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Governing through freedom and responsibility

A qualitative study examining the expression of neoliberal governmentality in
strategies concerning Swedish foreign development aid

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate exercises of power in Swedish foreign development aid, ultimately answering the question of how aid is governed. This is done by conducting an abductive qualitative content analysis exploring four actor-focused aid strategies guiding The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA). By utilising Micheal Foucault's theory of governmentality in general, and the theory development of neoliberal governmentality in particular, governmental rationalities, techniques and subjectifications are deciphered and analysed to increase the comprehension of how neoliberal governing is expressed in Swedish aid. The analysis finds that the strategies to a high extent motivate a moralisation of market principles and freedom as an operational space for agency and choice, using a pluralistic arena of agents to govern from a distance, with an intention to shape the conduct of subjects into responsible and self-governing people. Finally, it is concluded that although a reducing legitimacy of neoliberal ideology in contemporary aid policy, it remains ascertain that neoliberalism has continued to influence as an art of government.

Keywords: development, Swedish aid, SIDA, governmentality, neoliberal governmentality, Micheal Foucault, global studies

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1. Introduction

1.1 Statement of issue

Development aid has fulfilled a large part of the politics of development throughout the twentieth century. To this day it is an ongoing practice, allocating and transmitting hundreds of billion USD globally, through various networks and channels (Brown, 2014, p.539; OECD, 2023). Foreign aid is in a state of movement, not unlike the globalised world within which it operates, and has historically undergone changes in discourse, goals, and approaches (Brown, 2014, p.539). Since the late 1970s navigations in development have been highly influenced by market-driven principles, state-decentralisation and neoliberal thinking. Especially strong were these principles during the 1990s when the concept of the Washington Consensus emerged, the idea that developing countries were to follow market-led strategies. This development era came to experience fierce criticism, not least due to proclaimed failures such as criticised trickle-down theories and the 1980s structural adjustment programmes (SAP), an implemented strategy to achieve macro-economic stability through fiscal and monetary adjustments in several developing countries (Sørensen, 2010, p.1-2; Jönsson, Arvidsson & Jerneck, 2011, p.105). When, besides from classic leftists, a newer gathering of voices coming from the 'post-theoretic fields' collectively came to question development for holding on to colonial structures and failing to consider alternative development paths, neoliberal hegemony could no longer be defended (Jönsson, et.al, 2011, p.55) Still, forms of neoliberalism remain prominent to this day. However, a lot has changed since the wave of neoliberalisation dominated during Thatcher and Reagan's golden age. It has been said to have managed to absorb its critique by reforming and adapting, making space for other development discourses (Conway, 2014, p.110). Although later developments, labelled 'post Washington Consensus', have left approaches of pure neoliberal interventions and started to act on values of 'ownership', 'participation', and 'partnership', aid as we know it today continues to operate pluralistic. Opening up a market space where agents deriving from non-governmental organisations (NGOs), private sectors, civil societies and financial investors gain more influence and legitimacy within the development sector (Jönsson, et.al, 2011, p.62; Brown, 2014).

With the changed actor landscape a wide range of global governance literature has followed, for a long time claiming that the state had lost its sovereign power to multilateral institutions and non-state agents. However, some literature has started to question whether the relative power of states is dead, or if it expresses itself according to new conditions and logics of government (Sending & Neumann, 2006, p.651). With the use of Michel Foucault's concept of 'governmentality', an exercise of power performed with the attempt to shape conduct, the classic governance literature can be challenged, or at least nuanced (Dean, 2010, p.17; Sending & Neumann, 2006, p.651). Governmentality opens up a discussion that goes beyond that of the decentralised state, and rather formulates questions regarding de-statised governmental practices, highlighting not only rationalities but also the technical means for achieving or maintaining such rationalities (Rose & Miller, 1992, p.174). As a result of this shift and additionally the neoliberal reformation it can be argued that it would be of relevance to investigate foreign development aid in relation to these findings.

There is a large amount of previous research concerning aid. Mainly literature taking on critical angles, questioning its relation to power asymmetries, theories of dependency and postcolonialism (See: Glennie, 2009; Easterly, 2017; Jönsson et al, 2011), efficiency, result-based agendas and evaluations of aid in connection with the principles of the Paris Declaration on aid effectiveness (See: Sjöstedt, 2013; Dornan, 2017). Research contributions also exist regarding Swedish foreign development aid. For instance, studies have viewed Swedish development aid in relation to the global context, evaluating the evolution and shifts in its policies over time (See: Irwin, 2019; Pettersson, 2022). Yet, there seems to be less research that views foreign development aid through lenses of governmentality, especially with Sweden as a research focus. According to Andy Sumner and Jonathan Glennie (2015) the most frequently asked question in this matter is: when does aid work? (Sumner & Glennie, 2015, p.201). However, with this study, my ambition is to treat the subject from a different angle, namely by asking: how does aid work?

1.2 Aim & research questions

This thesis aims to gain a better understanding of governing within the political field of development. More precisely, it aims at exploring how Swedish aid is governed. I intend to do so while at the same time paying interest to the subject of neoliberalism, seeking to understand how the reformation of neoliberal values in development work takes shape today.

In doing so my purpose is to explore how neoliberal governing rationalities and techniques can be observed in Swedish aid policies and strategies today. Moreover, how it operates through the chain of agents connected to aid, from donors, partners to recipients. This to deepen the comprehension of how governmental power distribution in contemporary Swedish aid functions, gets legitimised, and towards whom or what it targets to govern. To fulfil the purpose of the thesis the study will be proceeded by the following questions:

- How can neoliberal governing rationalities and techniques be observed in The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) development aid strategies?
- How do these governing rationalities and techniques relate to assumptions and aspirations concerning subjects?

1.3 Limitations of the study

This thesis takes on the complex subject of power and governance in the context of foreign development aid. Thus, I need to detangle my intentions and limitations before investigating this matter further. For clarification, this study does not imply to provide a holistic overview of the complexity of governing processes in the aid sector as a whole, nor to give equal emphasis to all actors involved in it. I attempt to investigate the mode of governance of Swedish aid authority and thereby delimit my research case to a Swedish context. Choosing Sweden as a research case comes for several reasons, first and foremost it is a choice based on convenience, since I can read strategies in my native language, thus minimising linguistic interpretation errors. Secondly, Sweden is a small country but has previously taken a lot of pride in being a generous donor. Sweden, in contrast to the U.S. and the U.K, has not explicitly been at the forefront of the neoliberal agenda, but stuck to solidarity as the primary keyword, making it even more interesting to look at from a neoliberal governmentality perspective. Due to the national limitation, the result might not be, and do not attempt to fit as, a generalisation for other cases. Nonetheless, despite the selection of a case narrowed down to a national level, this study will hopefully serve helpful insights into the broader field of governmentality studies and foreign aid. Especially those studies targeting Sweden in particular, and other liberal democracies in general.

Moving on I will also give context and discuss the concept of ‘development’ throughout the thesis. This since development lies as the very arena for the processes and sectors I will look into. Nonetheless, valuable to mention, is that foreign development aid is partly a fractional part of the development sphere, therefore the results of this study can not account for global development as a whole.

Furthermore, a selection in theory has been made, partly due to the time constraints but also to improve the quality of the analysis. A sample of SIDA strategies will be examined through a lens of neoliberal comprehension of governmentality. By doing so, delimitations follow in the sense that some parts of Foucault's governmentality theory will gain a larger focus than others. While performing a governmentality analysis I put emphasis on that specific element of power in Foucauldian understanding, leaving several other concepts of his slightly less mentioned. The field of foreign development aid gives rise to a variety of interesting problems to investigate, and according to Foucault inspired studies an examination of discourse might seem most convenient. However, it is important to mention that this thesis is not a discourse analysis, but instead, a try to grasp not only the political dimension of aid but likewise the technical and operational one.

1.4 Disposition

The thesis follows a disposition of six chapters. *The first chapter* contains an introduction to the subject of contemporary foreign development aid and specifies the statement of problem, the limitations the study faces, the aim of the study and the following research questions. *The second chapter* attempts to provide insights into Swedish aid by explaining SIDA's internal structure and way of distributing aid. Also to be found is a brief presentation of the historical changes from government to governance, as well as a presentation of influential events that have shaped contemporary aid.

The third chapter starts with presenting previous research, depicting articles and books that have contributed with valuable insights regarding prior knowledge on governance within the field of development. Following accommodates the theoretical approach that will work as the analytical lens. I here present the underpinning theory, Michel Foucault's theory of governmentality. Thereafter follows a further description of neoliberal governmentality, which provides the main concepts used in the analysis. Furthermore, this chapter includes a

theoretical framework section in which I draw upon Nicolas Rose, Peter Miller and Michelle Dean's theory development of governmentality, extracting and emerging concepts from their theory methods. This section is an attempt to operationalise the concepts *rationalities of government*, *techniques of government* and *subjectification of government* which acts as a guide for the coding scheme.

