



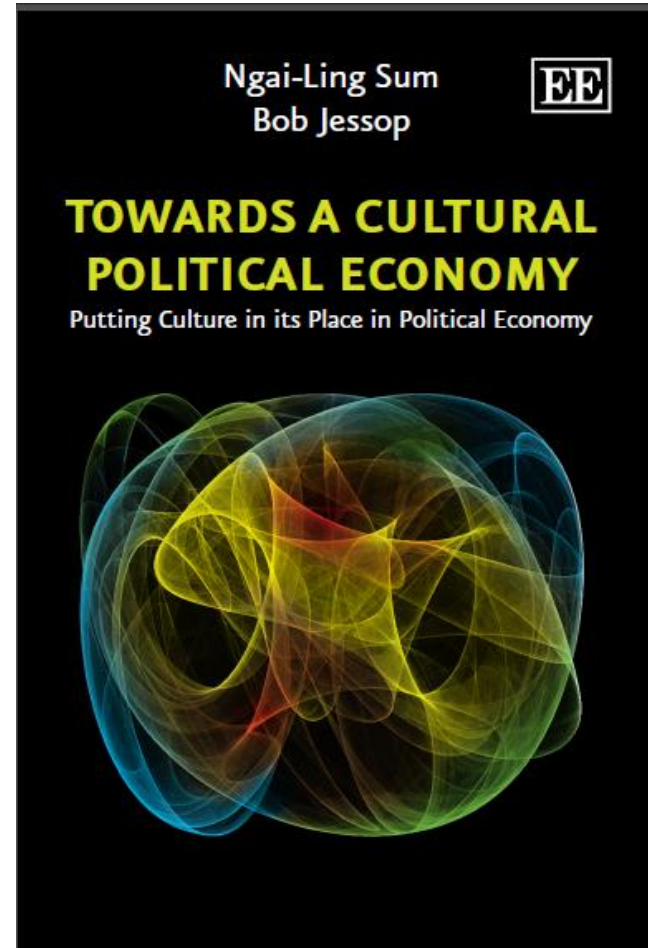
# **Towards a Cultural Political Economy: Engaging with the Cultural Turn in Political Economy II**

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# Outline: 5 Parts

- Making a Cultural Turn in Political Economy
- Charting a Route between Constructivism and Structuralism
- Staging an Encounter between Marx, Gramsci and Foucault
- Offering a Set of Heuristic Tool for CPE: Four Selectivities
- Concluding Remarks



