

TOWARDS A CULTURAL POLITICAL ECONOMY: Staging an Encounter between Marx, Gramsci and Foucault

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Author:

Dr. Ngai-Ling Sum is a British sociologist and political economist from the Department of Politics, Philosophy and Religion of the Lancaster University, United Kingdom.

Correspondence:

n.sum@lancaster.ac.uk

Field:

Sociology

Summary

This article elaborates one possible development of Marx's legacy 200 years after his birth. It responds to the influence of post-structuralism and its related 'cultural turn' on academic Marxist analyses by examining the material and discursive dimensions of changing social relations in capitalist social formations. In this context, it proposes a cultural political economy approach to bridge the theoretical divide between constructivism and structuralism. It suggests that, given his long-standing interests in language and semiosis as key aspects of the critique of economic, political, and social life, Marx can fruitfully be read as a proto-cultural political economist. It is further suggested that Marx's contributions to the critique of political economy can be enhanced by articulating them with the work of two later critical theorists, namely, Antonio Gramsci and Michel Foucault. Accordingly, this article stages an encounter between Marx, Gramsci and Foucault to explore the interface between the semiotic and extra-semiotic aspects of social relations and then identifies four modes of selectivity as a heuristic tool for examining the production of hegemony and the remaking of social relations.

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1. INTRODUCTION

This theoretical article elaborates one possible development of Marx's legacy 200 years after his birth. It responds to the influence of post-structuralism and its related 'cultural turn' on academic Marxist analyses and their relevance to the examination of changing social relations in capitalism. In this context, it suggests a cultural political economy approach (Sum and Jessop 2013) to bridge the theoretical divide between constructivism and structuralism and their contrasting implications for social transformation. More specifically, it suggests, against prevailing interpretations, that Marx can be read as a proto-cultural political economist. Most commentators tend to overlook his long-standing interest in language and semiosis as key aspects of the critique of economic, political, and social life. Yet much of his theoretical work and many of his political analyses were concerned to critique the dominant categories of thought that shaped social life and to relate the critique of ideology to the critique of exploitation and domination. I also suggest that Marx's contributions to the critique of political economy can be enhanced by articulating them with the work of two later critical theorists, namely, Antonio Gramsci and Michel Foucault. Accordingly, this article stages an encounter between Marx, Gramsci and Foucault in order to explore the interface between the semiotic and extra-semiotic aspects of social relations and the role of the production of hegemony (political, intellectual and moral leadership) in the remaking of these relations. Let me start with the 'cultural turn' and Marx.

2. THE 'CULTURAL TURN' AND MARX

The 'cultural turn' is an umbrella term for different approaches that focus on the role of semiosis (sense- and meaning-making), discourse, and discursive practices in constituting social relations and mediating changes in everyday life. Semiosis is a crucial condition of being able to 'go on' in the world and is expressed in various discourses and discursive practices. More specifically, in this article, discourse is interpreted as a series of re-presentations (e.g., words, numbers, pictures, images, tables, and so forth, and their articulation in different kinds of text) through which meanings are produced and legitimised, thereby creating, contesting, or overturning regimes of truth. Knowledging techniques (indexes, classifications, categories) are often, as Foucault has demonstrated, crucial aspects of truth regimes. For example, the currently hegemonic or, at least, prevalent discourse of competitiveness uses the knowledging technique of indexes to re-present the strengths and capacities of countries and their economies. The annual publication of the World Competitiveness Index by the World Economic Forum provides a regime of truth that ranks countries into a hierarchical order in terms of their relative competitiveness on one or more indexes (Sum 2009). Countries, especially those that have fallen down the hierarchy and/or are otherwise low in their ranking are exposed to governmentalising pressures to become more competitive. State officials, think tanks and business journalists urge decision makers and citizens to stay ahead or catch up by becoming more entrepreneurial and innovative. This kind of discursive power both objectifies local, regional, or national

economies as problematic and pressures actors into becoming competitive subjects who internalise competitiveness into their mode of thinking.

Analyses of discursive and ideational power are important parts of the 'cultural turn'. There are many versions of this turn, ranging from critical discourse analysis (Fairclough 1989; Wodak & Mayer 2009) through discursive institutionalism (Schmidt 2008; Hay 2006) to post-Marxism (Laclau & Mouffe 1985) (for a review of cultural turns, see Sum and Jessop 2013). With the notable exception of Norman Fairclough, who affirms the importance of structures and social relations, others tend to focus mainly on the discursive/constructivist moments of social stability and/or change and to neglect their structural aspects or to introduce them in an ad hoc and eclectic manner. In contrast, this article calls for a cultural political economy approach (hereafter CPE) that addresses discourses (and constructivism) without ignoring the role of structuration in shaping social relations (class, gender, race, age, etc.) and thereby selectively constraining opportunities for social action (for more details of the approach, see Sum and Jessop 2013). The development of CPE is inspired by the work of Marx, whose developing critique of political economy consistently had major semiotic dimensions (for further details, see Jessop and Sum 2018).

