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FROM "THE WILL TO IMPROVE"

TO "THE WILL TO TRANSFORM":

Some Promises & Challenges of Sida's

Multidimensional Poverty Analysis (MDPA) Framework

in Bolivia

Author: Jonathan S. Espinosa

Supervisor: Yahia Mahmoud

ABSTRACT

Objectives: This study sets out to answer the following research questions:

1. How do Sida and CEDLA problematize poverty and what does this reveal about their underlying development paradigms?
2. What are some of the key promises and challenges of Sida and CEDLA's differing understandings of capitalism for their use of the MDPA framework in Bolivia?

The key areas of focus are the organizations Sida and CEDLA, Sida's Multidimensional Poverty Analysis (MDPA) framework, and in particular, its use within the context of Bolivia.

Methods: This paper presents a qualitative case study of the above topics with recourse to semi-structured and paired depth interviews as well as a focus group, with Sida informants, in both Sweden and Latin America, as well as two non-Sida participants from a Sida-funded Bolivian think tank called CEDLA. The paper, moreover, uses a combination of post-structuralist concepts, such as discourse analysis, and materialist notions regarding Elite Development Theory (EDT) versus Labor-Centered Development (LCD), in order to answer the aforementioned research questions.

Principal findings: Sida, it turns out, *re*-problematizes poverty as multidimensional, in response to earlier unidimensional understandings of poverty, such as the World Bank's reductive focus on resource poverty, to the exclusion of the environmental, social, and political dimensions and contexts, among others. It does so, in part, in response to SDG 1's exhortation to "end poverty in all its forms." Sida's discourses on poverty have an underlying liberal development paradigm, influenced by Amartya Sen's capabilities approach. CEDLA, on the other hand, understands poverty through a materialist lens, as caused by the structural inequalities and exploitative dynamics inherent to global capitalism. While Sida tends to have more of an EDT, CEDLA has a perspective which could be considered representative of LCD. Sida is driven by "the will to improve," whereas CEDLA is driven by "the will to transform." Both organizations should continue their mutually-beneficial development cooperation.

Keywords: Sida; Sweden; Latin America; Bolivia; MDPA; multidimensional poverty; poverty reduction; development discourses; development paradigms; power; capitalism; donors; ODA

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"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times; it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness; it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity; it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness; it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair" (Dickens, 1859).

The opening lines of *A Tale of Two Cities*, by Charles Dickens, resonate uncannily with my experience of undertaking and writing a research project such as this one in the times of the Covid-19 pandemic. I conducted my research and wrote my thesis while in self-isolation in 2020 and 2021, with all of the loneliness that comes with such circumstances. Nonetheless, I could not have accomplished this gargantuan task all on my own.

For mentoring and guiding me during "the best of times" and "the worst of times," I am grateful to my internship supervisors at Helvetas and Sida, Kai S. and Maria O., respectively. All of the wonderful people I met at both organizations, even just as little virtual Zoom and Teams squares, imparted their knowledge and insights with such graciousness and generosity. To all of my interview participants at Sida and CEDLA: tack så mycket and ¡muchas gracias! I'm deeply grateful for your time and candor. Your stories and experiences truly make up the heart of this thesis.

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ACRONYMS

CEDLA	The Center for the Study of Labor and Agrarian Development[1]
COB	The Bolivian Workers' Center[2]
EDT	Elite Development Theory
ES-SO	Elite Subject - Subordinate Object
FFP	Feminist Foreign Policy
ILO	The International Labor Organization
IMF	The International Monetary Fund
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
LCD	Labor-Centered Development
MAS	Movement for Socialism[3]
MDP	Multidimensional poverty
MDPA	Multidimensional Poverty Analysis
MDPI	Multidimensional Poverty Index
MPM	Multidimensional Poverty Measure
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OPHI	The Oxford Poverty & Human Development Initiative
PoP	"Perspectives on Poverty"[4]
SAPs	Structural Adjustment Policies
SDGs	The Sustainable Development Goals
Sida	The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
UD	The Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs[5]
UNDP	The United Nations Development Program
WB	The World Bank
WPR	"What's the Problem Represented to Be?"

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[1] Original Spanish acronym: Centro de Estudios para el Desarrollo Laboral y Agrario (CEDLA).
[2] Original Spanish acronym: Central Obrera Boliviana (COB).
[3] Original Spanish acronym: Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS).
[4] This is the title of a 2002 Sida publication.
[5] Original Swedish acronym: Utrikesdepartementet (UD).

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose & research questions

This study aims to analyze the notion of "poverty reduction," particularly within the context of Sweden's development engagements in the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) region. To focus this study further, the analysis centers on the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida)'s Multidimensional Poverty Analysis (MDPA) framework, which was developed in 2016, and published in 2017 (Sida, 2017). My analysis of the MDPA framework is coupled with the insights I have gained from interviewing some of Sida's experts on both the MDPA framework and its relevance to Sida's development objectives in the LAC region. Given that the LAC region is vast, my data collection focuses primarily on the three countries in the region which have Swedish embassies: Bolivia, Colombia, and Guatemala. Of the three, Bolivia is the central focus of my analysis, as it was one of the pilot countries which Sida chose for the initial integration of the MDPA framework, and also the LAC country from which I collected the most relevant data.

As I elaborate further in Chapter 4 (Methodology), I interviewed Sida specialists based in Sweden as well as in the three LAC Swedish embassies. My only non-Sida participants are researchers at a Bolivian think tank called CEDLA, whose name, translated from the original Spanish, is the Center for the Study of Labor and Agrarian Development. One of my Swedish embassy informants in Bolivia recommended that I speak with their colleagues at CEDLA as they are uniquely positioned as beneficiaries of Sida's funding who have extensively researched, and applied, the MDPA framework. Although they are not directly Sida-affiliated, their perspective nonetheless provides a valuable complement to Sida's own understanding of the MDPA framework and poverty reduction in Bolivia.

Accordingly, my research questions are as follows:

1. How do Sida and CEDLA problematize poverty and what does this reveal about their underlying development paradigms?
2. What are some of the key promises and challenges of Sida and CEDLA's differing understandings of capitalism for their use of the MDPA framework in Bolivia?

<u>1.2 Scope</u>

The proverb "to miss the forest for the trees" refers to getting so caught up in the details that one misses the bigger picture. It is, of course, possible to do the reverse, and "miss the trees for the forest," i.e. focus so much on the grand scheme of things, that subtle nuances are lost in the process. For this reason, I have decided to take a multi-scale approach which looks at the macro, meso, and micro levels.

In my thesis, I delimit these three scales in the following way:

- **Macro:** Sida-LAC relations at the larger LAC regional level, as well as broader discourses of poverty reduction, as formulated in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, among other formulations;
- **Meso:** Sida as an institution, and as an agency of the Swedish government, along with its bilateral development support in Bolivia specifically, as well as its MDPA framework;
- **Micro:** The filtering of all of the above through the professional and personal experiences of Sida employees based in both Sweden and the LAC region, as well as the complementary perspectives of the researchers at CEDLA.

The hope is to provide a nuanced experience of the metaphorical "forest" of my thesis, alternating from a bird's-eye view of the canopy, to a stroll through the forest itself, down to a look at the texture of the tree bark, while stopping to smell the flowers along the way.

Perhaps as important as the above delimitation of the scope of my research is a brief consideration of what falls outside the scope of this study. As the main focus is on the MDPA framework, specific projects and programs funded by Sida and carried out in its LAC partner countries will not be considered. This is partly in order to keep my research as focused as possible, and also due to the confidentiality of much of this information to which I had access during my internship at Sida in the spring of 2021. Some of this information is, nonetheless, alluded to in general terms in my informants' interviews, however, the aim of this research is not to unpack specific Sida-funded initiatives in LAC, but rather, Sida's theoretical conceptualization of poverty as formulated in the MDPA framework, and elaborated upon by my informants. And while an earlier iteration of my research also considered the areas of climate and environmental justice, as well as Sweden's Feminist

Foreign Policy (FFP) framework, these are no longer as salient, though they do, nonetheless, come up in several of my interviews, and are considered to the extent that they intersect with Sida-LAC relations, the MDPA framework, and discourses of poverty reduction.

1.3 Thesis outline

Finally, I offer an overview of the research that follows:

Chapter 2 (Background) presents relevant historical and contemporary context for both Bolivia and Sweden, as well as a literature review, which surveys the scholarly dialogue on the topic of poverty, especially multidimensional poverty, as well as the wider debates on development aid.

Chapter 3 (Theoretical Framework) presents an ensemble of post-structuralist and materialist theoretical influences, in order to create an analytical framework which investigates issues such as development paradigms, discursive problematizations, depoliticization, among others.

Chapter 4 (Methodology) considers my research design, sampling and data collection, data analysis, while also reflecting on limitations, ethical considerations, and my own positionality in this research, in addition to a specific form of discourse analysis, building on the ideas established in the previous chapter.

Chapter 5 (Analysis and Discussion) applies the aforementioned theoretical and methodological frameworks to my collected primary and secondary data. This chapter aims to contribute to the broader scholarly dialogue introduced in Chapter 2.

Finally, **Chapter 6 (Conclusion)** revisits my research questions, and answers them, while reflecting holistically on my research, and teasing out its implications, while also pointing ahead to avenues for further inquiry, analysis, and advocacy.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Context

      As my research centers around Swedish-LAC relations, it is only fitting to place these into a broader historical context. Is Swedish-LAC interaction a modern phenomenon? Or have both regions perhaps encountered each other in a previous lifetime? A brief but serious consideration of the available historical research points to the latter, and reveals some unsettling realities about Sweden's earliest foray into this part of the world.
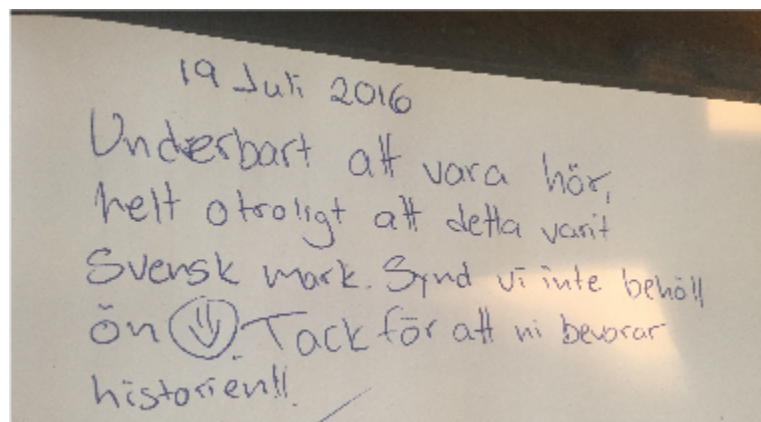
Figure 1. Swedish museum guest book in St. Barthélemy. Source: Körber, L.A. (2018:1).

      The photo above was taken by Lill-Ann Körber, a scholar of Nordic Studies at Aarhus University in Denmark, on a research trip to the Caribbean island of St. Barthélemy, known colloquially as St. Barts (Körber, 2018:1). The message, left by a Swedish tourist in a museum's guest book, can be translated as follows: "Wonderful to be here. Absolutely incredible that this was Swedish soil. Shame we didn't keep the island.☺Thanks for preserving the history!!" From this alone it can be surmised that St. Barts was once Swedish soil. St. Barts passed from French to Swedish control in 1784 in exchange for a trading port in Gothenburg. The ruling monarch in Sweden at the time was Gustav III. And the capital of St. Barts, both then, and still to this day? Gustavia. The island's indigenous name was Ouanalao.

Figure 2. Slavery in the Swedish colony of St. Barthélemy. Source: The Swedish National Maritime Museum (Sjöhistoriska museet); Note the Swedish flag in the distance.

Historians' accounts differ in the extent to which they emphasize Sweden's relatively small role in the larger scheme of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade (Ekman, 1975; Schnakenbourg, 2013), versus reveal its brutality (McEachrane, 2018). Swedish historian Nils Ahnlund sparked controversy and outrage in 1937, when he suggested that Sweden was a "weak and deficient colonizer" (Fur, 2013). Körber points out that "while Swedish slave transports were small in scope, Swedish neutral free trade facilitated those of others," and that this notion of "neutrality" is central to Sweden's weak cultural memory, or indeed amnesia, vis-à-vis this chapter in its history (Körber, 2019:88).

Sweden: the highly-developed Scandinavian welfare state, at the top of various human development indices (UNDP, 2020), and well-known in modern times for gracing the world with ABBA, IKEA, Volvo, Saab, and Spotify, among much else, was, in the 19th century, actually a very poor country, home to the destitute characters of Vilhelm Moberg's *The Emigrants* (1949),[6] and Per Anders Fogelström's *City of My Dreams* (1960),[7] among others. That Sweden is, at present, actively engaged in "poverty reduction" in Latin America, among other regions of the world, thus takes on a particularly interesting resonance. How did Sweden reduce its own poverty first?

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[6] Original Swedish title: *Utvandrarna.*
[7] Original Swedish title: *Mina drömmars stad.*

Some noteworthy milestones include the development of *folkhemmet* ("the people's home") in 1928, which, along with the principles of social democracy, was conceived as a "Swedish middle way," or "Third Way" between capitalism and socialism (Whyman, 2003). Nobel laureate couple Alva and Gunnar Myrdal's 1934 book *Crisis in the Population Question*[8] was highly influential in inspiring progressive policies and social programs to address Sweden's declining population at the time by respecting individual liberty, especially of women, while nonetheless encouraging Swedes to have children (Myrdal, 1934). It should be noted that their policies are not without detractors, particularly due to the issue of forced sterilization in Sweden, between 1935 - 1975, with influence from Alva's policy suggestions (Ekerwald, 2001). The Myrdals are considered key architects of the Swedish welfare state. In later decades, Gunnar published *Beyond the Welfare State* (1960) and *The Challenge of World Poverty* (1970), in which

> he [saw] the western, and specifically Swedish welfare state as a model for more generous flows of international aid, but this on primarily humanitarian grounds ...influencing the wider shift in international development ethics under way from the 1970s: away from questions of structural reform and economic redistribution, and towards the minimalist yet universal guarantees of a basic minimum of subsistence, from 'welfare world' to global poverty in other words (Reid-Henry, 2017).

Sweden is, today, a relatively wealthy welfare state. It's the third-largest official development assistance (ODA) donor in proportion to the size of its economy, and the sixth-largest ODA donor in absolute terms, allocating close to 1% of its gross national income (GNI) - or roughly $6 billion USD - exceeding the UN's target ODA-to-GNI ratio of 0.7%. Moreover, 98% of Sweden's ODA in 2019 consisted of grants (SEEK Development, 2021).

If Sweden's historical trajectory could, roughly, be characterized as one of "rags-to-riches," then that of Latin America, on the other hand, is a story of "riches-to-rags." As Uruguayan journalist and writer Eduardo Galeano puts it bluntly in the opening line of his seminal *Open Veins of Latin America: Five Centuries of the Pillage of a Continent*[9] (1973):

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[8] Original Swedish title: *Kris i befolkningsfrågan*.
[9] Original Spanish title: *Las venas abiertas de América Latina: Cinco siglos del saqueo de un continente*.

The division of labor among nations is that some specialize in winning and others in losing. Our part of the world, known today as Latin America,[10] was precocious: it has specialized in losing ever since those remote times when Renaissance Europeans ventured across the ocean and buried their teeth in the throats of the Indian civilizations (Galeano, 1973:1).

And just what were the Europeans after? Silver was certainly a part of the picture. Eswatini-born British economic anthropologist Jason Hickel puts it starkly:

Between 1503 and 1660, 16m kilograms of silver were shipped to Europe, amounting to three times the total European reserves of the metal. By the early 1800s, a total of 100m kg of silver had been drained from the veins of Latin America and pumped into the European economy, providing much of the capital for the Industrial Revolution" (Hickel, 2015).

