

University of Essex

**THE CONCEPT OF COERCION IN CHANTAL MOUFFE'S THEORY OF  
AGONISM: Theoretical Reflections and Empirical Applications to Local  
Politics in the UK**

**Joash Elisha Stephen TAPIHERU**

**1601704**

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## Abstract

Based on the premise that hegemonic practices involve a constant dialectic between consent and coercion, this dissertation explores the specific role and nature coercion in Chantal Mouffe's theory of agonistic politics and its subjective presuppositions. It concludes that coercion is a ubiquitous and constitutive aspect of agonistic politics and pluralism. Focusing on Mouffe's agonism and endeavours to apply this approach in empirical analysis, the thesis explicates its underlying 'Ethics of the Real' and elaborates a methodology centred on Poststructuralist Discourse Theory's (PDT) 'ontology of the lack'. Both concepts centred on the recognition of the ineradicability and constitutive role of 'lack' in the constitution of social reality and subjectivity.

Furthering Mouffe's framework and its underlying ontological assumptions (PDT), the elaboration on the nature and role of coercion in this dissertation adds and foregrounds the fantasmatic dimension. This dimension marks the 'lack' that inevitably permeates the agonistic structure while, simultaneously, provides support for its cohesiveness. This is especially evident in forms of identification. The analysis thus starts by interrogating Mouffe's theory of agonism and then elaborates the way that agonistic pluralism works through the fundamental mechanism of stabilization, which renders the latter constantly vulnerable to transformations of 'relations of subordination' into 'relations of oppression'. The latter is contingent on the dynamics of the fantasmatic dimension of social relations and the agent's identification with the structure. Such theoretical points are further developed through an empirical analysis of the case of

collaborative planning and partnerships in North Ayrshire, Scotland. This urban regime is taken as an exemplary case, which has been acknowledged as exhibiting ‘best-practice’ in terms of implementation of collaborative governance. The research contributes to a deeper understanding of the role and nature of coercion, while addressing some criticisms levelled at Mouffe’s political theory and developing elements in need of further elaboration.

**Keywords: coercion, agonism/agonistic-pluralism, Chantal Mouffe, fantasmatic dimension, logics of critical explanation**

## INTRODUCTION

From an ultimate ontological and epistemological point of view, religious fundamentalisms and the ‘most refined’ of Western socialisms are on equal footing (Laclau, 1990, pp. 242-243)

### 1. The Need to Elaborate the Dimension of Coercion in Agonism and Hegemony

‘Freedom’ or ‘Liberty’ is probably the most sought-after thing in the current crisis of liberal democracy. Yet, what these two terms substantively mean in actual situations may vary in one case to another. Their commonality is just that the demand for ‘Freedom’ or ‘Liberty’ signifies that such thing is lacking or absent and in its place there is something that obstructs its full manifestation. Parallel to ‘Freedom’ or ‘Liberty’, this ‘something that obstructs’ has diverse manifestations too. Their commonality lays not on their substance but on the actuality of being ‘an obstruction’ of something that would have otherwise fully manifested. These diversities have impacted all political movements all around the globe especially around and following the end of the Cold War. They manifest in the proliferation of demands and identities articulated as political movements that go beyond the then existing theoretical horizon, such as the dominant class struggle. This situation has been presenting dire challenges among the political movements not only to identify potential and build alliances but, prior to that, to identify the position of their counterparts. This challenge and the need to address it come to the fore especially during the current crisis of Liberal democracy.

‘Coercion’ is the generic term usually used to represent ‘the obstruction’ to the full realization of freedom. However, the meaning of coercion is just as elusive as the meaning of ‘freedom’ and



‘liberty’. This dissertation aims exactly to answer and elaborate ‘what this coercion is’ and, further, to investigate its nature. Central to answering this challenge is the issue of ‘coercion’. At this point, it is enough to take the general definition of coercion as “... the use of threatened force, including the limited use of actual force to back up the threat, to induce an adversary to behave differently than it otherwise would” (Byman & Waxman, 2000, p. 9). Taken from an article on the effectiveness of air force to coerce the opponent into submission in the case of 1990s Balkan War, this definition can be generalized to reflect the general understanding on what coercion is and how it becomes a central issue this dissertation takes to address. In the context dominated by Liberal democracy one’s submission under another’s will is an anathema, especially when this submission involves the use of force. Such a negative perception on coercion and use of force has been extended to ‘politics’ leading to what Mouffe describes as depoliticization or anti-political view. Such a view presupposes the immediacy of individuality, including its freedom that should be jealously guarded against any outside intervention, whether it is the state or the society. Such an assumption has been, to various degrees, preventing many political movements from identifying and building actual political alliances with their counterparts and, worse, develops anti-political views and attitudes that, in turn, are counter-productive to their agendas.

Elaboration on the topic of coercion here is expected to deconstruct this anti-political view especially its negative perception and portrayal of force and the political leading to aversion to politics. It does so by highlighting one of the most prominent theoretical frameworks that argues for, not only the constitutive role, but also the primacy of the political, including the use of force, for the constitution of our reality or social reality, namely agonism or agonistic-pluralism developed by Chantal Mouffe. Besides the deconstruction of such anti-political views; this research aims to further specify and elaborate the dimension of coercion in Mouffe’s

conceptualization of agonism/agonistic-pluralism. The usage of the ‘agonism/agonistic-pluralism’ signifier is based on the idea to make the agonistic dimension of democracy more explicit as well as its coercive dimension. Mouffe uses the term ‘agonistic-pluralism’ to describe her ideal (of no-ideal) of democracy (Mouffe, 1993, p. 21). Despite Mouffe’s own conviction on the primacy of the political and the constitutive role of antagonism, the dimension of coercion has not been sufficiently elaborated in her works. The under elaboration of this dimension has prevented further elaboration and application of her agonism/agonistic-pluralism as an alternative logic to break through the impasse manifested in the current crisis to Liberal democracy. Mouffe’s agonism/agonistic-pluralism has been criticized of either giving too much emphasis on contingency or too much emphasis on antagonism, by extension too much emphasis on the political and power. The former prevents further elaboration and empirical application of Mouffe’s agonism/agonistic-pluralism, and its Poststructuralist Discourse Theory (PDT) underpinning. While the latter makes those who already have anti-political inclination to become more suspicious towards her concepts and theoretical framework.

The elaboration of the dimension of coercion in Mouffe’s agonism/agonistic-pluralism in this dissertation aims to tackle both issues - the insufficient elaboration on this dimension in Mouffe’s work and the criticism levelled against her – by accentuating the distinction between two planes where coercion operates, namely the ontological and ontical, and the shift between these two planes. The ontical here refers to the thing as how we perceive them, while the ontological, how we come to perceive the thing as such. In the discussion on coercion, the ontical refers to ‘coercion’ as in “The act of A is coercive”, while the ontological refers to the condition the structure that enables the categorization of the said act of A as coercive. Politics belong to the former while political to the latter (Mouffe, 2005, p. 10). Elaboration of coercion on the ontological plane gives

insight to its ontological status, in line with the PDT's presupposition of the primacy of the political, that its main role is to stabilize the contingency that precedes it. Through such lens, the constitutive role of coercion for our social reality is foregrounded. The elaboration is heavily based on the PDT's underlying presuppositions, especially from Laclau and Mouffe's theory of discourse and hegemony that presupposes radical contingency of social reality and the primacy of the political for its constitution. In addition, the elaboration also incorporates substantial elements from Lacanian psychoanalysis to complement the explanation on the role of fantasmatic dimension in the constitution of social reality and libidinal investment. The latter is central for explaining the shift of coercion between the ontological and the ontical planes.

