. The moralization of this global governance exchanges the coercion discourse for a *juridical discourse* which turns global governance into a purely technical issue that should be addressed with the juridical templates of legitimate conduct pertaining to global affairs. “Global economic development” is still the utmost end, and countries have the means at their disposal to reach this end even if there are significant inequities and differences between them. The subject category of sovereign countries, especially less developed ones, is discursively connected to the objective of global economic development via a transitivity of optimal use of domestic policy tools, on the one hand, and a proper global governance system, on the other. By positioning the responsibility of states within the framework of a global governance system whose ideological validity is taken for granted, a discourse of juridical dimension is taking shape. This interdiscursivity, which is not that remarkable in itself as it does not denote a fundamental shift in the discursive dynamics at play, suggests extensive agility on the part of the DOG in its ability to reapply the discourses around the nodal point (the hegemonic institutionalization of a capitalist geoculture expanding commodification) as a way of reproducing the tenets of modern globality.

4.1.5 HDR 2016

Moving on to the penultimate communicative event. The juridical discourse emerges more clearly in this report as the central theme of global human development is posited to be the notion of universality, for which legality functions as a conceptual adhesive:

“Groups of people who remain deprived may be the most difficult to reach – geographically, politically, socially and economically. Surmounting the barriers may require fiscal resources and development assistance, continued gains in technology and better data for monitoring and evaluation.” (UNDP, 2021e: 5-6)

and

“Human rights are the bedrock of human development.” (ibid.: 8)

The identification of barriers to human development is directly linked with generalized policy recourse that follows from the instruments and measurements used to produce the notion of true human development. The congruence between ideal and perceived reality is sought through a modality of moral appeal to the foundation of human development, namely human rights. The injustices afflicting differentiated groups living in relative deprivation – on an abstract level – are to be countered with the universality of legality hence the discursive induction of the juridical discourse. The discursive transitivity of linking specified subjects with certain objectives or objects has here been abandoned since the general universality of human development does not need to attribute specification to delimited subject categories as they are supposedly included anyway:

“For human development to reach everyone, growth has to be inclusive, with four mutually supporting pillars —formulating an employment-led growth strategy, enhancing financial inclusion, investing in human development priorities and undertaking high- impact multidimensional interventions (win-win strategies).” (ibid.: 11)

and

“Globalization has integrated people, markets and work, and the digital revolution has changed human lives.” (ibid.: 1)

The transitivity meant to fuse subjects with development is substituted with a nominalization – a noun that turns the active discursive linking into a concept wherein the linkage does not have to be specified (Winther-Jørgensen – Phillips, 2000: 88-90) – in the form of the concept of globalization. The economic technologies advocated in the first quote serve to universalize the extraction discourse, which is itself veiled by the juridical discourse. Globalization, then, enables the rationality at the core of the DOG to persist by describing the movement towards true human development as a dynamic process that just happens and which, therefore, is futile to impugn. The ideological basis for the construction and dissemination of economic policy tools funneled through global institutions, is shielded by the steady motion of development – globalization. This represents the very thrust of the transhistorical constitution of political struggle. Furthermore, the universality of the specific rendition of rational development is maintained by externalizing any factors that may present threats to the vitality of the rationale:

“Progress in human development often stagnates or dissipates if threatened by shocks — such as global epidemics, climate change, natural disasters, violence and conflicts. Vulnerable and marginalized people are major victims.” (ibid.: 15)

and

“Human development for everyone requires a multipronged set of national policy options: reaching those left out using universal policies, pursuing measures for groups with special-needs, making human development resilient and empowering those left out.” (ibid.: 19)

The interesting thing here is that several concrete catalysts of regression with respect to human development are expressed while no subject differentiation is made. The universal spirit of global human development uses the specificity of obstacles as discursive elements to be projected outwards

and mainly affecting an unspecified mass of people. The juridical discourse makes it possible to shirk specification of subject categories as legitimacy – in terms of law and human rights – addresses all people. The ideal typical notion of progress aligns with the romantic modal affinity for universality and precipitates a guise of pervasive inclusion. The implicit-explicit relational discursive articulation of the coercion- and moral discourse has been removed in favor of the juridical discourse which operates from a consummated level of ideological validity epitomized in the process of globalization and the universal policies it encourages. This, again, proves the adaptability of the DOG and the resilience of its nodal point.