To illustrate the sheer magnitude of this wealth, Hickel offers the following thought experiment: "if 100m kg of silver was invested in 1800 at 5% interest – the historical average – it would amount to £110trn ($165trn) today. An unimaginable sum" (ibid.).

Fast-forward to the neoliberal structural adjustment policies (SAPs) of the Washington Consensus in the 1980s and 90s, which were developed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB), ushering in an era of increased privatization, trade liberalization, foreign investment, and a reduction in social safety net spending (Harvey, 2005; Teichman, 2019). Indeed Latin America is not simply "poor" for no reason, but rather, was impoverished over centuries in ways that are still felt today by the region's most vulnerable and marginalized communities, including indigenous peoples, Afro-descendants, migrants, refugees, internally displaced people (IDPs), and in particular, women, children, and gender and sexual minorities in all of the above groups.

As my research focuses more closely on Bolivia, it is important to consider the effects that neoliberal policies have had there specifically. According to researchers at CEDLA, in the 1980s and 1990s, Bolivia underwent the privatization of its mines and manufacturing, with neoliberal reforms significantly weakening workers' collective efforts. The Bolivian Workers' Center (COB),[11] founded in 1952, is a notable actor which resisted these reforms, though it, in turn, faced backlash and opposition, with repercussions for both working class movements and the larger Bolivian civil society, dampening the

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[10] An alternate name for the region, in the language of the indigenous Guna people of Panama and Colombia, is Abya Yala. This designation encompasses North America as well.
[11] Original Spanish acronym: Central Obrera Boliviana (COB).

prospects of a unified political project (Tapia and Chávez, 2020:183). CEDLA documents the COB's uneasy relationship with Bolivian left-wing populist and indigenist political party, the Movement for Socialism (MAS),[12] founded in 1998 and led by Evo Morales, Bolivia's first indigenous president, from 2006 to 2019 (ibid.:184). From an MDPA perspective, CEDLA reports that "multidimensionally poor households are headed by peasants and tenant farmers, independent workers and members of the rural and urban working class. Collectively, they represent nearly 70% of poor households," as opposed to the non-poor salaried middle- and upper-middle class, the managerial class, the petite bourgeoisie, and independent professionals (Escóbar de Pabón, Arteaga Aguilar, and Hurtado Aponte, 2019:97). In fact, while peasants and tenant farmers comprise "25% of workers in Bolivia (1.3 million)" disproportionately "86% of them are multidimensionally poor" (ibid.:114). CEDLA meticulously tracks these disparities along gender and ethnic lines, among other factors.

Enter: Swedish-LAC relations. From this brief historical overview, it is evident that while Sweden had the opportunity to develop its welfare state, LAC was denied this opportunity. Part of my research here is driven by this discrepancy: what happens when Sweden and LAC, with these different histories and positionalities, come together to work on "poverty reduction"? What kinds of power relations does this "baggage" bring along? In 2011, Sweden's bilateral and multilateral ODA to the LAC region was 170 million USD (OECD, 2012). Regarding Swedish ODA to Bolivia specifically, its 2018 and 2019 gross bilateral aid was 30 and 29 million USD respectively (OECD, 2021). For 2020, Sida estimates its total development assistance to Bolivia to have been approximately 25 million USD, with about 24 million USD going to development cooperation and nearly 0.5 million USD towards humanitarian assistance (Sida, 2021).[13]

On June 25th, 2020, "the Swedish government… commissioned Sida to initiate preparations of new development cooperation strategies with Guatemala, Bolivia, Colombia, Cuba, as well as the larger region of Latin America. The strategies will cover the period between 2021 and 2025" (UD, 2020). By October, 28th, 2020, Sida put together its

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[12] Original Spanish acronym: Movimiento al Socialismo - Instrumento Político por la Soberanía de los Pueblos (MAS-IPSP).
[13] The original amounts in SEK are 217.2 million, 213.2 million, and 4 million, respectively.

strategy proposal in a detailed report touching on the areas of democracy, human rights, the rule of law, gender equality, environment and climate, and immigration, and submitted it to the Swedish government for approval (Sida, 2020). On May 6th, 2021, the Swedish government approved and adopted these strategies, with a focus on the aforementioned areas, along with a budget of 1 billion SEK over the five-year period from 2021 - 2025 (UD, 2021). And with that, the historical context has not only landed in the present, but also looks ahead towards the next half decade of Swedish-LAC relations.

2.2 Literature review

"The frontiers of a book are never clear-cut: beyond the title, the first lines, and the last full stop, beyond its internal configuration and its autonomous form, it is caught up in a system of references to other books, other texts, other sentences: it is a node within a network" (Foucault, 1972).

In this section, my intention is to situate Sida's MDPA framework within the variegated constellation of existing research in areas such as development aid, poverty reduction, and, in particular, the multidimensional understanding of poverty. Indeed, the previous scholarship in these areas is well-established and, at the same time, marked by fundamental differences of ideology and epistemology. While Sida's MDPA framework is one of my core objects of study, Sida is nonetheless an interlocutor in its own right in the debates in the aforementioned fields. As such, I start here by zooming in on Sida's MDPA framework to present its key dimensions and contexts. Subsequently, I zoom out to consider not only the influences on this framework, but also the earlier perspectives to which Sida was responding, as well as the wider field of scholarship in these areas. As I do not intend to be exhaustive in this overview, what I forgo in terms of breadth and depth I hope to make up for by presenting some key figures among my intellectual predecessors.

The overarching aim of Swedish development cooperation is "to create preconditions for better living conditions for people living in poverty and under oppression" (Sida, 2017:3). It is, moreover, characterized by centering "poor people's perspective on development and the rights-based approach" and applying "three thematic perspectives - conflict, gender, and the environment and climate perspectives - as cross-cutting themes that form the basis for Sida's understanding of poverty" (ibid.). It is, in part, a response to the challenge announced in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable

Development, particularly the first Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) which states: "End poverty in all its forms everywhere" (ibid:8).
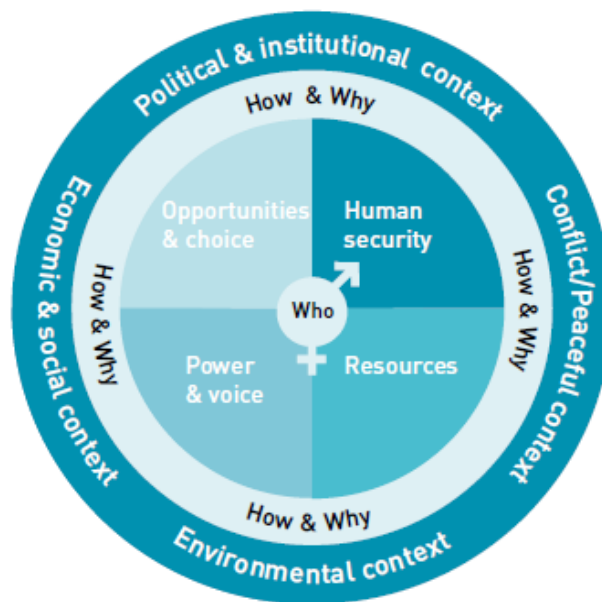
Figure 3. Sida's Multidimensional Poverty Analysis (MDPA) framework; source: Sida (2017).

The MDPA framework is an attempt to acknowledge these various forms, or facets, of poverty which were not enumerated explicitly in SDG 1. The framework is designed to address the questions: "who is poor and in what way" (ibid.:14)? In order to do so, it "identifies four dimensions of poverty: (i) **Resources**, (ii) **Opportunities and choice**, (iii) **Power and voice**, and (iv) **Human security**" (Sida, 2019:1). Sida's key idea is that the "multidimensionally poor" are resource poor and poor in one or more of the other ways. Sida's four dimensions of poverty are summarized below:

Dimension	Definition
Resources	"Being poor in terms of **resources** means not having access to, or power over resources that can be used to sustain a decent living standard, meet basic needs and improve one's life. Resources can be both material and non-material: a decent income or physical and human capital, such as being educated or having professional skills, being healthy, having agricultural tools or a cart to transport goods" (ibid.:2);

Opportunities and choice	"Being poor in terms of **opportunities and choice** refers to one's possibilities to develop and/or use the resources to move out of poverty. Access to productive employment, education, health clinics, infrastructure, energy, markets and information affect the choices available and opportunities to escape from poverty" (ibid.);
Power and voice	"Being poor in **power and voice** relates to people's ability to articulate their concerns, needs and rights in an informed way, and to take part in decision-making affecting these concerns inside the household, in local communities and at the national level… Reinforcing forms of discrimination based on socio-cultural relations may increase an individual's poverty in this sense" (ibid.);
Human security	"Being poor in terms of **human security** means that physical, sexual, and/or psychological violence and insecurity are constraints to different groups' and individuals' possibilities to exercise their human rights and to find paths out of poverty" (ibid.) "A person's security can differ radically depending on gender, ethnicity, age, identity or in which region one lives" (Sida, 2017:17).

Table 1. The dimensions of poverty in Sida's MDPA framework.

Sida explains that "while the dimensions of poverty help to outline how poverty manifests itself, Sida analyzes four development contexts that highlight the underlying causes and help identify pathways out of poverty," elaborating that "the context is often outside of the influence of an individual, but it frames the set of choices and opportunities available to individuals in a given context" (Sida, 2019:2).

Context	**Definition**
Economic & social context	"The **economic and social context** covers the size and growth rate of the economy, the key macroeconomic variables, fiscal policy, structure of the economy and exports, use and dependence on natural resources, education system, health system, and demographic developments" (ibid.);

Political & institutional context	"The **political and institutional context** refers to the formal and informal political institutions, norms, rule of law and human rights" (ibid);
Conflict/Peaceful context	"The **peace and conflict context** refers to factors such as social cohesion, trust, conflict resolution mechanisms, justice, and arms control" as well as "violence, tensions, grievances and conflicting interests" (ibid);
Environmental context	"The **environmental context** includes the need to understand the environmental situation, trends and consequences in the country or region - e.g. climate change, loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services, pollution, water quality - and the causes and drivers of degradation" (ibid.).

Table 2. The development contexts in Sida's MDPA framework.

To conclude, Sida integrates the 8 elements above as follows: "All dimensions as well as the development context are interlinked. They cannot be analyzed and understood in isolation from each other. However, how they are analyzed and in what order will vary depending on the situation as the framework is aimed to be used flexibly as appropriate in different country contexts" (ibid.).

Sida takes as its point of departure a 2002 Sida document titled "Perspectives on Poverty" (PoP). 15 years prior to publishing the MDPA framework, PoP already had a similar definition of multidimensional poverty (Sida, 2002:23). Other early groundbreaking work on multidimensional poverty at the time includes the contributions of Tsui (2002) and Bourguignon and Chakravarty (2003) as well as Kakwani and Silber (2008). These early interventions served as a corrective to the WB's decades of unidimensional poverty analysis which centered on resource poverty, with a particular focus on income poverty (Ravallion, 1998). The OECD's *Global Project on Measuring the Progress of Societies* also received considerable attention (OECD, 2008). The WB, too, came around to embracing a multidimensional poverty (MDP) understanding and published its own Multidimensional Poverty Measure (MPM) in 2018 (WB, 2018). It has revised and updated its MPM as recently as 2020 and 2021 (WB 2020; WB 2021), maintaining "Monetary poverty (measured as having a daily consumption less than $1.90 in 2011 purchasing power parity) as one of the dimensions" (WB 2021:1). The WB was inspired in large part by Alkire and

Santos' (2010) Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), developed through the Oxford Poverty & Human Development Initiative (OPHI), and reported in the United Nations Development Program (UNDP)'s *Re-thinking Human Development* (2010), reaching a global audience, leading to the development of an LAC-specific MPI (Santos, 2014). In 2017, CEDLA created a MPI for Bolivia (Escóbar de Pabón, Arteaga Aguilar, and Hurtado Aponte, 2019). Other literature of note in the MDP vein includes Deutsch and Silber (2005); Duclos, Sahn, and Younger (2006); Massoumi and Lugo (2008); Chakravarty, S., Deutsch, J., and Silber, J. (2008); Alkire and Sarwar (2009); Alkire and Foster (2011); Ravallion (2011); and Ferreira and Lugo (2012).

In the wider field of poverty reduction, Lewis's (1954) dual sector model and Rostow's (1959) stages of economic growth model are significant earlier treatments of the relation between growth and poverty. Spicker is a co-editor of *Poverty: An International Glossary* (2007) in which his essay "Definitions of Poverty: Twelve Clusters of Meaning" (2007) is an important contribution. Joseph's (2010) claim that "[poverty reduction] strategies operate not to improve the condition of populations but as a means for regulating states and their governments" is another notable intervention from a Foucauldian governmentality perspective. Moreover, the WB and IMF require Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) as a prerequisite for debt relief and receiving aid, which has led to criticisms of imposing aid conditionalities (Dijkstra, 2011). Prügl (2017) incisively critiques the WB's views on gender and poverty as neoliberal, undermining its supposedly feminist aspirations.

Finally, to zoom out to see the bigger picture, it is worth considering the so-called "Great Aid Debate" of the 2000s which can be understood as "a key site of contestation about visions of global development" (Engel, 2014:1374). The literature of this debate can roughly be divided along lines of aid optimists and aid pessimists, with hopeful reformers on the one hand (Sachs, 2006; Banerjee, et al., 2007; Collier, 2008), and the odd amalgam of radical neoliberals (Easterly, 2002, 2007; Hubbard and Duggan, 2009; Moyo, 2009), on the one hand, and the anti-colonial aid left (Maren, 2002; Sogge, 2002; Tandon, 2008) on the other hand. All of this underscores that aid and poverty are unequivocally political, which is an appropriate segue into my next chapter, in which I dig into a range of development paradigms, the depoliticization of poverty, as well as the potential for its re-politicization.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter I make a series of interrelated and mutually-reinforcing theoretical moves, drawing from post-structuralist and materialist influences. I see each of them as a theoretical toolbox of sorts, and accordingly, I take from each what I believe is most relevant given my research questions and body of collected data. Despite showcasing two post-structuralists and one materialist, my coverage of both paradigms is roughly equal. However, rather than assemble disparate theoretical lenses, I endeavor to integrate them, such that I can make my own theoretical contribution, namely regarding the shift from "the will to improve" to "the will to transform."

Accordingly, my theoretical moves entail:

1. Establishing that there are fundamentally distinct **development paradigms**, with different epistemologies, pivotal concepts, objects of study, relevant actors, questions of development, criteria for change, mechanisms for change, ethnographies, and critical attitudes concerning development and modernity. These three paradigms are: liberal, materialist, and post-structuralist.

2. Presenting the notion of **problematizations,** or, the idea that "problems" are not simply already-existing objects that governments and other development actors attempt to act upon and address; rather, they represent a specific way of thinking about social issues which privileges certain elements and forecloses other possibilities, and, importantly, produces certain effects.

3. Reckoning with the idea of **"rendering technical,"** or, the way in which development actors depoliticize and dehistoricize certain issues by approaching them in an overly specialized way which tends to remove a certain level of nuance and complexity, for the sake of pursuing actionable projects to solve "problems." Those who "render technical" are driven by **"the will to improve,"** which also merits closer scrutiny.

4. And finally, by funneling the above insights through the materialist lens of **"Elite Development Theory" (EDT) versus "Labor-Centered Development" (LCD)**, I aim to

Table 3. The theoretical moves which inform this thesis.

Indeed I am interested in understanding the MDPA framework as a problematization of poverty, which is rooted in a particular development paradigm - liberalism - and produces certain effects. In line with this, I am interested to understand whether, and to what extent, the MDPA framework renders poverty technical, that is to say, depoliticizes and dehistoricizes aspects of poverty.

The primary aim of this chapter, then, is to present these theoretical moves, followed by a synthesis, or integration, of them into a coherent and robust analytical framework. In the end, I argue that "the will to improve" - i.e. to work towards positive development outcomes - while shared by all development paradigms, is insufficient for reckoning with the structural complexities and causes of poverty. For this, "the will to transform" exploitative and oppressive structures is necessary. However, only two of the three main development paradigms share "the will to transform" as an end goal, and they happen to be the two which inform my research: post-structuralism and materialism.