This research also explores Mouffe's agonism/agonistic-pluralism on the empirical plane. An empirical case for investigation for several reasons namely as follows: i) to illustrate how coercion is constitutive for empirical reality, even if one is claimed to be non-coercive, such as the regime of collaborative governance; ii) to address the criticism of methodological and normative deficits levelled against Mouffe's agonism/agonistic-pluralism as well as Laclau and Mouffe's theory of discourse and hegemony; iii) to contribute further to the development of PDT for empirical research. The investigation on the empirical case also reveals the more nuanced dimension underlying Mouffe's agonism/agonistic-pluralism and also its theoretical underpinning, the theory of discourse and hegemony, namely the Ethics of the Real. The latter has been largely overlooked in the criticism against Mouffe's agonism/agonistic-pluralism and Laclau and Mouffe's theory of discourse and hegemony. Overlooking this ethical dimension would lead to disillusionment to most of their readers once they realize what Laclau describes in the quotes mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. There are crisscrossing frontiers in the field of the social and none of these frontiers and the discourse that entail them pre-determinedly has the privilege as the universal

representation for other demands and identities (Laclau, 1990, p. 229). Each of those discourses are always constituted on certain forms of limitations, exclusions, and coercion. In the same passage, following the statement quoted above, Laclau mentions that the analysis and elaboration should go further in the direction of the normativity underlying the interviewer question, thus the fantasmatic dimension, to complement the structural analysis (Laclau, 1990, pp. 243-244; Laclau, 2015, p. 103). In short, by going through such a path, the explanation should be able to answer the questions, “Why, even though any structure is inherently coercive, do people still cling to it and why a certain structure and not others?” The answers to these questions are pivotal as the basis to answer further questions with regards to the nature of coercion and how its role is constitutive for the social reality.

Last but not least, the application of Mouffe’s agonism/agonistic-pluralism on a certain empirical case requires a specific research strategy. This is due to the need to comply with the presuppositions of its theoretical underpinning, namely: radical contingency and the primacy of the political. The empirical investigation draws the strategy from Glynos and Howarth’s *‘Logics of Critical Explanation’* (LCE) that describes reality as comprised of three ontological dimensions, namely the social, the political, and the fantasmatic. Through this strategy, Mouffe’s agonism/agonistic-pluralism is not perceived as a fixed and reified category, permanently manifested in certain practice or regime of practice but as a certain logic or rule. Specifically, agonism or agonistic-pluralism is understood as a certain logic that foregrounds the contingent and political nature of the reality investigated and how these contingent and political natures are recognized and institutionalized as part of the said reality. Instead of being identified permanently to a certain practice or regime of practice, agonism, as logic, is engaged in hegemonic battle against other logics to characterize it. Through such an approach, the selection of the empirical case taken

to investigate the operation of the logic of agonism and its coercive dimension does not involve exhaustive verification on whether the case taken fits the certain features considered to be materially and immediately representative of agonism/agonistic-pluralism. On the contrary, it seeks the moments when such logic comes to the fore and how those moments are institutionalized in the case of practice or regime investigated. The dimension of coercion then appears when in such moments, the existence and operation of the logic of agonism/agonistic-pluralism can only take place through certain rules and the compliance of the subjects to those rules.

## **2. Foregrounding the Coercive Dimension in the Constitution of the Social as Agonistic Space**

Laclau has explicitly states that radical democracy serves not as another grand narrative of liberation. He even describes it as “... a formally anti-utopian thought” (Laclau, 1990, p. 232). Because it does not project the eradication of all dislocations once the targeted hegemonic and dominant structure is dislodged from its position and new structure replaces it. The new structure is inevitably constituted on the dual political processes of inclusion/exclusion, thus inevitably also causes dislocations. The same logic also applies to Mouffe’s agonism/agonistic-pluralism. It is not a panacea to eradicate all dislocations and antagonisms, on the contrary, it is a political relation based on the very acknowledgement of the constitutive role of antagonism in the constitution of any social reality, including the agonistic one. Laclau and Mouffe see radical democracy and agonism/agonistic-pluralism as the project and political relations that revolve around the impossibility of total and permanent social harmony. This dissertation aims to foreground the limits of Mouffe agonism/agonistic-pluralism marked by its coercive dimension.

The reading on Mouffe's agonism/agonistic-pluralism upon which the dissertation is based runs in contrast to the more common readings, including criticisms, to her concepts. It pertains to Mouffe's own underlying presuppositions of radical contingency and the primacy of the political. Therefore, it perceives harmony, characterized by compliance to certain rules, as reality that is only possible to be constituted on the ever present potentials of disharmony that can only be constituted and retained by both convincing and forcing the subject to maintain their compliance with the corresponding rules.

Why Mouffe's theory of agonism/agonistic pluralism? It is because her theory of agonism/agonistic-pluralism, along with its underpinning post-structuralist discourse theory, has been gaining prominence not only in the field of political theory proper but also to broader fields from democracy, planning to policy analysis. The appeal of this concept has been more apparent amid the current crisis of liberal democracy in various parts of the world. The concepts of agonism/agonistic-pluralism as well as the theory of hegemony and discourse are the building blocks of the radical democracy project that Laclau and Mouffe propose both as critiques toward liberal democracy as well as an alternative solution to break the impasse manifested in the current crises. Prior to the liberal democracy crisis, the appeal of Mouffe's agonism and its PDT theoretical underpinning was already felt, especially among the Left circles who refuse to capitulate to the dominant ideological mainstream of ideological convergence at the centre. In such context, the concepts of agonism/agonistic-pluralism that pertains to the 'radical democracy' project they initiate, seems to offer much needed fresh alternative.

In the current crisis of Liberal democracy in Europe and elsewhere, the import of Mouffe's contribution has been greater than ever. It is one among few other alternatives that offers a promising breakthrough from the current impasse by arguing for the recognition and

institutionalization of the constitutive role of antagonism for any polity, including democracy. This departs from the currently dominant regime of liberal democracy that perceives conflict either as a brief setback from the normal situation of harmony or, worse, as the reminiscence of a bygone era. When conflict and violence persist, its representations tend to be portrayed as ‘evil’ or ‘moral vice’, leading to what Mouffe describes as ‘moralization of politics’ (Mouffe, 2005, p. 75). Mouffe’s emphasis on the constitutive role of antagonism is based on the theoretical presuppositions of radical contingency and the primacy of the political, the underpinning of the theory of discourse and hegemony she develops with Ernesto Laclau. The constitutive role of antagonism, Mouffe argues, is apparent in democracy as it is basically constituted on continuous tensions between two principles which are irreducible from one another, namely ‘liberty’ and ‘equality’ (Mouffe, 1993; 2000). She further argues that the tensions between these two principles are not only ineradicable but they are necessary for the constitution of democracy itself.

Mouffe is not the only one who sees democracy as a function of tensions between more than one unitary principles. Other scholars, such as Farid Zakaria, also hold similar ideas (Zakaria, 1997). However, in contrast to Zakaria who offers positive solutions of ‘economic liberalization and rule of law first, democracy later’ (Carothers, 2003, p. 138), Mouffe’s offer is more nuanced. The nuance lies in her emphasis on the ‘impossibility of democracy’ and the constitutive role of this impossibility to constitute democracy. This nuance is based on the theoretical presuppositions derived from the theory of discourse and hegemony that Mouffe develops with Laclau and underpins the Radical democracy project that they propose. Through Mouffe’s lens, a critique to Zakaria can be summarized as following: If constitutional liberalism or economic liberalization is the solution for the current crisis of liberal democracy, its status as solution cannot be predetermined and is not fixed and total either, but a result of a hegemonic intervention.