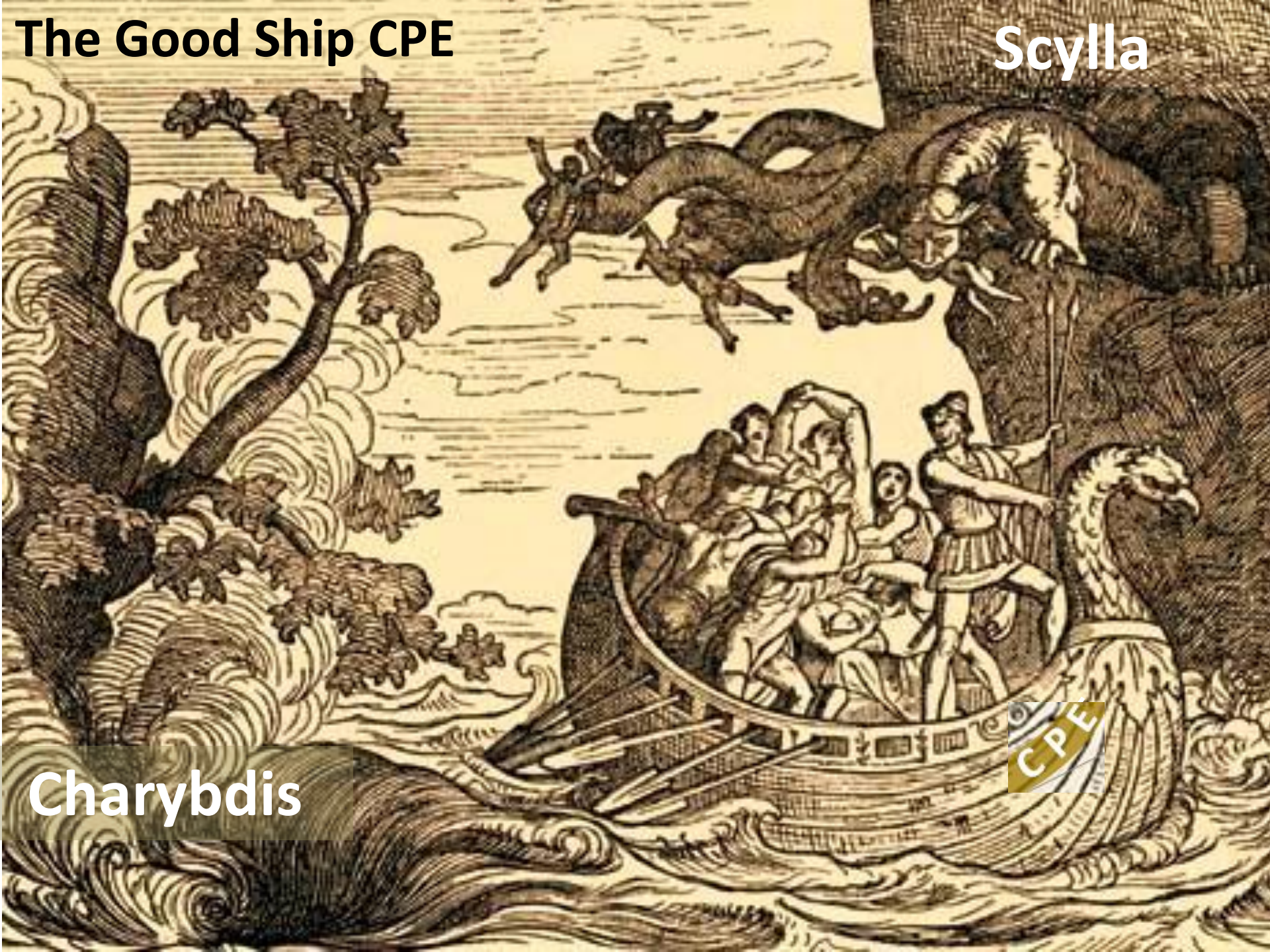
# 1. Making a Cultural Turn in Political Economy

- CPE is a broad 'post-disciplinary' approach that takes an ontological 'cultural turn' in the study of political economy
- An ontological 'cultural turn' examines **culture** as (co-)constitutive of social life and must, hence, be a foundational aspect of enquiry
- This turn aims to enhance the interpretive and explanatory power of political economy
- It focuses on the nature and role of **semiosis** (sense- and meaning-making) in the remaking of social relations and puts these in their wider **structural context(s)**
- Steering a route between constructivism and structuralism (Charybdis vs Scylla)
  - Based on Greek mythology of Ulysses



**The Good Ship CPE**

**Scylla**



**Charybdis**



# Charting a Route between Constructivist Charybdis and Structuralist Scylla

Constructivist Charybdis	Structuralist Scylla
Grasps semiotic construction of social relations and notes its performative impact	Grasps <i>distinctiveness</i> of specific economic categories and their structured/structuring role in wider social formations
But finds it hard to define specificity of economic relations relative to other relations – because they are all discursive	But reifies such categories, fetishizes economic structures as natural, and views agents as mere bearer of economic logics
Strong risk of <u>idealism</u> , defining economic relations in terms of their manifest <i>semiotic content</i>	Strong risk of economic <u>determinism</u> , explaining economic processes in terms of ‘ <i>iron laws</i> ’
Soft economic sociology	Hard political economy

- In charting the route, CPE notes that:

- *all constructions are equal but some are more equal than others*



- Some constructions (and related imaginaries) are more powerful because they are **promoted by dominant institutions/actors** that use impactful technologies to advance semiosis and structuration
  - CPE has an **evolutionary approach**: starting from *variation* in constructions, it asks what factors (semiotic and *extra-semiotic*) shape the differential *selection*, and subsequent *retention* of imaginaries?
  - These **hegemonic** (or, at least, dominant) **imaginaries** shape leading ways of thinking about social relations, crisis-management and hope-making

- The selection, retention, and institutionalization of hegemonic imaginaries are shaped by at least **four forms of selectivity**
  - Structural
  - Agential
  - Discursive
  - Technological
- To capture these four forms
  - Back to theories
  - Stage an **encounter between Marx, Gramsci and Foucault**



- Focus on Gramsci's concept of **hegemonies** – production of (counter-)hegemonies
  - Hegemonies cannot be taken for granted, they have to be constructed and reconstructed
  - This involves material-discursive mechanisms, processes and practices whereby hegemonies (political, intellectual, moral and self-leadership) are secured in diverse economic/political fields and in the wider society