3.1 Development paradigms

Below I present Colombian-American anthropologist and post-development theorist Arturo Escobar's framework of development theories according to their root paradigms. According to Escobar, the root paradigms of development theories are liberal; materialist; and post-structuralist (Escobar, 2008:172-173). It is important to note that these paradigms can overlap to yield hybrids, though it is generally possible to identify a predominant paradigm for most development theories.

Development Theories According to their Root Paradigms			
Issue	**Paradigm**		
	Liberal	*Materialist*	*Post-structuralist*
Epistemology	◆Positivist	◆Realist/dialectical	◆Interpretivist/constructivist

Pivotal concepts	◆Individual ◆Market	◆Production (means & mode) ◆Labor	◆Language ◆Meaning
Objects of study	◆"Society" ◆Market ◆Rights	◆Social structures (social relations) ◆Ideologies	◆Representation / discourse ◆Knowledge-power
Relevant actors	◆Individuals ◆Institutions ◆State	◆Social classes (working classes, peasants) ◆Social movements (workers, peasants) ◆State (democratic)	◆"Local communities" ◆New social movements ◆NGOs ◆*All* knowledge producers (e.g. individuals, state, movements)
Question of development	◆How can societies develop / be developed through a combination of capital and technology and individual and state actions?	◆How does development function as a dominant ideology? ◆How can development be delinked from capitalism?	◆How did Asia, Africa, and Latin America come to be represented as "underdeveloped"?
Criteria for change	◆"Progress," growth ◆Growth plus distribution (1970s) ◆Adoption of markets	◆Transformation of social relations ◆Development of the productive forces ◆Development of class consciousness	◆Transformation of the political economy of truth ◆New discourses and representations (plurality of discourses)
Mechanism for change	◆Better theories and data ◆More carefully tailored interventionism	◆Social (class) struggle	◆Change *practices* of knowing and doing
Ethnography	◆How culture mediates development and change	◆How local actors *resist* development interventions	◆How knowledge producers resist, adapt, subvert dominant knowledge and create their own

	•Adapt projects to local cultures		
Critical attitude concerning development and modernity	•Promote more egalitarian development (deepen and complete Enlightenment Project of modernity)	•Reorient development toward satisfying requirements for social justice and sustainability (critical modernism; delink capitalism and modernity)	•Articulate ethics of expert knowledge as political practice (alternative modernities and alternatives to modernity; decolonial projects)

Table 4. Development theories according to their root paradigms. Source: Escobar, A. (2008:172-173); all emphases are in the original; lightly adapted.

Although my chosen lenses are post-structuralist and materialist ones, in the sections that follow, all three paradigms will be elaborated upon and exemplified in ways that refer back to the key criteria of Escobar's chart. Moreover, all three paradigms are present in my analysis and discussion.

3.2 Post-structuralist influences

Having considered Escobar's overarching development paradigms, I now proceed to present my first set of theoretical influences, drawn from epistemologically constructivist theorists of a post-structuralist orientation. The main theorists I consider are Canadian-Australian political scientist Carol Bacchi and her reflections on "problematizations" as well as British anthropologist Tania Murray Li and her notions of "rendering technical" and "the will to improve."[14]

3.2.1 Problematizations

My next theoretical move, upon discerning the underlying development paradigm, is to consider the notion of problematizations, based on Carol Bacchi's "What's the Problem Represented to Be?" (WPR) approach. While I present its methodological utility more closely in the next chapter, what follows is a brief overview of the key theoretical concepts

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[14] The reader is encouraged to refer to Appendix A for some complementary theoretical context which they both share, namely: Foucauldian discourse analysis.

of the WPR approach to discourse analysis, particularly the notion of problematizations, and the Foucauldian influences behind it.

In her approach, Bacchi encourages researchers to "take nothing for granted" (Bacchi, 2009:ix). She elaborates that "rather than accepting the designation of some issue as a 'problem' or a 'social problem', we need to interrogate the kinds of 'problems' that are presumed to exist and how these are thought about. In this way we gain important insights into the thought (the 'thinking') that informs governing practices" (ibid.:xiii). In other words, rather than being outside the policy process, policies actually constitute, or give shape to "problems," such that "rather than *reacting* to 'problems', governments are *active* in the creation (or production) of policy 'problems'" (ibid.:1). It is important to note that this method places great importance on history. Indeed, "Problematization as a method… involves studying problematized 'objects' ('problematizations') and the (historical) process of their production. It involves 'standing back' from 'objects' and 'subjects', presumed to be objective and unchanging, in order to consider their 'conditions of emergence' and hence their mutability" (Bacchi, 2012:4).

However, Bacchi's approach is not limited strictly to policy analysis and is instead open to a wider array of texts and phenomena which purport to outline or tackle "problems." Indeed, and I note this with a bit of playful irony, Bacchi applies her scrutiny even to graduate programs. "The same [problem-solving] paradigm appears in many educational institutions which proclaim that their goal and purpose is to produce students who can 'solve' 'problems'… Invariably 'problem-solving' is put at the very top of the list" (Bacchi, 2010:1). Bacchi thus helps me to remember that I, too, am implicated in the complex web of problematizations that come with obtaining a degree in international development and management, and pursuing a career in this field.

As mentioned previously, the WPR approach is strongly influenced by the work of French post-structuralist philosopher and historian, Michel Foucault. Certainly Foucault's influence can be seen in Bacchi's focus on the historical and relational nature of problematizations. "Studying how these [problems] emerge in the historical process of problematization puts their presumed natural status in question and allows us to trace the relations—'connections, encounters, supports, blockages, plays of forces, strategies and so on' (Foucault 1991b:76, as cited in Bacchi, 2012:2)—that result in their emergence as

objects. In effect, relations replace objects" (Veyne, 1997:181, as cited in ibid.). Studying problematizations, therefore, allows us "to demonstrate how things which appear most evident are in fact fragile and that they rest upon particular circumstances, and are often attributable to historical conjunctures which have nothing necessary or definitive about them (Foucault, 1979, in Mort & Peters, 2005:19, as cited in ibid.).

According to Bacchi, problematizations produce three kinds of effects:

- "discursive effects (what is discussed and not discussed);
- subjectification effects (how people are thought about and how they think about themselves);
- and lived effects (the impact on life and death)" (Bacchi, 2009:48).

Ultimately, I am interested in engaging with Sida's MDPA framework as a problematization of poverty and I would like to understand the effects which this problematization produces, especially whether, and to what extent, Sida renders poverty technical, or depoliticizes it, which leads me to my next theoretical move.

3.2.2 "Rendering technical" and "the will to improve"

It should be noted that Li is also interested in problematizations, which she defines as "identifying the problem to be solved" and claims that "often problem and solution travel together, so a problem-diagnosis already anticipates the prescription-solution that a programmer has in mind, or can feasibly propose to a funding agency" (Li, 2014:228). For Li, the practices of problematization and rendering technical go hand in hand (Li, 2007:7). In this section I address what the practice of rendering technical is, who does it, how they do it, why they do it, and what its implications may be.

Li builds on British sociologist Nikolas Rose's notion of rendering technical, which, it bears noting, is also inspired by Foucault, and deals with the representation of "the domain to be governed as an intelligible field with specifiable limits and particular characteristics… defining boundaries, rendering that within them visible, assembling information about that which is included and devising techniques to mobilize the forces and entities thus revealed" (Rose, 1999:33 and 79, as cited in Li, 2007:7 and Li, 2014:228). For Li, rendering technical entails "extracting from the messiness of the social world, with all the processes that run through it, a set of relations that can be formulated as a diagram in which problem (a), plus

intervention (b), will produce (c), a beneficial result" (Li, 2019:33). Who engages in this practice, though?

Li designates those who render technical alternatively as "programmers," "trustees," and "experts." "Programmers include people working for transnational agencies, government departments, and NGOs, as well as the specialists and consultants …who support them" (Li, 2014:227). In her 2007 work, *The Will to Improve*, she outlines what she means by the term "trustees." For Li, trustees occupy a position "defined by the claim to know how others should live, to know what is best for them, to know what they need" (Li, 2007:4). Li elaborates that "the practice of ''rendering technical'' confirms expertise and constitutes the boundary between those who are positioned as trustees, with the capacity to diagnose deficiencies in others, and those who are subject to expert direction. It is a boundary that has to be maintained and that can be challenged" (ibid.:7). If we think of the common term in development practice of "capacity development," for Li, trustees are the ones who claim the intention of working towards this aim on behalf of others. However, Li clarifies that "the objective of trusteeship is not to dominate others - it is to enhance their capacity for action, and to direct it" (ibid.:5). Why do programmers and trustees render technical? Li believes they share what she terms "the will to improve" and recognizes that "their intentions are benevolent, even utopian. They desire to make the world better than it is" (ibid.). "The will to improve" and "rendering technical" are tied to Foucault's idea of governmentality, which Li frames as "the conduct of conduct" or "the attempt to shape human conduct by calculated means" (ibid.). Li distinguishes governmentality from the Foucauldian concept of discipline, "which seeks to reform designated groups through detailed supervision in confined quarters (prisons, asylums, schools)" whereas governmentality is, instead, focused on "the well-being of populations at large. Its purpose is to secure the 'welfare of the population, the improvement of its condition, the increase of its wealth, longevity, health, etc'" (Foucault, 1991:100, as cited in Li, 2007:5). Furthermore, governmentality "operates by educating desires and configuring habits, aspirations and beliefs" (ibid.).

However, Li cautions that "the claim to expertise in optimizing the lives of others is a claim to power, one that merits careful scrutiny" (ibid.). A consequence of rendering technical is depoliticization (ibid.:7). Li elaborates about how "experts tasked with

improvement exclude the structure of political-economic relations from their diagnoses and prescriptions. They focus more on the capacities of the poor than on the practices through which one social group impoverishes another" (ibid.). Ultimately, Li finds that depoliticization can be ascribed to American anthropologist James Ferguson's concept of an "antipolitics machine" that "insistently repos[es] political questions of land, resources, jobs, or wages as technical 'problems' responsive to the technical 'development' intervention" (Ferguson, 1994:270, as cited in Li, 2007:7). Li observes that a result of "antipolitics" can be "the design of programs as a deliberate measure to contain a challenge to the status quo" (ibid.:8), however, she prefers to accept "the will to improve" in good faith rather than "identify[ing] hidden motives of profit or domination" (ibid.:9), and this good faith move influences my own engagement with the Sida programmers whom I interviewed.

Along with Li, I'm interested in asking "how programs of improvement are shaped by political-economic relations they cannot change; how they are constituted, that is, by what they exclude" (ibid.:4). The useful post-structuralist notion of "the constitutive outside" comes to mind. What is the MDPA framework's "constitutive outside" whose exclusion allows Sida to produce a critique of poverty which is, ultimately, acceptable to the Swedish government?

3.3 Materialist influences

Having considered the post-structuralist lenses above, my final theoretical move shifts to the materialist development paradigm to engage with British international relations and development scholar Benjamin Selwyn. In particular, his reflections on the structurally exploitative nature of capitalism are especially insightful. They take the form of the distinction he draws between "Elite Development Theory" (EDT) versus "Labor-Centered Development" (LCD). In order to appreciate the nuances of Selwyn's theoretical contribution to my research, I provide an overview of his materialist understanding of economic exploitation, as well as what he terms the elite subject - subordinate object (ES-SO) conception of development, and finally, the LCD alternative which he champions.

3.3.1 "Elite Development Theory" (EDT) versus "Labor-Centered Development" (LCD)

Selwyn's key line of reasoning can be productively distilled to the following statement of his: "Much development thinking is founded upon elite-led conceptions of social change and can be thought of as forms of elite development theory (EDT)... [which] contribute to reproducing unequal, exploitative, and oppressive social relations that limit significantly the possibilities for human development of the poor" (Selwyn, 2015:781). What, then, constitutes EDT?

It is first necessary to clarify what Selwyn means by the term "elite." Selwyn presents the more common understanding of "elites" in much contemporary development discourse, in an attempt to hold that conception to scrutiny and provide a more nuanced understanding. Indeed, "within much contemporary development thinking the concept of 'elites' is often employed in pejorative terms (as in the conception of 'elite capture'), in contradistinction to the notion of representative and responsible state actors and/or dynamic capitalist entrepreneurs and corporations" (ibid.). In other words, in this understanding, "elites" are framed as the "bad" actors among the wealthy and powerful, as opposed to "good" or "well-intentioned" ones who, to echo Tania Murray Li, may possess "the will to improve." Selwyn elaborates that this notion is predicated on an understanding of the market "as a ladder of social mobility," which means that "elite capture" implies "'opportunity hoarding', which [is] portrayed as antithetical to the potentially broad-based developmental benefits of market expansion and incorporation" (ibid.). Contrary to the prevailing understanding of "elites," Selwyn advances the following corrective. For Selywyn, "elites" could be more productively understood "as class fractions (or sections of the ruling class) that possess the ability to force the majority of a given population into a socially subservient position, enabling the former to systematically capture unpaid labor from (i.e. exploit) the latter" (ibid.:782). He clarifies that the fact "that these elites take different forms - occupying positions within state bureaucracies and owning capital - is secondary to their relational power over a nation's laboring classes" (ibid.). Selwyn's definition of "elites" relies on his understanding of the term "exploitation," which, in turn, merits closer attention.

In its popular usage, the term "exploitation" might bring to mind sweatshops and mines, or even the industrial child labor in times of yore.[15] However, for materialists like Selwyn, this term describes an aspect that is fundamental to the functioning of global capitalism, and which is a root cause of poverty. For Selwyn, "exploitation is understood… as the institutionalized and systematic capture by capital of workers' unpaid labor"[16] and he elaborates that "the political-economic subordination of labor to elite-led development generates a situation whereby capitalism's immense dynamism and wealth-generating capacity systematically accrues to a small minority of the world's population" (ibid.). It's worth noting how Selwyn is clear not to ascribe this process of exploitation to some "bad" version of "elites" as opposed to "good" ones whose wealth and power are untainted by these structural dynamics. Indeed, all "elites" under capitalism exploit as a *sine qua non* of their class position within the global economy. Likewise, Selwyn's conception of "laborers" is nuanced. "The global laboring class is fragmented along lines of income, ethnicity, gender, caste and race, formal or informal occupation, geographical location (urban/rural or north/south), and the extent of its dependence upon wage labor for its social reproduction" (Selwyn, 2013:50). Moreover, "it includes a growing number of workers who exist outside the formal sector and who do not enjoy permanent, relatively secure employment" (Standing, 2011, as cited in ibid.). Selwyn claims, in no uncertain terms, that "workers are systematically paid less than the value they produce for their employers" and, furthermore, that "workers' poverty is a consequence of employers' ability to pay them very low wages and to subject them to harsh working and living conditions as part of their capital accumulation strategies" (Selwyn, 2019:5). However, Selwyn reminds us that "while capital is the dominant actor in this exploitative relationship, it is not all-powerful" (Selwyn, 2013:50). This is the seed of hope that drives what I theorize as "the will to transform."

With a foundational understanding of "elites" and "exploitation" it is now fitting to dig deeper into Selwyn's analysis of the ES-SO conception of development, which is the defining characteristic of what he terms EDT. While development actors often "aim to

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[15] Though to be unequivocally clear: the exploitation of child labor is absolutely, and very unfortunately, still a reality in the present day.