4.1.6 HDR 2020

And so, the final report. The upheavals of compounding global risks are depicted overtly and translates to an acknowledgement of their being a cohesive global system that must be protected lest human development be thwarted. These risks are, however, framed as external yokes pinning down the intrinsic force for good constituted in the global system:

“There can be dangerous unintended consequences from any single seemingly promising solution. We must reorient our approach from solving discrete siloed problems to navigating multidimensional, interconnected and increasingly universal predicaments.” (UNDP, 2021f: 5)

and

“Now, in little more than a decade, the global financial crisis, the climate crisis, the inequality crisis and the Covid-19 crisis have all shown that the resilience of the system itself is breaking down.” (ibid.: 9)

An awareness of the complexity of the challenges ahead is clearly pronounced, which engenders the explicit notion of crisis, but resilience is sought only for the systemic features of globality rather than those possible subject categories for whom the consequences of these crises may be most starkly felt. This is somewhat bizarre but indicates a fundamental lack of self-reflexivity within the conceptual frame of interpretation invoked to adjudicate the transformations of the world and the perils that come with it. The identification of “universal predicaments” functions discursively not to reconstitute the global system per se, but rather to create surfaces of projection onto which specific elements of danger can be manifested and thus combated; the universality of problems and complexity of solutions enables a discursive articulation that maintains the proselytization of the moral discourse as enshrined in the juridical discourse, thereby preserving and possibly extending the penetration of the extraction discourse in practical channels of resolving the crises – i.e. global institutions. Consider the following:

“The Report calls for a just transformation that expands human freedoms while easing planetary pressures. It organizes its recommendations not around actors but around mechanisms for change — social norms and values, incentives and regulation, and nature-based human development.” (ibid.: 9)

and

“Today almost 80 percent of the world’s people believe that it is important to protect the planet. But only about half say they are likely to take concrete action to save it. There is a gap between people’s values and their behaviour (see chapter 4).” (ibid.: 10)

The point about projection is especially palpable in the commentary on the environmental crisis. The notion of proper action is individualized but framed as constituting freedom, which is further diluted by emphasizing the primacy of mechanisms over agents. This represents a disconnect; the mobilization of people is based in freedom, yet their actions should be directed towards certain mechanisms that mainly serve to facilitate certain behaviors rather than to change any of the foundations of the core to which these mechanisms are linked. While globalization was used to smooth over gaps in discursive transitivity previously, the discursive discord is at this point so profound that the only way it is sustained is by conceptual leaps of faith that remove discursive stringency in terms of the moral discourse while still not belying the extraction discourse. Because of these inconsistencies, a rationale of power has to be reestablished in order to foment the conceptual regime embedded in the idealized global system:

“Even so, one set of actors plays a uniquely important leadership role: governments, especially national governments. Only governments have the formal authority and power to marshal collective action towards shared challenges [...]” (ibid.: 11)

and

“But while the stakes for humanity may unfortunately be much higher today than they were some 70 years ago, there is cause for hope — we need no longer be passive recipients of plagues or of development. Fate has been usurped by choice, which in turn is predicated on power.” (ibid.: 14)

The reassertion of the juridical discourse is done by invoking government – the state – as an anchoring point of legitimacy and leadership. Hence, in a situation where multiple events are designated as crises, the juridical discourse – reproducing and disseminating conceptual regimens of power – is upheld by reintroducing the coercion discourse and the liberal management of individual freedom embodied in choice and the circumscribed scope of vision that comes with it. The romantic modal affinity will no longer suffice, instead a return to the pragmatism of modern liberal coercion is executed. This is where the dynamism of hegemony, as mediated by the DOG through referring to the power of the state, is clearly displayed. The universality of globalization is used to bestow discursive flexibility upon the universality of capitalist hegemony by never actually reconstituting the nodal point.