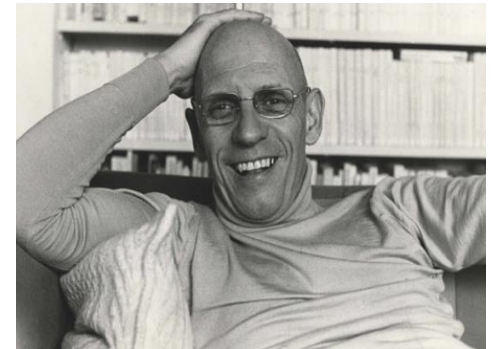


- Examines the production of hegemonies as **process** that involves actors who discursively frame economic/political imaginaries (e.g., competitiveness, growth, hi-tech development, modernization, nationalism, poverty reduction, crisis, resilience, hope/fear, etc.)
- Does not assume pre-existence of organic intellectuals
- Studies the contingent interactions as
  - discourses make organic intellectuals *and*
  - organic intellectuals make discourses

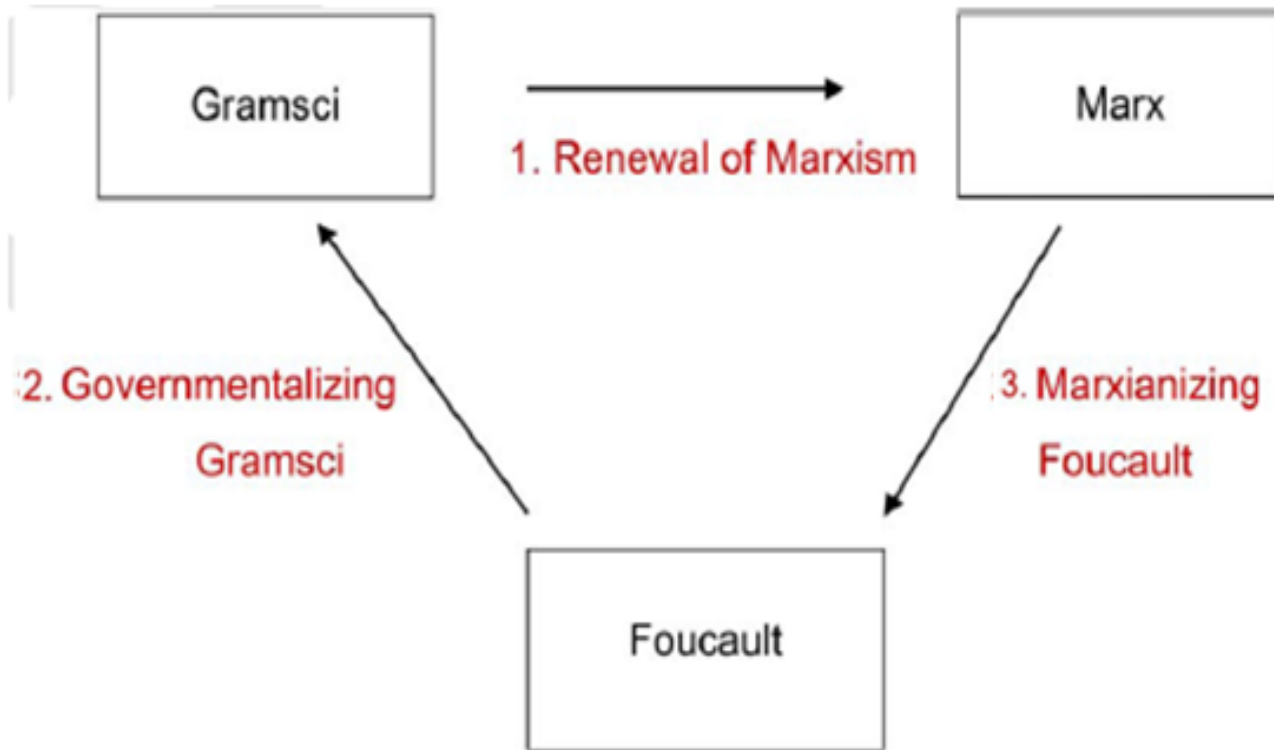
# 3. Marx, Gramsci and Foucault

- Explore interface between the semiotic and extra-semiotic and the production of hegemonies by staging a three-sided encounter between Marx, Gramsci, and Foucault
  - Marx provides the crucial foundations for the **critique of political economy**
  - Gramsci developed a ‘vernacular materialism’ (Ives 2004) that highlights the **role of language in sense and meaning-making in mediating hegemony** and domination across all spheres of society (Gramsci 1971; see also Thomas 2009; Green 2011)
  - CPE enhances this synthesis by integrating Foucault’s insights on objectivation, subjectivation, power/knowledge, and their related **technologies of power and assembling of dispositives**