3. TOWARDS A CULTURAL POLITICAL ECONOMY: A THREE-SIDED ENCOUNTER BETWEEN MARX, GRAMSCI AND FOUCAULT

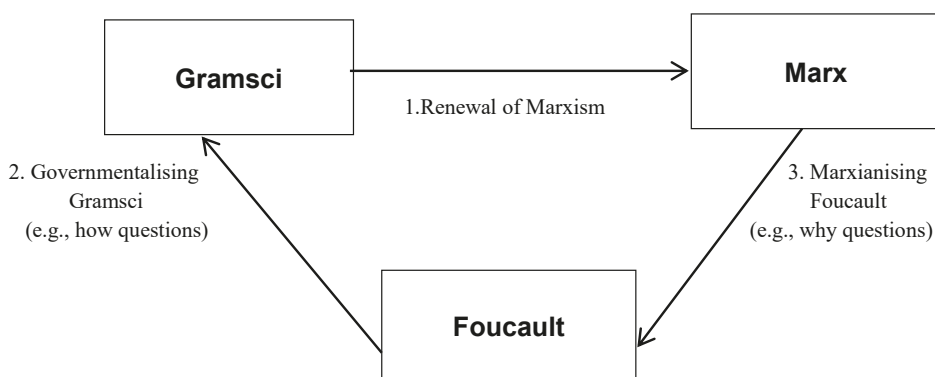
Marx's embryonic critical cultural political economy approach can be enhanced by integrating it with the work of subsequent critical theorists. Here I consider the potential of linking it with the work of Antonio Gramsci and Michel Foucault. Indeed, I stage a three-sided encounter between Marx, Gramsci and Foucault focusing on Marx's critique of political economy, Gramsci's analyses of hegemony and the differential articulation of coercion-consent (and the associated role of traditional and organic intellectuals); and Foucault's analyses of discourses, regime of truth, dispositives, governmentality, knowledging technologies, and subjectivity. This encounter notes parallels, complementarities, and potential synergies in their work.

A useful starting point for this encounter is an observation by Richard Marsden (1989) in his reconstruction of Marx's work in the light of Foucault's analysis of governmentality. For Marsden suggests that Marx's account of the logic of the labour process and other aspects of the profit-oriented, market-mediated course of capital accumulation (its 'laws of motion') can explain 'why' but does not explain 'how'. In contrast, Foucault's analysis of disciplinarity and governmentality can explain the 'how' of objectifying and subjectifying everyday practices but does not explain 'why' this occurs in the forms that it assumes in capitalist social formations (Marsden 1999, p. 135; cf. pp. 24, 129, 131-2). He therefore recommends synthesising their insights to provide a more rounded account of the how and why of accumulation. Here I want to

argue that Gramsci’s rethinking of Marxism provides several further concepts to facilitate this encounter/synthesis, notably through his account of hegemony, historical bloc, organic intellectuals, common sense, and everyday subjectivities and practices. Accordingly, the following thought experiment involves a three-sided encounter that explores: (1) Gramsci’s renewal of

Marxism based on the rise of mass politics in liberal democracies after the 1870s; (2) the governmentalisation of Gramsci based on Foucault’s insights into normalisation and governmentalisation; and (3) the Marxianisation of Foucault via a return to Marx’s radical critique of political economy (see Diagram 1).

Diagram 1 A Three-Sided Encounter between Marx, Gramsci and Foucault



(Source: Sum and Jessop 2013, p. 206)

(Source: Sum and Jessop 2013, p. 206)

3.1 GRAMSCI’S RENEWAL OF MARXISM

Gramsci’s analyses of the state or, better, state power in liberal democracies in its integral sense (state + civil society or hegemony protected by the armour of coercion) and the economy as a determined market (*mercato determinato*)¹ embedded in a historically specific set of social relations both contributed to a renewal of Marxism (see,

respectively, Gramsci 1971, pp. 244-58 and p. 410). While political class domination, expressed through state power, has a decisive economic nucleus linked to dominant or emergent class relations, it depends for its durability on the creation and diffusion of an appropriate common sense via the work of civil society (e.g., schools, churches, universities, think tanks, etc.) as well as repressive apparatuses. The significance of civil society and political society to class domination suggests it would be useful analytically to distinguish ‘hegemonies in production’ from ‘production of hegemonies’. The former examines accumulation regimes (e.g.,

¹ Gramsci defines *mercato determinato* as ‘equivalent to [a] determined relation of social forces in a determined structure of the productive apparatus, this relationship being guaranteed (that is, rendered permanent) by a determined political, moral and juridical superstructure’ (Gramsci 1971, p. 410).