4.2 Discerning the GDP-GSP Dialectic

The GDP consumes the moral-, coercion-, and extraction discourse, and produces the juridical discourse. This discursive production and consumption constitutes the common frame of interpretation through which the relational codification of the GSP is filtered, fomenting the propitious standing of technologies of capital and the adhering imaginary of governable space. In a concrete manner, the moral discourse is needed to enable the coercion discourse and vice versa. The coercion- and moral discourse, in turn, provide room for the application of the extraction

discourse. And the extraction discourse, by virtue of the processes of socially mediated capital it necessitates, comes back to the moral discourse as the ethical foundation of extraction is implanted into these processes themselves. The juridical discourse, then, is sort of like an intervening variable; since there can be some pretty rough seams between the three main discourses, the juridical discourse works as a cloaking device for this coarseness thereby perpetuating the rationality of modern globality.

The notion of inclusion, conceptually most extensive in the idea of complete universality, functions as a way of rendering differences in subjectivity as essential to the specific category by positioning these categories in a strictly technical constitution of development and globalization. When the UN is presented with challenges, denoted as crises surging around the channels of legitimate operational power and straining on their discursive technologies of defense, the agency of positive transformation is reserved for subject categories that bear the discursive framing of always having the potential of being differentiated but not necessarily being explicitly differentiated. As has been stated earlier, this has to do with universality based in legality. Still, the sense of potential differentiation remains and means that there is an essence to specific subject categories, but only in functional terms, not in substantive terms; for the purpose of maintaining the narrative integrity of the GSP, retaining the primacy of its spatiotemporal contingencies, the essence of subjects is instrumental to fit them with the responsibility to defuse the crises themselves. The poor, as a very general subject category, are at once essentialized and instrumentalized by never actually interrogating the relational context in which this subject category is conceptualize which entails that the lofty language of empowerment mostly functions to reify the stratification of the world. Equality, which most would agree is a worthwhile end, is, therefore, in this context not the opposite of domination, rather it is a constituent part of domination, corresponding to the very reason for the deeply transhistorical discursive production and consumption inherent to the GDP – the GDP is so beholden to the relational codification of the GSP that it cannot offer a genuinely critical account, and the latter continuously absorbs the generative practice of the former to cement its own preeminence.

The dialectical character of the GDP-GSP relation lies in the bolstering of the structural properties of non-discursive capital processes, conveyed as a narrative called globalization, thus discursively producing the constant centrality of those structures by consuming the discourses generated from them. The HDRs prove the manner by which the single textual event is both informed by and contributes to the ongoing reproduction of the wider social practice. States and global institutions, entities to which formulations of appropriate mediation of actionable agency are attached, correspond to the actual conduits for refining national hegemony to global hegemony – the global-local dialectic – and it is in the discursive and non-discursive contradictions of development and globalization that arise from this that the GDP-GSP dialectic (the power-struggle-ideology nexus) emerges and the RIS enters. This has deleterious effects on global epistemology and the idea of political transformation. It is to these central issues this thesis now turns.

5 Analysis

5.1 The Epistemic Regime of Global Crisis

5.1.1 The Sublime Objects of Modern Globality

What seems clear from the preceding section is that the GDP, as the discursive foundation for objective meaning in modern globality, consumes and produces discourses that propel the intentionality of development and globalization. The intent of modern globality is shrouded in the foundational normativity of global liberalism but embeds this normativity in the organizational configuration of the UN as an institution thereby concealing the ideological engine of the intentionality that the UN espouses in its analyses and propositions. The UN uses the narrative properties of development and globalization to offer a platform for projecting the RIS by locating the global-local nexus in various contexts and thus functions as an epistemic point of departure for the structuring of global politics, which is why the nodal point of the DOG is never removed in the HDRs as sustaining it is key for the very notion of the UN being a conveyer of universal truths and global meaning. Throughout the HDRs, a plethora of upheavals are noted, and the acknowledgement of there being a global system means that the idea of crisis is only articulated explicitly when the current systemic rendition cannot assert its primacy and the imperatives that follow from it well enough. The disembedding mechanisms of expertise (e.g. the influences of the competencies of the epistemic community of the IMF) are adduced explicitly, but more often implicitly, in moments where the institutional reflexivity of the UN declines due to the inadequacy of the praxis it draws upon and helps to reproduce. The four discourses pertaining to the given time frame of late modernity entail descriptive distractions in the form of analytical projections that hide the fragility of the normative husk around the material core; the adaptability of the DOG does not reconstitute this material core, it simply reasserts the discursive practice in such a way as to confer upon the GDP the more or less implicit instruction to always look and strive for the RIS so that the dialectical conformity of the GDP and GSP is maintained. The RIS is, simply put, about preserving this conformity no matter what as any substantial chasm between the GDP and the GSP could expose the material core to policy agendas that actually reconstitute its composition.