- The encounter involves a triple movement based on Marsden's observation of
  - Marx can tell us *why* but cannot tell us *how*, and
  - Foucault tells us *how*, but cannot tell us *why* (1999: 135)



# A three-sided Encounter and Triple Movements





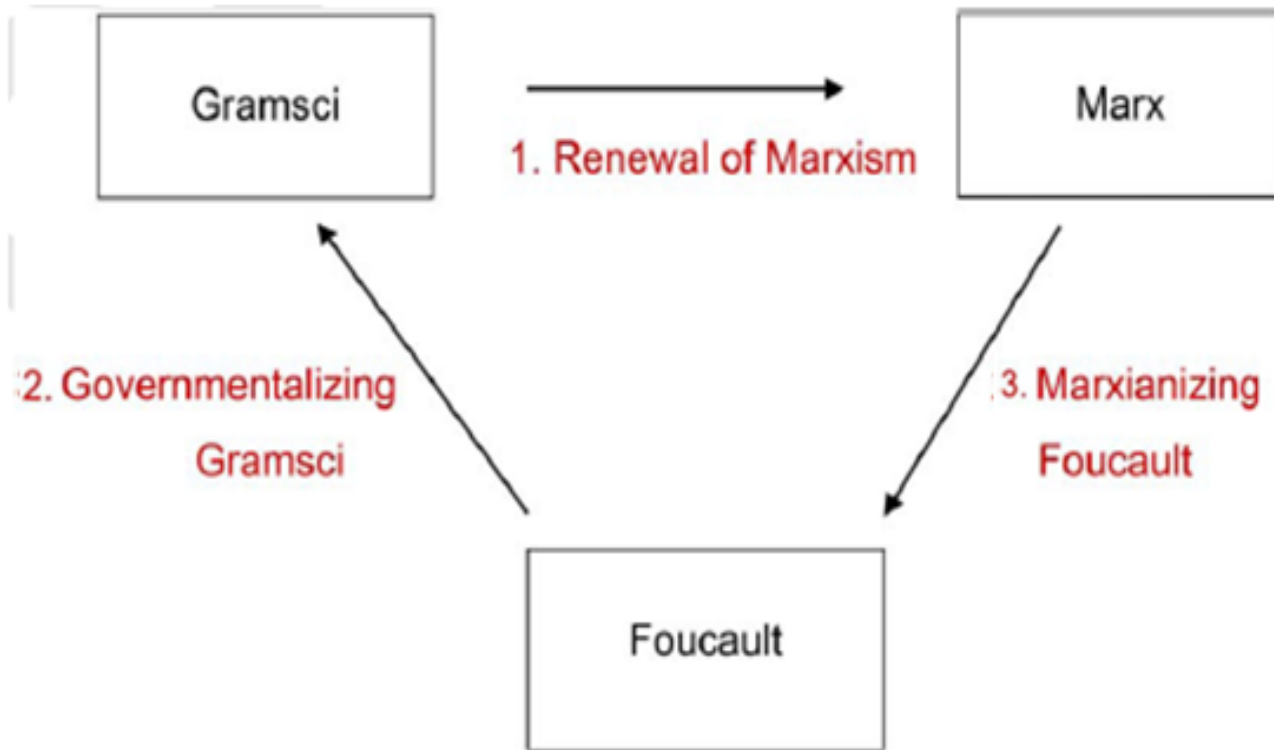
- **Renewal of Marxism**

- Gramsci's 'vernacular materialism' (Ives 2004) renews the Marxian critique of political economy with categories such as **hegemony**
- It highlights **the role of language in sense and meaning-making in mediating hegemony** and domination (Gramsci 1971; see also Thomas 2009; Green 2011; Carlucci 2015)

- **Governmentalizing Gramsci**
  - Dissonance and consonance between Gramsci and Foucault
  - Stage this encounter by drawing on the **Duisburg School of discourse analysis** (Link 1983; Jäger and Maier 2009; Caborn 2007) on the grammar of hegemonic and dominant discourses
    - Gramsci on the creative role of *hegemony* (political, intellectual, moral and self-leadership) in constituting power relations
    - Foucault on productive and constitutive role of *‘regimes of truth’* and *configuring of dispositives*