[16] In materialists understandings, "unpaid labor" is synonymous with the term "surplus value," based on the materialist Labor Theory of Value, which posits that the portion of unremunerated labor accrues as a surplus which becomes profit, wealth, and even capital itself, in a co-constitutive cycle of exploitation and wealth generation.

contribute to the uplifting of the world's poor, many of the major traditions within development theory are founded upon assumptions about 'the poor' that contribute to their (re)subjection to debilitating hierarchical social relations" (Selwyn, 2015:782). Selwyn explains that "this is because the development of 'the poor' is dependent upon elite guidance. The poor are required to subject themselves to, or be subjected to, elite-devised and -led development" (ibid.). This strongly echoes Li's "trustees," "programmers," and "experts," and the Foucauldian concept of "governmentality," or "the conduct of conduct." Selwyn unpacks the ES-SO conception of development thus:

Key features of ES-SO development	Corresponding conceptualizations
1) Definition of "elites"	"[ES-SO development] identifies elites (whether corporations, state planners, private sector agencies or NGOs) as drivers of development" (ibid.);
2) View of the poor's agency	"It ranges from ignoring to de-legitimating the poor's actions to ameliorate their conditions" (ibid:783);
3) Legitimation of elite positionality	"As a consequence of point 2, it legitimates elite repression and exploitation of the poor politically and economically, especially when the latter contest elite-led development" (ibid.);
4) Delegitimation of the poor's actions	"Consequently, while myriad actions, movements and struggles by the poor are *not* considered developmental, they are often considered to be *hindrances* to development" (ibid., original emphases).

Table 5. Key features of Elite Subject-Subordinate Object (ES-SO) development. Source: Selwyn, B. (2015).

At its core, the ES-SO conception of development is about capitalist power relations; about a process of elite empowerment and the disempowerment of their subordinates, such that, "subjects possess primary agency, [while] objects only possess secondary agency *once they have been incorporated into elite-led development processes*" (ibid.:783, original emphases). Ultimately, for Selwyn, "EDT cannot conceive of development being a process whereby objects, through their own actions and through the transformation of social relations, displace subjects from their elite position" (ibid.).

This can be helpfully illustrated by the recurrent metaphor of "the ladder" in much development discourse. On the one hand, "the world market is portrayed as a ladder of

opportunity, where, once on the bottom rung, poor countries and their populations have the possibility of climbing further up" (ibid.) *à la* Jeffrey Sachs (Sachs, 2005). On the other hand, in turn, is the reality that EDT "kicks away the ladder" *à la* Ha-Joon Chang (Chang, 2002). For EDT, therefore, "market 'inclusion' is posited as the solution to the maladies generated by market 'exclusion'" (Selwyn, 2015:783). Having unpacked the underlying ES-SO characteristics of EDT, what remains is to flesh out the most relevant form of EDT for my research, as well as its alternative.

Selwyn surveys a range of EDTs, including the Washington and Post-Washington Consensuses, statist political economy, modernisation Marxism, and varieties of pro-poor growth. For the purposes of my research, I now turn my attention to the last of these, "pro-poor growth," as it's the most relevant to my research questions. More specifically, Selwyn groups together inclusive growth, pro-poor growth, and decent work. He observes "the emergence of a range of approaches to economic growth that aim to benefit the poor, such as 'inclusive' and 'pro-poor' growth and 'decent work'. The former two are relatively more liberal, while the latter is more social democratic" (ibid.:792). This broad school of EDT involves a range of actors such as "the World Bank, the International Labor Organization (ILO) and most national governments" (ibid.). Selwyn sees the distinction between the liberal and social democratic orientations as "[the former] propos[ing] an absolute form of pro-poor growth, which is achieved when the poor's economic conditions are improving, [whereas the latter]... proposes a relative conception, where growth is pro-poor when poor people's incomes are rising faster than those of the better off" (ibid.). By contrast, "the inclusive growth perspective… eschews a pro-poor orientation as it argues that the most effective way to reduce poverty is to achieve widespread, rather than targeted growth" and aims for "raising the pace of growth and enlarging the size of the economy, while levelling the playing field for investment and increasing productive employment opportunities" (ibid.). For some proponents of this set of EDTs, "poverty reduction requires providing physical access to markets, remedying market failures, investing in the entire population's education and health and countering discrimination" (ibid.), which, when looking back at Escobar's development paradigms, checks off several of the key criteria of the liberal development paradigm.

Ultimately, there is no room in liberal EDT for "the will to transform." Objects must, then, challenge or reject EDT altogether and reclaim their own agency via another development lens altogether, and for Selwyn, this counterpoint comes in the form of LCD. To conclude, "LCD as a practice (by laboring classes) and as an intellectual framework (for development theorists) aims to conceptualize and promote politically developmental processes generated by laboring classes" (ibid.:795-796). Among the more far-reaching developmental gains achieved through LCD "include gaining (less or more) control over the means of producing social wealth and the political capacity to decide upon its distribution" (ibid.:796). To adapt Selwyn to my own theorization, a key takeaway I wish to emphasize is that improvement-oriented EDT is not sufficient to systemically address poverty. Transformation-oriented LCD can, and must, fulfill that purpose in its place.

3.4 Building an analytical framework
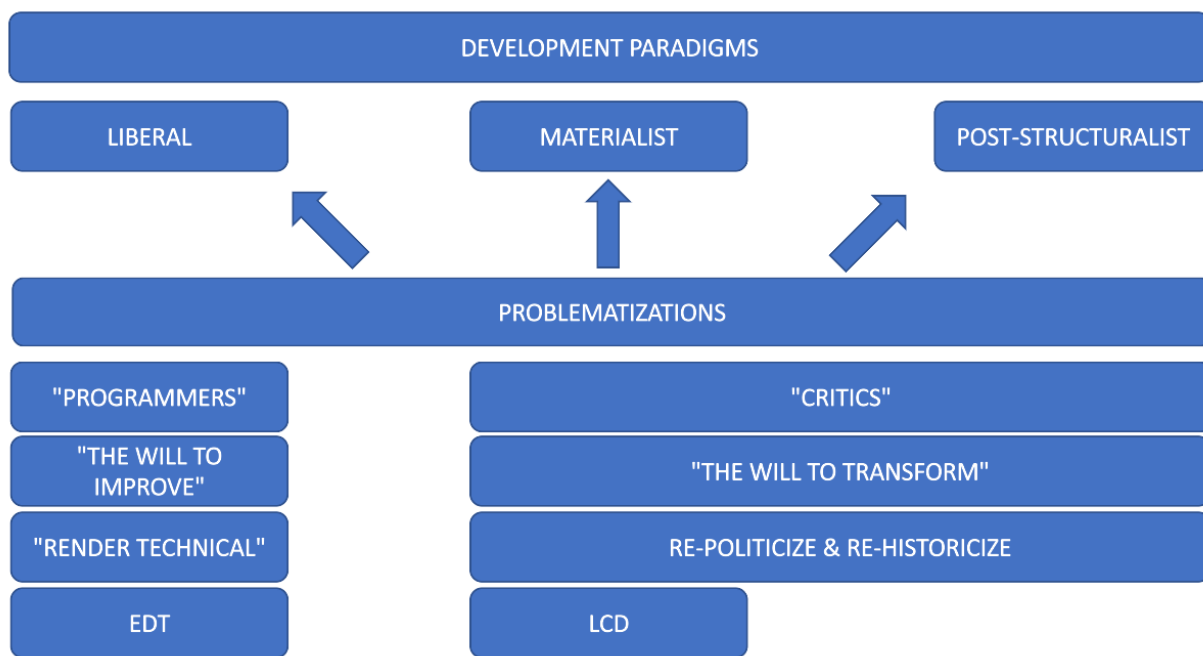
Figure 4. Analytical framework integrating the theoretical influences of Escobar, Bacchi, Li, and Selwyn.

In summary, my contention is that problematizations of poverty are, inevitably, rooted in certain development paradigms and their concomitant epistemologies and worldviews. In addition, I maintain that these problematizations produce certain effects, one of the most important of which, in the case of liberal programmers' EDTs, is the

depoliticization and dehistoricization of poverty by rendering it technical. One of my ultimate aims in this thesis is to show that it is entirely possible to re-politicize poverty, from the standpoint of a critic, by attending to these silences around the history of poverty and its structural causes, in order to problematize poverty differently, such that the focus is shifted away from poverty as the "problem," reframing it instead as a symptom of a more fundamental "problem" which dares not speak its name, i.e. global capitalism and the systemic inequality which it engenders.

4. METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I present the philosophical premises of my research and provide an overview of how I designed this study and collected and analyzed the data, while reflecting on my positionality as a researcher and on some relevant ethical considerations.

4.1 Philosophical assumptions

This thesis adopts a hybrid approach of post-structuralism and materialism. Epistemology concerns our knowledge of the world, while ontology is about what there is to be known, or, the nature of reality (Al-Ababneh, 2020; Rawnsley, 1998; Yeh, 2015). On the one hand, given my recourse to Foucauldian theorists, my epistemology could be said to be interpretivist, wherein layers of language, discourse, and meaning are important to consider (Escobar 2008; Silverman, 2013; Walliman, 2006). On the other hand, I have a realist ontological focus on social structures, such as capitalist class relations, which are often eschewed, or deconstructed, by pure post-structuralists, but embraced by materialists (Escobar, 2008). Both, however, are interested in power relations (ibid.).

For this reason, I find that English philosopher of science Roy Bhaskar's stance of critical realism resonates with my project, to the extent that I am attentive to interpreting social constructs while acknowledging material structures and relations. Unlike many post-structuralists, critical realists recognize the importance of being realist about ontology, while not foreclosing an interpretivist epistemology (Bhaskar, 2008). What I share with critical realists, materialists, and post-structuralists alike is skepticism towards a purely positivist project, which would posit an objectively knowable reality which can be empirically ascertained by extricating the observer's subjectivity (Kvale, 1996; Bhaskar, 1997). While I have indeed collected empirical data, my claim to understanding reality is a much more modest and tentative one.

4.2 Research design

I have designed a qualitative research project. I have opted for a case study design, whereby I focus on a particular tool and objective - the MDPA framework and poverty reduction - as understood by CEDLA and two specific Sida departments - namely: Eurolatin

and the Chief Economist team - with a focus on the LAC context, and more specifically, on Bolivia, as the region's pilot country for integrating the MDPA framework.

American social scientist Robert Yin offers the following helpful twofold definition: "A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the 'case') in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident" (Yin, 2014). He elaborates, "you would want to do case study research because you want to understand a real-world case and assume that such an understanding is likely to involve important contextual conditions pertinent to your case" (ibid.). My study of Sida's MDPA framework and poverty reduction in the Bolivian context meets Yin's case study criteria.

According to Flyvbjerg, "The advantage of large samples is breadth, whereas their problem is one of depth. For the case study, the situation is the reverse" (Flyvbjerg, 2006:241). Given my qualitative approach, I have embraced the depth of my samples, and the insights they have allowed me to garner. A useful complement to Flyvbjerg's reflections has been Christian Lund's claim that case studies can fall within two continua, one along specific versus general lines, and the other along concrete versus abstract lines (Lund, 2014:225). Indeed I recognize that my research troubles these binaries.

Ultimately, I agree that case studies are "more than just a type of qualitative research. [They are] a ticket that allows us to enter a research field in which we discover the unknown within well-known borders while continually monitoring our own performance; scalability; and our own, as well as general, existing knowledge" (Starman, 2013:32).

4.3 Discourse analysis: the WPR approach

In the previous chapter, I introduced Carol Bacchi's reflections on problematizations, and their Foucauldian influences, and established the connection to Li's "rendering technical" lens. Having laid this theoretical foundation, it is now opportune to consider its methodological implications. Specifically, here, I present Bacchi's "What's the Problem Represented to Be?" (WPR) approach to discourse analysis.

The following are the six questions and one step outlined in Bacchi's (2009:xii) WPR approach, slightly re-ordered and adapted to my research topic.

1. What's the 'problem' of poverty represented to be in Sida's MDPA framework?
2. What presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of the 'problem'?
3. How and where has this representation of the 'problem' been produced, disseminated, and defended?
4. What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? Where are the silences?
5. What effects are produced by this representation of the 'problem'?
6. How could this representation of the 'problem' be questioned, disrupted, and replaced? Can the 'problem' be thought about differently?
7. Apply this list of questions to your own problem representations.

Table 6. Bacchi's (2009) "What's the Problem Represented to Be?" (WPR) approach to discourse analysis.

I find that questions 1 and 2 above help me to answer my first research question; questions 3 through 5 allow me to analyze my second research question; while question 6 and the final step serve as promising discussion prompts for the next chapter. Next, however, it is helpful to consider my data collection itself more closely.

4.4 Data collection

My data collection entailed arranging and conducting semi-structured and paired depth interviews as well as a focus group. However, due to the modest size of my sample, I found it necessary to supplement my primary data with secondary textual sources, primarily from Sida, the Swedish government, and from the Sida-funded Bolivian think tank CEDLA.

4.4.1 Sampling & interviews

I used a combination of two non-probability sampling methods which were well-suited to the small population size of available participants. These methods were

purposive sampling as well as snowball sampling. In my purposive sampling, specifically, I opted for expert sampling, drawing from my experience as an intern at Sida at the time, and using my best judgment. Purposive expert sampling offers the benefit of identifying participants who are highly knowledgeable and specialized in a given topic, however it can be prone to errors in the researcher's subjective judgment (Creswell and Poth, 2017:148; Brown & Edmunds, 2011:84). I sought out experts on the MDPA framework, as well as on Swedish development cooperation in LAC. While most of my sampling was purposive, early on, one of my Swedish informants recommended three potential participants in LAC, two of whom, in turn, referred me to three additional informants, of which one put me in touch with my only two non-Sida informants. Indeed, snowball sampling is a type of convenience sampling in which participants aid in the recruitment of future potential participants drawing from their own networks, however it is not without some ethical concerns regarding the risk of deductive disclosure (ibid.:158; ibid., 84).

I ultimately conducted 10 in-depth semi-structured individual interviews, 2 paired depth interviews with 2 participants in each, and 1 small focus group with 3 participants, with a total of 17 participants. My informants included 8 Swedes, 8 Latin Americans (4 Bolivians, 2 Guatemalans, and 2 Colombians), and one with neither background who nonetheless had comparable and highly-relevant knowledge and experience. 14 of my participants were women and 3 were men, which, to a large extent, reflects the realities of Sweden's FFP and gender equality principles in action. Indeed, most of the available participants were women. For an anonymized table of my participants, refer to Appendix B.

The appeal of the semi-structured interview format was the "open-endedness [which] allows the participants to contribute as much detailed information as they desire and it also allows the researcher to ask probing questions as a means of follow-up" (Turner, 2010:756), however the richness of the qualitative data collected can lead to challenges when it comes to coding the data (ibid.). Another advantage of interviewing can be seen in Kvale's (1996) metaphor wherein the interviewer is like a traveler: "The journey may not only lead to new knowledge; the traveler might change as well. The journey might instigate a process of reflection that leads the interviewer to new ways of self-understanding, as well as uncovering previously taken-for-granted values and customs" (Kvale, 1996:4). I do feel that my interviews had this sort of impact on me.

Another kind of interview I conducted was the paired depth interview, which "is an interview conducted with two people. Often referred to as dyad, the methodology allows the researcher to probe in depth around each person's experience as well as using any similarities and differences in experience to explore the subject more deeply" (AQR, n.d.). However, "compared to individual interviews, paired interviews can be difficult to organize (e.g., both members of the dyad of interest to the researcher must be available for interview at the same time) and to conduct (e.g., power dynamics inherent within the dyad might compromise the integrity of the ensuing paired interview, thereby threatening data saturation)" (Wilson, Onwuegbuzie, and Manning, 2016:1551). I am pleased to report that my two paired depth interviews were both easy to organize and conduct.