Mouffe formulates her offer through the concept of agonism/agonistic-pluralism, where it precludes any positivization and predetermination of certain elements as foundational to democracy. This inclination is also reflected in Laclau's statement quoted in the beginning of this chapter. In the passage where this quote is taken from, Laclau is addressing the question on the possible danger of abandoning the rooting to social reality, based on the orthodox Marxist interpretation that, the interviewer argues, may lead to the conflation of class identity with arbitrary and fanciful identities constructed by the likes of religious fundamentalism. Laclau exposes how such a question is actually a normative question as 'from an ultimate ontological and epistemological point of view, religious fundamentalism and the most 'refined' of Western socialisms are on an equal footing.' The latter, Laclau argues, is impossible to find in our reality (Laclau, 1990, p. 243). In other words, Laclau says that both the religious fundamentalism and the most refined Western social democracy, structurally and inevitably causes dislocations as their constitutions inevitably involves double movements of inclusion/exclusion. Parallel to Mouffe, who states: "every order is political and based on some form of exclusion." (Mouffe, 2005, p. 18). They are products of (successful) hegemonic intervention constituted on certain relations of subordination between the nodal point and the internal moments and inclusion/exclusion between moments and elements. The interviewer asks this question with certain assumption in mind that normatively favours certain social grounding over the others. This hierarchy of certain social rooting over the others, in Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory, is not given and predetermined. The privilege given to certain social rooting does not follow either a pre-given natural or objective law or internal logic of the corresponding structure either. Thus, such a question and its answer as well, are always normative questions as they are always imbued with certain moral principles. In



this exposition Laclau further argues that it is this imbued certain moral principle that is the condition of possibility as well as the impossibility for hegemony (Laclau, 1990, pp. 242-245).

The passage from Laclau's exposition is quoted as a prelude to the discussion presented in this dissertation because it exposes the research problem that this dissertation aims to address that is the status of coercion in Mouffe's agonism/agonistic-pluralism. Laclau's exposition points out that the interviewer question is a normative question in which certain structure and the corresponding identity is assumed to occupy a higher position than the others. In his reply, Laclau explicates that such assumed hierarchy is not permanent because final closure is impossible not only on the structural but also on the ethical planes. In its place Laclau argue for a structure that recognizes and institutionalizes the impossibility of the final closure through which continuous debates can take place to continuously produce common sense (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014, p. 243). Laclau's explication in this passage implies his ethical stance that fits the description of 'the Ethics of the Real' (Stavrakakis, 1999, p. 130; see also Zizek, 1990, p. 259) even though he never explicitly uses this term. The explication, however, does not elaborate explicitly enough how contingency and stabilization are co-constitutive to each other and to realize this ethical principle either. Acknowledgement of the impossibility of the final closure can only take place through submission to the structure in the first place. This may lead to overemphasis on one over the other and overlooking the constitutive constant tensions between the two. This contributes to the tendency to overlook the ethical underpinning of Mouffe's, as well as Laclau's, by the commentators reviewed in the following chapter. Overemphasis on contingency tends to disregard the role of the structure and its coercive nature in identifying and articulating the limits, thus the impossibility of the final closure. On the other hand, overemphasis on stabilization reifies the structure as if there is no other possibility. Therefore, it is central to elaborate the role of the structure and its coercive

feature in this quest of traversing it in order to locate and identify its limits before it becomes possible to question it.

The radical democracy project that Laclau and Mouffe initiate clearly represents their ethical stance. They embrace democracy not because democracy is something of value in itself, but because in democracy the absence of such ultimate value and its recognition becomes the ultimate value itself. Mouffe attempts to translate this general idea of Radical democracy into theoretically closer concept in the study of democracy. The project is undertaken on Mouffe's agonism/agonistic-pluralism as it represents an alternative to the mainstream discourses on democracy and democratization, ranging from Habermas' communicative action to the actual practice or regime of collaborative governance. Despite the appeal, however, Mouffe's agonism/agonistic-pluralism shares the ambiguities as Laclau's exposition discussed in the preceding paragraph. This ambiguity comes to the fore due to insufficiency in Mouffe's elaboration on antagonism and agonism (Norval, 1997; Abizadeh, 2005; Roskamm, 2015; Menga, 2017). However, the ambiguities have also been exacerbated by the criticism levelled against her as most of them miss or overlook the specific ethical underpinning of Mouffe's agonism/agonistic-pluralism, namely the Ethics of the Real. In contrast to the Ethics of Harmony, this Ethics of the Real is an ethical stance that recognizes and institutionalizes the ineradicability and constitutive role of the 'lack' thus precluding any ideal of imaginary unity denoting the immediacy and transparency of social reality, meaning and identity (Mouffe, 1993, p. 5; Mouffe, 2000, p. 98; Mouffe, 2013). Further, this 'lack' permeates not only the structure but also the subjectivity of its agents (Žižek, 1990).

The Ethics of the Real is an ethical principle that encourages the subject to confront the impossible. It is an ethic without any ideal but the continuous pursuit of confronting with this very lack of ideal

(Stavrakakis, 1999, p. 130; Žižek, 2009, p. 259). Mouffe and Laclau's conviction on this certain ethical principle is obvious and recognized by other scholars. Their opus magnum of *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* is acknowledged as a work that articulates such ethical stance and it becomes one of the main reasons that work stands out among other works in 'post-works' (Žižek, 1990, p. 259). It addresses the constant failure of the chase of final closure, manifesting in the absence and the idealized state often describe as 'the good', not by replacing it with another final closure but by confronting the impossibility of these successive goods. Yannis describes that this ethic of the real "... breaks the vicious cycle of traditional ideological and utopian ethics" (Stavrakakis, 1999, p. 131; see also Laclau, 1990, p. 232). Mouffe's agonism is an attempt to ensure that this impossibility and its constitutive role is recognized and institutionalized through the agonistic moments institutionalized in the regime of democracy.

This research argues that Mouffe's underdevelopment of the concept of coercion is that because she has not gone beyond the discourse analysis to incorporate the fantasmatic dimension, thus complementing the elaboration on the constitutive role of lack on the structure with the constitutive lack in the divided subject. This is rather surprising because she clearly states that there are "(T)wo key concepts – 'antagonism' and 'hegemony' – necessary to grasp the nature of the political". 'Coercion', in its continuous dialectics with 'consent', is the main characteristic of hegemony (Anderson, 1976; Davies J., 2013; Davies J., 2014). However, this may be understandable due to her focus on the structural aspect in her elaboration of agonism/agonistic-pluralism. Therefore, further elaboration on this topic of 'coercion' as a dimension in Mouffe's agonism becomes necessary and this is the challenge that this research aims to address.

Elaborating the dimension of coercion in Mouffe's agonism/agonistic-pluralism, however, is a challenging task due to the specific theoretical presuppositions underlying Mouffe's

agonism/agonistic-pluralism, namely ‘radical contingency’ and ‘the primacy of the political’ and also the ethical underpinning. Employing Steven Lukes’ categories of the dimensions of power (Lukes, 2005) it can be mapped out that the studies on coercion have been predominated by analysis on coercion as the exercise of power of A-over-B. In other words, they focus mainly on the overt dimension of coercion. Some studies have ventured beyond this overt dimension by elaborating the covert dimension of coercion such as Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1991) and Foucault with his concept of governmentality (Foucault, 1991). Much fewer studies, however, cover the latent dimension of power and coercion.

The research aims to elaborate the dimension of coercion in Mouffe’s agonism/agonistic-pluralism on this latent dimension. In doing so, it is necessary to specify how Mouffe misses or overlooks this dimension on that particular plane and thenceforth the starting point can be determined in the form of a research problem and question. The elaboration in this first chapter focuses on how Mouffe has been ambiguous in elaborating this concept of coercion. This ambiguity is parallel with the ambiguity in her conceptualization of antagonism and agonism that entails the various critical responses towards her work.

### **3. Research Problem and Question: the Dimension of Coercion in Mouffe’s Agonism**

The mapping and elaboration of Mouffe’s agonism/agonistic-pluralism, including its underlying theoretical presuppositions, and its critiques have given some important points to inform the inquiry this research aims to address. Those points can be summarized as following: (i) Mouffe has not sufficiently elaborated on the concept of antagonism and hegemony, which is necessarily characterized by constant dialectics between consent and coercion. She, however, gives crucial

hints by implying it through the use of terms such as ‘grammar’, ‘identity’ and ‘identification’, and the incorporation of Freudian ‘libidinal investment’ and Lacanian ‘*jouissance*’ or enjoyment; (ii) when Mouffe discusses this topic, especially in relations to the topic of ‘grammar’; identity; and identification, Mouffe does so on the ontological plane; (iii) the combination between points (i) and (ii) has led to the emergence of ambiguities in her portrayal of antagonism and its ontological status and its transformation or sublimation into ‘agonism’; (iv) the ambiguities highlighted by her critics have been exacerbated by incomplete misunderstandings on the theoretical presuppositions in many of her critiques; (v) the emphasis almost exclusively on the ontological plane puts Mouffe’s agonism/agonistic-pluralism and its theoretical underpinning pose a challenge if it is to be employed for empirical research. More detail elaboration and discussion that lead to these points are presented in the Chapter I.