Fordism from the 1920s to 1970s) and their related modes of regulation and/or governance (e.g., mass consumption, collective bargaining, Keynesian demand management, welfare regimes) (see Gramsci's notebook on Americanism and Fordism, 1971, pp. 277-318). Gramsci also offered original analyses of the 'production of hegemonies' in which he investigates the processes and practices through which hegemonies are constituted in and across different institutional orders, including political society and civil society as well as the social relations of production. Of special interest here is his account of traditional and organic intellectuals (alongside other social agents) as the intermediaries for producing and consolidating hegemonies (political, intellectual and moral leadership) and promoting sub- and counter-hegemonies.

3.2 GOVERNMENTALISING GRAMSCI: HEGEMONY, DISCOURSE, SUBJECTIVITY AND SUBJECTIVATION

Although Gramsci and Foucault wrote and struggled in very different conjunctures and were committed to quite different views on the feasibility of revolution in Western capitalism, their work displays interesting, important, and illuminating parallels as well as tensions (e.g., Stoddart 2005; Olssen 2006; Ekers and Loftus 2008; Springer 2010). Four issues are worth exploring here: (1) the productive nature of Gramsci's worldviews and Foucault's truth regime in objectifying, reifying, and sedimenting social relations; (2) the diffused and contingent nature of power relations in general terms and in specific conjunctures, including power-resistance dynamics; and (3) the relationships among discourse considered as semiosis

and in terms of specific discursive practices, subjectivity, and hegemony.

First, Gramsci rejects reified and fetishised treatments of institutional separations as so many distinct fields in a social formation in favour of an integral analysis of specific fields of social practice and their articulation to ensembles of social relations. His analysis of hegemony-consent-persuasion and intellectuals is not restricted to civil society but extends into what are conventionally termed, the economic and political spheres. In particular, he observed that, while everyone is an intellectual, not everyone in society has the function of an intellectual (Gramsci 1971, p. 9). This informs his account of the role of organic intellectuals in promoting and consolidating a worldview that gives homogeneity and awareness to a fundamental class in the economic, political, and social fields; this, in turn, becomes the basis for efforts to create hegemony within the wider society (Gramsci 1971, p. 5).

The Italian's analysis has affinities with Foucault's analysis of discourse, knowledging technologies, dispositives, and truth regimes. For the French philosopher focuses on how regimes of truth are produced through socially construed 'problematization' at the level of discourse and, relatedly, through what one might call knowledging technologies. The latter produce object fields and subject positions that contribute towards the making of dispositives. Foucault offers an ostensive definition of dispositive as 'a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic proposition' (1980, p. 194). A more systematic account, based on

many discussions and allusions in his work, would involve exploring: (1) the role of discursive formations (including, but not limited to, language) in constructing objects, establishing semantic fields, constructing subject positions, coagulating subjectivation, and vitalising affective energy; (2) the apparatus logic and strategic logic inscribed in dispositives, including their associated governmental and knowledging technologies, that lead to a general strategic line without this having been willed by a particular subject, i.e., that lead to the actualisation of a 'strategy without a subject' and (3) technologies of the self, through which individuals self-transform their identities, develop 'appropriate' competencies and modes of calculation, and reshape their modes of existence (Sum and Jessop 2013, pp. 205-11).

Thus, a dispositive consists of apparatuses and a strategic logic that together make up a regime of truth. Dispositives tend to emerge in response to 'urgences', i.e., emergencies, challenges, ruptures that destabilise past solutions, disorient received understandings, and pose social problems. In this sense a dispositive is a 'strategic-functional imperative'. As such, dispositives should be studied in terms of how they are produced, selected, and consolidated in response to specific 'problematizations' in specific structural contexts. Foucault also emphasised the mobile character of truth regimes and their associated technologies, such that, for example, disciplinary or governmental technologies developed in one context can be applied in other spheres too (e.g., Foucault 1977). His detailed analyses of these processes are especially relevant to practices of self-governance.

Second, Gramsci and Foucault both stress the diffuse and contingent nature of

power. For Gramsci, hegemony is the permeation throughout a social formation (or significant parts thereof) of a system of values, attitudes, beliefs and morality that support existing power relations. It is an 'organising principle' that diffuses into daily life and becomes part of 'common sense'. For Foucault, too, power operates at many scales. He is probably best known for his middle-period studies of micro-power and micro-technologies, which he developed in opposition to state or juridico-political centred analyses. One such micro-technology, explored initially for the prison, was the Panopticon. But even in *Discipline and Punish* (1977) he presented this as a diagram of power that can be adopted elsewhere and for other purposes, leading through its generalisation, to panopticism in the wider social formation. In this context he examines disciplinary power as a means to the panoptic organisation of society, where all aspects of lives are visible and open for inspection by those in power.