The fourth chapter presents a deeper review of the method used for the study. Here follows an account for methodological standpoints and a presentation of the selection process of empirical material. Moreover I provide a brief summary of the content of each strategy. This chapter also provides a more profound discussion on the analysis method, debating the pros and cons concerning the choice of performing a content analysis. Lastly proceeds a method discussion about ethical considerations and levels of validity and reliability. In *the fifth chapter*, I present the results from the coding process and combine the findings with an analysis, drawing on knowledge from theory and previous literature. In *the sixth and last chapter*, I attempt to make account for the key findings and formulate a conclusion for the study.

2. An overview: Development, Aid assistance & Contemporary Swedish aid

2.1. Government to governance: A changed actor-landscape for aid

Foreign aid as a political means for development has experienced changes in how it has been channelled and through which actors. In the aid's early days, after the end of the world wars, the state had the central role as regulator and planner. As the main actor in Keynesian economic theory, it was assumed that the state should pursue stabilisation policies, influence processes related to investment, saving and consumption by stimulating demand and supply to prevent potential financial crises (Peet & Hartwick, 2009:56-59). However, the post-war era also resulted in the creation of new global institutions. The United Nations not least, but also the Bretton Woods institutions which were assigned to rebuild the global economy. Still, reconstruction took place within institutionally embedded national economies, where the state was primarily responsible for welfare and economy (Sörensen, 2010, p.6-7; Conway, 2014, p.108).

It was not until the late 1970s that the previous state-focused development paradigm got challenged by a counter-revolution and neoliberalism gained large influence. It was promoted through international institutions, such as the World Bank, and wished to reduce state interference. Rather came privatisation, deregulation and the rise of the free market to flourish, which also reflected upon development thinking. The Bretton Woods institutions gained an increased role in forming and allocating development programmes (Sörensen, 2010, p.9). The notion of 'governance', meaning the shaping of formal and informal rules governing the public space in which states and market agents interact in decision-making, replaced the previous strong 'government' (Jönsson et al., 2011, p.49). Along with the aim of reducing power from the sovereign state, new agents of development arose within that process. The upcoming actors during the 1970s came to be highly appreciated for their capacity of working hands on, delimiting the distance between donors and receivers in poverty reduction practices. These actors came from the civil society, the space where agents not belonging to the state, political power-driven arena nor the profit-driven market take action. It included NGOs, social movements and other advocates of human rights, striving towards change. With the rampaging of such actors, civil society grew in importance, representing a sector that could perform development assistance without being dependent on

a state (Van Rooy, 2014, p.560-561). That gives them the important function to be the aid channel that bypasses fragile or badly governed states (Acht, Mahmoud & Thiele, 2015, p.20). With the notion of fragile states, the state emerged again as a subject of discussion, inevitable for neoliberalism to avoid. The vital state institutions still needed to function in order to secure the neoliberal project and avoid threats against democratisation. Consequently, the state could not be fully erased, instead it needed to be 'good'. Hence the good governance agenda, stressing values of transparency, accountability, effectiveness and anti-corruption, struck during the 1990s (Sørensen, 2010, p.10; Jönsson, et al., 2011, p.106).

Since then governance has assumed a global form, considering that many current development challenges concern big regions or the planet as a whole. There is today a demand for 'global governance' and global cooperation, rather than interstate or international governance (Scholte & Söderbaum, 2017, p.4). Today's development orientation remains market-led but has gone softer since the golden age of neoliberalism. It now promotes corrective actions taken by pluralistic agents of development to stabilise when market forces contribute to ecological and social damage. For instance, corporate social responsibility (CSR) and green economy have become moral guidelines in the global market (Scholte & Söderbaum, 2017, p.9). With the implementation of global agreements, signed and ratified by states in which they also are held accountable, a discussion occurred of whether the state has returned. According to Jens Sørensen (2010) one must not equate the contemporary state with Keynesian development state, but instead view it as a 'governance state' taken upon the role of supervisors for market principles, agreements and reforms. With the pluralistic actor-landscape remaining, aid can now instead operate directly on populations (Sørensen, 2010, p.12-13). To conclude this discussion, historically the state has been a topic of debate of whether it shall or shall not be. Foucault suggested that 'the problem of the state' has been rather over-valued, seeing it as either a dominant monster or the necessity for social and economic fulfilment (Rose & Miller, 1992, p.272). Moving forward from a discussion of government to governance, we now add: from governance to governmentality. Continuing reflecting on the concept of the state further in this study, I will draw from Foucault's notion that: "is not so much the State-domination of society, but the "governmentalisation" of the State' (Foucault 1979: 20 cited in Rose & Miller, 1992, p.273).

2.2 Contemporary Swedish Aid & the influential events shaping it

In addition to the previous discussion, contemporary aid has undergone several changes due to changing politics. Several happenings, agreements, summits and policies have changed the direction and landscape of development and foreign aid. My intention further on is to briefly describe the most influential global changes leading up to the current structure and state of Swedish aid.

Foreign development aid has experienced stages of modernisation with weight on industrialisation and westernisation, neoliberal interventions with its expectations on market-based solutions and expansion of trade, good governance projects and eventually towards a paradigm which has broadened the understanding of human development to more than economic growth. (Peet & Hartwick, 2009, p.104; Sørensen, 2010, p.3-10). Goals, content and priorities have changed given the biggest threats and challenges of each specific time, for instance being war or climate change. During the last two decades scientific alertment regarding rising climate change and the need to address poverty as multidimensional has given significant gravity to what came to be sustainable development. Namely the current hegemonic development discourse which intends to give equal emphasis to three pillars of sustainability: social, economic and ecological (White, 2014, p.60; UN, n.d.). Sustainable development came as a result of the critique to economic growth dominance which pervaded the 20th century. It began to be discussed in the global institutions during the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, and within the first years of the new millennium several summits had adopted the new development path. Agreements that took place during this time have influenced the governing policies of today, and thereby indeed the construction of Swedish aid (UN, n.d.).

The current *Policy Framework for Swedish development cooperation and humanitarian aid* (translated: Policyramverk för svenskt utvecklingssamarbete och humanitärt bistånd) (2016/17:60) came to replace the previous policy from 2013. The framework is a composition of guidelines relating to Agenda 30 and the SDGs, the Paris agreement (on climate change) and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, an agenda for financing the SDGs (2016/17:60 p.1). According to the overall policy, Swedish development aid shall operate with regard to five perspectives working as tools to identify and handle goal conflict,

as well as encourage cooperation within the tematics of aid. ‘Poor people’s perspective on development’ and ‘the rights perspective’ are central, highlighting democracy, human rights and that the priorities, needs and conditions that people in poverty experience must lead the direction towards poverty reduction. The other perspectives are mentioned as thematic: ‘gender equality perspectives’, ‘conflict perspectives’ and ‘environment-and climate perspectives’. With these guiding perspectives as a toolbox, Swedish development aid shall attempt to work in all thematic fields and together strive towards the main goal: To create opportunities for better living conditions for people living in poverty and oppression (2016/17:60, p.16).

The current policy framework is in addition designed in relation to agreements on effective aid. With the critique of development interventions and aid programs, a demand for more effective aid arose at the end of the millennium (Glennie, 2014, p.551). The demand for better cooperation between donors and receivers was brought up within the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) resulting in a new steering policy. With the consultation of 91 donor and partner countries, several international donor organisations, civil society and private sector representatives, ‘The Paris Declaration on aid effectiveness’ was created. From it came five key features: *ownership*, putting emphasis on partner countries right to their own development, *harmonisation*, avoiding conflicting requirements, *alignment*, supporting partner countries own priorities instead of imposing its own or implement parallel programmes, *managing for result*, together shape and implement aid with regard to desired results, *mutual accountability*, putting emphasis on responsibility and transparency. (Odén & Wohlgemuth, 2013, p.8-9). Together it constituted a new paradigm in foreign aid, still prominent to this day. According to Bertil Odén and Lennart Wohlgemuth (2013) this has left an seemingly extensive mark on the Swedish aid sector, meaning that since the 1960s Sweden has gone from having donor driven strategies, substantially involved in the direction of projects, to adapting to the current conditions (Odén & Wohlgemuth, 2013, p.20-21).

2.3 The bottomline of SIDA’s operation

The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) is a Swedish authority working on the commission of the Swedish ministry for foreign affairs (translated: Utrikesdepartementet) who in turn works under the direction of the Swedish government.

SIDA's mission is a composite of the government's regulatory letter, regulations, strategies and budget concerning politics of development. Politics that in turn has been formed according to international agreements (SIDA, 2023). The budget for Sweden's international development aid year 2023 is 47, 2 billion Swedish kr (approximately 460 million USD), of which 243 million USD is decided over by SIDA, spread out to different aid projects. Apart from receiving government tax fundings, SIDA works with development financing, or 'additional resources' to free more assets (money or knowledge capacity). This activity, alongside the aid, targets companies, banks, partner countries and investors (SIDA; 2023a). The whole practical part depends on partnerships within several sectors. SIDA's role is to provide knowledge capacity, set the strategies and distribute funding, meanwhile other agents perform the practical projects. The partnerships include civil society, private sector, authorities, scientists and universities, multilateral organisations and other Swedish authorities (SIDA, 2021).