As pointed out earlier, the differentiation of subjects, and the recognition of their supposed essence, is made in strictly functional terms in relation to the narrative integrity of the DOG necessary for the sense of temporal continuity in global space. These subjects are pieces to be organized in this global space to protect and perpetuate the disciplinary episteme of modern temporality – these subjects are the mediators of the objects of the capitalist geoculture and make up the conceptual glue that is the process of commodification. In other words, these subjects – the poor, women, and so on – are the sublime objects of modern globality that allow for the epistemic validation of the structural biases of global space and the institutions that serve this space. This epistemic validation is, fundamentally, about keeping a limited scope on how politics can be structured at all and therefore uses the functional properties of these sublime objects to improve the preeminence of the conceptual regime that constitutes this global epistemology – this episteme of the capitalism of institutionalized insecurity. The

market mechanisms, recurring discursively as elements fulfilling the promises of development and globalization, are not sublime objects as these mechanisms and the rationality from which they are born, including the instruments of measurement that are devised from it, constitute the very reflection of the material core of modern globality, i.e. the capitalist geoculture of commodification. Nor are these mechanisms the actual subjects (as in primary subjectivities) of modern globality. What they constitute is the innermost layer of meaning wrapped around the material core, hidden in plain sight and using the DOG to project fragility outwards by identifying the sublime objects of differentiated, or differentiable, subjects while simultaneously reflecting the subject that is actually considered valuable in modernity – the bourgeois subject advantaged by coloniality, an idealized Western subject who gets to shape the material core and reap its benefits. It is for this reason that states – often in terms of “poor countries” in the HDRs – are mentioned as vital agents for change; states, in modern globality, are not agents of genuine transformation (although they could be) but arenas of an ever more total capitulation to the rationale of capitalism and the subjugation of some via the instrumentalization of all using the people-crafting technologies that sovereign states are equipped with. The sublime objects are used to reproduce the border of the perceivable and the contours of viable subjects, and engender superficial notions of freedom since the primary agency of modern globality is a reactive agency, reactive in relation to boundaries of knowing and transforming delivered by a material core that cannot be actively altered and reconstituted. The RIS makes this reactive agency, distributed by states, seem good, desirable, and fair thus trapping the process of politics and its prescriptive endeavors in a pre-given and ultimately conservative idea of human prosperity aligning with the epistemic conceit of historical fixity.

5.1.2 The Spectacle of Equality

The expressed goal of the HDRs is to promote human development and usher in a richer and more equal world. But like the above outline of the instrumentality of differentiated subjects as sublime objects would suggest, this goal does not harmonize with the dynamics actually disseminated. The four discourses of the GDP are, as stated before, meant to discover lines and surfaces of projection, creating conceptual spokes integral to the configuration of the RIS in modern globality. There is a certain degree of performativity that is needed to enable the conceptual leaps of faith which these projections require – a spectacle that diffuses a sense of control and order. Because of the subordination of the state to the rationality of modern capitalism in the form of neoliberalism, the former simply embodying a technology to the latter, the spectacle is not one of conventional sovereignty but one of dynamic globality wherein the agency of the state to govern national hegemony is utilized to create spaces of projection that synthesize the construction of body politic with the goals of national hegemony and thereby the global hegemony of transnational capital. It is, then, the idea of equality as propagated by the HDRs that constitutes the spectacle of modern globality. In the introduction it was stated that hypostatization of abstract values to concrete praxis creates a distance in which domination can emerge, and that structural and productive notions of power elucidate the constitution of this distance. The concept of equality is emitted from this distance, but since the HDRs do not address power exhaustively, equality becomes something that obscures the presence of power struggles and the social mediation of subjects and spaces

pertaining to these struggles. The pursuit of equality within the framework of development and globalization that the HDRs propose, instantiates a spectacle of force on behalf of those that have the ability to shape the material core, whose elusiveness encourages this spectacle as a way of bringing about eternal stability. The bourgeois subject can know about the material core, but it can never know if it knows enough to ensure a policy agenda that maintains an auspicious arrangement of this core. The spectacle of equality, epitomized in the RIS, is, therefore, deployed in the GDP to secure the hegemony embedded in the GSP. Equality becomes a discursive technology for cementing the ideological validity of modern globality.