Foucault later argued that the state played a key role in the strategic codification of power relations (1979, p. 96) and noted that it was a matter of methodological choice rather than ontological primacy that his studies of governmentality initially focused on micro-power relations. He declared 'the analysis of micro-powers is not a question of scale, and it is not a question of sector, it is a question of a point of view' (Foucault 2008, p. 186). Thus, he went on to apply governmentality to the state, statecraft, state-civil society, or state-economy relations just as fruitfully as to the conduct of conduct at the level of anatomo-politics, interpersonal interactions, organisations, or individual institutions. For example, in *The Birth of Biopolitics* (2008), he traces the development of state projects and

the general economic agendas of government over four centuries and notes how the rationales and mechanisms of state power (and their limits) change in different periods. Commenting on this shift in perspective, Senellart argues that ‘the shift from “power” to “government” carried out in the 1978 lectures does not result from the methodological framework being called into question, but from its extension to a new object, the state, which did not have a place in the analysis of the disciplines’ (2008, p. 382). This makes it useful for exploring the multiple sites of hegemony.

Marsden’s ‘why-how aphorism about Marx and Foucault of the capital relation is less applicable to the Gramsci-Foucault relation because both were interested in how, why, and what questions regarding the dispersion and codification of social power. Yet Gramsci has a richer set of concepts for exploring why and Foucault has a richer set of concepts for answering the how question. Indeed, Gramsci examined the micro-level in terms of everyday life and common sense, whereas Foucault studied it in terms of micro-level disciplinary, normalising, control, and knowledging technologies and practices. Conversely, Foucault refers to the strategic codification of power relations at the meso- and macro-levels in pursuit of specific strategies of governmentalisation, whereas Gramsci highlights the importance of economic strategies, state projects, and hegemonic visions and links all three to unstable equilibria of class compromise.

This suggests fruitful links between Foucault and Gramsci across certain scales of social analysis. This can be seen, for Foucault, in his studies of: (1) *capillary power* - power that stretches into the smallest and most private aspects of life), (2) *anatomopolitics* - the disciplining of individuals at the

corporeal and personal level; (3) *biopolitics* - power that controls lives through hygiene, public health, education, etc. and that takes ‘population’ as its object of governance; and (4) *governmentality* - the multi-scalar ensemble of governing rationalities and technologies that facilitate the governance of social relations at a distance. These discipline/discourse sets create the modern subject and subjectivities. Instead of weakening power regimes, they contribute towards their strengthening.

Third, for Gramsci, just as the moment of force is institutionalised in a system of coercive apparatuses, hegemony is crystallised and mediated through a complex system of ideological (or hegemonic) apparatuses located throughout the social formation. But the practice of hegemony is nonetheless concentrated in the sphere of civil society or so-called ‘private’ organisations, such as the Church, trade unions, schools, the mass media, or political parties (Gramsci 1971, pp. 10–12, 15, 56n, 155, 210, 243, 261, 267) and in the activities of intellectuals whose function is to elaborate ideologies, educate the people, organise and unify social forces, and secure the hegemony of the dominant group. Thus apparatuses have a key role in organising personal and social identity, common sense, collective memory, and conceptions of the world as well as organising material concessions, administrative routines, and coercive practices. There are some affinities with the concept of dispositive here that would be worth exploring and developing, especially in avoiding the erroneous inference that the production of hegemony is reducible to discursive practices and/or the activities of intellectuals alone.

Foucault and his followers study similar topics in terms of the dispositive and its role in the strategic codification of power

relations in and across different sites and scales. The dispositive is a heterogeneous ensemble of elements (Foucault 1984, p. 194) that could be interpreted to comprise diverse genres or orders of discourse, institutions and institutional practices, their materialisation in the social and built environment, and their embodiment and internalisation in individual bodies and minds. These dispositives, which are nodal points in the articulation of heterogeneous sets of power relations across different sites and scales, are unstable but relatively robust. They are unstable because they are everywhere and consist of an ‘unbalanced and tense force of relations’. They are also robust because they are ‘repetitious, inert and self-producing’ (Foucault 1979, p. 92). In this regard, these (un-)stable formations of power relations in dispositives concentrate certain power effects and form the bases of Gramsci’s ‘common sense’ and the (re-)making of hegemonies.

My proposal to governmentalise Gramsci by including dispositives and governmental technologies provides an important corrective to readings of Gramsci that prioritise his interest in discourses and discursive practices at the expense of structuration. In this sense, it puts the recent linguistic turn in reading Gramsci into perspective (see, especially, Ives 2004) by emphasising the links between discourse and dispositive. This said, while the concept of dispositive helps to explain *how* questions by providing a more comprehensive analysis of the mechanisms and moments of disciplinary and governmental power, it cannot answer (nor is it intended to do so) the *why* questions that concerned Marx and Gramsci and that also animate CPE. In short, why do some accumulation strategies, state projects, hegemonic visions and

modes of societalisation become hegemonic (or, at least, dominant) and what interests do they serve? Unless one reduces this to a simple question of utility or evolutionary advantage, namely, that some dispositives are more effective than others, further questions need to be answered. Indeed, as Foucault notes, dispositives can only be judged in terms of their relation to strategic objectives.