3. Previous research & Theory

3.1 Previous research on governmentality within the politics of development: Critical literature

Governmentality extends over a large field of literature, as do writings on development and aid. I am therefore aware that the selection I have chosen to highlight in this part of the study is delimited. Again, my ambition is to draw on literature that integrates with the chosen theoretical framework, presented further down in this chapter, and depict interesting perspectives, relevant for the analysis. The following researchers that are to be elucidated, are all influential authors within the sphere of development studies, primarily for the critical corner of development literature.

A part of my interest is to investigate the technical aspects of aid, as a complement to its political aspects. An article which has brought attention to the topic is *‘The Anti-politics Machine: ‘Development’ and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho’* (1994) in which James Ferguson together with Larry Lohmann discusses the efforts, delegated by the World Bank, to target rural development projects in the African country Lesotho. They argue that what led to the project's failure was in fact the reliance on Western development models. Models which poorly took into account the country's historical, social and cultural context. They bring up a discussion regarding technical versus political, arguing that development efforts failed in Lesotho due to the World Bank's attempt to rely on technical solutions such as improving infrastructure and agriculture, meanwhile neglecting the power dynamics and political tensions in the region. Ferguson & Lohmann (1994) empathises that by ‘‘casting themselves in the role of political-neutral artisans using ‘‘development’’ projects as a tool to grab hold of and transform a portion of the country according to a pre-determined plan, development officials assumed that the projects were given and all they had to do was ‘‘implement’’ them.’’ (Ferguson & Lohmann, 1994, p.178). A simplistic view in Ferguson & Lohmann's (1994) meaning, leading to what Ferguson sought to call the ‘Anti-politics Machine’, a process which eradicates politics from development. In conclusion, they argue that development has to address the complexity of local politics, preferably by including aid receivers in their own empowerment (Ferguson & Lohmann, 1994).

Techniques in development have not only been discussed in relation to the political dimension. Besides, technology can also be depicted as the channel in which aid takes, that is

how strategies and mechanics carry out development towards their goal. Within the field of development and governmentality Tania Li contributed with the book *The will to improve* (2007) in which she explains the attempt to improve livelihood in Indonesia by analysing historical development strategies through the concept of governmentality. She primarily examined development interventions led by the World Bank and came to realise that they were designed “ to govern through community, manage conflict, and set conditions in which an empowered civil society could reform its own conduct and that of the state apparatus.” (Li, 2007, p.273). Li (2007) concludes according to her findings that governing techniques have changed throughout time, meaning that since the turn of the millennium there has been an increased level of community based governing and simultaneously less level of the state (Li, 2007). What's interesting about this book in relation to this thesis, other than the technical shift into governing through non governmental market agents, is the language use she depicts from these interventions. Li (2007) highlights certain words such as participatory, empowerment and ownership, words which have frequently figured in development thinking after the 1990s as a response to the criticism of top-down approaches that development interventions have received. By doing so, she provides insights on how to interpret and understand these values, strategies and goals as a way to govern local communities and people to exercise responsibility and choice (Li, 2007).

Similarities can be found in the article *The power of partnership in global governance* (2004) in which Rita Abrahamsen also reflects on concepts of ownership and participation in a broader discussion on development partnerships. Abrahamsen (2004) argues that the new aid effective agenda and its promotion of fair partnership needs to be investigated further. She detects in such an investigation, viewing it from a governmentality perspective, that partnership has to be understood as an exercise of advanced liberal power. Functioning on premises of inclusion and empowerment rather than direct domination. Likewise, partnership here appears as a technology that helps produce self-disciplined- and managed citizens, promoting responsibility and empowerment over their own development. It is a delegation of power using freedom as the formula of rule. Nonetheless this use of freedom should not, according to Abrahamsen (2004) solidly be understood as a process eliminating aid conditionality towards donors. Still, African societies are highly exposed to western power structures. With this article, Abrahamsen presents several interesting findings of use to this study. Except for connecting aid with governmentality as I as well intend to do, she highlights partnership as a technique of not only governing over, but governing through. Here we have

to understand advanced liberal governance as not an attempt of governing less, but instead as an attempt of governing differently, through a pluralistic arena of agents (Abrahamsen, 2004).

3.1.1 Critical reflection

What these researchers have in common is their contribution to understanding the technical dimensions of development and aid. To refer back to the introduction chapter, they do not only ask the question: when does aid work? But also sets out to answer: How does aid work? They legitimise that these processes can advantageously be analysed with the help of governmentality and Foucault's understanding of power as interrelational by paying attention to the transfer of responsibility and decentralised governing. Li's findings in particular provides this study with a comprehension of values and language use traced in advanced liberal governance, giving this study support in investigating neoliberal governmentality in particular. However, in a broader research review there is little to be found on governmentality in Swedish aid. The literature presented above does primarily use either one recipient country or a multilateral organisation as a case for their analyses. My ambition is to contribute by investigating governmental rationalities, techniques and subject construction in the context of a donor country.

3.2 Theoretical approach

Since previous research points at neoliberal government as an interesting and important tool in understanding power distribution in processes concerning development and aid, the choice of theory can be motivated. However, going into this study with a set, deductive approach would possibly delimit the analysis of the empirical material if other more interesting theories or concepts evolved during the process (Bryman, 2018, p.47-48). Therefore, the relation between theory and empiricism has in this matter moved back and forth, and eventually been filtered down to a theoretical framework that can be applied to a certain material fitting to answer the given aim of the study. Further discussions on the process of choosing material will be given in the chapter on method. Thus followed an abductive approach, a hybrid combination of inductive and deductive approach (Bryman, 2018, p.478). Under this main title, framed as the 'theoretical approach' I will give an introduction to Foucault's notion of governmentality and further delve in what is distinguished by neoliberal governmentality.

3.2.1 Foucault & Governmentality

In an explanation of neoliberal government it is firstly wise to untangle the wider concept of governmentality. The term was introduced by the philosopher Michel Foucault and came to be, according to his understanding, one element in a triangle of power: sovereignty, disciplinary and governmental power (Barry, Osborne & Rose, 1996, p.8). To avoid the same path as previous discussions regarding the state had taken, that is viewing the division between the state as either the dominant power suppressing the people or the functioning institution essential for economic and social life, Foucault introduces governmentality. That is, to pay interest in the 'governmentalisation' of the state rather than the state-domination of society (Rose & Miller, 1992, p.174-175).

Foucault's definition of government, means an exercise of power which various authorities and actors perform with the purpose of shaping the conduct of others in a beneficial direction. This is described as 'the conduct of conduct'. What is beneficial in the matter relates to norms, rationalities and discourses which can depend on the context of morals and knowledge (Dean, 2010, p.17-18). "'To conduct' means to lead, to direct or to guide, and perhaps implies some sort of calculation as to how this is to be done" (Dean, 2010, p.17). However in his late lectures on governmentality, Foucault also put a lot of interest in government as a political domain. In that matter, government is also defined as a rationality, the very art of government. Colin Gordon (1991) explains this: "'A rationality of government will thus mean a way or system of thinking about the nature of the practice of government (who can govern; what governing is; what or who is governed) capable of making some form of that activity thinkable and practicable both to its practitioners and those upon whom it was practised.'" (Gordon, 1991, p.3).

Foucault introduces the theory of governmentality as an analysing tool in order to understand these practices and help investigate how relations of power shapes conduct. As well as to help understand the mentalities and techniques behind government and how thoughts and practices get materialised (Ove, 2013, p.312). Besides, this way of analysing provides a framework where it is possible to connect questions regarding government and authority to those about identity and the self (Dean, 2010, p.20).

3.2.2 Neoliberal government: Governing through freedom

In his work, Foucault detects a linkage between government and freedom, indicating a liberal way of governing. Power, in his meaning, can only operate among subjects that hold some capacity to act freely in one way or another. Freedom becomes relevant since from a Foucauldian understanding power is argued to be defined as actions on others' actions. Hence, to act on another's actions requires subjects to be active agents, a part of a society where power operates interrelational rather than being fixed in a regime (Gordon, 1991, p.5).

Important to grasp, as both Peter Ove (2013) and Sofie Hellberg (2020) emphasise, is that neoliberal governing has to be understood as an art of government which does not necessarily relate to neoliberal economic or political goals (Ove, 2013, p.313-314; Hellberg, 2020, p.188). Rather it is founded on the belief that actors of society are both subjects of the state, but likewise possess the capacity to govern themselves and others. In addition, neoliberal government tend to decentralise power of government from the authority of the state to other agents of the society (Ove, 2013, p.313-314). Such decentralisation of power works since according to Foucauldian understanding power can not be held by an authority, but instead " (...) is produced from one moment to the next, at every point, or rather in every relation from one point to another. Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere." (Foucault, 1978/1999:93 cited in Ove, 2013, p.313). Therefore neoliberal government does not mean less government, but instead indicates a more pluralistic and subtle way governing that functions on the condition of freedom (Barry, Osborne & Rose, 1996, p.8). Freedom in this case is the arena in which governing takes place, a condition for submission. To be governed through freedom works on the assumption that individuals hold the capacity to think and act rational. At the same time, to be able to act freely the subjects need to be guided and shaped into responsible individuals, capable of making rational choices (Dean, 2010, p.192-193).