Based on those points above, this research aims to address the issue of coercion in Mouffe’s agonism on the ontological plane. In doing so, the taming of ‘the antagonist’, the ever present contingency and fluidity of meaning and identity, into agonism is the starting point to formulate the research problem and question. The main research problem is: **“How to explicate coercion on the ontological plane and define its constitutive role within the framework of Laclau and Mouffe’s theory of discourse and hegemony?”** The main challenge in addressing this research problem within the framework of Laclau and Mouffe’s theoretical presuppositions are twofolds; *first*, it is necessary to explicate coercion prior to subjectivity and its constitutive role to the subjectivity and *second*, the explication also should include how coercion itself is contingent in parallel with the contingency of the social and political dimensions of the reality that belongs to the register of the symbolic.

With presumption of agonism/agonistic-pluralism as an order, that is a hegemonic discourse, which owes its reality to its contingent articulation, the research question can be formulated as follows, **“How does coercion operate in the constitution of the agonistic structure and agonistic subject?”** and **“How is the shift of coercion between ontological and ontical planes always possible?”**. This question is underpinned by the ethics of the real as it presumes that no matter how agonism/agonistic-pluralism presupposes the impossibility of final closure, it is still an order that implies exclusion and normative or fantasmatic support to maintain its cohesiveness. The Ethics of the Real is this normative support and the second question points to the ever present possibility of this normative support to lose its grips to maintain the cohesiveness of the corresponding structure.

The research questions based on the point where Mouffe stops short in her elaboration on identity and identification as the condition for the constitution of a structure as a structure. She does not explicate it further with the concept of hegemony that herself, with Laclau, develop and only employs the elaboration to justify her argument of the ontological status of antagonism. The ambiguities that this half-way explication entails are tremendous, especially when Mouffe insists on using Schmitt’s category of friend/enemy to define her concept of political. Mouffe only slightly touches the topic of agonism/agonistic-pluralism as an order or structure that, inevitably, requires the submission of its subjects to its specific rules and to identify themselves with it. While she mentions the necessity of this identification, most portions of her elaborations on agonism/agonistic-pluralism revolve around juxtaposing it with other concepts of which agonism/agonistic-pluralism-is-not. This insufficient explanation has drawn criticisms reviewed in detail in the following chapter, especially ones that highlight her ambiguity in conceptualizing and distinguishing between antagonism and agonism (Menga, 2017) and her insufficient

explanation on the limits of agonism or the impossibility of agonism in the final instance (Roskamm, 2015). The insufficient explanation of this aspect also contributes to the inclination to misunderstand her points, starting with the underlying theoretical presuppositions of her conceptualization, leading to the two emerging almost totally contradictory criticisms toward her agonism/agonistic-pluralism.

The theoretical exposition, research strategy, and analysis on the empirical case of collaborative governance in North Ayrshire Council Area is intended to expose and highlight how this dimension of coercion is inevitable and necessary in the constitution of agonism/agonistic-pluralism. The theoretical exposition highlights how coercion at work on the ontological plane constitutes the reality that belongs to the symbolic register through the stabilization. The introduction of the notion of governance as the counter-discourse to government has often been perceived rather as the dissolution of the hierarchical structure that rigidly stabilizes the otherwise fluid and contingent relations. The discourse of governance and its multiple variants promises the liberty to choose and flexibility of options in contrast to the previously dominant discourse of government. This is especially central in the participatory variant as it brings to the fore that every decision should be subjected to question, review, and requires consent from the parties involved, beyond the government. While in such moment the contingent nature of the decision comes to the fore, the moment itself requires to be specified against the background of stability of the governance and policy cycle. It is this stabilization that is, simultaneously, cancelled yet becomes the condition of possibility for the foregrounding of the contingency, the political nature of the decision as well as the structure that constitutes it, that indicates the coercion.

The acknowledgement of the constitutive role of contingency and the political moment described above specify agonism/agonistic-pluralism from other kinds of political relations. Yet, still, the

stabilization as a form of imposition of certain rules to regulate the innumerable possibilities is required to constitute it. This stabilization signifies that things could have gone other ways and therefore stabilization becomes necessary and relevant. Just as the foregrounding of contingency requires stabilization as its condition of possibility, the stabilization is only relevant and necessary only against the background of contingency that cannot be totally eradicated but continuously permeates the reality it constitutes. It is because this contingency is impossible to be dissolved in the final instance, coercion on this plane is also impossible to eradicate as it is vital to maintain the cohesiveness of the reality. By doing so, the exposition further highlights and foregrounds how the two underlying presuppositions of Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory are co-constitutive to each other in constant tensions.

The co-constitutive nature of the radical contingency and the primacy of the political have apparently been eluding the criticisms directed towards Mouffe. Most of them have given too much emphasis on one over the other. Besides this, the little attention given to empirical analysis from Mouffe and Laclau, pointed out by some of the criticisms, has its contribution to the tendency to overemphasise on one presupposition over the other. The lack of attention on the application of this theoretical framework, both agonism and the theory of hegemony and discourse, for empirical analysis gives the impression that Wagenaar describes as the "The relentless impermanence of social and political categories and phenomena (following upon its equally obsessive anti-essentialism), and a concurrent unwillingness to acknowledge the institutional character of many social and political arrangements" (Wagenaar, 2011, p. 155). This impression of impermanence of social and political categories and phenomena are the consequences of Laclau and Mouffe's presuppositions that put emphasis on their conflictual co-constitutions which they do not sufficiently provide methodological framework for its application on empirical analysis. This has



been exacerbated by the tendency to overlook the Ethics of the Real that becomes the ethical underpinning of Laclau and Mouffe's theory of discourse and hegemony and Mouffe's agonism/agonistic-pluralism.

The research strategy deployed in this dissertation addresses this insufficiency of methodological framework by drawing from the Logics of Critical Explanation (LCE) that Glynos and Howarth develop inspired by Laclau and Mouffe's post-structuralist discourse theory PDT and Lacanian psychoanalysis. Through the category of 'logic' this framework enables to overcome relentless impermanence of social and political categories and phenomena that Wagenaar describes without compromising the presuppositions of radical contingency and the primacy of the political. This framework also incorporates vital aspect of the constitution of reality that is the fantasmatic dimension that is also central to the elaboration on the dimension of coercion in Mouffe's agonism/agonistic-pluralism here. This dimension of reality is central to the exposition of how coercion at work on the ontological plane and how it potentially shifts between the ontological and ontical planes and between objective and subjective coercion.

The move to take an empirical case for analysis is intended rather for illustrating the thesis of this dissertation that focuses more on theoretical plane. The exposition of the key points of the thesis, however, is better to be explained if the explanation refers to empirical context. The latter is especially related to key points such as the co-constitution of radical contingency and the primacy of the political and the role of the fantasmatic dimension in the constitution of reality. The latter is important to avoid falling into being misunderstood of overemphasizing and justifying coercion as the thesis here is the ontological status of coercion which is co-constitutive with the radical contingency that becomes its condition of possibility as well as impossibility in the final instance.

The answers for these research questions also contribute to the study on coercion. As an attempt to better understand and elaborate the contingency of coercion, the answers provide non-essentialist formulation of coercion that deconstruct the essentialist paradigm that attempts to fix certain acts as coercive in-itself and, thus, obscure other forms of coercion. Laclau and Mouffe have implied the constitutive role of coercion and its contingency in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* through the concepts of relations of subordination, domination, and oppression and the ever-present potentiality for transformation from one form to the others (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014, pp. 137-139).