3.3 MARXIANISING FOUCAULT: CAPITALIST FORMATIONS AND CONTRADICTIONS

This encounter between Gramsci and Foucault should also lead, eventually, to recognition of the limits of governmentality and the analytics of the dispositive. While Foucault and neo-Foucauldians shy away from explicit mention of Marx in their analyses (and, in many cases, notably for his followers, are oblivious to the richness of his work), the analyses of objectivation, problematisations, sites of intervention, and modes of governance cannot be disentangled from the processes and practices involved in the rebuilding of social relations in response to ‘urgencies’, such as lost competitiveness, a financial crisis, or an epidemic. Strategic interventions cannot be reconfigured at will or completed according to plan; indeed, they routinely produce contradictory and uneven effects as they interact with other forces and vectors on structurally-inscribed terrains. As Foucault emphasised, this is a strategy without a (master) subject. At stake is an emerging strategic line (see, for example, Foucault 1979). Where the objects of governance are economic (broadly conceived), these limits can be interpreted and explained by drawing on the Marxist critique of political economy. This is not such an outrageous suggestion as

many Foucauldian scholars might believe. Foucault argued (incorrectly, in my view) that Marx's analysis of value stayed within the classic episteme of Smith and Ricardo; but he still praised Marx's epistemic break in the fields of history and politics. This is reflected in increasingly sympathetic but often covert references to some core themes in Marx's critique of political economy (1970; 1972) and, even more importantly, his historical analyses, some of these references being deliberately and provocatively undeclared (Balibar 1992; Kalyvas 2002; MacDonald 2002; Lemke 2003; Elden 2007). Indeed, he argued that capitalism has penetrated deeply into our existence, especially as it required diverse techniques of power to enable capital to exploit people's bodies and their time, transforming them into labour power and labour time respectively to create surplus profit (1977, pp. 163, 174-5; 1979, pp. 37, 120-4, 140-1; see also Marsden 1999). This prompted Balibar to suggest that Foucault moved from a break to a tactical alliance with Marxism, [with] the first involving a global critique of Marxism as a 'theory'; the second a partial usage of Marxist tenets or affirmations compatible with Marxism. ...Thus, in contradictory fashion, the opposition to Marxist 'theory' grows deeper and deeper whilst the convergence of the analyses and concepts taken from Marx becomes more and more significant (Balibar 1992, p. 53).

Macdonald went further and argued that Foucault's work 'never intended to articulate a position free from a certain Marx, but rather one that was free from a specifically restrictive Marxism' (2002, p. 261). He argued that 'a certain Marx' is embedded within Foucault's work and cited Marsden's investigation (see above) as one illustration. Thus, it is not entirely

inappropriate to propose a Marxianisation of Foucault to link his work on governmentality with the forms, institutional fixes, and *régulation-cum-governance* of the capital relation. This is consistent with Foucault's claim that contradiction is only one configuration of a power relation because Marxist theory itself posits the inherent fragility of any social, semantic, institutional, or spatio-temporal fix. Thus, if drawing on Foucauldian concepts helps to produce a better understanding of the mechanisms of capitalist societalisation and its relative stabilisation, the inevitable fragility and provisional nature of these fixes and, hence, the limits and eventual breakdown of classical, social, and advanced liberalism and other approaches to governance....? These are not just questions of the inevitability of power/resistance dynamics, because the forms of failure, the character of resistance, and the scope for recuperation are all conditioned by the capital relation (for an extended discussion of Foucault's concept of governmentality and its relation to statecraft, particularly viewed from an evolutionary perspective, see Jessop 2010).

Bringing Marx back helps to identify the tensions in governmentality that arise from the contradictions and crisis-tendencies present in the 'objects' of governance and the capacities of resistance on the part of its 'subjects'. While the Anglo-Foucauldian tradition follows Foucault in identifying the productive role of disciplinary and governmentalising technologies in constituting the objects and subjects of social control, they tend to ignore the limits to control that lie less in plebeian instincts of rebellion, than in the material resistances to control that are rooted in the social relations of being controlled. These include, above all, those features of the social world that are

not envisaged, let alone encompassed, in any given project (the Anglo-Foucauldian account of the ‘Foucault effect’ is criticised in Jessop 2010).

Winners and losers do not emerge naturally through the magic of the market, they are included/excluded. By combining Foucauldian interest in governmental technologies (with their implicit Marxian engagements) with a more explicit account of the contradictions and crisis-tendencies of capital accumulation, we will obtain a more nuance version of the semiotic-material moments of social development.