3.3 Theoretical framework

With this main title the ambition is to boil down the essence of the theoretical approach into a framework, making the governmentality perspective applicable to the material. This is done by presenting a governmentality analysis, drawing on previous governmentality literature, and furthermore operationalising the key terms important for the coding scheme.

3.3.1 Governmentality Analysis: Drawing on Dean, Rose & Miller

Since the rise of governmentality in academia, different methods of analysing the practices have developed. Dean (2010) talked about something he called ‘Analytics of government’ in his work *Governmentality: Power and rule in modern society*. In this analysis Dean (2010) operationalises Foucault’s thoughts and transforms it into a toolbox whose central concern is to investigate how things govern and are governed within regimes, the conditions which reproduce such regimes and how it transforms or continues to function. An ‘Analytics of government’ thus builds on questions of ‘how’ and categorises four dimensions: 1. ‘visibilities’; ways of perceiving, 2. ‘knowledge’; ways of thinking and questioning, where vocabulary plays a vital part, 3. ‘technologies’ ways of acting, directing and interfering according to set mechanisms and techniques and 4. ‘subject and identity’ ways of shaping subjects and agents (Dean, 2010, p.33).

Moreover, Rose and Miller (1992) also propose analytical tools in the influential article *Political power beyond the State: problematics of government* for investigating what they call ‘Problematics of government’. Their analysis mainly focuses on categories of *political rationality* and *techniques of government* (Rose & Miller, 1992). In the following part I will explain these theoretical concepts further and account for how I intend to use them in my research. With inspiration from both Dean’s ‘Analytics of government’ and Rose and Miller’s analysis of ‘Problematics of government’ I will present three categories of government; ‘rationalities of government’, ‘techniques of government’ and ‘subjectification of government’.

3.3.2 Rationalities of government

In this category I will draw upon Dean’s (2010) formulations of ‘visibilities’ and ‘knowledge’, as well as Rose and Miller’s concept of *political rationalities*. This part of the analysis framework will be used to investigate the rationalities, the systematic world of thought in which technologies, strategies and behaviour functions. A rationality in this context implies ways of thinking, reasoning and responding to a problem. It is systematic and tightly connected with formal knowledge and expertise (Dean, 2010, p.24). Looking for

rationalities in this matter becomes vital to understand the context, or arena of thought in which governing takes place. I will in my coding divide rationalities of government into subcategories, similar to Rose and Miller's (1992) core features of political rationalities.

Firstly, rationality has a *moral* character, that is, it provides ideals for government to strive towards, such as freedom, justice, growth, equality to name a few examples. Secondly, it possesses an *epistemological* character, meaning it articulates objects of whom or what that is to be governed, for example a population or an economy (Rose & Miller, 1992, p.178-179). In this aspect of rationality one can see similarities to what Dean means by investigating 'visibilities', a fundamental step in analysing government where one must understand how groups of objects that are to be governed formulate (Axelsson & Qvorsebo, 2017, p.146-147). Thirdly, Rose and Miller (1992) argue that rationality holds a form of idiom, or as I will describe it further on: a *linguistic* character. In this aspect language and vocabularies play a vital part in constituting political discourse and should be seen as a machinery which renders reality thinkable (Rose & Miller, 1992, p.179). Here knowledge becomes relevant, since it is highly interconnected with production of discourse, a process which one should pay attention to in order to disclose the systematic ideas that sets the framework for government (Dean, 2010, p.43). To summarise, rationalities are moral, functions on the foundation of knowledge and expertise, and are constituted in language (Rose & Miller, 1992, s.179).

3.3.3 Techniques of government

Apart from rationalities, government contains sets of strategies, mechanisms and technologies through which systematic programmes or rationalities function and become capable of deployment (Rose & Miller, 1992, p.183). Government always strive towards regulating populations or individual behaviour and attitude, either changing it or remaining a status quo, with help of technical means and practices (Axelsson & Qvorsebo, 2017, p.148). Nevertheless, these techniques of government should not be simplified into tools which are implemented by the seat of power in order to put ideals into practical reality. Instead it is rather a whole set of different forces, such as legal, financial and administrative that all together shape and regulate populations, organisations and individuals decisions and actions in a direction that benefits a specific rationality or goal of government (Rose & Miller, p.183). In Dean's (2010) model for 'Analytics of government' he emphasises that while investigating techniques one must ask the question: 'by what means, mechanisms,

procedures, instruments, tactics, techniques, technologies and vocabularies is authority constituted and rule accomplished?” (Dean, 2010, p.42). In the context of this thesis such questions opens up an opportunity to better understand the strategies and techniques through which Swedish development aid is governed, which agents that governs or are governed and through which means it proceeds.

3.3.4 Subjectification of government

It is in the interest of the subject construction where the two analyses of government differ, and is only to be found in Dean’s (2010, p.33) analysis model. In a Foucault inspired subject analysis the nature of the subject is not seen as a permanent state, but rather a constructed result of historical power influence. Examples of such subjects can be the construction of the responsible consumer, the desirable citizen or the rehabilitated patient (Axelsson & Qvarsebo, 2017, p.149). It is on the same epistemological assumption that Dean (1992) builds his fourth dimension of government, the one concerning subjects, the self and identity.

The process of subjectification is closely connected and sometimes inseparable with rationalities and governing techniques, but it is especially concerned with collective and individual conduct. By including this dimensional perspective a relevant broad question to ask is: “what forms of person, self and identity are presupposed by different practices of government and what sorts of transformation do these practices seek?” (Dean, 2010, p.43). This leads to the following questions regarding what capacities, attributes, duties and rights subjects are assumed to possess. Likewise, what form of conduct is expected of them, to what extent they are constructed as active agents and so on and so forth (Dean, 2010, p.43). In the coding process this category will primarily target the subject in form of the aid receivers, both on an individual and populational level.

3.3.5 Summary

The three concepts described above will work as an outline to the coding scheme. I have, with the help of eminent governmentality researchers, attempted to operationalise the primary components associated with each term. In a search for governing rationalities I will look for it. *Moral*: what ideals or goals does government behind aid strive against? ii.

Epistemological: what or who are to be governed? iii. *Linguistic*: How does the targets above render into something thinkable through language and discourse? Further On, the guiding question in finding governing techniques reads: Through which techniques, mechanisms, tactics and strategies does government operate? Lastly, the coding for finding subjectification of government will be followed by: i. *Assumptions*: Which assumption about the subject can be identified within the governing? ii. *Aspirations*: What goals and desirable directions for the formation of the subject are the governing practices trying to achieve? These codes will further down, in chapter four, be presented in the form of a table.

4. Method

In this chapter I will firstly make account for the choice of implementing a qualitative research design. I then present a section concerning empiricism, describing the processes of selecting suitable material in relation to the study's aim, research questions and qualitative approach. Thereafter follows a discussion on the analysis method and a further explanation of how the data has been rendered through a content analysis. Lastly, I will consider some limitations, critics and ethical considerations as well as make account for the methodological undertakings that might affect my interpretation of the data.

4.1 Research design & Methodology

In order to fulfil the aim of the study a qualitative approach of method seemed most fitted. It is argued that using a qualitative approach more easily helps investigate research questions which aim to discover meaning in language, rather than in numbers and frequency (Bryman, 2018, p.454). The choice of research design falls naturally not only to the specific research questions, but also according to the ontological standpoint commonly associated with social science studies. Qualitative research tends to draw on a more constructivist ontological approach, meaning that social reality is assumed to be understood as constantly changing, built on constructions rather than on objective truth (Bryman, 2018, p.61). My very ambition with this study is to treat development and aid as such comprehension of social reality, showing how aid operations work according to sets of knowledge constituted on language. The research questions for this study lies on the very assumption that power and discourse manifests and plays a vital role in the shaping of Swedish development aid. I thereby take a stand that language can not be separated from the perception of reality, and that meaning is created discursively, in that way also similar to a post-structuralistic approach (Boréus & Bergström, 2018, p.27).

4.2 Empiricism

The purpose of analysing governing rationalities, techniques and subjectifications in Swedish foreign aid calls for some kind of analysis of documents. Arguably being of more relevance

than, for example, using semi-structured interviews, since the study aims to investigate the language, morals, descriptions and technical performance in strategies and targets, rather than analyse people's interpretations of it. If the aim of the study were to seek the results of how strategies have affected aid receivers or how frequently different signs or words were used in the document, methods like qualitative interviews or a quantitative content analysis would be better suited (Bryman, 2018, p.561; Boréus & Kohl, 2018, p.50). Below follows two sections, one where I will motivate the selection of data that has constituted the empirical case for the thesis. Furthermore, a section where I will provide a brief summary of each strategy's main points and design.