Through the notions of relations of subordination, oppression, and domination Laclau and Mouffe, take different path to portray ‘coercion’ as reality that is contingent and politically constituted, in contrast to essentialist point-of-view where any form of exclusion or subordination will be almost immediately categorized as oppression. Relations of subordination refer to situations where an agent is subjected to another’s decision. Relations of oppression refer to the relations of subordination that have transformed into site of antagonism. Relations of domination refer to the relations of subordination that are judged as illegitimate from the perspective of an agent external to the relations. The latter is not always congruent with the relations of oppression (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014, pp. 137-138). Their transformation from one form to another is contingent to their articulation.

Laclau and Mouffe also explicate the discursive condition of their transformation. The transformation of relation of subordination requires, *first*, the subversion of the specific differential relations that constitute the relations of subordination. Referring to the illustration of relations of subordination between employer and employee, Laclau and Mouffe explicate how the relations between the two are not necessarily antagonistic. Both are subject positions, internal differential

relations, commonly belonging to the discourse of capitalism. Antagonism emerges in the example when the employee identity in the discourse of capitalism obstructs the full realization of its other identities that belongs to other discourse. This explains Laclau and Mouffe's definition of antagonism as 'the limit of objectivity' or totality. *Second*, the subversion of the specific subordinate relations requires 'discursive exterior'. The relations of subordination cannot be interrupted from inside since within the discourse they belong to, they are just internal differential relations. The effects of the discourse that constitute the relations of subordination are displaced to other discourse (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014, p. 138).

'Keeping the constitutive lack at the center' becomes the main point that this dissertation aims to reiterate and argue for. The coercive dimension in agonism/agonistic-pluralism as a structure or order marks its limits and this ineradicable yet constitutive lack. Foregrounding the coercive dimension in Mouffe's theory of agonism is intended to make it more explicit to argue that it is not and never intended to become a panacea for the eradication of all dislocations and antagonisms, but rather an open-ended course to take its subject to traverse the fantasy of fullness and finds and accept its impossibility yet keep traversing the circuitous course around it.

#### 4. The Structure and Organization of the Argument

Despite the extensive explication on the ubiquity of coercion in the constitution of reality and identity, coercion as a dimension of agonism/agonistic-pluralism has been insufficiently elaborated by Mouffe in her works. The following **Chapter I** reviews and elaborates this insufficiency in Mouffe's works and how it has been portrayed by its critics. This review also foregrounds the dimension of coercion for further and more nuanced elaboration in this

dissertation. The latter requires capturing antagonism beyond its overt manifestation, such that is implied in the critics that portrays Mouffe to overemphasis on antagonism. The discussion includes reviews on Mouffe's conceptualization of agonism/agonistic-pluralism and some prominent criticisms levelled against agonism/agonistic-pluralism and the theory of discourse and hegemony. The insufficiency of her elaboration on antagonism on the ontological and ontical planes (Menga, 2017) and the impossibility of agonism in the final instance (Roskamm, 2015) serve as the starting points to highlight the main criticisms toward her. The elaboration on these criticisms includes discussion on how these insufficiencies are related with Mouffe's underdeveloped elaboration on the dimension of coercion in her works on agonism/agonistic-pluralism. This is followed with the author's response to the tendency of most of the criticisms reviewed to overlook the underlying theoretical presuppositions of Mouffe's agonism/agonistic-pluralism and ethics, while acknowledging the validity of their criticism of Mouffe's insufficient elaboration. The research problem and questions stated in the preceding section are intended to contribute to fill this gap as well as making explicit what Mouffe has only implied so far in her works with regards to the dimension of coercion, its nature, and its role on the ontological plane.

**Chapter II** highlights this latent dimension of coercion as one manifestation of power. This includes elaboration on how subjectivity is constituted through the agent's insertion into the structure of symbolic order and its willingness to castrate itself in the process. The categories of overt, covert, and latent dimensions of power are drawn from Steven Lukes (Lukes, 2005). Focusing the investigation on coercion on ontological plane, this chapter discusses how coercion is possible, operates, and what its role is in the constitution of social reality and subject. Following a review on several theories on coercion, the discussion in this chapter focuses on how the constitution of social reality belongs to the register of the symbolic. It is the constitution of

symbolic reality that Laclau and Mouffe argue as the plane where hegemony also takes place as for them the social reality, which is symbolic in nature, is always a result of a (successful) hegemonic intervention. Hegemony itself, following the Gramscian tradition, is always a constant dialectic between consent and coercion. Thus, coercion is inevitably embedded in the constitution of social reality. The discussion here also includes how this coercion on the ontological level always involves the agent's complicity thus rendering the coercion on this plane as something that is natural and given among those who adhere to it. The topic of subjectification comes to the fore in this discussion, pointing to the need to further the analysis beyond the structural discourse analysis to include the fantasmatic dimension to explain why a discourse has its grips upon the agents. This chapter is concluded with the description of the need to elaborate the three ontological dimensions of reality, namely: the social, political, and fantasmatic dimensions, for portraying the reality of agonism/agonistic-pluralism and highlight its coercive dimension that it shares with any other structure.

**Chapter III** focuses the discussion on the research strategy taken to utilize Mouffe's concept of agonism/agonistic-pluralism on empirical case. It continues the elaboration from the point where it left off in Chapter II: how agonism/agonistic-pluralism should be perceived and treated as a category in empirical research frameworks. This section elaborates how in the analysis on the empirical case taken, agonism/agonistic-pluralism is perceived and treated as a logic or discourse that attempts to hegemonize the case investigated. The strategy is derived from Glynos and Howarth's LCE where the three ontological dimensions of social, political, and fantasmatic also serve as the logics to be "... articulated together to account for a problematized phenomenon" (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 133). This chapter also elaborates the LCE as a methodological framework and how it is utilized in the research strategy to investigate the empirical case. This

elaboration is followed with a description of methods for data collection and analysis adopted in the empirical research. This chapter also discusses the application of the research strategy on empirical case of North Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership (NACPP), justifying why empirical case facilitates the exposition of the dissertation's main thesis and why NACPP, among other possible cases, is taken.

**Chapter IV** focuses on a general description on the empirical case taken to illustrate the points this dissertation aims to highlight. This includes descriptions on the history of the regime of collaborative governance in North Ayrshire (NA) council area, Scotland, the development and state of the said council area, and the prominent issues related to the collaborative governance framework it adopts. The elaboration of the general context of the case of NA includes justification on why this case is taken. One of the main reasons that justify its selection is its achievements for innovations in the formulation and adoption of a collaborative governance framework that makes this council area stand out in comparison to other council areas. The contrast between the achievements and the relatively below-expectation performance in terms of policy effectiveness found later during the research, also justifies further the selection of this council area.

Discourse analysis on the empirical case of collaborative governance in the NA council area becomes the focus in **Chapter V**. The analysis starts on the general articulations of collaborative governance in UK and Scotland. This is followed with more specific analysis on its articulation in the case of NA and it is correlated with the broader general articulations. The discourse analysis here goes beyond the linguistic dimension to cover any meaningful production practices. Therefore the analysis here includes how the public is constituted through an ensemble of practices that are regulated by a certain set of rules and norms. The articulation of agonism or agonistic-pluralism is identified and analysed at the moments when these rules, norms, and the decision produced

through their enactments are questioned, debated, and new decisions whether they are to be retained, modified, or altered altogether. This includes how such moments are recognized to be constitutive and institutionalised in NACPP regime investigated. The coercive dimension is highlighted by exposing how the institutionalization of such moments involves exercising of power where a certain set of rules are put forward and the agents are ‘forced’ to comply with it. This compliance, on its turn, determines the justifiability of the regime itself and its existence as a regime. Further analysis on the compliance is carried out by identifying the fantasy that serves to mobilize it and, thus, supports the cohesiveness of NACPP regime.