4. TOWARDS A MESO-LEVEL HEURISTIC SCHEMA: FOUR MODES OF SELECTIVITY IN CPE

Based on these reflections, I now offer a meso-level heuristic schema for CPE, based on four modes selectivity in social relations: structural, discursive, technological, and agential respectively. Selectivities comprise different kinds of filter that privilege the advancement, but without guarantee, of particular social categories, social agents, social forces, identities, interests, goals, strategies, projects and spatio-temporal

horizons of actions over others. The articulation of these four modes of selectivity draws on the notion of complexity reduction, the insights of critical realism, and the strategic-relational approach (Jessop 2007). Initially developed to address structure-agency dialectics, the strategic-relational approach extended from structural selectivity to discursive selectivity. It is also relevant to technological selectivities and dispositives (see Table 1).

Structural selectivity is a short-hand term for structurally-inscribed strategic selectivity. As such, it denotes the asymmetrical configuration of structural constraints and opportunities on social forces as they pursue particular interests, strategies and projects. This configuration exists only insofar as it is reproduced in and through social practices and can be transformed through time, through cumulative molecular changes and/or more deliberate attempts to transform the pattern of constraints and opportunities. Whether these attempts succeed or not, they are likely to have path-dependent legacies (see Table 1). Gramsci’s insights into molecular transformation, passive revolution, wars of manoeuvre and wars of position are all relevant here.

Table 1: Four Modes of Strategic Selectivities in CPE

Modes	Grounded In	Effects
Structural	Contested reproduction of basic social forms (e.g., capital relation, nature-society relations, patriarchy, racism), their specific instantiations in institutional orders and organisational forms, and in specific interaction contexts.	Structures favour certain interests, identities, agents, spatio-temporal horizons, tactics, strategies, and projects over others. Focuses on how path-dependency limits scope for path-shaping. Selectivities are always relative and relational – structure is not an absolute constraint that applies equally to all actors – it is necessarily asymmetrical.

Discursive	<p>Semiosis as meaning-making grounded in enforced selection in the face of complexity.</p> <p>Operates at all scales from the micropores of everyday life to self- descriptions of world society.</p>	<p>Semiosis provides and articulates elements of meaning-making and thereby shapes perception and social communication.</p> <p>Discursive-inscribed selectivity frames and limits possible imaginaries, discourses, genre chains, arguments, subjectivities, social and personal identities, and the scope for hegemony, sub-hegemonies, and counter-hegemonies.</p>
Technological	<p>Technologies regarded as assemblages of information and categories, disciplinary and governmental rationalities, sites and mechanisms of calculated intervention, and social relations for transforming nature and/ or governing social relations.</p>	<p>These involve specific objectivation, subjectivation, knowledging technologies, interwoven dispositives, and social coordination.</p> <p>In addition to their differential capacities to transform nature, technologies also shape social relations through (1) horizontal and vertical divisions of labour and knowledge, (2) their material effects (e.g., the built environment or anatomo- and biopolitics), and (3) their epistemological effects ('truth regimes').</p> <p>Technologies shape choices, capacities to act, distribute resources and harms, and convey legitimacy through technical rationality and effectivity.</p>
Agential	<p>Specific capacities of specific social agents (or sets of agents) to 'make a difference' in particular conjunctures thanks to idiosyncratic abilities to exploit structural, discursive, and technological selectivities.</p>	<p>'Agents make their own history but not in circumstances of their own choosing'</p> <p>Making a difference depends on abilities to (1) read conjunctures and identify potentials for action; (2) re-politicise sedimented discourses and re-articulate them; (3) invent new social technologies or recombine extant technologies; (4) deploy strategies and tactics to shift the balance of forces in space-time.</p>

(Source: Sum and Jessop 2013, pp. 218-9)

Discursive selectivity is also asymmetrical. As with structural selectivity, it has several dimensions. The primary aspect and principal stake in this regard are the asymmetrical constraints and opportunities inscribed in particular genres, styles, and discourses (or, more generally, particular forms of discourse), both in terms of what can be enunciated, who is authorised to enunciate, and how enunciations enter intertextual, interdiscursive, and contextual fields. Semiotic resources set limits to what can be imagined, whether in terms of 'objects', possible statements within a discursive formation, themes that can be articulated within a given semantic field, or subject positions that can be adopted. In other words, discursive selectivity concerns the manner in which different discourses

(whether everyday or specialised) enable some, rather than other enunciations to be made within the limits of particular languages and the forms of discourse that exist within them (cf. de Saussure on *parole* and *langue* or Gramsci on the different hierarchies and asymmetries involved in the use of Latin, national languages, minority languages, and subaltern dialects).² A further aspect concerns how different forms of discourse and/or genres position subjects in specific situations: this is the field, par excellence, of sociolinguistics. A related set of selectivities concerns the extent and grounds that make some discursive forms more or less accessible to some agents rather than others either because of their

² This is clearly relevant to a major concern of critical linguists, namely, official language policy.

sense- and meaning-making competence and their discursive competence (in relation to everyday interactions or the demands of socialisation into specialised discourses, e.g., law, medicine, and engineering). Regarding spatio-temporal selectivities, different languages have different ways of expressing temporality and spatiality, privileging some spatio-temporal horizons over others and allowing for greater or less anticipation of, as yet, unrealised possibilities. In combination, these aspects of discursive selectivity constrain the opportunities to develop specific appeals, arguments, claims, legitimations, recontextualisations, etc., rather than others by virtue of their filtering effects (see Table 1).