- Our an extended (re-)definition of Foucault's *Dispositive* (Sum/Jessop 2013: 208)
- It comprises a problem- oriented, strategically selective bringing together (ensemble) of
  - a distributed apparatus, comprising institutions, organizations and networks;
  - an order of discourse, with corresponding thematizations and objectivations;
  - diverse devices and technologies involved in producing power/knowledge;
  - subject positions and subjectivation

# A three-sided Encounter and Triple Movements





- **Marxianizing Foucault**
  - Returning to Marx (via Gramsci) helps to re-integrate **how** and **why** questions in a coherent critical framework
  - In the 1970s Foucault said one could not write history without using many concepts linked to Marx's thought and working on an intellectual terrain defined by Marx (P/K: 53)
  - Turning from microphysics of power to broader issues of governmentality and its strategic codification, Foucault also explored dynamic of capital accumulation and "state effects" (*Discipline and Punish* + lectures on governmentality)

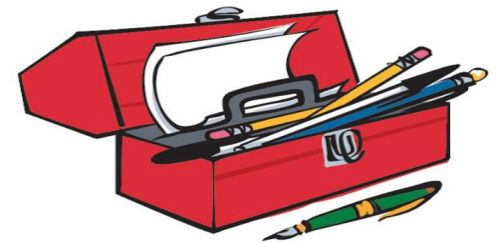
—This helps to identify the

- *structural limits to shaping objects of governance and willing subjects*
- *sources of crisis-tendencies and antagonisms*
- *links between problematization and struggles for hegemony*
- *relative capacities of discourses, dispositifs, and subjectivations in producing institutional and spatio-temporal fixes*

- Based on this encounter and Jessop's **strategic-relational approach** (2007)
  - CPE studies structures as structurally-inscribed selectivities, i.e., how the social organization of social relations biases the selection of practices and strategies in terms of variation-selection-retention of possible actions and possible sets of social relations
  - It studies actions in terms of selectivities, i.e., how reflexive agents and semiosis guide meaning and action in terms of identities, interests, and strategies pursued over different spatio-temporal horizons
- CPE identifies four modes of selectivity for studying the remaking of social relations

# 4. The Heuristic of Four Selectivities

- The set of four selectivities serves to orient CPE research – it is not a theory but a heuristic device that poses questions and methods (meso-level)
- It highlights
  - the interaction of *four selectivities* of social relations
    - Structural selectivity
    - Agential selectivity
    - Discursive selectivity
    - Technological selectivity (Foucauldian sense)





## Four Modes of Strategic Selectivity (Sum and Jessop 2013: 218-9)

Selectivity	Grounded In	Effects
Structural	Contested reproduction of basic social forms (e.g., capital-labour relations, capital-gender relations, nature-society relations, etc.)	<u>Structure favours</u> certain interests, identities, agents, temporal-spatial horizons, strategies and tactics over others
Agential	Uneven capacities of <u>social agents</u> (individuals, organizations, social forces) to <u>'make a difference'</u> in particular conjunctures – including their abilities to exploit structural, discursive and technological selectivities	<b>'Make a difference' depends on abilities to change (or maintain) balance of forces and structures by (a) reading conjunctures; (b) repoliticizing sedimented discourses or depoliticizing contested discourses; and (c) recombine technologies or developing new technologies</b>

Selectivity	Grounded In	Effects
Discursive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semiosis is rooted in enforced <u>selection of sense and meaning</u> in face of complexity</li> <li>• What can be said, who may speak, how do enunciations enter inter-textual, inter-discursive, contextual fields?</li> <li>• <u>Constraints/opportunities tied to particular genres, styles and discourses (e.g., news, consultancy reports, executive summaries, news releases, etc.)</u></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semiotic resources can <u>frame and limit possible imaginaries</u>, discourses, arguments, identities and feelings</li> <li>• Shapes scope for hegemonies, sub-hegemonies and counter-hegemonies</li> </ul>
Techno-logical (à la Foucault)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Assemblages of knowledge, disciplinary and governmental rationalities</u> in specific sites, mechanisms of calculated intervention and/or governing social relations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specific objectivization, subjectivization, knowledging technologies and interwoven dispositives that <u>shape choices, capacities to act, normalize intervention</u>, convey legitimacy via rationality and effectivity</li> </ul>

# Discursive Selectivity: Genre and Style of Executive Summary in Consultancy Report

## Executive Summary

To achieve sustainable growth and poverty reduction, developing countries need strong institutional capacity. The World Bank devotes significant resources to building stronger institutions and organizations in client countries. It helps build capacity through a variety of means, including technical assistance, studies, equipment, and training. This evaluation focuses on the efficacy of one of the primary instruments for capacity building—training individuals so they are better able to contribute to their country's development goals.