**Chapter VI** presents elaboration on the findings discussed in the previous chapter. The exposition of the dimension of coercion on the ontological plane is discussed on how the foregrounding of the contingency and the exposure of the political nature of the agonistic moments is also basically political. It follows a certain set of rules and norms that demands the compliance and the compliance with those rules and norms signifies the frontiers between ‘us’ and ‘them’. The ‘us’ and ‘them’ here may not refer to a specific person or group of people but to ‘order’ and ‘disorder’. This is followed with analysis on the ‘naturalization’ of this compliance with the rules and norms through analyses on the fantasies of harmony that go hand in hand with participation and consent. In addition, the finding on the discourse of ‘Kind Society’ during the field research also becomes an important part as this discourse serves to present new fantasy a harmonious society comprised of kind subjects exactly when the collaborative arrangement seems to be ineffective in producing the intended impacts in the society. These fantasies serve to maintain the subjects’ compliance with existing norms and rules even though they do not necessary lead to the intended results.

**Chapter VII** gives exposition on how the elaboration in the previous chapters addresses the research problem and questions. The focus is on how coercion has ontological status as it is the

substance or the lack of it that makes it necessary as an attempt to suspend and stabilize the contingency of meanings and identities. In the case of agonism/agonistic-pluralism, the logic may differ in the sense that this logic argues for the ineradicability and the constitutive role of antagonism or the lack of the stability and the need for its recognition and institutionalization. While it may refer to a different kind of nodal point and ethical principle, it however still necessitates the suspension and stability of the contingency though it is always partial and temporal.



## CHAPTER I. PROBLEMATIZING THE ISSUE OF COERCION IN MOUFFE'S AGONISM

My Introduction has pointed out the main reason that the 'coercion' becomes central in the discussion and application of Mouffe's agonism/agonistic pluralism due to the latter's ambiguous elaboration on this topic. This section reviews how this ambiguity has been exposed in various critical studies on Mouffe's works and how some of them overlook the ethical underpinning of Mouffe's theory of agonism, partially due to the deficit of elaboration on the topic of coercion in her own works. However, prior to that, it is necessary to elucidate Mouffe's concept of agonism/agonistic pluralism and the context of its emergence.

### 1. The Ambiguities in Mouffe's Agonism

Mouffe develops her notion of agonism/agonistic pluralism as part of the Radical democracy Project she initiates with Ernesto Laclau. Her work on agonism/agonistic pluralism is a response to the seemingly converging world following the collapse of Left and Right division of the Cold War. In tone with many other scholars who are critical toward the ongoing trend of convergence, she argues against the rationalistic, universalistic, and individualistic pretention of the currently dominant Liberal democracy. She argues that the liberal democracy owes its existence to the constant tensions of two different and irreducible logics. The ascendancy of liberal democracy since the end of the Cold War tends to obscure this constitutive tension by naturalizing the existing configuration of power and, thus, precluding any legal expression of alternative configuration of power (Mouffe, 2000, p. 5). In the long run, she argues, this would endanger liberal democracy

itself. Mouffe may claim that her argument is right when the dominant liberal democracy has been coming face-to-face with a series of crises following the economic crisis in the US and Europe starting in 2008 in various parts of the globe. Therefore, acknowledging the ineradicability and the constitutive role of conflict and antagonism, thus shedding the rationalism; universalism; and individualism pretensions, and giving it channels and outlets for legal expression is crucial to maintain Liberal democracy.

Based on the theory of discourse and hegemony that she develops with Laclau, Mouffe offers an alternative to this monolithic view of democracy. It revolves around the underlying presuppositions that every structure is always a result of hegemonic intervention and its stability is always contingent and partial. The incompleteness manifests in the form of ‘the Other’ or its radical negativity, referring to whatever the said structure-is-not. Drawing from Derrida’s concept of ‘constitutive outside’, Mouffe argues that ‘the Other’ serves not only to mark the limits of the said structure but it is also constitutive for the apparent completeness or totality of the said structure (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014, pp. 130-131; Mouffe, 1993, p. 114). ‘The Other’ serves the function to specifies the meaning and identity of the said structure by representing what-it-is-not. Mouffe uses this theoretical presupposition to construct her argument against the claim of the universality of Liberal democracy as the only reasonable way forward following the end of the Cold War. In order to specify her aim, she uses Carl Schmitt’s criticism towards liberal democracy utilizing the strategy of ‘to think with Schmitt against Schmitt’ (Mouffe, 1993, p. 2; 1993, pp. 106-108).

It is understandable that Mouffe incorporates Schmitt’s criticism toward liberal democracy as the starting point of her conceptualization of agonism/agonistic pluralism. Schmitt’s criticism gives primacy to ‘the political’ and the ineradicability of ‘antagonism’ that Mouffe requires as the starting point to articulate the theoretical presuppositions of PDT as a discourse of democracy

(Mouffe, 2005, pp. 13-14). In line with Schmitt, Mouffe states explicitly that her conceptualization of agonism/agonistic pluralism gives primacy to the dimension of 'political' and argues for its ontological status (Mouffe, 1993, p. 3; 2005). She, however, turns against Schmitt by denouncing the latter's claim of the inevitability of antagonism between the contradictory elements that constitute liberal democracy and argue for its contingency (Mouffe, 2000, p. 57). She argues further that it is their constant tensions that have been the condition of possibility for the constitution of Liberal democracy, as well as the condition of impossibility in the final instance (Mouffe, 1993, p. 5).

It is the concept of agonism that Mouffe offers to counter Schmitt's claim of the inevitability of antagonism. Mouffe draws from various sources to justify how such arrangement is possible and even constitutive within the framework of Liberal democracy. She refers to Niklas Luhman and Claude Lefort who respectively characterize democracy as 'the splitting of the summit' (Mouffe, 1993, p. 5) and 'the emptiness of its center' (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014, pp. 170-171; Mouffe, 2000, p. 1). By 'thinking with Schmitt and against Schmitt', Mouffe also argues for the contingency of antagonism among the constitutive elements of liberal democracy by pointing out that those elements have engaged in the common front against absolutism, demonstrating how they are not necessarily antagonistic against each other. Absolutism provided the constitutive other against which a certain nodal point and chain of equivalence among the anti-absolutist elements are articulated. The disappearance of the absolutist regime dissolves this chain of equivalence, prompting the need to constitute a new one. It is in this new chain of equivalence the antagonism among the elements that previously engaged on the common front against absolutism comes to the fore. The contingency of antagonism in Mouffe's elaboration of agonism/agonistic pluralism refers

to what she and Laclau discuss in the HSS as the ever-present transformation among the relations of subordination, domination, and oppression (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014, pp. 137-139).

She characterizes agonism as a struggle between adversaries, in contrast to antagonism that she defines as a struggle between enemies (Mouffe, 2000, pp. 102-103). She further specifies the definition of agonism by further describe what the term of 'adversary' means and the relations among them:

This category of the 'adversary' does not eliminate antagonism though and it should be distinguished from the liberal notion of the competitor with which it is sometimes identified. An adversary is an enemy, but a legitimate enemy one with whom we have some common ground because we have a shared adhesion to the ethico-political principles of liberal democracy: liberty and equality. But we disagree concerning the meaning and implementation of those principles, and such a disagreement is not one that could be resolved through deliberation and rational discussion. (Mouffe, 2000, p. 102)

In short, Mouffe differentiates agonism to antagonism by defining that the conflict in the former, in contrast to the latter, does not involve the involved parties to question each other's legitimacy. In agonism, the conflicting parties may clash with against each-others, but they perceive their counterparts as legitimate parties based on their co-adherence to common principles.

Typical among post-structuralists, she specifies that the 'the ethico-political principles' and 'the adherence to it' are neither given nor fixed. In the case of liberal democracy, the identification of 'the ethico-political principles', Mouffe argues, is necessary if it is to thrive. The ethico-political principles she refers to in the passage are open to and inevitably produce different interpretations and she envisages the agonistic field, revolving around the adherence to those principles including the liberty for everyone to come with its own interpretations and the equality among those

interpretations, provides the outlet for those interpretations to engage against each other in adversarial relations. Each decision that temporarily suspends the fluidity of meanings and identities should be anticipated to be temporary and the chance for it to be subjected to questioning and reconfiguration should be kept open. The consensus on the adherence to the said 'ethico-political principles' is, Mouffe defines, 'conflictual consensus' (Mouffe, 2000, p. 103; 2013).