In spite of the pandemic limitations, I was able to conduct a virtual focus group discussion with one representative from each of the three Swedish embassies in LAC. In doing so, I needed to navigate the distinction between a focus group versus a group interview. Brown and Edmunds (2011) proved insightful in teasing out this distinction: "In group interviews, the researcher interacts with each individual in the group and occasionally checks the level of consensus in the group. In a focus group, the researcher encourages participants to interact. Usually a group interview or focus group is a mixture of mostly open questions and some closed questions" (Brown & Edmunds, 2011:35). The authors provide a helpful diagram illustrating the types of interactions between interviewers and participants in group interviews versus focus groups.
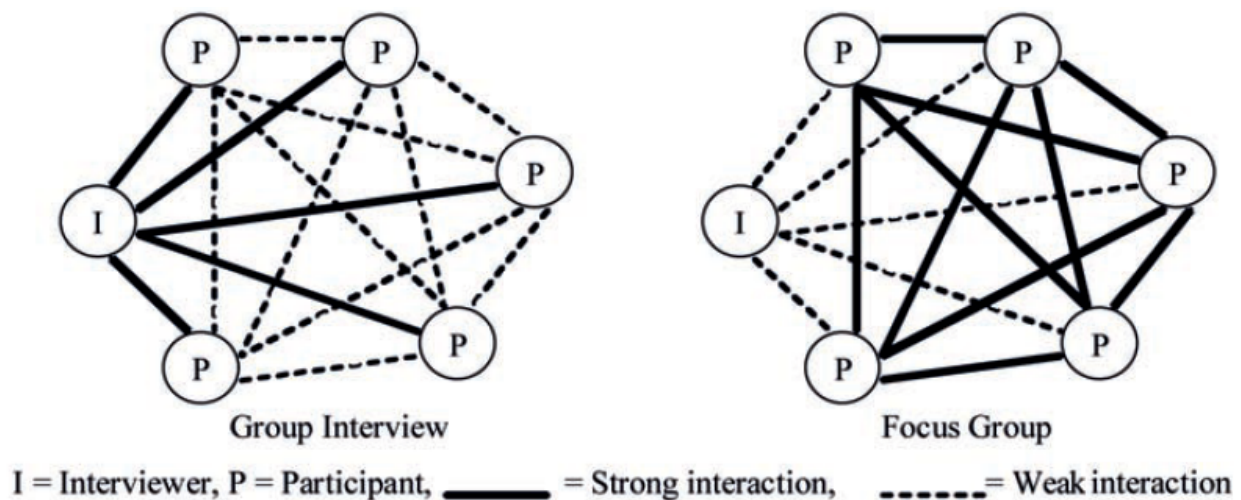

Figure 5. Differences between group interviews & focus groups. Source: Brown & Edmunds (2011:35).

In my research, the paired depth interviews and focus groups alike were characterized by a predominance of strong interactions between the participants, and weaker interactions between myself and them, with occasional exceptions in which I had stronger interactions with the participants than a mere observer might have had.

4.4.2 Other texts

I deliberately use the heading "other texts" as an acknowledgment that interviews themselves may be considered texts, especially from the perspective of doing discourse analysis. "...If we treat an interview as a narrative, this can mean looking for the same textual features as researchers working with printed material. Indeed, the mere act of transcription of an interview turns it into a written text" (Silverman, 2013:52). My corpus of texts enables me to place my interviewees in dialogue with Sida, the Swedish government, and CEDLA, all on the topics of the MDPA framework and poverty reduction within the Bolivian context, thus exposing the continuities and heterogeneities in their discourses and problematizations, as I explore in the next chapter. See Appendix C for a list of my secondary textual data sources. The texts span the following three languages: English, Spanish, and Swedish. Translations into English from the latter two languages are all my own.

4.5 Data analysis

My data analysis approach could best be described as old-school meets the future. On the one hand, I had recourse to the speech transcription softwares known as Otter and Sonix, developed by two California-based tech companies. They both provide speech-to-text transcription powered by advances in artificial intelligence and machine learning. I was delighted to be able to speed up the process considerably with these programs. Notably, Otter only transcribes English speech (Otter.ai, 2021).[17] My English-language interviews were in a mix of my own American English accent and my informants' Scandinavian English accents, with some Swenglish words thrown in for good measure. However, my focus group,

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[17] Indeed, it recognizes an impressive array of accents "including (southern) American, Canadian, Indian, Chinese, Russian, British, Scottish, Italian, German, Swiss, Irish, Scandinavian, and other European accents. We are committed to continually improving Otter's accuracy for additional accents" (Otter.ai, 2021).

two individual interviews, and two paired depth interviews were conducted in Latin American Spanish, which Otter does not support. Sonix, however, automatically transcribes 37 languages and dialects, including Spanish (Sonix.ai, 2021). Despite enjoying the benefit of automatic transcription, it was nonetheless necessary to revisit the generated transcripts in order to edit and improve their accuracy. This was still far less onerous than complete manual transcription from scratch.

While Otter and Sonix represent my foray into the future, my coding process, on the other hand, was carried out in a more old-school manner. Each question in Bacchi's WPR framework served as a theme. As I re-listened to all the recordings, I manually matched sections of each transcript, as well as portions of the secondary data texts, to the most relevant themes which, in turn, I compiled in one document for convenient access to the quotations I needed for my analysis and discussion in the next chapter.

4.6 Limitations

I acknowledge that my data is far too limited to make any representative claims about all of LAC, or the selected LAC countries with Swedish embassies, or even my country of focus, Bolivia. I also primarily focused on the Eurolatin and Chief Economist departments, thus limiting the claims I can make about Sida as an institution. As my data consists of interviews with 17 informants, while I may have reached the point of saturation, nonetheless I found it beneficial to consider secondary data sources.

The fact that about half of my interviewees are Swedish, and, moreover, that 15 out of 17 work for Sida, introduced an element of potential pro-Sweden and pro-Sida bias. However, I attempted to account for this in my interview guides - see Appendix D - by asking questions that sought to strike a balance between the positive aspects of Sweden and Sida as a donor, as well as eliciting constructive reflections on any potential room for improvement.

The ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, moreover, has limited my access to participants and to "the field" i.e. Sida's Stockholm-based headquarters as well as its LAC embassies, particularly the Bolivian one. Nonetheless, thanks to web conferencing software such as Zoom, and to the Internet in general, I have been able to overcome these limitations to

some extent, by navigating a new "digital field" (Lobe, Morgan, and Hoffman. 2020; Howlett, 2021).

Moreover, participant selection was also limited by the fact that the staff in Sweden's foreign embassies are not numerous to begin with, and they are all, of course, navigating their professional and personal lives in Covid times as well.

While not strictly a limitation, the time zone differences between Sweden and the LAC region posed some challenges. Coordinating a virtual focus group with participants in three different time zones was quite the feat, as my participants were 8, 7, and 6 hours behind me in Guatemala, Colombia, and Bolivia respectively. Fortunately my evenings were flexible, but coordinating to find a common morning or afternoon time during their working hours was tricky to say the least, but appreciated of course.

4.7 Positionality

It is only fitting that I turn my critical gaze back upon myself. After all, "Those who live in glass houses, should not throw stones" (Chaucer, 1385). For the sake of transparency in my research, allow me to cast some stones at myself. Let me tell you a bit about who I am, and why it matters.

I introduced myself to my informants as a *colombiano gringo*. "*Gringo*" is a colloquial term used in Latin America which designates foreigners - especially white foreigners - often from North America, though the term can also apply to white Europeans. "*Gringos*" typically do not speak Spanish or Portuguese, so this aspect of the term does not apply to me. With this playful phrase, I offered my participants some insight into who I am. My family emigrated from Colombia shortly after my birth in 1987, when the country was in the throes of its still ongoing civil conflict, and sought a new life in New York. Another way to articulate my positionality is that I have Global South roots and Global North shoots. Moreover, I am a multi-racial, white-passing Colombian-American, which means that I am perceived as a white Euro-American, which, regardless of my multi-racial background, nonetheless confers a set of privileges of which I needed to be mindful while engaging with my interviewees of color (Fawcett & Hearn, 2004).

While as a bilingual native Spanish speaker, not being dependent on an interpreter provided its benefits, nonetheless, having geographical, linguistic, and cultural similarities with some of my participants posed the risk of taking these shared understandings for granted (Edwards, 1998; Kapborg and Berterö, 2002). I should note that although I had a very pleasant rapport with all of my participants, my interviews with my LAC-based informants tended to feel like home, in a sense, given our cultural common ground. While smiles and good will abounded in all of my interactions, there was a special warmth in my exchanges with most of my LAC participants, as if we were long-time friends, which resulted in a more informal tone, both in our e-mail exchanges as well as in our interviews themselves, complete with the requisite virtual *abrazos*[18] and warm *saludos*,[19] wishing good health and the like, which are especially common in Latin American interpersonal interactions.

Another relevant aspect of my positionality is my gender. I cannot *not* acknowledge my positionality as a cis-gender man in this research. Cis-gender refers to the reality that my sex assigned at birth, as a male, aligns with my own personal experience of my socially constructed gender identity as a man (Divan, 2013:3). Given that the majority of my qualitative research subjects are women, I found it important to be mindful of the power dynamic between us along gender lines. In light of the reality that men tend to interrupt, discredit, and condescendingly "mansplain" to women, I endeavored, as often as I could, to check my implicit biases (Fawcett & Hearn, 2004), and take a step back from my usual extroverted and talkative self, in order to respectfully listen, and avoid these negative gendered patterns of communication (Solnit, 2014).

Finally, Li's distinction between programmers and critics is important to address as far as my positionality vis-à-vis my participants is concerned. According to Li, the relation between these two positionalities is fraught with constraints and incompatibilities. "Programmers tolerate critique only so long as it can be translated back into programming, or used for the 'improvement of improvement'… Critique that identifies structural problems that development agencies cannot address is generally regarded as unhelpful, unrealistic, and hence without value" (Li, 2014:234). Li points out that since programming demands

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[18] Spanish for "hugs".
[19] Spanish for "greetings".

closure, "the opening up that is intrinsic to critique can only be accomplished when the demands of programming are suspended, at least for a while. We can agree on a respectful division of labor" (ibid:235). In this research, I understand myself, and the CEDLA researchers, to be critics in Li's sense, and my Sida informants to be programmers. I have endeavored for my interviews to accommodate a respectful suspension of the demands of programming in order to carve out space for meaningful dialogue.

4.8 Ethical considerations

First and foremost, an ethic of reciprocity has been important to me in my data collection. I have wanted very much to avoid being solely extractive and having the benefits of my research be only one-sided. For this reason, I have promised to share my thesis with my participants, so that they may see my results. Indeed, several of my Sida informants expressed an interest in how my research might be able to feed back into Sida's work; this came up as we discussed reciprocity. I am very interested in contributing to the "improvement of improvement" while striving, nonetheless, to preserve the integrity of my critique. Most participants reported feeling that the very exercise of the interview was enjoyable, interesting, or worthwhile in and of itself, while others specified that it was useful and important to take a moment aside from their day-to-day work routines to reflect on these topics which are very relevant to their work, and yet are not discussed enough.

I provided all of my interview participants with an informed consent form (see Appendix E), in English or Spanish, which explained the motivation of my participant selection, elaborated on the purpose of the study, and, crucially, granted my participants anonymity. Such a disclosure has the benefit of building rapport with informants (Cresswell & Poth, 2017:267). Moreover, I hoped that with the possibility of anonymity, my interviewees would feel at ease to be as candid as possible in their responses. In fact, I included the following line in the consent form to further reassure my participants: "You would be speaking in a personal capacity rather than as a Sida spokesperson or representative."

Indeed, data privacy and protection are crucial ethical topics to consider. With so many apps and programs which facilitate conducting, recording, and transcribing virtual conversations, it is important to weigh the benefits of convenience against the realities of

corporate and state mishandling of data (Lee, 2020). I did everything possible to be mindful of this, particularly to be in compliance with the European General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), even with my informants in LAC, as they are still affiliated with Swedish embassies. I read the privacy and data protection policies of Zoom and the transcription programs carefully before deciding to use them, keeping an eye out for their encryption practices and confidentiality certifications. Had I been interviewing particularly vulnerable participants, such as refugees or environmental defenders and other at-risk activists, with higher stakes involved, such as their personal safety, or the risk of their deportation or arrest, I would have opted for traditional recording and transcription practices (ibid.). However, in my cost-benefit analysis, I deemed that there was some measure of commensurability between the low level of sensitivity of my data and the lack of potential harm to my participants, to justify my choice of recording and transcription tools.

Finally, in the next chapter, I have endeavored to limit the possibility for "deductive disclosure" (Tracy, 2010), that is, for any given participant's identity to be inferred based on contextual clues. I am reasonably confident that no one outside of Sida could deduce the identity of any of my informants based on the care I have put into my wording. As far as within Sida, even in that case, I have gone to extra lengths to avoid colleagues being able to identify each other. There is, however, a fine line to toe between preventing deductive disclosure, and nonetheless still having meaningfully usable data. Indeed "as there are multiple clues to a person's identity (e.g. process of elimination may be used to identify others, etc.), it is [seldom] easy for a researcher to predict which data will lead to identification and require anonymization" (Kanyangale, 2019:6). Moreover, despite my intention to prevent deductive disclosure, it has been important for me to weigh this aim against the risk of overly decontextualizing my data to the point of "decoupling …events from history and geographically specific location" (Nespor, 2000:549), thus undermining my research goals. Decidedly, in most cases, nothing of a particularly delicate or controversial nature was shared which could jeopardize any of my informants' employment. In the occasional moments where this might remotely be the case, I have taken additional precautions to be vague so as to honor my promise of anonymity to the fullest extent possible. There was, moreover, one respondent who was neither Swedish nor Latin American, and I was careful not to specify this person's nationality or gender.

Some surprising and unexpected glimpses into power relations at Sida came to the surface, and it may not have been possible to learn about them without the assurance of anonymity. And so, like a journalist, doctor, lawyer, or a religious confidante, I guard my informants' identities with zeal, and I will take their secrets with me to my grave.

5. ANALYSIS & DISCUSSION

"First, when writing up a case study, I demur from the role of omniscient narrator and summarizer. Instead, I tell the story in its diversity, allowing the story to unfold from the many-sided, complex, and sometimes conflicting stories that the actors in the case have told me" (Fyvbjerg, 2006:238).

What follows is a WPR discourse analysis of the various interlinked, and at times divergent, discourses around poverty reduction, with Sida's MDPA framework, and Bolivia's role as a pilot case, receiving the most prominent focus. Each question interrogates different aspects of Sida's improvement-oriented liberal problematization of poverty such as what its underlying assumptions and presuppositions are; its provenance; any notable silences or absences; the effects it produces; among a few others. This subsequently leads to a discussion of alternative possibilities for *re*-problematizing poverty, by considering CEDLA's understanding of the MDPA framework, from its transformation-oriented materialist paradigm. Finally, I conclude with a self-reflexive WPR discourse analysis of my own thesis research.

In the spirit of Fyvbjerg's non-positivist narrative style, I too will tell a story, and while my situated positionality inevitably makes me one of the narrators, my co-narrators range from the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, to Sida employees in Stockholm and in the Swedish embassies in Bolivia, Colombia, and Guatemala, as well as researcher-activists at CEDLA. It will be a story of "the will to improve" and "the will to transform"; of the challenges of Sida's MDPA framework in Bolivia, as well as its promises.

To keep track of the anonymous interviewees, my system of nomenclature assigns three characters per participant:

- the first for the participants' country (S for Sweden; B for Bolivia; C for Colombia; and G for Guatemala);
- the second for the type of interview conducted (I for individual semi-structured interview; P for paired depth interview; and F for focus group);
- and the third is a number, assigned in no particular order, simply to differentiate between different individuals who share any, and especially both, of the initial two attributes of country and interview type.

S.I.1, for instance, is the first of the individually interviewed informants based in Sweden; C.F.2 is the second focus group participant (of three total), who, in this case, is based in Colombia; and B.P.1 and G.P.2 are the first and second members of the paired depth interviews conducted with the dyads based in Bolivia and Guatemala, respectively. Finally, the singular "they" pronoun will be used universally for each individual participant, as a gender neutral stand-in, in order to further prevent deductive disclosure and protect the anonymity of my informants.