This does not translate to a complete scrapping of the notion of equality, it simply suggests that greater sensitivity to the discursive technologization of the concept for non-discursive ends would be appropriate. Equality in the HDRs does not echo an egalitarian ideal of emancipation as the concept is not anchored in a transformative vision with respect to the material core. In fact, it is not even about increased freedom since the constitution of differentiated subjects, as sublime objects, entails political aspirations in global space and time to be characterized by mono-epistemology where equality can only be as extensive as the parochial concerns and ambitions of this mono-epistemology. The functional differentiation of subjects serves to clarify lines of competition (the most central theme of modern mono-epistemology, right in line with the capitalist geoculture) and thereby regenerates the domination of relational fixity as it is structurally impossible, or at least very difficult, to escape this regime. Hence, equality in the modern renditions of development and globalization, reasserts this space of global mono-epistemology as the only conceivable governable space and can therefore be attached to regimes of objective meaning, such as human rights, that confirm the extent of governable space, consequently concealing the power struggle that emerges from the dominant neoliberal rationality – the fast abstract-concrete distance of the systemic violence of domination. Equality is sought in terms of the RIS, the process of progression where the foundation of this progression is at most recalibrated but not fully replaced. The principal contradiction this brings – the production of the future in the image of the past – is why equality without visionary dimensions is not about justice, rather, it is about rationalization. The epistemic regime of global crisis is one which detects crisis when the ease with which this conceptual rationalization otherwise happens is depleted.

5.1.3 Meaning and Late Modern Symptoms

The sublime objects of modern globality and the spectacle of equality constitute technologies of structural and productive power that imbue the UN with the sense of objectivity, and prepare the conceptual ground in such a way that discourages critique from another standpoint than that of capital as a medium for social mediation, on the one hand, and neoliberal governmentality via the individualization of political recourse, on the other, as that would represent ontological transgressions possibly rupturing the RIS and the global episteme of capitalism. The abstract-concrete distance is manifested in several ways; between the individual and the global system with the state as an intermediary, between the GDP and the GSP with the RIS as an intermediary, and between the local and the global with the institutional platform and instruments of the UN as an intermediary. All of these intermediaries are repositories of meaning in modern globality, regimes of epistemic

consumption and production in the dialectical interplay between the non-discursive and discursive. And all of these intermediaries are symptoms of late modernity and its mosaic of domination. In general, the late modern symptom bears the traits of the social mediation of forces that shape the spatiotemporal contingencies of the world but whose reflection is deflected by the supposed relational fixity of the abstract-concrete distance thus turning the ideological validity of late modernity into something constituted as a constant projection of abstract values instead of an immediately accessible reflection of actually existing praxis. The GDP identified through the HDRs is a symptom of the material-ideational dialectic wherein the material elements and the origins of their being are made subservient to the ideational dimension of discursive articulation (the intentionality of global objective meaning). The GSP is closer to the material core of modern globality but is still encapsulated by the symptom of late modernity and not its cause as the GSP renders political subjects and spaces perceivable in direct relation to the structural boundaries instantly presented. The GSP is very much a structure and any struggle against it, even if founded in the ethical premise of expanding meaningful action (as in meaningfully having the ability to transform the social space one inhabits), represents the configuration of the inside purview of the inside-outside relation of socially mediated capital. And it is capital that holds the key to actually reaching the core of modern globality. This can be taken advantage of, actively and not just fortuitously, but more on that later.