4.2.1 Selection of data

As for the limitation of the empirical material four strategies concerning Swedish foreign development aid have been picked out, signed and issued by the Swedish government. It is therefore a targeted selection that has been performed, one where the empirical material has not been picked randomly but instead chosen to fit the aim of the research questions (Bryman, 2018, p.496). There is a wide range of policies and strategies under which SIDA shall relate and operate towards. Here I want to pick up where we left the discussion regarding an abductive approach in the introduction to the theoretical approach. In the beginning of the study my thought was to execute the research using only the wider *Policy Framework for Swedish development cooperation and humanitarian aid (2016/17:60)*. However, a brief perusal of the document showed little hands-on operational description of SIDA's work, possibly making it more difficult to discern a fair and legitimate view for governing techniques. In chapter two I mention this policy since it captures the current state of Swedish aid, nonetheless it will in this research serve as a background to Swedish foreign development aid as well as complementing the analysis.

Instead, four steering documents have been selected, all strategies, published as government decisions (translation: Regeringsbeslut), dealing with cooperation with various aid actors. The choice of making an actor-focused analysis comes from several reasons. First of all, it functions as a demarcation in the multitude of strategies that SIDA works from. Secondly, I claim that the actor-focused strategies provide an opportunity to understand the distribution of governing power between and through the network of agents. A practice of power which neoliberal governmentality literature has places a lot of interest in, especially

when formulating discussions on the distribution of responsibility and agency (Dean, 2010, p.192-193). Due to time limitations, all written policies and strategies concerning actors of aid have not been gathered. There are several sub-strategies describing the work with specific actors, material which I due to time limitations have chosen not to gather within the empirical framework, a choice that could be considered a weakness. However, I state that the four documents picked still capture and summarise the collaborations with the most vital partners in aid.

4.2.2 Presentation of material

Firstly, I will look closer at a strategy targeting civil society. *The strategy for support of swedish organisations in the civil society* (translated: Strategin för stöd genom svenska organisationer i det civila samhället) (Regeringsbeslut UD2016/10135/IU) is a strategy issued by the Swedish government, written as a six year plan which shall apply until year 2022. Its main message concerns strategies aiming at strengthening the civil society in developing countries through the support of Swedish civil society organisations (CSOs). The most highlighted guidelines for operations strive towards a pluralistic and thriving civil society in aid receiving countries, one that promotes rights perspectives, better living conditions for those in poverty, human rights and global sustainable development (Regeringsbeslut UD2016/10135/IU).

Secondly, in order to provide insights in SIDA's cooperation with the private sector, I have further selected the government's *Strategy for Sweden's global development corporation within sustainable economic development 2022-2026* (translated: Strategi för Sveriges globala utvecklingssamarbete inom hållbar ekonomisk utveckling 2022–2026) (Regeringsbeslut UD2022/11294). It is a set strategy that will stay relevant to SIDA until the year 2026. In contrast to the other strategies selected, this one is not a solidly actor-focused strategy, but touches the whole economic dimension of sustainability. SIDA does not currently have an isolated steering document for market agents, hence this one will be used. It should be said though, that this strategy still treats the topic of market-and private sector agents. The document implies that the operation shall achieve better conditions for productive employment and decent working conditions. In addition it focuses on creating conditions for a more including and sustainable trade, market and private sector. Taking into account perspectives of equality, especially regarding gender. One of the main goals is to strengthen

women's economic empowerment and create possibilities for a more equal access to financial services (Regeringsbeslut UD2022/11294).

Thirdly, *The Strategy for Sweden's development corporation within science for poverty reduction and sustainable development 2022-2028* (translated: Strategi för Sveriges utvecklingsamarbete inom forskning för fattigdomsbekämpning och hållbar utveckling 2022-2028) (Regeringsbeslut UD2022/09061) will be included for investigation. It is a strategy for the continued collaboration with the academic sector. Science and research is here emphasised as a crucial fundament in detecting signs and perspectives of poverty, and not least contribute with investigations and evaluations regarding solutions for poverty reduction. The main goals in this strategy is to strengthen the research field concerning poverty and sustainable development, both in Sweden and in other partner countries. A lot of significance is directed at building capacity and engagement for poorer countries to invest in their own science centres and universities (Regeringsbeslut UD2022/09061).

Lastly, I will pay attention to the cooperation with multilateral organisations. For the first time in ten years, the Swedish government renewed the strategy policy for the development collaboration with multilateral agents. The *Strategy for multilateral development policy* (Regeringsbeslut UD2017/21055/FN) contains the vital guidelines for global partnership with international organisations. It is set to govern the work of Government Offices, including SIDA, with multilateral organisations in development cooperation and humanitarian assistance. However for this research, particular concern will be placed on development cooperation. The document covers a summarised strategy for the work with the UN system, multilateral development banks, international financial institutions and other large global actors. It further describes an action plan in which SIDA and other relevant ministries together in unity shall represent Swedish interest in the global development agenda, influence and monitor partner countries within multilateral institutions (Regeringsbeslut UD2017/21055/FN).

4.3 Analysis Method

For the analytic part of the study a qualitative content analysis has been selected as the analysis method. Although the study will process topics of power and discourses, it does not primarily focus on detecting, ranking or problematising discourses. Rather it seeks to

understand the governmental practices which creates or reproduces discourses, knowledge, behaviours among other things. From a methodical perspective it thereby becomes difficult to strictly follow one of the classic types of discourse analyses. My interest relates to Foucault's interest in knowing how knowledge is created through power and how it produces and reproduces discourse. However, he never contributed with an own method for analysing such processes (Bergström & Ekström, 2018, p.259). Thus will a content analysis be implemented instead. As several sources of methodological literature points at, it is not unusual to use the results from a content analysis to further perform a discourse analysis on the material previously gathered, later on (Bryman, 2018, p.702; Boréus & Kohl, 2018, p.52). Something I take into account for future research. In addition, qualitative content analyses are flexible in the way that they can be used in researching issues of power depending on the research questions. Although, a common critique of this method is its often inability to examine implicit segments (Boréus & Kohl, 2018, p.79-84). This study however, uses neoliberal governmentality and specific concepts and practices tightly connected with it as a frame for research. That is, to answer the research question, my goal is to simply point out what can be observed regarding neoliberal governmentality, rather than portraying broad discourses or the full spectrum of governance power in aid. The weakness concerning implicit segments remains, but due to my discussion I believe that it did not constitute a major obstacle to the analysis. The shape of a content analysis is merely the methodic outline, in which I make the governmentality analysis practicable. The previous chapter on Theory, more specifically the title on theoretical framework, contains a demonstration and operationalisation of the governmentality analysis's composition. Based on the concepts that I put together, with help from governmentality literature, a coding scheme has been formed, viewed on the next page.

As for the process, the material was firstly selected and read through in order to make sure that it indeed fitted the theoretical scheme, and thereby the research questions. Then it was carefully read through and in line with Bryman's recommendation (2018, p.707) a process of coding started. To ensure that nothing of interest passed my attention I repeated the processes several times.

4.3.1 Coding Scheme

Rationalities of government	Strategy 1 Civil Society	Strategy 2 Market-based private sector	Strategy 3 Science & academia	Strategy 4 Multilateral cooperation
<p>i. <i>Moral</i>: what ideals or goals does the government behind aid strive against?</p> <p>ii. <i>Epistemological</i>: what or who are to be governed?</p> <p>iii. <i>Linguistic</i>: How does the targets above render into something thinkable through language and discourse?</p>				
Techniques of government				
Through which techniques, mechanisms, tactics and strategies does government operate?				
Subjectification of government				
<p>i. <i>Assumptions</i>: Which assumption about the subject can be identified within the governing?</p> <p>ii. <i>Aspirations</i>: What goals and desirable directions for the formation of the subject are the governing practices trying to achieve?</p>				

4.4 Method discussion

Before concluding this chapter, it is appropriate to critically discuss the obstacles that often arise when bringing theory and method together. Following I devote a discussion to questions of validity and reliability and further conclude by discussing ethical considerations that I as a researcher had to consider while proceeding the research.

4.4.1 Validity and Reliability

The results might encounter some difficulties regarding ensuring a high external reliability. That is, making sure that the study can be replicated by others later on. Since my research takes on a qualitative approach, tackling governing power between aid agents in social interrelational networks, the social environment is constantly moving. According to Bryman (2018) it is nearly impossible to freeze a social context, something that I as a researcher have to point out and account for (Bryman, 2018, p.465). Although, a way to tackle such critique has been to work with documents and strategies instead of collecting data through interviews. All empirical material used in this research is available for the public, leaving the ‘raw’ material transparent for others, which would not be the case if the empirical material contained personal communication. Nonetheless one can not overcome the fact that the analytic part of the research design is built on subjective interpretations (Bryman, 2018, p.484). In order to strengthen the dependability, I have therefore, in line with Bryman’s (2018) recommendations, attempted to stay transparent throughout the whole research process, especially with the selection of data and the shaping of the coding scheme (Bryman, 2018, p.468).