5.1 Analysis

In my analysis, I avail myself of the first five questions in Bacchi's WPR framework in order to answer both of my research questions as they apply to Sida's problematization of poverty, its development paradigm, and understanding of capitalism. While the focus will be on Bolivia primarily, the perspectives of most of my participants, including those from other LAC countries than Bolivia, are useful for exploring the contours of Sida's problematization of poverty, and the deeper development paradigm that allows this problematization to cohere and make sense in the form of the MDPA framework.

5.1.1 What's the 'problem' of poverty represented to be in Sida's MDPA framework?

In the eponymous first question of Bacchi's WPR framework, she reminds us that the goal is "to identify a place to begin the analysis. We are looking for a way to open up for questioning something that appears natural and obvious" (Bacchi and Goodwin, 2016:20). Her guidance is to "work backwards" from the text under investigation, in order to identify the underlying problem representation (ibid.; Bacchi, 2009:4).

It bears noting, and I elaborate on this in section 5.1.3 below, that Sida's MDPA framework could be more accurately thought of as a *re*-problematization. In other words, the MDPA framework did not develop in a vacuum, divorced from historical context and influences. It was a response to the reductive unidimensional poverty frameworks of institutions like the WB which, in turn, seemed "natural and obvious" in the late-20th century, as discussed earlier in Chapter 2. In 2015, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development published the 17 SDGs, with the very first goal being: "End poverty in all its forms everywhere" (U.N. General Assembly, 2015:14), yet it did not specify exactly what "all

its forms" entailed. This is the MDPA framework's starting premise, namely, that poverty is multifaceted.

The most articulate problematizations of poverty I found in my data, from the perspective of the MDPA framework, were expressed by the following primary data sources: [S.I.1, B.I.1] as well as, arguably, my most important secondary data source: Sida's MDPA framework itself.

It is worth noting that virtually all Sida-affiliated informants, in Sweden and at the LAC embassies, offered definitions of Sida's MDPA view on poverty when asked to discuss the topic of poverty, as anticipated. One example of this explanation was that offered by S.I.1: "Our definition of poverty considers a person living in poverty who is resource poor and poor in one or several other dimensions" (S.I.1). They clarify that "it's not that the SDGs came and Sida said, 'wow, is poverty, multidimensional?' Sida has been working with the multidimensional mindset for a long time" (ibid.). Indeed this is corroborated by a consideration of it's PoP paper, discussed in Chapter 2, which was published in 2002, in the early years of the burgeoning debates on the multidimensional nature of poverty.

To justify why Sida focuses on poverty reduction, one informant said: "we live in an unequal world and we have to, through ODA, try to address those inequalities" (S.I.7). This is a sentiment echoed in some way by all of the Sida-affiliated informants (S.I.1, S.I.2, S.I.3, S.I.4, S.I.5, S.I.6, S.I.7, S.I.8, B.I.1, G.F.1, C.F.2, B.F.3, G.P.1, G.P.2, and C.I.1).

S.I.1 called development cooperation and, in particular, poverty reduction, "the bread and butter of what we do; it's the centerpiece of Sida's work. It is crucial for us" (S.I.1). Indeed, the primary and secondary data confirmed that Sida's problematization of poverty is, in fact, a *re*-problematization, which emphasizes the multiple dimensions and contexts of poverty as presented earlier in Chapter 2.

5.1.2 What presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of the 'problem'?

Having established what Sida's key problematization of poverty is, it is now important to consider its underlying premises. Indeed, the task is "to identify and analyze the conceptual logics that underpin specific problem representations. The term 'conceptual logic' refers to the meanings that must be in place for a particular problem representation to cohere or to make sense" (Bacchi, 2009:5). To do this, Bacchi suggests identifying what

she considers to be the building blocks of the problem representation. In other words, "which concepts and binaries, such as public/private, man/woman, and citizen/migrant, does it rely upon?" (Bacchi and Goodwin, 2016:21)

This question allows for me to have recourse not only to Bacchi but also to Foucault and Escobar. Regarding Foucault's influence, Bacchi elaborates that this question "involves a form of Foucauldian *archaeology*, identifying underlying conceptual logics and political rationalities in specific policies" (Bacchi, 2009:48, original emphasis). Akin to an archaeologist, I see my goal with this question being to excavate any taken-for-granted assumptions which, when left uninterrogated, allow the MDPA framework's key points to appear "natural and obvious." The prevalence of comments from my interviewees regarding the importance of focusing on "individuals" and "markets" suggests a predominantly liberal development paradigm with a positivist epistemology, as laid out in Escobar's (2008) chart presented earlier in Chapter 3. They also suggest an EDT orientation as per Selwyn's materialist theorizations from the same chapter.

The most direct confirmation of Sida's liberal development paradigm when it comes to poverty reduction came in two particular interviews, which both identified Amartya Sen's capabilities approach as influential to the development of the MDPA framework. S.I.1 said directly, "the power and voice dimension of the MDPA framework is inspired by Amartya Sen's capabilities approach" (S.I.1). However as I present in the discussion, 5.2.1, Sen's framework provides one way of understanding poverty, but it is not without its detractors. Poverty can, and should, be re-problematized in other ways.

A recurrent binary in several of the interviews was that of inclusion / exclusion, particularly with regard to access to markets and economic growth (S.I.1, S.I.5, S.I.6). A representative sentiment in this regard was: "part of our poverty reduction work entails supporting the inclusion of those left out of the benefits of growth, in order to fulfill the spirit of SDG 1's challenge of 'leave no one behind' and 'to reach the furthest behind'" (S.I.5).

In response to this WPR question, the various references to the individual's voice and empowerment (S.I.1, S.I.2, S.I.3, S.I.4, S.I.5, S.I.6, S.I.7, G.P.1, G.P.2, and C.I.1), coupled with the aforementioned emphasis on inclusive growth and more equitable access to markets, strongly suggest an underlying liberal development paradigm, to recall Escobar's chart presented in Chapter 3.

5.1.3 How and where has this representation of the 'problem' been produced, disseminated and defended?

This question in the WPR framework "involves a form of Foucauldian *genealogy*, focusing on the practices and processes that led to the dominance of this problem representation (or of these problem representations)" (Bacchi, 2009:48, original emphasis). The function of a genealogical approach is to destabilize the taken-for-grantedness of problem representations. In addition, it "provides insights into the power relations that affect the success of some problem representations and the defeat of others" (ibid.: 10-11). These "other problem representations" are considered in 5.2.1. Bacchi points to the "operation of specific discursive practices that create forms of authority for certain knowledges" (Bacchi and Goodwin, 2016:22). Bacchi is clear that "the intent is to disrupt any assumption that what is reflects what has to be" (ibid.).

For Bacchi, "the purpose of Question 3 of a WPR approach is to highlight the conditions that allow a particular problem representation to take shape and to assume dominance" (Bacchi, 2009:11). Moreover, she encourages analysts to recognize that the existence of competing problem representations suggests "that things could have developed quite differently" (ibid.:10). Once again, the message is not to take anything for granted. Of particular importance to my analysis is considering "the means through which particular problem presentations reach their target audience and achieve legitimacy" (ibid.:19). My interviewees shared some interesting insights in this regard. Furthermore, my secondary data sources shed additional light on the "genealogy" of Sida's MDPA framework and poverty reduction discourses, as presented earlier in Chapter 2.

The informants who spoke the most at length about the production, dissemination, and defense of Sida's MDPA framework, particularly in the context of Bolivia, were S.I.1 and B.I.1. According to S.I.1, "our objective is not to impose the MDPA, but rather to offer it as a tool for dialogue" (S.I.1). They elaborate, "our approach that we tell our partner countries is: 'make the model work for you', which was among the earliest instructions we provided to the MDPA pilot countries, of which Bolivia was one" (ibid.). This informant merits being quoted slightly more at length:

I mean, obviously, you can talk to your partner and express your wish that they would use the MDPA approach. And it's highly unlikely that they wouldn't listen, because you're the donor. But on the other hand, it's highly unlikely that we would partner with an institution that doesn't share the same values. So I don't think that we are imposing something that they are totally against. But I would like to believe that there is a dialogue between both parties. And I think Sida is quite unique, in the sense that we are very flexible. And we genuinely seek dialogue with our partners (S.I.1).

The reason this is interesting, is because it is evocative of the Foucauldian concept of governmentality, or "the conduct of conduct." Furthermore, when considered alongside B.I.1's remarks on the MDPA pilot experience in Bolivia, the nuances surrounding governmentality and power relations become increasingly fraught. Completely unironically, B.I.1 described the experience thus:

One of our initial tasks was to approach our local partners in Bolivia and invite them to workshops where we would say: this [the new MDPA approach] is the gospel. It was necessary that they be aware of it, agree to it, and know how to preach this gospel themselves (B.I.1).

This made me wonder: well, which is it? "Make the model work for you," or, "preach the gospel of the MDPA"? According to B.I.1, some 7 local partners approached the Swedish embassy in Bolivia to express interest in learning more about the MDPA. Upon learning more about it, 4 of them were interested in proceeding towards collaboration. One of them, a UN agency, disagreed with the focus on poverty, and preferred a wider focus on multidimensional development, to which B.I.1 and colleagues had to regretfully decline. Of the local partners who expressed interest, in the end, the partner which proceeded to collaborate closely with Sida colleagues in Bolivia was none other than the independent think tank CEDLA.

5.1.4 What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? Where are the silences?

Now that I have presented what Sida's problematization of poverty is, in the MDPA framework and its attendant discourses of poverty reduction, and given due attention to its underlying premises as well as how it came about and has established itself, in Sweden and abroad, I turn my focus to the task of reading between the lines. In other words, I consider what's left out of the MDPA framework, as well as which aspects are presented as

unproblematic which, from a different perspective, might be subjected to additional scrutiny.

In Bacchi's framework, the objective of the fourth question "is to raise for reflection and consideration issues and perspectives silenced in identified problem representations" (Bacchi, 2009:13). "One way to do this" Bacchi offers, "is to consider limits in the underlying problem representations. A key intervention here is to ask - what fails to be problematised?" (ibid.:12). Bacchi raises for consideration the practice of carrying out cross-cultural and trans-historical comparisons of problem representations (ibid.:48). I especially appreciate that this question encourages "a critical practice of thinking otherwise" to the point of "destabiliz[ing] an existing problem representation by drawing attention to silences, or unproblematized elements, within it" (Bacchi and Goodwin, 2016:22).

Another benefit of this step in my analysis is that it allows me to draw upon Tania Murray Li's insights around "rendering technical" and its concomitant depoliticization. On the subject of poverty, Li states unequivocally: "Without an understanding of the processes that are producing poverty in a particular time and place, it isn't possible to devise interventions that would actually reduce it" (Li, 2014:236). To re-use a term I introduced in Chapter 3: what is "the constitutive outside" of the MDPA framework and Sida's discourses of poverty reduction?

When I probed to find out why wealth - as opposed to income - inequality seems absent from the MDPA framework, S.I.1 suggested that it seemed to be a matter of differing interpretations. They believed that it was a part of the economic context on the outer ring of the framework.

The various references to inclusion in markets and economic growth discussed earlier in response to WPR question 2 above apply here as well as examples of items which are unproblematic in most of the Sida-affiliated informants' interview responses. One of the most resounding silences was on the exploitative nature of capitalism as a driver of inequality, and cause of poverty. Moreover, while some participants agreed about the importance of historical context, it was absent in many of the responses, at times also representing a kind of silence.

5.1.5 What effects are produced by this representation of the 'problem'?

Having considered the silences as well as the taken-for-granted aspects of the MDPA framework, the fifth question of the WPR approach makes it possible "to identify the effects of specific problem representations so that they can be critically assessed" (Bacchi, 2009:15). Moreover, Li reminds us that "whether or not the goals were achieved, the matrix by itself was already an intervention" (Li, 2014:233). Regardless of the results of applying the MDPA framework, it is, in and of itself, likewise already an intervention, or, put another way, its very existence is already a type of effect. Which type of effect, though?

Bacchi clarifies that "effects ought to be thought about as political implications rather than as measurable 'outcomes'" (Bacchi and Goodwin, 2016:23). As introduced earlier in Chapter 3, she goes on to identify three primary kinds of effects, which she posits as being interconnected.

WPR effects	Descriptions
Discursive effects	"show how the terms of reference established by a particular problem representation set limits on what can be thought and said" (ibid.)
Subjectification effects	"draw attention to how 'subjects' are implicated in problem representations, how they are produced as specific kinds of subjects" (ibid.).
Lived effects	"as an analytic category, ensures that the ways in which discursive and subjectification effects translate into people's lives form part of the analysis" (ibid.).

Table 7. The three kinds of effects analyzed in Bacchi's (2009) 'WPR' framework.

As a complement to the above schema of effects, Bacchi suggests some useful sub-questions: "What is likely to change with this representation of the 'problem'? What is likely to stay the same? Who is likely to benefit from this representation of the 'problem'? Who is likely to be harmed? How does the attribution of responsibility for the 'problem' affect those so targeted and the perceptions of the rest of the community about who is to 'blame'?" (Bacchi, 2009:48)

I understand the very creation of the MDPA framework as productive of **discursive effects**, insofar as it serves to delimit the scope of how poverty could be understood, as may be observed in my interviewees' reflections. Regarding **subjectification effects**, it is of interest to interrogate the MDPA framework's references to "the poor," or more specifically, "the multidimensionally poor." As far as **lived effects** are concerned, it is interesting to consider whether the "people's lives" referred to in this type of effect are the "multidimensionally poor," Sida's development practitioners themselves, Sida's local partners in LAC, a combination of all of the above, or someone else entirely. Or no one at all.

5.2 Discussion

Finally, the discussion proceeds to engage with Bacchi's final question and self-reflexive analysis step. I consider here how the story approaches the end, by describing the local Bolivian actor, CEDLA, which stepped forward to engage with Sida's MDPA framework in a very different and promising way, calling into question some of its most fundamental assumptions, while truly embodying Sida's original ethos of "make the model work for you" in a way that combines *bona fide* critique with a spirit of solidarity and collaboration. While the analysis allowed me to answer my research questions as they applied to Sida, my discussion is where I do the same as they apply to CEDLA. Ultimately, I scrutinize my role as a narrator, as a lead-in to my upcoming concluding chapter.

5.2.1 How could this representation of the 'problem' be questioned, disrupted and replaced? Can the 'problem' be thought about differently?

For Bacchi, the goal of question 6 "is to pay attention to the possibility of challenging problem representations that are judged to be harmful" (Bacchi, 2009:19). She goes on to elaborate that "the question of possible resistance also needs to be addressed. On this issue it is important to recognise that discourses are plural, complex and, at times, inconsistent" (ibid.).

I take Bacchi's challenge seriously to "consider past and current challenges to this representation of the 'problem' [as well as] the discursive resources available for re-problematization" (Bacchi, 2009:48). Given the importance of power relations, it is important to be attentive to the existence of what Bacchi terms "subjugated knowledges,"

which challenge the wider consensus while surviving at the margins (Bacchi and Goodwin, 2016:22).

While I, unsurprisingly, found the most articulate critiques of the MDPA's blind spots from my non-Sida interviewees and texts, I nonetheless encountered seeds of critique even within Sida, which would certainly merit further consideration.

The most interesting responses were from the CEDLA informants, B.P.1 and B.P.2, who emphasized CEDLA's materialist critique of capitalism, and in particular, the widespread exploitation across various sectors and industries of the Bolivian economy, from agroforestry, to mining, among others, disproportionately impacting Aymara Quechua indigenous workers, among whom women bear a considerable amount of the burden.

"We disagree with ideas like in Sen's framework, because they're too individualistic. Where is the collective? The group? The we? The class struggle?" asked, B.P.2, revealing a materialist development paradigm and pointing towards a LCD conception of development.

5.2.2 Apply this list of questions to your own problem representations.

I could not, in good conscience, conclude this research without subjecting my own analysis to the same degree of scrutiny as I have applied to the object of my study. As I stated in my positionality section (4.7), I understand my role as that of a critic, according to Li's distinction between programmers and critics. However, I view myself as a critic who is engaged in what Li calls "the improvement of improvement." It is in that spirit that I offer my critique.