Meaning, as points of interpretation that people can understand, sort, and apply, and which shapes what can be known and how new knowledge is pursued, is in late modernity delineated by the symptoms of this era constituted in the spatiotemporal contingencies from which the capitalist geoculture and the RIS emanate. Meaning in the epistemic regime of global crisis is reactive, just as agency is reactive, and is constantly trailing behind the events of the processes that actively shape the epistemic landscape and the conditions for interpretation. This points to the critical imperative of regarding capital as the rationality and the state as the technology of a kind of legitimate social mediation of power that guides relations in a way that aligns with the conceptual borders of neoliberalism. Capital and the state are not simply channels for collecting discrete stuff, they are dynamic and continuous forces that simultaneously spring from and engender certain constitutive specificities which are subsequently filtered through the supposed fixity of space using the scientific competencies – expertise – of institutions. The rationale of neoliberal domination is predicated on this expertise, and the epistemic communities formed from this assume the intellectual leadership of the historical blocs – the social coalitions – of late modernity. This codification of meaning – this violence of implicit but very real domination – reaffirms why the juridical discourse had to be added to the DOG as the technologization of matters of injustice contributes to the ideological validity of the material core of modern globality and the neoliberal governmentality it nurtures. The greater emphasis on human rights and such on the part of the UN is not so much an evolution of ethics as it is a refinement of expertise to enhance the flexibility of capitalist hegemony. The more things are turned into strictly technical issues, the greater the arsenal of the dominant rationality to rearticulate and reproduce itself becomes. In sum, the epistemic regime of global crisis is constituted by the structural limitations of modern globality – sustained by states - and the reactive meaning

diffused in institutional operations and the use of the narrative functionality of differentiated subjects, as sublime objects, to maintain the boundaries of national governable spaces, thus boosting the relational and operational slickness of transnational capital.

5.2 Towards a Politics of Transformative Struggle

5.2.1 Anxiety as Freedom

The epistemic regime of global crisis, and its generation of late modern meaning, corresponds to the symbolic order accompanying the imaginary of modern globality. This does not, however, imply that there is no way to transform this imaginary as a genuine reconstitution of the underlying Real (the RIS in this case) is in fact possible. The epistemic regime of global crisis is, in other words, an accumulation of late modern symptoms yet is not an inert structure, but the place of transforming its constitution is located, at least partly, beyond itself. The regime points to the outside purview of the inside-outside relation of the core-shell arrangement (capital accumulation on the inside and the ideological validity of reactive agency on the outside) as a way of overcoming the RIS and thereby exposing areas of the GSP that can be changed. This is tricky as embracing the outside purview lays bare the anxiety fundamental to all human relations and institutions since it greatly limits the opportunities for complacent discursive subterfuges using the DOG, which merely thrives within the inside purview. Anxiety is the only uniting force of human perception and can be harnessed for good to exploit the anxiety inherent to the spatial, the temporal, and the social thereby opening up for new and genuinely transformative conceptualizations of human interaction and social constitution (Berenskötter, 2020). Freedom, a concept touted in the HDRs but seldom substantiated in a profound manner, is the constitutive reflection of anxiety – the dialectic between vision and submission. Anxiety harbors freedom's possibility – the possibility of possibility – and can be used to recover a form of active agency that has been lost in a constitution of the world where the inescapable presence of anxiety makes most subjects submit to the order as it is and all that it entails (ibid.).

What, then, is freedom? It is often tempting to list a bunch of clearly delimited conditions that would answer to some general notion of freedom. But in regarding anxiety as freedom, the concept of freedom is more about widening conceptual horizons than establishing the true and firm order of human freedom. If one acknowledges the importance of basing analyses in the contingency of contingency and thereby seeks to avoid transhistorical theorizing, freedom, as a constitutive condition of life in the form of anxiety, cannot be finitely defined as that would invite a conceptualization of universal emancipation actually anchored in the particularity of the discrete historical moment and thus reproduces domination as supposed historical fixity becomes the inception for struggle, which makes this struggle logically reactive. But if freedom is regarded as an embrace of the motion of history – the continuous crisis of all human arenas of interpretation and engagement – a path towards universal emancipation can materialize as freedom, when understood as simply pointing to the outside and the potential for another constitution of the material core, makes subjects constituted in a certain way in a certain space aware of the possibility of obtaining active agency hence making transformative struggle graspable. Freedom is not so much about isolated material aspects as it is about

substantive capabilities that allow subjects to have a say in their surroundings, individually and collectively (Sen, 2001: 13-34). This lets people become conscious of the constitution of the context in which they find themselves in and thereby presents them with the possibility to organize and mobilize for transformation. Of course, hegemony may bridle the growth of a transformative attitude towards the material core, which is why counter-hegemony in the form of a new imaginary of modern globality needs to be concurrent with the expansion of freedom as substantive capabilities to extricate all from the constraining forces of anxiety and move towards a constructive vision of freedom. Concretely, this would manifest in forging new communities wherein the inclusion of existing identities can be used to create a new common identity around which a counter-culture of proactive politics may emerge.