I have previously, in the first chapter, touched the subject of external validity, synonymous with generalisability, and discussed the possible implications concerning that (Bryman, 2018, p.74). Other validity questions tend to highlight the relevance of selected material and choice of theory in relation to the aim and research questions outlining the study, that is if the study investigates what is what intended to do. Notably when performing a content analysis, the coding can easily be taken out of its context, especially when words have multiple meanings or interpretations (Boréus & Kohl, 2018, p.80). In chapter 3, under the theoretical framework, I make an attempt to minimise such risk. Rationality, technologies and subjectification has multiple interpretations in and outside academia. I spend three

paragraphs explaining my exact interpretation of the codes, and further add questions under each code in the coding scheme to stay transparent with what I have asked myself reading the material.

4.4.2 Ethical considerations

During this study it has arisen some considerations that I as the researcher needs to reflect upon. One of those being my position in performing a qualitative method where subjective interpretation permeates the process. Important to notice, as Göran Bergström and Linda Ekström (2018) points out, is the complexity of analysing power and discourses meanwhile I as an individual is exposed for such power and discourses (Bergström & Ekström, 2018, p.293). This brings up important questions regarding positionality. As a Swedish citizen it remains vital to be humble by the fact that my cultural, political and social influence might affect how I interpret power relations, language, morals and rationality in the material. At the same time, objectivity has been discussed as something unachievable. Some researchers even insist that positionality comes with a responsibility of questioning current exercise of power (Boréus & Bergström, 2018, s.341). Positionality can therefore work progressive, where I as a Swedish researcher can use my position to take on, for instance material written in Swedish, a quite small language seen from a global perspective. Of course, still with precaution to the critical aspects I made account for earlier.

Another thing that may very well affect the outcome of the analysis is my post-structuralist position, which influences my view on ontology and epistemology. Considering that the analysis is based on public documents published by the Swedish government instead of interviews, private documents or material from a specific company, I do not see any ethical distinctive problems with carrying the study through. The possible ethical risk would be, as discussed earlier, that the study produces angled or harmful knowledge and thoughts concerning governing power in Swedish foreign development aid, due to my interpretation.

5. Findings & Analysis

This study sets out to investigate how neoliberal rationalities and techniques can be observed in SIDA's development aid strategies, again how these relate to assumptions and aspirations regarding subjects. In the following chapter I will account for the results and findings of the coding process, and further present an analysis intertwined with these findings. With the lens of neoliberal governmentality my first point will be to examine rationalities expressed in the strategies and account for how they get enabled by knowledge and language. My second point is to present a selection of governmental techniques found. Lastly I will attempt a discussion regarding the subject construction that forms due to the techniques and rationalities.

5.1 Rationalities of government

5.1.1 Political rationality & the moralisation of the market

In a reading of all four strategies, several distinct goals or *morals* are to be found. The overall goal "(...) to create opportunities for better living conditions for people living in poverty and oppression" (2016/17:60, p.16) relates to many of those Rose and Miller (1992, p.178) exemplifies, such as freedom, justice and equality. Before continuing further I want to bring to mind that Swedish foreign aid is not a pure product of neoliberal rationalities. Neither is the intention of this analysis to claim so. As discussed in chapter two, contemporary aid policies are the result of a combination of ideas and theories, which have come to be shaped according to the criticism aid has faced historically (White, 2014, p.60; UN, n.d.). For instance, the strategy on economic sustainability show some emphasis on the critiques of former economic growth domination in development: "Over time, economic growth has not been environmentally and climatically sustainable, but has taken place at the expense of human health, depleted natural resources, increased pollution and reduced biological diversity." (Regeringsbeslut UD2022/11294, p.3: my translation). To prevent harmful repetition of former economic thought, the strategy aims to cover all three pillars of sustainability in economic activities, for instance with resource efficiency and a toxic-free circular economy within the planetary limits (Regeringsbeslut UD2022/11294, p.3). However to answer the first research question, I will further present those results that point at

rationalities corresponding with the theoretical approach. One particular being the moralisation of the market.

Advocating for a free market space constitutes a fundament for neoliberal governing practices. It works as the operational space where technologies to govern the conduct get legitimised (Dean, 2010, p.198). It is especially in the reading of the strategy on economic sustainability where strong market principles are aspirational. In order to increase employment, and other goals connected with economic sustainability, the strategy highlights the need for stable market principles and transparent institutions. That being for instance, well functioning markets, favourable corporation environments, taking regard to the demand of labour markets, a resilient financial sector and increased financial stability (Regeringsbeslut UD2022/11294, p.2-4). To reach the goals mentioned above, partnership with a broad range of actors is pursued (Regeringsbeslut UD2022/11294, p.7). Dean (2010, p.198) calls this the emergence of a new pluralism, a result of neoliberal art of rule, well summed up in the citation: “Neo-liberalism does not abandon the “will to govern”: it maintains the view that failure of government to achieve its objectives is to be overcome by inventing new strategies of government that will succeed.”(Rose, 1996, p.53). Market actors are portrayed as having a key-role within topics prioritised by Sweden. Support is to be given to organisations, networks or other agents which are normative, contributing to activities which influence the international normative policy development within the area that the strategy targets (Regeringsbeslut UD2022/11294, p.4). This does not only apply to those representing a profit-driven private sector. Likewise, civil society agent’s activity is said to contribute to poverty reduction, state-building and sustainable changes in living conditions, and shall thereby get increased funding as a means of strengthening their capacity and promote a “ (...) viable and pluralistic civil society in developing countries (...) (Regeringsbeslut UD2016/10135/IU, p.3: my translation). The agents in this matter, become the technology for either maintaining or establishing a strong market-rationality. What it seeks is to replace governmental practices from the state on to other agents (Rose & Miller, 1992). The political direction of *moral* can change, as discussed in the last paragraph. However, Dean (2010) suggests “ (...) neoliberal rationalities to be reflexive in the extent to which the objectives of policy also become their means.” (Dean, 2010, p.175).

The fact that some agents of civil society are independent from the state is seen as a positive opportunity, since they then can “(...) offer community services where the state does not.” (Regeringsbeslut UD2016/10135/IU, p.3: my translation). This gives a hint that the

epistemological character, that is what or who is to be governed, for this project of government are markets and those exercising their agency within it, making sure that their agency keeps the market resilient. Further notions of the state are given in a context of threat and risk, arguing that the state can impose a threat to the pluralistic aid channels. Civil society activities are exposed to obstacles in terms of restrictive legislation, something the strategy aims to prevent by putting in support to keep CSOs operational space free. The threat of fragile states is recurring, and CSOs are highly spoken about as active agents of preventing conflict and non-democratic tendencies (Regeringsbeslut UD2016/10135/IU, p.6). It seems, to refer back to market principles, that the state in addition impose threats to economic rationality. Regarding trade it is said that the risk of protectionism, the opposite of free trade, threatens the resilience of the market (Regeringsbeslut UD2022/11294, p.6). The state must here be understood as a risky authority, incapable of withstanding the same resilience as the market. Thus, the neoliberal government rationalities get motivated by decentralising risk (Dean, 2010, p.175).

5.1.2 Reproduction of knowledge through expertise: Rendering the liberal rationality

As discussed earlier, in the chapter on theory, rationalities have to be understood as systematic and connected with knowledge and expertise (Dean, 2010, p.24). In a reading of the strategies, the cooperation with the academic sector shows interesting findings concerning both knowledge and expertise. The academic sector's work can, according to the Ministry of foreign affairs, provide important contributions to the realisation of overall development goals, such as those formulated in Agenda 30. Research is described as a means to identify the expressions of poverty and its solutions, further influencing the political sphere of aid with more scientific evidence inputs, as shown in: "Development research in Sweden can also contribute to international development cooperation through strengthened platforms for exchange between research and policy." (Regeringsbeslut UD2022/09061, p.3: my translation). In recognition of such value, the strategy aims at strengthening universities as public institutions in low or mid-income countries as a means to bring positive effects on democracy and development (Regeringsbeslut UD2022/09061, p.2-4). Here again, the market space opens up opportunities to construct active agents that can realise political goals. Research centres become the very technology in which rationality renders. From a comprehension of neoliberal governmentality, education can further be understood as linked

with economic models outlining what is acknowledged as rational human behaviour. Boosting the research and science sector in developing countries are according to Natasha Jankowski & Staci Provezis (2014) a means of fueling knowledge economies, using expertise as a tool for solving economic suffering (Jankowski & Provezis, 2014, p.476). The strategy stresses ‘ownership’ and ‘domestic engagement’ as important principles in supporting what is described as ‘the least developed countries’ to invest more in their own research. Likewise, an equal partnership shall permeate the operational activities. ‘‘The ownership by universities and other research actors is central, as is that researchers from least developed countries and lower middle income countries can be competitive in international research calls and collaborations.’’ (Regeringsbeslut UD2022/09061, p.2: my translation). The attention on competition and investment can here be understood as an instrument, impelled by neoliberal rule of art, to relocate experts within a market, striving to de-governmentalise the state while instead de-statising practices of government (Rose, 1996, p.41). In essence, governmental rule seeks to set up technologies to get actors, in this case researchers and universities, to compete in a market space and in doing so changing societal power relations (Jankowski & Provezis, 2014, p.483).