Of the final step of the WPR approach, Bacchi states that it "requires a form of reflexivity, which involves subjecting the grounding assumptions in one's own problem representations to critical scrutiny" (Bacchi, 2009:48). Bacchi adds that "given one's location within historically and culturally entrenched forms of knowledge, we need ways to subject our own thinking to critical scrutiny" (Bacchi and Goodwin, 2016:24).

Rather than end my thesis with recommendations, I prefer to make a specifically Foucauldian move instead. After all, while reflecting on his own role as a critic, Foucault maintained that "My position is that it is not up to us to propose. As soon as one 'proposes'- one proposes a vocabulary, an ideology, which can only have effects of domination. What we

have to present are instruments or tools that people might find useful" (Foucault 1988:197, as cited in Bacchi, 2009:46).

My problematization of poverty is that it is a result of capitalist exploitation, which is obscured by dominant liberal-individualist discourses of pro-poor growth and inclusion. This reveals my hybrid post-structuralist and materialist development paradigms. I'm reasonably confident that I do not intentionally omit anything important to these debates. I believe that a discursive effect of my intervention is to widen the scope of dialogue between programmers and critics. Indeed this is an aspiration of mine. I could problematize this otherwise by drawing on different theoretical influences, such as decolonial or materialist feminist critiques.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 Looking back

From analyzing my primary and secondary data, I conclude the following in response to my research questions:

1. How do Sida and CEDLA problematize poverty and what does this reveal about their underlying development paradigms?

- Sida *re*-problematizes poverty as multidimensional, as a corrective to earlier reductively unidimensional problematizations from the late-20th century, such as the WB's nearly exclusive focus on resource poverty. Sida's emphasis, on individual empowerment, voice, as well as access to, and/or inclusion in markets and economic growth, influenced by Sen's capabilities approach, reveals a predominantly liberal development paradigm, which necessitates rendering poverty technical, and thus, depoliticizing and dehistoricizing it.

- By contrast, CEDLA problematizes poverty as a symptom of a more fundamental problem, i.e. the exploitative nature of global capitalism. They reject a liberal-individualist framing, such as Sen's, as inimical to more collective notions such as solidarity, class struggle, and liberatory mass movements of the exploited and oppressed. They operate, unequivocally, from a materialist development paradigm.

- It is important to consider that as liberal programmers at Sida, a development donor agency, they face a host of institutional and geopolitical limitations and constraints which further underscores their penchant for rendering technical. Nonetheless, it must be acknowledged that they operate with "the will to improve."

- CEDLA, on the other hand, faces its own set of constraints, as a materialist think tank, which, while funded by Sida and other donors, nonetheless zealously guards its independence. Indeed it has been viewed as a subversive entity, which exposes, rather than excludes, the deeply political and structural nature of poverty and exploitation in Bolivia. CEDLA's researchers should be understood as critics, driven

by "the will to transform." This is, moreover, how I would characterize myself, and my research.

2. What are some of the key promises and challenges of Sida and CEDLA's differing understandings of capitalism for their use of the MDPA framework in Bolivia?

- While nuanced, Sida's understanding of the development context - of which the economic context is a part - is primarily to view it as contextual background information. Sweden's development cooperation mission "to create preconditions for better living conditions for people living in poverty and under oppression" (Sida, 2017:3) reveals that Sida understands poverty and oppression as being separate yet compounding on one another. Moreover, Sida demonstrates a marked tendency towards EDT of the pro-poor variety. Once again, this is underscored by the prevailing emphasis at Sida on the importance of access to, and/or inclusion in markets and economic growth.

- This is in marked contrast to CEDLA's more structural and systemic interpretation of the development, and especially economic, context. For CEDLA, poverty *is* tantamount to capitalist oppression, which they understand, intersectionally, as being inextricably bound up with gendered, racialized, and other forms of oppression. All of CEDLA's publications directly name capitalism, and emphasize its exploitative nature as a fundamental and systemic root cause of poverty. CEDLA's understanding of capitalism, which is thoroughly materialist, makes it unabashedly a proponent of LCD, rather than EDT, as the most promising way to address poverty. After all, for CEDLA, wealth and poverty, or more specifically, capital and labor, are in a structural relation, which necessitates an organized LCD opposition.

- Sida's multidimensional view on poverty is a much-welcome and needed *re*-problematization of the various facets of poverty, which has already inspired others to rethink more simplistic and reductive stances. With the support of the Swedish government, it holds the promise of continuing to be influential in the wider debates on poverty reduction, and bringing about meaningful, yet at the end of the day, palliative, ameliorations to "the multidimensionally poor." Its challenges, particularly in a context like Bolivia, are that it misses an important opportunity to

address the root causes of poverty in exploitative capitalist class relations, as this could hinder the approval of its development interventions, given its institutional and geopolitical limitations as a liberal development donor.

- CEDLA has actively, and in good faith, collaborated with its donor, Sida, in adapting the MDPA framework to the Bolivian context. Its promises and challenges are the inverse of Sida's. As a materialist think tank dependent on donor funding and support, CEDLA's platform and reach are not at the same scale as Sida's. Moreover, it has been seen as a subversive entity by those in power, which CEDLA's researchers suspect has served as an appeal for Sida in deciding to fund the organization. Nonetheless, despite its constraints, CEDLA has an impressive research output, and even developed a MDPI for Bolivia, using Sida's MDPA framework and "making it their own." CEDLA's critique of capitalism, while decidedly in the minority discursively and geopolitically, nonetheless holds the promise of exposing the causes of poverty, and amplifying the voices and movements of LCD-oriented peasants, the poor, and working class Bolivian actors.

In light of the above, it is important that liberal donors like Sida, and the programmers who work for them, who are driven by "the will to improve," continue to fund - not just as donors, but as genuine partners[20] - organizations such as CEDLA which serve a more "critical" function driven by "the will to transform." Such alliances hold the promise of being constructive and mutually beneficial. Sida should continue to remain open to the insights of its partners who serve a "critical" function, particularly when it decides, in the future, to assess, reevaluate, and update its understanding of poverty.

Despite their different constraints and positionalities, programmers and critics can, and must, nevertheless, work together in a dialectical fashion in order to synthesize our differences and continually strive for, and achieve, "the improvement of improvement."

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[20] While remaining continuously aware of the power relations that such partnerships entail.
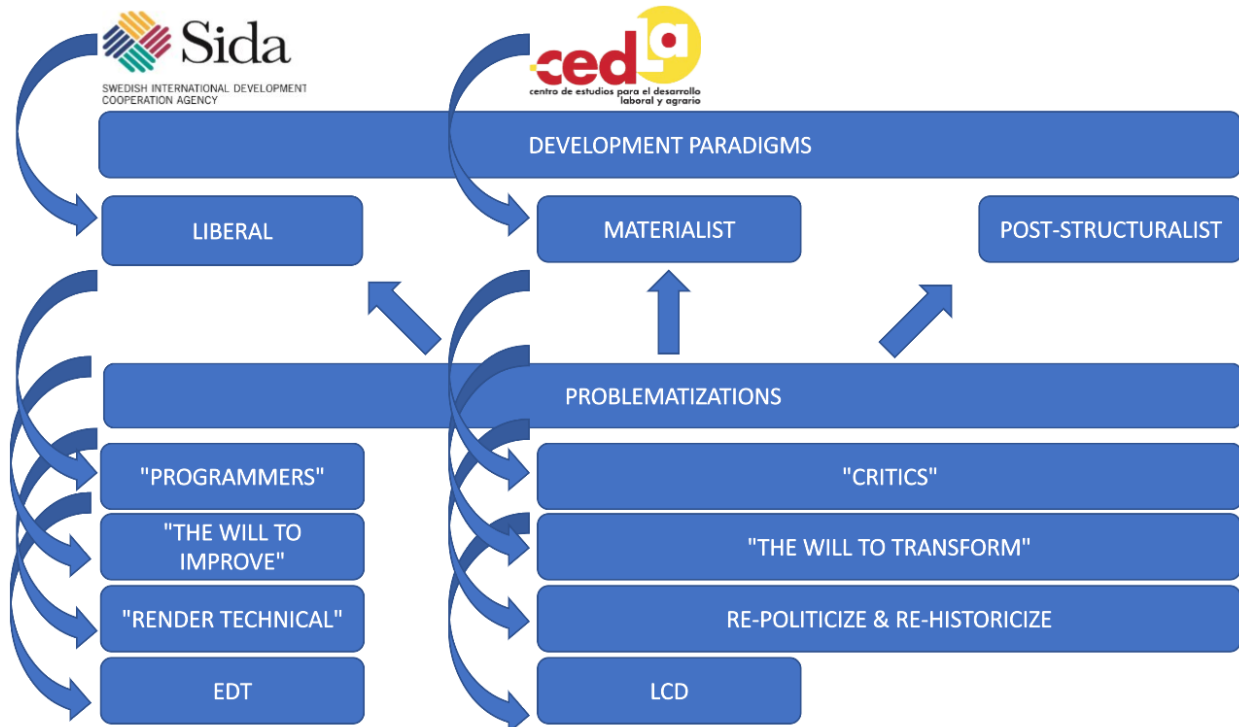
Figure 6. Analytical framework from Chapter 3, and its theoretical concepts, as they apply to Sida and CEDLA.

6.2 Looking forward

Future research should be done, perhaps availing itself of ethnographic methods, in which "the will to improve" and "the will to transform," as well as programmers and critics, are investigated further within the context of international development cooperation. Indeed, development practitioners, researchers and other academics, and activists and organizers alike may share a genuine desire for social - and in some cases, economic - justice. However, their different positionalities, constraints, and development paradigms make it so that these aspirations follow vastly different trajectories, revealing fundamentally diverging understandings of, for example, the root causes of poverty. I would love to see, and eventually participate in or contribute to, research with an explicitly intersectional feminist orientation, that is deeply attentive to the history of colonialism, and its enduring legacies.

I am endlessly grateful for the opportunity to have interned at Sida's Eurolatin department in the spring of 2021, and undertaken this research, which allowed me to meet the incredibly committed and passionate Sida staff and CEDLA researchers. Looking ahead,

I truly hope that they continue to learn from each other, and inspire similar partnerships between donor agencies and independent think tanks, synthesizing evermore the former's "will to improve" and the latter's "will to transform" to continue advocating, and fighting, as the case may be, tirelessly and relentlessly, for justice for "the multidimensionally poor."

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APPENDICES

<u>Appendix A: Foucauldian Discourse Analysis</u>

The oeuvre of French post-structuralist philosopher and historian Michel Foucault is expansive in scope, as he scrutinized prisons, the discipline of psychiatry, the history of sexuality, among various other topics. For the purposes of my research, I would like to unpack the following concepts of his that I find especially germane: archaeology, discourse, governmentality, power-knowledge, and resistance.

Foucault described his approach to history as a kind of **archaeology** through which he sought to examine the discursive traces left by the past in order to write a "history of the present" (Foucault, 1972; O'Farrell, 2005). In my interview guide, I deliberately asked my participants what relevance, if any, they accorded to historical context in their work as development practitioners. In my data analysis, it is, accordingly, significant to be attentive to the traces, as well as absences, of important Latin American historical context such as colonialism, for instance. If archaeology concerns discourse, then what does discourse mean in Foucault's work?

Discourse, for Foucault, is more than just an exchange of words, and more than just a collection of signs (Foucault, 1972:291). Discourse is, instead, about "*structures* - that is 'sociocultural resources,' which are used to make sense of the social world - and *practices* - 'structures of meaning-in-use,' which dictate the rules through which social meanings are assigned to things and social interactions are framed" (Laffey and Weldes, 2004:28; Carta, 2019:81, original emphases). Thus understood, discourse analysis is not merely a "method" but "also a perspective on the nature of language and its relationship to central issues of the social science[s]" (Wood and Kroger, 2002:x). It should be noted that Foucault also conceptualized what he termed "non-discursive practices" which consist of "institutions, political events, economic practices and processes," and he found it important to relate discursive and non-discursive practices (Foucault, 1972:162). I am especially interested in the concept of discourse as it pertains to notions of poverty reduction. Following Foucault's example, I do not take these discourses for granted. In my analysis, I will draw on both my qualitative data and textual corpus in order to understand, and problematize, these discourses more thoroughly.

Related to the term "governance," Foucault's notion of **governmentality** "encompass[es] the techniques and procedures which are designed to govern the conduct of both individuals and populations at every level, not just the administrative or political level" (O'Farrell, 2005). I am interested in discerning which group is meant to be "governed" by the MDPA framework in theory, and which group, if any, is actually "governed" in practice: LAC's multidimensionally poor, LAC states, Swedish development actors themselves, a combination of the above, or some other group(s) entirely.

Foucault's notion of power merits closer consideration. In Foucault's works, power can be understood as "a dynamic of control and lack of control between discourses and the subjects, constituted by discourses, who are their agents. Power is exercised within discourses in the ways in which they constitute and govern individual subjects" (Weedon, 1987:113). Foucault is distinctive in his theorization of power relations to the extent that he understands them to be inextricably linked to knowledge, to the point that he sees it necessary to employ the term "**power-knowledge**." "Power produces and defines knowledge. Power and knowledge imply one another" (Foucault, 1975, as cited in Stahl, 2004). Recalling Escobar's (2008) development paradigms chart, as Foucault is a post-structuralist, he is very much invested in the analysis of knowledge production. So too, in my analysis, do I endeavor to investigate the link between knowledge and power in Sida's development work in the LAC region.

Given that for Foucault, power is relational, and that it is not simply repressive, but rather, productive, it is necessary to note that he additionally conceptualizes it as omnipresent at all levels of society (O'Farrell, 2005). However, this need not be a cause for pessimism, as Foucault also theorized **resistance** within power relations. "Resistance is co-extensive with power, namely as soon as there is a power relation, there is a possibility of resistance" (ibid.). Moreover, "there is always the possibility of resistance no matter how oppressive the system" (ibid.). In summary, while discourses produce power, they can also expose it and render it fragile.

Appendix B: Anonymized Participants List

ID	Affiliation	Country[21]	Language[22]	Date	Medium[23]	Duration[24]
S.I.1	Sida	Sweden	English	20-04-21	Online	00:54:44
G.F.1	Sida	Guatemala	Spanish	22-04-21	Online	01:02:03
C.F.2		Colombia				
B.F.3		Bolivia				
B.I.1	Sida	Bolivia	Spanish	22-04-21	Online	01:04:35
S.I.2	Sida	Sweden	English	26-04-21	Online	00:32:03[25]
S.I.3	Sida	Sweden	English	27-04-21	Online	00:25:40
S.I.4	Sida	Sweden	English	27-04-21	Online	00:29:09
S.I.5	Sida	Sweden	English	28-04-21	Online	00:43:49
S.I.6	Sida	Sweden	English	29-04-21	Online	00:39:46
S.I.7	Sida	Sweden	English	29-04-21	Online	00:41:37
B.P.1	CEDLA	Bolivia	Spanish	30-04-21	Online	01:16:47
B.P.2						
S.I.8	Sida	Sweden	English	06-05-21	Online	00:20:36
G.P.1	Sida	Guatemala	Spanish	06-05-21	Online	01:19:09
G.P.2						
C.I.1	Sida	Colombia	Spanish	11-05-21	Online	00:52:34

Table B1. Anonymized participants list.

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[21] The combination of a Sida affiliation and being based in Sweden applies to the participants who work at Sida in Stockholm. The combination of a Sida affiliation and any of the three LAC countries denotes a participant at one of the Swedish embassies in LAC. The two CEDLA participants were the only non-Sida-affiliated ones.

[22] I transcribed the English interviews with Otter and the Spanish interviews with Sonix.

[23] All interviews were conducted and recorded via Zoom.

[24] More specifically, this column represents the durations of the recordings.

[25] The full duration of this interview was a bit longer. However, due to a recording glitch, the final part was lost. I adapted quickly and took notes when this occurred, however, fortunately, the essential content was conveyed prior to the glitch, and thus made it into the transcription.