It was found that most Bank-financed training resulted in individual participant learning, but improved the capacity of client institutions and organizations to achieve development objectives only about half the time.<sup>1</sup> Where training did not succeed, it was because its design was flawed or insufficient attention was paid to the organizational and institutional context in which training took place. The Bank could significantly improve the impact of its training investments through (i) the development of training design guidance to enhance quality assurance and (ii) by making available resource staff with expertise in training design to Bank project managers.

Training provided by the World Bank Institute (WBI) was found to be insufficiently targeted to client needs, and inadequately embedded in broader capacity-building strategies, to substantially impact development capacity. If the WBI is expected (as stated in its mandate) to play a capacity-building role, its training processes need to be substantially reengineered.

*Over the past decade, the Bank has financed approximately \$720 million in training annually, over 90 percent through projects and the remainder through the WBI. The importance of training to the achievement of development objectives goes well beyond these dollar terms, however.*

Training is one of the primary means by which the Bank helps build the capacity of countries to reduce poverty. Moreover, it is often fundamental to the success of other investments. Without trained road maintenance crews, highways crumble. Without trained teachers, school buildings remain empty. Overall, in an estimated 60 percent of projects, training is either integral to the achievement of the goals of one or more components or supportive of all project components.

The Bank supports training in two ways. First, many investment projects include dedicated training components or training activities embedded within project components. Second, the Bank has a separate unit devoted to capacity building—the WBI, which aims to “build skills among groups of individuals involved in performing tasks, and also to strengthen the organizations in which they work, and the socio-political environment within which they operate.”

This evaluation examined the extent to which Bank-financed training contributed to capacity building. *Most Bank-financed training was found to result in individual participant learning, but only about half resulted in substantial changes to workplace behavior or enhanced development capacity.*

gaps or normal needs assessment or training participants. It also lacks standardized procedures for meaningful direct consultation with clients on training needs and priorities. In most cases, the WBI does not directly provide follow-up support to facilitate workplace implementation of learning. It also does not systematically link its training programs to complementary capacity-building support provided by operations or other partners.

*The quality of project-financed training is uneven due to the lack of explicit design standards for all World Bank training activities, and lack of expert support for training activities embedded in projects. Bank-*

### Recommendations

The Bank can enhance the vital contribution of training to client capacity building by ensuring that the training it supports

- Is linked to the Bank's support for development objectives in client countries,
- Is embedded within broader capacity-building strategies that provide complementary support for the implementation of learning, and
- Conforms with best practice in training design.

The following three recommendations are intended to lead to this outcome:

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### USING TRAINING TO BUILD CAPACITY FOR DEVELOPMENT

1. The Bank needs to develop guidance and quality criteria for the design and implementation of training, to enable quality assurance and monitoring and evaluation of all its training support. This guidance should be applied to all training financed by the Bank, including training that is directly provided by units such as the WBI. Design guidance should include
  - Diagnostics and training-needs assessment requirements for training initiation;
  - Participant selection criteria;
  - Standards for the use of practical exercises and other active-learning techniques within training;
  - Use of follow-up support; and
  - Provisions for monitoring and evaluation, including specification of performance-change objectives and key monitorable indicators.
2. The Bank could improve the quality and impact of training by making available to its regional staff and borrowers, resource persons with technical expertise in the design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of training.
3. Management must clarify the WBI's mandate on provision of training with capacity-building

goals. If the WBI is to play a capacity-building role in client countries, its training processes should be substantially reengineered to ensure that training is likely to contribute to sustainable change. New WBI training processes should ensure that all training meets the following criteria:

- Is based on a comprehensive capacity assessment of the target organization(s)/Institution(s)—done in cooperation with clients—identifying (i) clear and specific capacity-building objectives; (ii) the human, institutional, and organizational capacity support that is necessary in order to achieve these objectives; and (iii) measurable indicators of success;
- Is undertaken after work is done with operations and partners to identify and confirm, in advance, what resources are required to achieve the objectives, including, where needed, (i) multiyear training programs, (ii) follow-up technical assistance, and (iii) organizational and institutional support measures, such as policy support and financing of implementation of learning; and
- Is subject to external quality review and evaluation of results.