It is necessary to underline here that Mouffe defines the adherence to the 'ethico-political' principles as not the sort of blind and strict compliance among the subjects toward certain strict rules and regulations, but rather in the form of identification. Mouffe describes the latter, referring to Freud, to identification with or internalization of those values that constitute the agents' subjectivity that is more related to the dimension of passion or affection than is merely compliance based on rational calculation (Mouffe, 2000, p. 103; 2005, pp. 25-29). Her explication is quoted as following:

Freud's analysis of the process of identification brings out the libidinal investment at work in the creation of collective identities and it gives important clues concerning the emergence of antagonism. In *Civilization and Its Discontents*, he presents a view of society as perpetually threatened with disintegration because of the inclination to aggression present in human beings. According to him 'men are not gentle creatures who want to be loved, and who at the most can defend themselves if they are attacked; they are, on the contrary, among whose instinctual endowment is to be reckoned a powerful share of aggressiveness.' Civilization, in order to check those aggressive instincts, needs to use different methods. One of those consists in fostering communal bonds through the mobilization of the libidinal instinct of love. As he asserts in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, 'a group is clearly held together by a power of some kind: and to what power could this feat be better ascribed than to Eros, which holds everything together in the world.' (quoted in Mouffe, 2005, p. 26) The aim is to establish strong identifications between members of the community, to bind them in a

shared identity. A collective identity, a 'we', is the result of a libidinal investment, but this necessarily implies the determination of a 'they'. To be sure, Freud did not see all opposition as enmity, but he was aware that it could always become enmity. As he indicates, 'It is always possible to bind together a considerable amount of people in love, so long as there are other people left over to receive the manifestations of their aggressiveness.' In such a case, the 'we/they' relationship becomes one of enmity, i.e. it becomes antagonistic. (Mouffe, 2005, pp. 25-26)

With this description on Mouffe's conceptualization of agonism/agonistic pluralism at hand, the elaboration can proceed to see how other studies respond to it. The elaboration and review below focus on the responses towards Mouffe's central concept of antagonism and agonism that covers both planes of theoretical and its practical application. The focus on her concepts of antagonism and agonism is given the focus here because it is on this aspect the ambiguity on Mouffe's theoretical edifice with regards to coercion comes to the fore. As it will be elaborated and argued below, the ambiguity comes to the fore due to two factors, namely: Mouffe's own shortfall in her elaborations and the tendency of the critical commentators to overlook the dimension of 'beyond discourse analysis', borrowing the term from Žižek's response to *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, underlying Mouffe's conceptualization. One of the most prominent critics toward Mouffe highlights her portrayal of antagonism and the primacy she gives to it. Some focuses on her ambiguous conceptualization on the relations between antagonism and agonism (Abizadeh, 2005; Roskamm, 2015). Some other critics even argue further that Mouffe seems to reify 'antagonism' (Norval, 1997; Fristch, 2008; Menga, 2017). The image that Mouffe seems to reify antagonism especially rises from the juxtaposition she makes between her agonism/agonistic-pluralism with Arendt in several of her works, one of them is quoted below:

In my view, the main problem with the Arendtian understanding of 'agonism' is that, to put it in a nutshell, it is an 'agonism without antagonism'. What I mean is that,

although Arendt puts great emphasis on human plurality and insists that politics deals with the community and the reciprocity among human beings who are different from each other, she never acknowledges that this plurality is at the origin of antagonistic conflicts. According to her, to think politically is to develop the ability to see things from a multiplicity of perspectives. (Mouffe, 2013, pp. 9-10)

The central issue in these critiques is that Mouffe seems to be ambiguous in defining antagonism and its relations with difference. On some of her passages, she explicitly mentions that the difference, as the source of meaning and identity, comes first and from which the antagonism always potentially stems out. However, in some other passages, especially when discussing agonism, her statements imply that antagonism is given or predetermined. This is a central issue because, as seen in the quote above, Mouffe constructs her distinction between her agonism/agonistic pluralism and Arendt's around these concepts of 'difference' and antagonism. However, some of the commentators see that Mouffe's ambiguity, accepting antagonism as potential in some passages and antagonism as actually given in some others. Criticisms on her ambiguity mostly highlights Mouffe's decision to position Schmitt's friend/enemy as 'quasi-transcendental condition of possibility' for democracy (Mouffe, 2013, p. 135).

Critics, such as Menga, agree with Mouffe's theoretical presuppositions. Menga, however, parts ways with Mouffe when Mouffe takes Schmitt's friend/enemy categories or antagonism as 'quasi-transcendental condition of possibility' because he sees Schmitt's presupposition is contradictory to Mouffe's intention to incorporate it to strengthen democratic plurality (Menga, 2017, p. 541). Mouffe describes the constitution of collective self in such situation as the result of hegemonic intervention, since there is no transcendental ground, and each formation of collective self inevitably causes double movements of inclusion and exclusion. It is this inevitable exclusion that makes the said collective self always remain contingent and open for possible reconfiguration. It

is this ever-present possibility in its contingency that becomes the condition of possibility of the rearticulation of the collective self as democratic order. Menga sees, however, that Schmitt's antagonism does not start from this presupposition of contingency nor allows for its articulation, thus foreclosing the inner-dynamics and inner-self-questioning that characterizes democratic plurality (Menga, 2017, p. 542). He criticizes Mouffe whom he sees to overlook the structural difference between antagonism and agonism, manifests in the ambiguity of her depiction of relations between 'antagonism' and 'agonism' (Menga, 2017, pp. 544-548). To be more precise, Mouffe equates the condition of possibility of antagonism and agonism as the plurality and contingency of values and identities.

Instead of Schmitt, Menga proposes to take Mouffe's underpinning presuppositions for critical appropriation of Arendt's idea of plurality and *natality*. Through critical appropriation of Arendt's idea, Menga argues, it would be more viable and feasible to carry Mouffe's concepts of agonism/agonistic pluralism further. Menga argues, based on closer reading on Arendt's concept of plurality and distinction, that Arendt's concept is more appropriate for the articulation of Mouffe's democracy design. Menga presents his reading on Arendt as follows:

Arendt's characterisation of plurality, if one follows what she makes of it, does not imply the mere condition of cohesion among the many and, accordingly, a presumptive unifying grounding thereof; it asserts precisely the opposite. It bespeaks the constitutive condition of human interaction, such that this condition, insofar as constitutive and, therefore, not grounded in any metaphysical or otherwise prior substantive foundation, is and remains irreducibly contingent. And insofar as it is effectively interactive, it cannot but reflect the open interplay of what Arendt defines as the 'twofold character of equality and distinction' among individuals. As a consequence, plurality, being structurally informed by such a contingent dynamic of interaction between equal and distinct beings, cannot give rise to any final unitary



formation of common space or collective order. Rather, it engenders realms of commonality which inevitably display traits of conjunction and disjunction—of accord and conflict. And what is additionally crucial in Arendt's depiction of plurality is that she by no means accentuates its component of equality, but much rather the primacy of distinction as the very source for dynamism and participation within collectivity. Distinction, in other words, informs the contingent, 'differential' and conflictual character of plurality, thereby making plurality effectively 'plural'. The primacy of distinction is best illustrated by Arendt's emphasis on the notion of natality as a notion which, by breaking the logic of sameness and generalisation, displays the constitutive inequality of singular beings within plurality, along with their intrinsic capacity of acting as initiating, beginning, and therefore of possibly inserting strands of innovation and conflict into a common space. (Menga, 2017, pp. 548-549)

Menga argues that had Mouffe incorporated Arendt's concept of plurality, instead of Schmitt's, she would not have had gotten herself entrapped in ambiguous conceptualization of antagonism and agonism.