Appendix C: Selected Secondary Data[26]

Publisher	Year	Original Title	Translated Title	Description
CEDLA	2017	Medición de la Pobreza Multidimensional: Bolivia 2017	Measurement of Multidimensional Poverty: Bolivia 2017	Here, CEDLA engages with the MDPA framework the year it was published, applying it to the Bolivian context.
CEDLA	2019	Desigualdades y Pobreza en Bolivia: Una Perspectiva Multidimensional	Inequalities and Poverty in Bolivia: A Multidimensional Perspective	This is a more recent publication in which CEDLA applies Sida's MDPA framework to its local labor research.
CEDLA	2020	Producción y Reproducción de Desigualdades: Organización Social y Poder Político	Production and Reproduction of Inequalities: Social Organization and Political Power	CEDLA provides valuable historical context on the impacts of the neoliberal SAPs in Bolivia, the COB, and its relation to the MAS party.
Sida	2002	Perspectives on Poverty	---	An example of Sida's multidimensional view on poverty that predates the MDPA framework.
Sida	2003	Making Markets Work for the Poor	---	Ch. 1 "Why Private Sector Development?" opens as follows: "Since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, the market is the undisputed principle for the organization of market activities..." (p. 17).

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[26] This chart contains a selection of the secondary data which supported the analysis of the primary interview data, providing helpful context, including, in some cases, material which was analyzed as well. All translations from Spanish and Swedish into English are my own.

Sida	2017	Dimensions of Poverty: Sida's Conceptual Framework	---	The main official document in which the MDPA framework is presented and elaborated upon.
Sida	2019	Dimension of Poverty	---	A summary of the MDPA framework.
Sida	2020	Underlag till strategi för regionalt utvecklingssamarbete med Latinamerika: 2021 - 2025	Basis for Strategy for Regional Development Cooperation with Latin America: 2021 - 2025	The Swedish government commissioned Sida to propose a strategy for the coming half decade of Sweden's development cooperation in LAC. This is Sida's proposal.
UD	2021	Strategi för Sveriges regionala utvecklingssamarbete med Latinamerika: 2021 - 2025	Strategy for Sweden's Regional Development Cooperation with Latin America: 2021 - 2025	In May, 2021, the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs published its decision on Sida's proposed strategy.

Table C1. Selected secondary data.

<u>Appendix D: Interview Guides</u>[27]
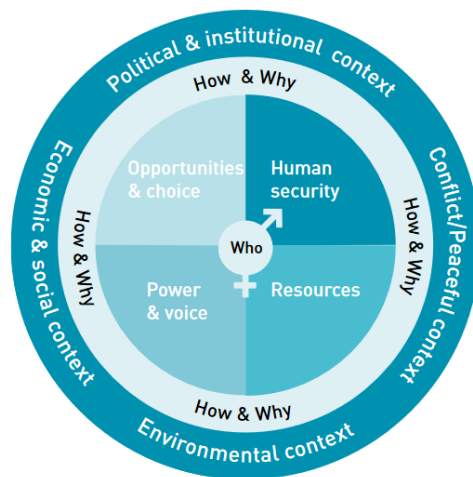
INTERVIEW GUIDE: SAMPLE 1[28]

Figure D1. Sida's Multidimensional Poverty Analysis (MDPA) framework; source: Sida (2017).

Introduction

- Could you please kindly share a brief background of how you came to your line of work and to Sida? What led you to your professional focus, and to this agency?

Development of MDPA framework & link to Swedish & international priorities

- Could you kindly elaborate on how the MDPA framework was developed? How does it distinguish itself from earlier frameworks used at Sida, or other frameworks used in international development cooperation in general? Do you feel it is important to Sida's work, and if so, why?
- What is your understanding of how this framework responds to and is shaped by Swedish and international development priorities?
- I noticed that the Swedish policy framework is described as being more ambitious than the SDGs. Could you please elaborate on this?

---

[27] I prepared these interview guides in April, 2021, in an earlier stage of my research in which I had a different purpose and focus. The present thesis and its research questions emerged from the data collected through these interview questions. The earlier broader focus on topics such as donor positionality and reflexivity, climate and environmental finance, power relations, etc. allowed me to "cast a wide net." In the end, it all served as relevant contextual material for my eventual first research question about Sida and CEDLA's problematizations of poverty and their underlying development paradigms, as well as their differing understandings of capitalism and uses of the MDPA framework, which became my second research question. While all the questions in this guide elicited relevant material for my current thesis, the material can be divided into responses in which poverty and the MDPA framework were most salient, and responses which provided helpful background context.

[28] The interview guides varied depending on the interview type and on the exact expertise of the participant in question. This particular interview guide was among the ones more focused on the MDPA framework, and I used it for two individual semi-structured interviews. I included the MDPA framework as a visual reminder.

- What is your understanding of what is entailed by "poverty reduction," and why do you believe this is a Swedish development priority?

Connection to Latin American regional strategy in particular

- To the best of your knowledge, to what extent, and in which ways has the MDPA framework been used in the Latin American and Caribbean region?
- As far as you're aware, what are some distinctive characteristics of this region for which the MDPA framework is especially well-suited?
- As the MDPA framework is meant to center "poor people's perspectives," in which ways is Sida accountable to poor people in LAC, and, concretely, how are their perspectives integrated? How, if at all, could Sida be more accountable to them?

Power, inequality, and history

- Drawing from your professional experience at Sida, and prior to working at Sida, what is your understanding of power and power relations? How would you define them?
- What room, if any, is there in the MDPA framework for a consideration of not only income, but also wealth inequality? To what extent does the framework, whose focus is on poverty, account for the relevance of "the other side of the coin," i.e. global and local wealth disparities?
- I noticed that historical context does not figure explicitly in the framework. To what extent, if at all, might history, in this case Latin America's historical context, inform an MDP analysis? Who, if anyone, whether in Sweden or at the embassies abroad, is most likely to contribute such insights, as far as you know?

Elaborating and looking forward

- Do you have any particular experiences or insights you could kindly share in order to complement or elaborate on any elements of the framework?
- What possibilities, if any, exist for the further development of the MDPA framework, and in which ways do you believe the framework can be strengthened or improved?

Anything else that wasn't addressed?

- As we conclude, was there anything you feel was not addressed that you would like to add?

INTERVIEW GUIDE: SAMPLE 2[29]

Introduction

- Could you please kindly share a brief background of how you came to your line of work and to Sida? What led you to your professional focus, and to this agency?

Your reflections on some key terms

- I would be interested for you to briefly share your understanding of the following terms. How would you define them, in your own words, as they apply to your work at Sida. Do you believe it is important for Sida to reflect on them? If so, why? The terms are:
  - International development
  - Power and power relations
  - Poverty reduction
  - Gender and intersectionality
  - Historical context

Swedish & international priorities

- What role, if any, do Swedish and international priorities play in your work? What are these priorities?
- Is there anything that sets Sweden apart in the areas of your professional focus? If so, what is it, and how does it differ from other global actors?
- Historically Sweden has been described, and sometimes described itself as "neutral." As a Swede, what significance, if any, does this have for you? Do you have any thoughts on the interplay between Swedish "neutrality" and some of Sweden's more bold and progressive development goals and positions?

Climate/environment & Latin American strategy

- What do climate & environmental justice in LAC mean to you? Whom do they involve? You may substitute social & economic justice in LAC if you prefer.
- As far as you're aware, what are some distinctive characteristics of the LAC region as far as climate and environmental or social & economic issues are concerned?
- Feel free to share, to the best of your knowledge, about the process behind developing the proposal for the new Latin American regional strategy. Do you have any particular hopes, expectations, or concerns as the Swedish government delivers its decision soon?

---

[29] This interview guide is representative of the more general line of questions I pursued with individuals who used the MDPA framework but whose primary expertise was in another area, for instance, climate and environmental issues, or, as in this particular case, democracy and human rights issues.

Story

- Does any particular anecdote or story from your professional or personal experience stand out which illustrates power relations, or, any of the other topics we have been discussing? Other colleagues have briefly shared stories, and I'd like to give you an opportunity to do the same if one comes to mind.

Wrap-up: What does Sida do well as a donor? Where can it improve?

- What does Sweden, and in particular Sida, do well as a donor?
- Where, in your opinion, could Sweden, and Sida, improve?

Anything else that wasn't addressed?

- As we conclude, was there anything you feel was not addressed that you would like to add?

INFORMED CONSENT FORM (English)

This informed consent form is for Sida informants who are invited to participate in this Master's thesis study which investigates Sida's positionality and reflexivity regarding the power relations in its climate and environmental finance in Latin America, with a focus on its newest regional strategy.

RESEARCHER: Jonathan S. Espinosa

INSTITUTION: Lund University, Sweden

RESEARCH PROJECT: MSc. thesis, qualitative study

RESEARCH PURPOSE

This research looks into the under-examined area of donor positionality and reflexivity, that is, how donors understand their role in broader international development power dynamics. The donor being researched is Sida, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency. As Sida is active around the world in a wide array of development issues, this study limits its scope primarily to Sida's climate and environmental finance in Latin America, while considering the national and international discourses which have shaped Sida's funding priorities, as well as the specificities of the relevant Latin American contexts which inform Sida's most recent Latin American regional strategy.

PARTICIPANT SELECTION AND PARTICIPATION

You have been invited to take part in this research because your expertise as a development professional can contribute greatly to the understanding of Sida's positionality and reflexivity. This research will involve your participation in an interview which will take up to 45 minutes.[31]

PARTICIPATION, CONFIDENTIALITY, AND DATA USAGE

Your initial acceptance of the researcher's interview request is taken as a sign of interest, and is greatly appreciated. This consent form is an extension of that informal e-mail arrangement. Your participation in this research exercise is entirely **voluntary.** You may choose to discontinue the interview at any time. You do not have to answer any question, or take part in the interview, if you do not wish to do so. You do not have to provide any reason for not responding to any question, or for declining to take part in the interview, if you wish not to. The researcher will respect your decision.

The interview will be recorded solely for the purpose of facilitating the researcher's subsequent transcription process. In any report on the results of the research, your identity, and the identity of those mentioned during the interview, will remain anonymous. All personally identifiable information will be treated with strict confidentiality and will not be disclosed to any third parties. The researcher endeavors to respect and comply with all relevant GDPR data protection regulations.

Finally, in his capacity as an intern at Sida, between the dates of 1 March 2021 and 31 May 2021, the researcher abides by the *Sekretessförbindelse för praktikanter* form which he signed on 16 February

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[30] I prepared these informed consent forms in April, 2021, in an earlier stage of my research in which I had a different purpose and focus. See Appendix D, footnote 27, which addresses the relation between my original research focus, and my eventual thesis focus, in more detail. I have left the original forms unchanged.

[31] This duration was modified on a case-by-case basis depending on the participants' availabilities, as expressed in our e-mail communications prior to sending them this form.

2021. As such, he is committed to researching only that information which is non-classified in nature, and publicly accessible. The interviewee is kindly requested to bear this in mind.

PARTICIPANT CONSENT

I have read the foregoing information, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it, and any questions I have posed have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study.

PARTICIPANT'S NAME:
PARTICIPANT'S SIGNATURE:
DATE:

You are welcomed and encouraged to contact the researcher should you have questions and / or require further clarification about the research. You may contact me at jonathan.espinosa@sida.se.[32]

FORMULARIO DE CONSENTIMIENTO INFORMADO (Español)[33]

Este formulario de consentimiento informado es para las/los colegas de Asdi que han sido invitadas/os a participar en este estudio de tesis de maestría. El enfoque de esta investigación es la posicionalidad y la reflexividad de Asdi con respecto a las relaciones de poder, tanto en la cooperación sueca en general, como en su financiamiento climático y ambiental en Latinoamérica en particular. La nueva estrategia regional de Asdi también es de interés.

INVESTIGADOR: Jonathan S. Espinosa
INSTITUCIÓN: Universidad de Lund, Suecia
TIPO DE INVESTIGACIÓN: Tesis de maestría, estudio cualitativo

PROPÓSITO DE LA INVESTIGACIÓN

Esta investigación analiza el tema poco examinado de la posicionalidad y la reflexividad de los donantes, es decir, cómo los donantes entienden su rol en las dinámicas de poder en el desarrollo internacional. El donante que se está investigando es Asdi, la Agencia Sueca de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo. Dado que Asdi tiene presencia en varias partes del mundo, y en una amplia gama de temas de desarrollo, el ámbito de este estudio se limita al financiamiento climático y ambiental de Asdi en Latinoamérica. Se consideran también los discursos suecos e internacionales que han influido en las prioridades de financiamiento de Asdi, junto con la especificidad de los contextos latinoamericanos relevantes que han moldeado la nueva estrategia regional de Asdi.

SELECCIÓN Y PARTICIPACIÓN DE PARTICIPANTES

Se le ha invitado a participar en esta investigación porque su experiencia como profesional del desarrollo podría contribuir enormemente a la comprensión de la posicionalidad y la reflexividad de Asdi. Esta investigación implicará su participación en un grupo focal que durará hasta 1 hora.[34] Estaría

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[32] This was my Sida e-mail address during my internship there in the spring of 2021.
[33] I prepared this translation into Spanish for my LAC-based participants myself.
[34] I provided this version of the form to the focus group participants. The stated duration here is different from what appears on the otherwise identical forms provided to the individual, as well as paired depth, interview participants.

hablando a título personal y no como portavoz o representante de Asdi. Se le anima especialmente a compartir anécdotas relevantes o una breve historia durante la entrevista, si lo desea.

PARTICIPACIÓN, CONFIDENCIALIDAD, Y USO DE DATOS

Se le agradece mucho su aceptación inicial de la solicitud de entrevista del investigador. Este formulario de consentimiento es una extensión de ese acuerdo informal que se realizó por correo electrónico. Su participación en esta entrevista es completamente voluntaria. Puede optar por suspender su participación en cualquier momento. No se le obligará a responder a ninguna pregunta, ni a participar en la entrevista, si no lo desea. No tiene que dar ninguna explicación o justificación si decide no responder a cualquier pregunta, o no participar en la entrevista, si no lo desea. El investigador respetará su decisión incondicionalmente.

La entrevista se grabará con el único fin de facilitar el proceso de transcripción posterior del investigador. En cualquier informe sobre los resultados de la investigación, su identidad y la identidad de las demás personas mencionadas durante la entrevista serán anonimizadas. Toda la información de carácter personal se tratará con estricta confidencialidad y no se divulgará a terceras partes. El investigador se compromete a respetar y cumplir con todas las regulaciones de protección de datos relevantes (p.ej. el RGPD europeo).

Finalmente, en su calidad de pasante en Asdi entre las fechas del 1 de marzo del 2021 y el 31 de mayo del 2021, el investigador cumple con el formulario de confidencialidad de Asdi que firmó el 16 de febrero del 2021. De por sí, se compromete a investigar sólo información de acceso público, y no clasificada. Se le pide a la entrevistada / al entrevistado[35] que tome esto en cuenta.

CONSENTIMIENTO DE LA / DEL PARTICIPANTE

He leído la información anterior o me la han leído. He tenido la oportunidad de hacer preguntas al respecto y he recibido respuestas satisfactorias. Por lo tanto, doy mi consentimiento voluntario para participar en este estudio.

NOMBRE DE LA / DEL PARTICIPANTE:
FIRMA DE LA / DEL PARTICIPANTE:
FECHA:

Por favor, no dude en contactar al investigador si tiene preguntas o si requiere de más aclaraciones sobre la investigación. Mi dirección de correo electrónico es la siguiente: jonathan.espinosa@sida.se.

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[35] The Spanish language poses some additional challenges for accounting for gender neutrality and inclusiveness. In cases where gendered nouns or adjectives were present, I provided the corresponding feminine and masculine forms in an effort to be inclusive rather than default to the universal masculine tendency in Spanish grammar, which has been changing in recent years, as a result of societal pressures.