- **Executive summary - a genre that targets policy makers in fast policy making**
  - A **tool** to provide relevant (or selective) information for decision making to an audience that may not have the time or technical expertise to read and understand the entire report
  - The use of **simple format** that aims to be non-technical (but professional) and **communicate quick and selected information**
    - Use clear and simple layouts
      - Use the minimal number of words (e.g., no more than 1-3 pages)
      - main points in bold and bullet points
    - Use simple logics and aim to build credibility
  - It **selectively prioritizes and frames particular policy pitch and recommendations** – idea marketing rather than full analysis
  - At time even (selectively) gloss over difficult issues in the full report or full analysis

# Technological Selectivity of Competitiveness Index (World Economic Forum)

Table 1: Global Competitiveness Index rankings and 2005 comparisons

Country/Economy	GCI 2008 Rank	GCI 2006 Score	GCI 2006 Rank	Country/Economy	GCI 2008 Rank	GCI 2006 Score	GCI 2006 Rank
Switzerland	1	5.81	4	Azerbaijan	64	4.06	62
Finland	2	5.76	2	Colombia	65	4.04	58
Sweden	3	5.74	7	Brazil	66	4.03	57
Denmark	4	5.70	3	Trinidad and Tobago	67	4.03	66
Singapore	5	5.63	5	Romania	68	4.01	67
United States	6	5.61	1	Argentina	69	4.01	54
Japan	7	5.60	10	Morocco	70	4.01	76
Germany	8	5.58	6	Philippines	71	4.00	73
Netherlands	9	5.56	11	Belgium	72	3.96	61
United Kingdom	10	5.54	9	Uruguay	73	3.96	70
Hong Kong SAR	11	5.46	14	Peru	74	3.94	77
Norway	12	5.42	17	Guatemala	75	3.91	95
Taiwan, China	13	5.41	8	Algeria	76	3.90	82
Iceland	14	5.40	16	Vietnam	77	3.89	74
Israel	15	5.38	23	Ukraine	78	3.89	68
Canada	16	5.37	13	Sri Lanka	79	3.87	80
Austria	17	5.32	15	Macedonia, FYR	80	3.86	75
France	18	5.31	12	Botswana	81	3.79	72
Australia	19	5.29	18	Armenia	82	3.75	81
Belgium	20	5.27	20	Dominican Republic	83	3.75	91
Ireland	21	5.21	21	Namibia	84	3.74	79
Luxembourg	22	5.16	24	Georgia	85	3.73	86
New Zealand	23	5.15	22	Moldova	86	3.71	89
Korea, Rep.	24	5.13	19	Serbia and Montenegro	87	3.69	85
Estonia	25	5.12	26	Venezuela	88	3.69	84
Malaysia	26	5.11	25	Bosnia and Herzegovina	89	3.67	88
Chile	27	4.95	27	Ecuador	90	3.67	87
Spain	28	4.77	28	Pakistan	91	3.66	94
Czech Republic	29	4.74	29	Mongolia	92	3.60	90
Tunisia	30	4.71	37	Honduras	93	3.58	97
Barbados	31	4.70	—	Kenya	94	3.57	93
United Arab Emirates	32	4.66	32	Nicaragua	95	3.52	96
Slovenia	33	4.64	30	Tajikistan	96	3.50	92
Portugal	34	4.60	31	Bolivia	97	3.46	101
Thailand	35	4.58	33	Albania	98	3.46	100
Latvia	36	4.57	39	Bangladesh	99	3.46	98
Slovak Republic	37	4.55	36	Suriname	100	3.45	—
Qatar	38	4.55	46	Nigeria	101	3.45	83
Malta	39	4.54	44	Gambia	102	3.43	109
Lithuania	40	4.53	34	Cambodia	103	3.39	111
Hungary	41	4.52	35	Tanzania	104	3.39	106
Italy	42	4.46	38	Egypt	105	3.37	106
India	43	4.44	45	Paraguay	106	3.33	102
Kuwait	44	4.41	49	Kyrgyz Republic	107	3.31	104
South Africa	45	4.36	40	Cameroon	108	3.30	89
Cyprus	46	4.36	41	Madagascar	109	3.27	107
Greece	47	4.33	47	Nepal	110	3.26	—
Poland	48	4.30	43	Guyana	111	3.24	108
Bahrain	49	4.26	50	Lesotho	112	3.22	—
Indonesia	50	4.26	69	Uganda	113	3.19	103
Croatia	51	4.26	64	Mauritania	114	3.17	—
Jordan	52	4.25	42	Zambia	115	3.16	—
Costa Rica	53	4.25	56	Burkina Faso	116	3.07	—
China	54	4.24	48	Malawi	117	3.07	114
Maldives	55	4.20	55	Malé	118	3.02	115
Kazakhstan	56	4.19	51	Zimbabwe	119	3.01	110
Panama	57	4.18	65	Ethiopia	120	2.99	116
Mexico	58	4.18	59	Mozambique	121	2.94	112
Turkey	59	4.14	71	Timor-Leste	122	2.90	113
Jamaica	60	4.10	63	Chad	123	2.81	117
El Salvador	61	4.09	60	Benin	124	2.59	—
Russian Federation	62	4.08	53	Angola	125	2.50	—
Egypt	63	4.07	52				