Discursive selectivity is not purely discursive – to claim otherwise would entail linguistic reductionism. It derives from the differential articulation and co-evolution of the discursive and extra-discursive moments of social processes and practices and their conjoint impact in specific contexts and conjunctures. The primary aspect of discursive selectivity (that is, the asymmetries inscribed in language as a repertoire of discursive possibilities) is overdetermined by the media of communication used in enunciations (its technological mediation and the bias these contain) and by the linguistic and communicative competences of particular agents (its agential mediation). In short, by including the discursive and extra-discursive, we are better placed to understand and explain discursive selectivities. Semiotic constructions are neither independent nor neutral, they derive meanings as a part of a network of statements and social practices in the inter-discursive fields. Foucauldian discourse analysis has much to offer here in terms of conceptual architectures and semantic fields; and critical

discourse analysis has much to offer in clarifying how discursive selectivity operates in terms of its lexical, semantic, and pragmatic features and their relation to modes of expression, forms of discourse, genre chains, framing, and so forth (see especially Fairclough 2003).³

Technological selectivities are usually considered, paradoxically, both in broader terms and narrower terms than Foucault applied in his own analyses. In the broader sense, they typically include the full range of forces of production and technical and social relations of production involved in the social division of labour. This is the field par excellence of Marx's analysis of the development of the forces of production and their selective implications for the stakes of class conflict and the balance of class forces. It was also central to Gramsci's analysis of Americanism and Fordism. Nonetheless these are often studied in narrowly technological terms. Foucault is less concerned with developing an all-encompassing account of technologies in this sense and more concerned with examining the social technologies involved in constituting objects, creating subject positions and recruiting subjects, and, notably, in this context, creating relations of power/knowledge and the possibilities of governmentalisation. These technological selectivities can be studied in strategic-relational terms along the lines of Foucault and neo-Foucauldian scholarship – indeed, as noted elsewhere (Jessop 2007; Sum and Jessop 2013), there are affinities between the strategic-relational approach adopted here and Foucault's work on the strategic codification of power relations and the emergence

³ For Fairclough, genre chains link different genres of discourse together and involve systematic transformations from genre to genre (Fairclough 2003, pp. 31-2).

of a general strategic line of action. What he adds to this approach is his concern with specific technologies of governmentalisation and their articulation with dispositives in their multi-dimensional complexity.

At stake in the notion of technological selectivities, then, are the asymmetries inscribed in the use of technologies in producing objects and subject positions that contribute towards the making of dispositives and truth regimes. For example, in the case of object/subject formations, rules for conceptualisation selectively define what and how objects are created, ordered and classified as well as what subject positions that open/limit observation. As for dispositives and regime of truth, their apparatuses and strategic logics may selectively limit choice and regulate bodies, thoughts and conduct. These limit the scope for developing alternatives and opposition to possibilities that are inscribed in, or imaginable within, the logic. At best, this allows for proposals to reform the existing order rather than to radically transform it, let alone to challenge the basic principles on which it is founded.

Much work in actor-network theory (especially that of Callon 1998) also addresses technological selectivities. Three affinities are worth noting: (1) they embrace a relational ontology based on the mutual constitution and interpenetration of the material and social linked to their determined rejection of rigid object-subject and material-cultural distinctions; (2) they deny any fixed ontological distinction between the 'macro' and the 'micro' or the 'global' and the 'local' in favour of their mutual conditioning and continued interaction; and (3) they examine the interaction between mechanisms and strategies that gives some semblance of unity to

economic and political agencies, the conditions and points at which these unities can break down, and the mechanisms and strategies that may restore these unities. Nonetheless, although Callon was influenced by Foucault, he seems to have abandoned (at least partially) one key element in the latter's analyses of dispositives. This is the transition from the emergence of devices or dispositives in response to an 'urgent need' to the acquisition of 'new, unanticipated functions, strategies, and processes [that] emerge and contribute to stabilise and entrench the device (if it does not rapidly disappear)' (Dumez & Jeunemaître 2010, p. 31). In examining both the appearance of the device and its stabilisation, which is clearly related to mechanisms of variation, selection, and retention, Foucault is better able than Callon to explore continuities and discontinuities. Despite these differences, however,⁴ of course, but each, in his own way, highlights the importance of the asymmetrical impact of social technologies.