Another prominent rationality within the neoliberal art of rule is freedom (Gordon, 1991, p.5). Within the empirical material, the importance of academic freedom is constituted in language, for instance being portrayed as a ‘‘(...) cornerstone in the protection of human rights and is crucial for a country's democratic development.’’ (Regeringsbeslut UD2022/09061, p.2: my translation). The strategy is said to be carried through in ‘‘(...) a time when academic freedom and the idea of a free and open society is being challenged by, for instance, authoritarian regimes, and when facts and science is being questioned within, amongst other things, public debate.’’(Regeringsbeslut UD2022/09061, p.2: my translation). Although emphasis is put on defending free spaces for academia, certain values, not unlikely to correspond with a liberal development though, gets premiered as a topic of research. For instance research that ‘‘(...) improve the ability to handle various development challenges within, among other things, environment/climate, secure food supply and health, democratisation processes, institution-building, gender equality, social economy and migration.’’(Regeringsbeslut UD2022/09061, p.2: my translation). This gets promoted by encouraging SIDA to ‘‘(...) engage universities, institutions and researchers in Sweden in the areas of the strategy for which the authority is responsible.’’(Regeringsbeslut UD2022/09061, p.4: my translation). Here appears a more subtle governing. Using Gordon's (1980)

comprehension of Foucault's writings on power and knowledge, we can here collect insights in how certain values promoted in aid gain legitimacy. It is said that exercising power constantly constructs knowledge and, conversely, that knowledge perpetually gives rise to effects of power (Gordon, 1980, p.52). Governing the field of development research in favourable or normative directions, shaping knowledge, can thereby be understood as a means of manifest and strengthen the conduct within the given rationalities.

5.2 Techniques of government

5.2.1 Responsibilisation: Governing from a distance

With a wide range of market-and non governmental agents follows a decentralisation of authority, thereby also a decentralisation of responsibilities. The actor-focused strategies all touch the topic of responsibility and accountability. For instance, due to their capacity to operate with people in poverty “(...) civil society thereby has a responsibility to represent and/or act in favour of groups and individuals who are discriminated, marginalised, threatened or otherwise living in poverty.” (Regeringsbeslut UD2022/09061, p.3-4: my translation). Agents of this sector are in addition portrayed as ‘bridge-builders’ between agents of development. It is said that:

The organisations that work with opinion-forming expect through support to gain increased knowledge and capacity to carry out advocacy work, share information, exercise influence and demand responsibility in decision-making processes. This includes being able to conduct a qualified dialogue with governments, political parties and other relevant actors, to participate actively in existing networks and build new ones if necessary (...) (Regeringsbeslut UD2022/09061, p.5: my translation).

Similar transfers of responsibility are to be seen within the strategy on economic sustainability and market-based agents. It is said that activities should promote responsible business and entrepreneurship as well as responsible investments (Regeringsbeslut UD2022/11294, p.5). To offer individuals and collectives active involvement in tackling issues that might otherwise be the responsibility of governments, can be recognised as ‘responsibilisation’, a technology highly interconnected with neoliberal government. However, with access to involvement follows demands on being responsible for not only

carrying out activities, but also for the outcoming results. In doing so, the government strives at formulating appropriate models of action lining with rationalities, in which the principle of freedom with responsibility can be exercised (Ove, 2013, p.320; Burchell, 1996, p.29). Examples of such practice can be identified in the strategy for civil society, where responsibility is delegated to (primarily Swedish) CSOs in terms of designing and controlling the content of the operation, while SIDA acts as supervisors in terms of regulations, evaluations and follow-up of the activities performed (Regeringsbeslut UD2016/10135/IU, p.4). The cooperation with private sector agents also depends on moral rationality frames, for instance support is only to be given to those economic activities that take UN principles on business and human rights and OECD's guidelines for multilateral business into account (Regeringsbeslut UD2022/11294, p.5). While operating like so, Swedish government offices can govern from a distance, through a pluralistic field of agents, still conveying its moral values and rationalities, nonetheless without being responsible for its outcome.

5.2.2 Global governance: SIDA as both subject and object of government

Here I want to quickly return to the discussion of the previous paragraph. Although Swedish government offices, involved in development issues, uses responsabilisation as a technique of governing through others, Swedish government is also a subject of governance. Governmental power is not set in a state institution, rather it flows between a variety of agents, making them both subject and object of power exercises. To refer back to the theory chapter, this works since power according to Foucault "(...) is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere." (Foucault, 1978/1999:93 cited in Ove, 2013, p.313). For instance, in a realisation of the current global agenda, sustainable development, multilateral organisations are said to hold the important role as global setters of norms and supervisors of international rules and agreements such as obtaining the goals in Agenda 30 (Regeringsbeslut UD2017/21055/FN, p.2). As discussed in chapter two, Swedish development aid is to a large extent a result of global processes, agreements and guidelines (2016/17:60, p.1; Odén & Wohlgemuth, 2013, p.20-21). Not least is this articulated in all strategies analysed for this study, whereas all of them introduces with declaring direct connection to Agenda 30, Addis Ababa Agenda and the Paris agreement on climate change (Regeringsbeslut UD2017/21055/FN; Regeringsbeslut UD2016/10135/IU; Regeringsbeslut UD2022/11294; Regeringsbeslut UD2022/09061). Global governance attempts to structure

global development, among other things by influencing agents such as governments (Jönsson, et al., 2011, p.49). SIDA and other relevant government authorities thereby become subject of global governance, in that they themselves adopt and adapt development goals in policies, bureaucracy and institutions.

Nonetheless, findings show that multilateral organisations are neither isolated from being subjects of power. The cooperation is argued to complement Swedish bilateral aid, which is primarily allocated towards the least developed and most vulnerable countries, while multilateral organisations hold the capacity of targeting poverty and oppression in middle-income countries (Regeringsbeslut UD2017/21055/FN, p.2). The larger organisations can here be understood as channels for reaching goals beyond the state's capacity and thereby also subjects in which power is exercised through. Moreover, Swedish development authorities are set to use specific strategies to affect the direction of multilateral organisations. Fundings being one of them, where Swedish authority exercises influence by regulating monetary fundings in order to secure Swedish interests. "Sweden will base the size and design of core support on continuous follow-up and assessment of relevance and effectiveness (both internal and external) of each individual organisation." (Regeringsbeslut UD2017/21055/FN, p.4). Other techniques for establishing Swedish influence relate to knowledge and expertise. Firstly, it is said that "there is knowledge and expertise in the Swedish resource base that suits many multilateral organisations. Sweden can thus influence organisations and contribute to processes of change by promoting the recruitment of Swedish staff (...)" (Regeringsbeslut UD2017/21055/FN, p.8). Staff here refers to government offices, primarily SIDA. Secondly, in a discussion concerning procurement as an instrument of developing effectiveness, it is said that the expertise that is to be found in the Swedish private sector must be taken care of. The expertise is seen as an asset to building knowledge, a knowledge that needs to be made to use. Not only concerning development topics, but likewise about multilateral systems, for instance in how they function and govern (Regeringsbeslut UD2017/21055/FN, p.12).

5.2.3 Policy, monitoring and evaluation as techniques

As shown under the previous title, policy takes a prominent role in the development sector. In fact Swedish aid falls directly under the global agreements concretised in policy documents. If politics is here to be understood as an encouragement to take action for change, policy becomes the very political means, or technique for rendering such thoughts (Rose & Miller,

1992, p.175). In a neoliberal art of government conduct has to be made on the premises of free agents and their choice. Policy, in contrast to law and legislation, does not impose decisions on a population. Rather it, in this matter, suggests informal rules guiding agents of aid to conduct their activities in line with the desirable rationalities (Dean, 2010, p.189). Although not imposed, it will set norms and standards for aid activities keeping different actors monitored (Dean, 2010, p.193). One example of such a technique can be found in the strategy concerning multilateral cooperation.

Sweden will work to ensure that multilateral organisations have well-functioning result frameworks and focus on results in their work. That means, for instance, that planning starts from the results to be achieved, that activities are monitored continuously and evaluated in both quantitative and qualitative terms and that information about results is used for learning, accountability and communication. (Regeringsbeslut UD2017/21055/FN, p.7).

Monitoring to ensure that policies are followed is not only done towards the global institutions and organisations, likewise it targets other agents. For instance civil society must “(...) operate and act with legitimacy and representativeness, and that they also work in accordance with UN principles for human rights, international humanitarian law and decisions of the UN Security Council.” (Regeringsbeslut UD2016/10135/IU, p.4: my translation) and market agents shall ensure that “Activities linked to productive employment with decent working conditions shall contribute to development in accordance with the ILO's Decent Work agenda and strengthened respect for human rights in working life.” (Regeringsbeslut UD2022/11294, p.4: my translation). This technique is tightly connected with the one of ‘responsibilisation’. In summary, exercising governmental power here prerequisite free agents, however in order to get fundings they need to operate within the frame of what is desirable. Using policy instead of legislation, the governmentality differs from the sovereign and disciplinary power in that sense.