5.2.2 A Brave New Imaginary

If the Real – the elusive material core – is to be reconstituted using anxiety as freedom, the reconstitution of the imaginary – the shell of ideological validity – cannot be seen as an auxiliary operation simply complementing the first one. Since both dimensions exist in a dialectic, both of them have to be transformed simultaneously if the epistemic regime of global crisis is to be superseded. Articulating discursively the need for conceptualizing freedom as substantive capabilities is a paramount step towards providing alternative ways of thinking about the predicaments experienced in modern globality without being co-opted by the nodal point of the DOG – commodification as a template for structuring politics. The outside purview is about producing new boundaries of governable space and new subjects with new relational constitutions. And this needs to be interwoven with the inside purview of the structural forces of capital as social mediation. It is this tension, this dialogue, that can constitute the basis for struggle that is both practically feasible and conceptually visionary. Freedom as substantive capabilities enables the transformation of seemingly insurmountable conflict given supposedly axiomatic inconsistencies between what is and what could be, turning freedom into a participatory foundation of common progression (ibid.). Considering freedom in this way would mean embracing the ontological transgressions that come with it as these inspire subjects to question the RIS and the material core of capital. These transgressions hold the very practical potential of anxiety as freedom and should be explicitly articulated as means for bringing about transformative struggle into the spaces of global politics that can endure temporal transitions and deflections of projected fragility by turning the very systemic configuration of modern globality into the center-piece of critique. In this way, the rationality of neoliberal individualization through governmentality using the narrative functionality of differentiated or differentiable subjects appears clearly and its leeway for projection dwindles. The leading rationality needs to be isolated for its structural and productive relations of power to become identifiable, thereby enabling a critique of this rationality rather than a critique of the technologies it employs.

A visionary imaginary cannot be transhistorical; the very notion of vision is what encourages attention directed towards the spatiotemporal contingencies of the world and the way in which they are captured by the historically specific context. A visionary imaginary utilizes the dialectical foundation of modern society not solely as a path to deconstruction, but also as a path towards construction by using the anxiety of the imperfection of any vision to create

forward thrust that is less and less dependent on domination. The perseverance of such an imaginary emerges not from its relational specificity but rather from its relational potential, always leaving room for an explicit articulation of further transformation and improvement. The inside-outside dialogue is the dialogue wherein discursive formulations of another imaginary can be made while still anchoring them in the structural embodiments and boundaries of the non-discursive, which are the ultimate areas of transformation. A brave new imaginary of modern globality is supposed to offer another filter, another narrative functionality of subjects, and also spaces, hence challenging the GDP and thereby creating a rift between the GDP and the GSP that the RIS cannot reconcile, thus, hopefully, unveiling the main reflection of the Real – the material core. And it is in this active approach to the core-shell dialectic that emancipation, as a continuous process, can be realized and the objects of commodification be dethroned.

6 Conclusions

Many aspects of modern globality and the epistemic regime of global crisis constituting it have been touched upon in this thesis, but the somewhat eclectic character of this study should not be mistaken for a lack of depth; the point has been to magnify and examine the central systemic specifications of relational globality in late modernity and its supposedly indomitable material-ideational configuration. Three main conclusions can be drawn: A) The hegemony of the capitalist geoculture molds institutional operations and analyses in a way that favors this hegemony and the subjects and agents that uphold it. B) The structural force of capital and the productive force of neoliberal governmentality underpinned by expertise provide the components for the late modern dialectic of domination and emancipation. C) The seemingly indelible resilience of socially mediated capital can be overcome proactively by situating the struggle for transformation on the frontier between the structural and the productive, thus enabling an inside-outside dialogue which deconstructs and constructs at the same time, making new communities of political agency visible. Fantasy, as a crucible of ultimately anodyne late modern signifiers, must be actively pushed towards another imaginary – another vision – of politics as to not let subjects succumb to the systemic power of modern globality. The question is, therefore, not: is the world becoming more postmodern? A more incisive question would be: is humanity becoming less visionary?

7 Bibliography

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