Agential selectivity is the theoretically necessary (but empirically contingent) complement to structural (and, by analogy), discursive selectivities. Specifically, agential selectivity refers to the differential capacity of agents to engage in structurally-oriented strategic calculation – whether regarding structurally-inscribed or discursively-inscribed strategic selectivities – not only in abstract terms but also in relation to specific conjunctures. A second step would be to distinguish different social forces, their subjectivation as bearers of specific identities and ideal and material interests, their

⁴ For example, actor-network theory is stronger on the social construction of the material and immaterial features of marketised and/or marketisable use-values than it is on the logic of surplus-value and exchange value. For a more detailed comparison of CPE and Actor-Network Theory, see Jessop (2005).

capacities for strategic calculation, and their capacities for action. Agents can make a difference thanks to their different capacities to persuade, read particular conjunctures, displace opponents, and re-articulate in timely fashion discourses and imaginaries (see Table 1). This is always overdetermined by discursive and technological selectivities. Ultimately, agential selectivity depends on the difference that specific actors (or social forces) make in particular conjunctures.

The four selectivities in Table 1 are presented in general terms on two grounds. First, they derive from a synthesis of approaches that employ sometimes radically different vocabularies (e.g., Gramsci, Marx, Foucault, various old and new institutionalisms, critical discourse analysis, actor-network theory, and conjunctural analysis). Second, they must be reinterpreted and re-specified as the analysis moves from abstract or general reflections to more concrete and particular case studies or research problems. Different sets of problems will require attention to different interactions of the four selectivities. This is perfectly consistent with the CPE approach, which emphasises the importance of different entry-points, different standpoints, and spiral movements in which more and more of the full CPE conceptual instrumentarium and analytical toolkits are deployed.

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

This article has suggested one way to develop Marxist scholarship 200 years after Marx's birth that builds both on frequently neglected aspects of his own approach to critique and draws on more recent theoretical advances. It proposes a CPE take that combines the 'cultural and semiotic turn' in post-structural Marxist analyses

with a return to Marx's concern with the relations of economic exploitation, political domination, and the material underpinnings of ruling ideas and ideologies. To ground this approach, it staged a three-sided encounter between Marx, Gramsci and Foucault. This indicated some theoretical affinities between these critical theorists and the scope for putting their key concepts and insights into a productive dialogue that could round out weak-points and blind spots in their respective analyses. This account was complemented and supplemented by a formal presentation of the content and heuristic potential of examining four interrelated selectivities that shape the possibilities of social action and transformation.

The relative weight of these selectivities varies across conjunctures, with periods of crisis increasing the scope for discursive and agential selectivities to make a difference, whereas periods of relative stability invite greater concern with the sedimentation of discourses, structural constraints, and the effects of disciplinary and governmental power. This said, in times of economic and political crisis, structurally-advantaged actors are better placed to pursue their interests through specific strategies and projects and it requires greater effort for disadvantaged forces to mobilise against them. This is where Gramsci's analyses of the articulation of wars of position and wars of manoeuvre is especially inspiring. These can be fruitfully re-interpreted in terms of the differential articulation of the four selectivities across time and space. All four interact across different conjunctures and settings to condition the variation, selection, and retention of hegemonic, sub-hegemonic, and counterhegemonic projects and their societal repercussions and contradictions in

actual case studies. A short article such as this cannot provide illustrative case studies. Nonetheless, the interested reader is referred to the CPE-inspired studies of variegated capitalism, competitiveness, the knowledge-based economy, Wal-martisation, corporate social responsibility, financial crises, and the BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, China) imaginary in the co-authored book, *Towards A Cultural Political Economy* (Sum & Jessop 2013: Chapters 6-12).

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КА КУЛТУРНОЈ ПОЛИТИЧКОЈ ЕКОНОМИЈИ: Замишљени сусрет Маркса, Грамшија и Фукоа

Кључне ријечи:

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Ауторка:

Др Нгаи-Линг Сум је британски социолог и политички економиста са Одсека за политику, филозофију и религију Универзитета у Ланкастеру, Уједињено Краљевство.

Кореспонденција:

n.sum@lancaster.ac.uk

Област:

Социологија

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Сажетак

У овом раду разматра се могући развој Марксовог наслеђа двије стотине година од његовог рођења. Он представља одговор на утицај пост-структурализма и „културног обрата” повезаног с њим на академске марксистичке анализе тако што испитује материјалне и дискурзивне димензије промјењивих друштвених односа у капиталистичким друштвеним формацијама. У овом значењу, предлаже се приступ културне политичке економије да би се премостио јаз између конструктивизма и структурализма. Наговјештава се, узимајући у обзир Марксово дуготрајно занимање за језик и знаковне процесе као кључне аспекте критике економског, политичког и друштвеног живота, да се његова дјела могу читати као први облик културне политичке економије. Даље, наводи се да се Марксов допринос критици може појачати тумачењем кроз призму рада двојице критичких теоретичара новије генерације, Антонија Грамшија и Мишела Фукоа. У складу с тим, у раду се ова три аутора постављају у исти временски оквир, да би се истражила веза између семиотичких и не-семиотичких аспеката друштвених односа, те да се након тога идентификују четири облика селективности као оруђа за испитивање стварања хегемоније и преобликовања друштвених односа.