(cont'd)

Executive Summary

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- Deploying knowledging technologies of **ranking, hierarchy, performance and judgement**
- They **visibilize countries** especially those with declining or low rankings, to take certain (market-friendly) steps to become more competitive – **normalizing intervention – to become more entrepreneurial or resilience**

- The four selectivities offer **diverse entry points** depending on the purpose of study and method of research
- Researchers/scholars are recommended to
  - deploy the strategic-relational approach and choose their own conceptual and empirical entry-point/standpoint to suit their own research
  - **develop their own interactions between the 4 selectivities** which examine the semiotic and structural aspects in their co-evolutionary articulation
  - Entry point should not be same as exit point

## **Seven Discursive-Material Moments in the Production of (Counter-)Hegemonies (Sum and Jessop 2013: 220-4)**

- *Discursive-strategic moment of social restructuring*
- *Agential selective moment rooted in the wider social formations*
- *(Inter)discursive selective moment in the order of discourses*
- *Technological–selective moment in constituting social/economic reality*
- *Moment in the constituting/ consolidating of subjects and sedimenting of common sense*
- *Moment in re-regularizing and sedimenting social relations*
- *Counter-hegemonic resistance and negotiations*



Modes of Selectivity	Discursive-Material Moments of Production of Hegemonies
Structural selectivities	<i>Discursive-strategic moment of social restructuring</i> (V, S, and R)
Agential selectivities	<i>Agential selective moment rooted in the wider social formations</i> (V, S, and R)
Discursive selectivities	<i>(Inter-)discursive selective moment in the order of discourses</i> (S and R)
Technological selectivities	<i>Technological–selective moment in constituting social/economic reality via dispositivization</i> (S and R)
Hegemonization and Restructuration	<i>Moment in constituting/consolidating of subjects and sedimenting of common sense</i> (R)
	<i>Moment in re-regularizing and sedimenting social relations in the material terrain</i> (S and R)
Counter-Hegemony	<i>Counter-hegemonic resistance and negotiations</i> (C and N)

- My own entry point tends to start with **new (or changed) discourses** and/or **discursive selectivities** and their links to changing social relations and structural contexts
- Bob Jessop's entry point tends to start with the **structural selectivity or structural crises** and their grounding in social-discursive relations
- My past work includes remaking hegemonic discourses of:
  - Competitiveness as knowledge brand (2009)
  - Corporate social responsibility (Wal-Mart) and stakeholder discourses in the remaking of neoliberal capitalism (2010 and 2014)
  - 'BRIC' (Brazil, Russia, India, China)/China as a hope object since the 2008 crisis conjuncture (2013 and 2015)
- Now I am working on
  - China's 'One belt one road' geoeconomic spatial imaginary (2016-)





Source: <http://en.xinfinance.com/html/OBAOR/>

# 5. Concluding Remarks

- What is cultural political economy?
  - Charting a route between constructivism Charybdis and structuralism Scylla
  - CPE has evolutionary approach: starting from *variation* in constructions, what factors (semiotic and *extra-semiotic*) shape differential *selection*, subsequent *retention* of hegemonic imaginaries?
  - Focusing on the selection, retention, and institutionalization of hegemonic imaginaries are shaped by at least **four forms of selectivity**
  - Looking to Marx, Gramsci and Foucault
  - Structural, agential, discursive and technological selectivities (use executive summary of consultancy report as example)

**The End**  
**Thank you**