5.3 Subjectification of government

5.3.1 Empowerment & Participation: A means for constructing the subject

The detected techniques performed in Swedish aid target all levels of agents, thus including the recipient individual. Findings show that notably emphasis is put on values of ‘participation’ and ‘empowerment’. For instance the strategy concerning civil society state that getting support also presuppose that CSOs work with participatory methods, that is ‘‘(...) that marginalised groups are included in the organisations' internal organisation and involved in central decisions.’’ (Regeringsbeslut UD2016/10135/IU, p.4: my translation). Regarding the second, empowerment is most frequently mentioned in the strategy targeting economic sustainability and market-based agents, where specific emphasis is directed to the development of women's economic empowerment (Regeringsbeslut UD2022/11294, p5). The notion of empowerment is perceived differently in literature on development and aid. On one hand, as mentioned in the chapter of previous research, Ferguson & Lohmann (1994) argue that empowerment is lacking due to technical dimensions overtaking aid. He makes a good point, claiming that the ownership of one's own development is a way of detaching dependency and historical unfair strings between donors and recipients (Ferguson & Lohmann, 1994, p.181). On the other hand however, Li (2007) claims that empowerment and participation has to be understood as a technique constructing the subject, rather than the opposite to technical dimensions of development support (Li, 2007, p.274). If empowerment is perceived as a technique for invoking individuals to conduct themselves, this practice can according to Abrahamsen (2004) be understood as making recipient countries and people living in poverty responsible for their own wellbeing, and thereby transfer responsibility from typically western donors (Abrahamsen, 2004, p.1461).

The idea of empowerment presupposes that people, often marginalised and poor ones, who do not ‘hold’ power can be empowered. The will to empower can be called a ‘technology of citizenship’, a strategy for transforming the powerless to active citizens. It is according to Dean (2010) an expression of reaching participatory aspects, autonomy and self-determination commonly found in liberal rationalities. Achieving empowerment is, in this sense, the endeavour to construct active subjects, amenable to use self-governing capacities for realising governmental objectives (Dean, 2010, p.82-83).

5.3.2 The active subject: Freedom as a prerequisite for agency

Within the strategy for working with civil society, a lot of emphasis is put on CSOs capability to reach people in poverty. It is said that they ‘‘(...) can create awareness of the rights of

individuals, mobilise people and strengthen their capacity to demand their rights (...) (Regeringsbeslut UD2016/10135/IU, p.1: my translation). There is to be found an expressed desire to create opportunities that facilitates individuals capacity to organise themselves to demand their human rights, especially those who experience discrimination, threats and poverty (Regeringsbeslut UD2016/10135/IU, p.1-2). Once again techniques of transferring responsibility become visible.

An assumption is that ‘the people that the civil society works for and with are in many cases unaware of their human rights.’ (Regeringsbeslut UD2016/10135/IU, p.3: my translation). To participate in society, and impact their own life situation, access to basic services and knowledge is described as vital. The support shall therefore target to ‘(...) strengthen group’s and individuals’ opportunity to demand their rights and impact their own life conditions themselves (Regeringsbeslut UD2016/10135/IU, p.4: my translation). This is also recognised as ‘self-governing’, a means of erasing the disciplinary state (Hellberg, 2020, p.189).

In an overview of what assumptions and aspirations are given to print, it appears what Dean (2010) might call a paradox of freedom. In order to perform authority of power within the neoliberal art of governing, the subject presupposes to be free, capable of agency by expressing needs, desires and choice. On the other hand the subjection is again a condition of freedom, meaning that to act freely the subject must initially be shaped and guided into responsible moulds, creating the self-conducting individual (Dean, 2010, p.193). For example, the cooperation with science institutions is argued to contribute to the promotion of analytic competence, critical thinking and a well-informed public debate (Regeringsbeslut UD2022/09061, p.2). Again, the individual is assumed to be rational, capable of critical and logical thinking. Still different sets of techniques, in this example science and expertise, need to encourage and maintain such free space of thought. As Rose and Miller (1992) puts it, personal autonomy works not as the antithesis of political power exercise. Rather it is a key function in exercising power since individuals are not only subjects of governing power, but also attributed to play a vital role in governing operations (Rose & Miller, 1992, p.272).

6. Concluding discussion

This study set out to analyse Swedish aid strategies to answer the research questions of how Swedish allocation of aid can be understood, view from neoliberal governmental rationalities, technologies and subjectification. As stated earlier, taking on the topic of Swedish development aid, analysing it with the comprehension of governmentality has not been studied to a large extent before. Hence, this paper has served as a complement to existing research of Swedish aid, encouraging an angle of taking on the technical aspects of power exercise as a complement to the political dimension.

Through a governmentality analysis, the study has reached the conclusion that Swedish aid is a composition of a large extent of morals and values, all fitting the contemporary broad discourse of sustainable development. Nonetheless in a realisation of such morals, it depends and strives towards a rationality constituted on freedom and market principles. We have learned that while using partnership as a pluralistic channel of aid, Swedish aid practices technologies of 'responsibilisation', transferring responsibility towards not only Swedish and multilateral actors, but likewise towards the civil society and individuals living in recipient countries. To detach practices classically performed by the state and pass it on to others, the expertise and knowledge of agents become important. For instance this study shows the great deal of emphasis put on the academic sector's capacity of building strong economies of knowledge, working as a machinery for rendering rationalities into something thinkable, especially by influencing policies with scientific evidence. Further this paper has reached the conclusion that Foucault's understanding of power fits well in comprehending power exercises in aid. Instead of finding 'power holders', or solid objects of power, this study shows that no agent, being a multilateral organisation or a recipient individual, are fully isolated from being the subjects in which power governs through.

In answering the second research question, understandings of rationalities and techniques first had to be sorted out. In a way it had to, since the principles of freedom and market in conjunction with techniques for governing from a distance together help understand the shaping of self-governing, empowered, and responsible subjects. However, I suggest that not to be quite true. This study has displayed the complexity of governing practices, viewing power as interrelational, constantly flowing. On one hand, rationalities and technologies collectively construct the subject of which it intends to govern. On the other hand, the assumption of the subject's rational nature, capable of responsibility and freedom also

legitimises a rationality constituted on freedom. In conclusion, what I attempt to prove with this discussion is the coherence of the three main codes I collected from Dean (2010), Rose and Miller's (1992) theoretical points. If anything, this web of interaction might be one reason for the resilience of neoliberal art of rule.

I quickly want to bring up these findings and briefly discuss them in relation to the previous research which contextual orientation helped set out the theoretical direction for this thesis. In a way, the pluralistic character that Swedish aid has taken on corresponds with Li's (2007) conviction that development projects today govern more through levels of community than of the state. Similar to conclusions made in *The will to improve* (2007), this analysis shows the great deal of empowering both individuals and civil society as a technical force to shape conduct. Besides from understanding partnership as a neoliberal technique for decentralisation, this paper has also confirmed Abrahamsen's (2004) argument that participation and empowerment does not equal eliminated aid conditionality. In the analysis we have explored the power/knowledge coherence that influences policy in which agents of aid (including those operating in recipient countries) are sought to follow in order to receive support. Besides, we have gained comprehension of the techniques of evaluation and monitoring making sure activities correspond with rational morals. When setting out this study, the twist was to look at Swedish aid from not only its political content but further its technical, operational approach. Viewing the analysis now it can be clear that aid has a prominent technical dimension to it. I hence confirm Ferguson & Lohmann's (1994) conviction that aid is technical. However, since the intention of this paper never was to investigate the efficiency of Swedish aid, I can not further utter an embroidered discussion in regard to their claims.

Lastly, when entering this field of study, a second interest of mine was to get a grasp of how neoliberalism plays out in the politics of development today. Lifting these findings back to the broader context given in chapter two, it can be stated that although theories and politics have changed, leading to a reducing legitimacy of neoliberal ideology, it remains ascertain that neoliberalism has continued to influence as an art of government. These findings are not shocking since this art of government is reflexible in terms of being able to acclimatise politics, making it technically doable according to neoliberal rule.

6.1 Further research

The insights provided in this paper can serve a helpful foundation for future research related to the topic. Although I have accounted for the research questions, a lot of interesting things have been discovered during the research process, outside the aim for this specific paper. For instance, future research would do good in picking up the security project which neoliberal governmentality motive. It seems to unfold a broader discussion regarding resilience connected with neoliberal governmentality. Hence such investigation would be a valuable continuation to this study. Another topic not stressed enough in this paper is the emphasis put on women as a particular group to empower and involve in participation processes. An interesting perspective would be to either combine the two, and apply a gender perspective on a discussion concerning security discourses, or investigate gender and governmentality alone. Beyond that, my intention with this study was never to further investigate the consequences of neoliberal governmentality in detail. Hence, a more critical approach to this study would fit a future research.

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