Aletta Norval also levels criticism toward this emphasis on antagonism. Norval's criticism though, operates on a different level and is not exclusively levelled toward Mouffe and her works but covers the whole theory of discourse and hegemony Mouffe develops with Laclau. Norval problematizes Laclau and Mouffe's emphasis on the constitution of political frontiers and antagonism that gives the impression that identity can only be constituted in oppositional, and thus, antagonistic relations. She points out that Mouffe and Laclau have gone too far in their anti-essentialist endeavour by taking up the position of seemingly to privilege negativity in the individuation of identity.

It is crucial to proceed carefully here, for it is at this point that an important ethico-theoretical decision can be located in the argument. The manner in which their critique of essentialist forms of argumentation is developed lead Laclau and Mouffe to a

position which privileges the dimension of negativity in the individuation of identity. In this process, the critique of essentialist forms of theorising identity is conflated with the further proposition that the only manner in which identity can be thought in a non-essentialist fashion is through negativity. I will pursue this argument and the consequences of this shift in more detail throughout this article. At this point it is simply necessary to highlight the fact that the way in which their critique of essentialism is articulated closes off other possibilities of thinking about identity which does not, at the outset, privilege the moment of frontiers and antagonisms. (Norval, 1997, p. 57)

Later, in the same work, Norval specifies her criticism toward Mouffe and her inclination to Schmitt to highlights the constitutive role of the political moment in the constitution of the social (Norval, 1997, p. 58).

Norval's criticism points to the conflation of the antagonism, understood as frontiers drawing, as the articulation of difference as well as the constitution of antagonism in Laclau and Mouffe. She refines the topography all the while by keep adhering to the non-essentialist presupposition while avoiding overemphasis on exclusion, opposition, and antagonism. In the topography she proposes, she distinguishes among (i) the individuation of identity; (ii) the relation of the process of individuation of identity to antagonism and frontiers; and (iii) the theorisation of frontiers themselves related to the complexity and the problem of homogeneity (Norval, 1997, p. 67). Referring to Wittgenstein and Derrida, Norval argues that there is no inherent logic or predetermined law that necessitates the logic of identity individuation with where and how antagonism may arise (Norval, 1997, p. 70; 73).

Mouffe problematizes the overemphasis on antagonism as the only way for individuation of identity by arguing that the constitution of binary opposition in antagonism tends to overlook the complexities of constituted multiple identities that cannot be accounted for by the binary

oppositions (Norval, 1997, p. 63;67). Norval's central argument in her criticism is the necessity not to conflate the individuation of identity and the drawing of political frontiers. She refers to Wittgenstein's concept of 'family resemblance' and Derrida's 'iterability'. The former argues that individuation of identity does not necessarily require specification of determined definition of the said identity as it can be constituted through a series of overlapping resemblances between the said identity and the others. The latter emphasises the role of iterability in individuating identity that argues as long as the articulation of such identity is repeatable the identity is relatively stable. It is necessary to underline here, following Norval, that the repetition here is not "merely repetition of the same as essentially the same, since every repetition already involves alteration" (Norval, 1997, pp. 68-69). She further argues that nowhere in both Wittgenstein's and Derrida's concepts of identity does formation antagonism become a necessary condition and its point of emergence can be ascertained (Norval, 1997, p. 70).

Nikolai Roskamm takes a similar trajectory in his critical response to Mouffe's agonism/agonistic pluralism. He further argues that agonism is not necessary and it is more fruitful to use the concept of 'constitutive' other from Laclau (Roskamm, 2015). In his critical response, Roskamm contrasts Laclau and Mouffe in order to construct his critical response to Mouffe's agonism and the apparent primacy she gives to 'antagonism' in her conceptualization. There are three central points in Roskamm's critical response to Mouffe's agonism. *First*, Roskamm argues that "(Mouffe) does not stress enough the impossibility of taming antagonism." (Roskamm, 2015, p. 397) Though Roskamm acknowledges that Mouffe recognizes and mentions it explicitly (Mouffe, 2013, p. 15) Roskamm and I agree with him, she does not substantiate it sufficiently. The insufficiency will be elaborated in the next section. The political where antagonism belongs is given primacy in Mouffe's conceptualization of agonism. Her criticism to the currently dominant regime of

democracy is exactly their denial to the constitutive role of this antagonism. As an alternative, Mouffe offers her model of agonistic pluralism that she claims to be based on the recognition of the constitutive role of antagonism and its sublimation into agonism. However, Roskamm's critique points out that this transformation can never be total and complete and Mouffe does not elaborate further how to deal with this excess. Roskamm argues that Mouffe does not want to elaborate this further because by doing so "... would counter her main project: to create a positive alternative for democratic politics" (Roskamm, 2015, p. 397).

*Second*, as part of his critiques Roskamm also elaborates how the transformation of antagonism into agonism deprives 'the political' that Mouffe gives primacy in her conceptualization. Roskamm argues that the sublimation process is a shift from the plane of the ontological into the ontical or from the political into politics. This shift, Roskamm argues, deprives antagonism of its radical negativity or, in other words, deprives Mouffe's theory of antagonism its power to define and explain the political. *Third*, based on his reflection on Carl Schmitt and Ernesto Laclau, Roskamm argues that the constitutive outside is not the enemy and antagonism is not a personal feature but a structural principle (Roskamm, 2015, p. 398). Similar to Norval, Roskamm suggests, instead of thinking about the other in friend/enemy categories, to turn to the notion of constitutive other, or difference in Norval's term based on his reflection on Schmitt and Laclau.

Norval, Roskamm, and Menga share the same concern that is Mouffe's and Laclau's, apparent overemphasis on exclusion, opposition, and antagonism. In different words, they argue that such overemphasis may lead to the reification of antagonism and obscure or even cancel the ever present openings they have argued for against the essentialist paradigm. Many other Scholars share their criticism of Mouffe on this issue. Reification in general can be defined as the treatment of immaterial thing into a material one. More specific to Marxian tradition, the term reification here

refers to the process by which social relations are perceived as inherent attributes of the people involved or the product of such relations (Lukacs, 1972, p. 86). Roskamm's elaboration and specification of antagonism as a structural principle and not a personal feature partially clarifies this criticism. Yet, further response to specify this category of antagonism is required as it is central to the elaboration on the dimension of coercion at work on the ontological plane. This elaboration is part of the next section. Prior to that, however, it is necessary to review other kinds of criticism levelled towards Mouffe's agonism/agonistic pluralism and its theoretical underpinning.

Criticism towards Mouffe's agonism/agonistic pluralism are not exclusive on this issue of reification or overemphasis on antagonism. Her agonism/agonistic pluralism, as well as the theory of discourse and hegemony, also receive criticism of being too fluid and impermanent. Andrew Schaap elaborates Mouffe's agonism/agonistic pluralism based on his reflection on the cases of reconciliatory projects in Chile, South Africa, and Timor Leste. Besides acknowledging its strength and promising potential, Schaap highlights the overemphasis of Mouffe's agonism, and its theoretical underpinning on the contingent nature of social reality and does not address, in the specific cases in his analysis, the need for stable structure in order to transform the antagonism among elements in divided societies into agonism (Schaap, 2006). For Schaap, Mouffe's agonism seems to be an ethos that always seeks to postpone the moment of decision in order to affirm the openness of political life (Schaap, 2006, p. 270). He poses the question that demands an immediate answer from the agonist camp that is, paraphrasing Schaap, "How (and why) do the parties involved come to have 'agonistic respect' for each other that would ensure their conflicts remain non-violent?" (Schaap, 2006, p. 269). This emphasis on the openness and broadening of the political space is, Schaap argues, more likely to reify the conflicting identities in the context of

reconciliatory politics. This is despite his acknowledgement on the merit of such a view and approach that sees reconciliation as basically political undertaking.

Other studies argue that these weaknesses become more apparent when the theoretical frameworks and concepts are applied to empirical cases, such as in the fields of peace building/reconciliation and planning. Yamamoto highlights the other side of this ‘relentless impermanence’, to use Wagenaar’s words, by pointing out that since it is possible for antagonism to transform into agonism, it is also possible for agonism to transform into antagonism. Thus, the task of radical democracy theory is not only to transform enemies into adversaries, but also to prevent the transformation of adversaries into enemies. In doing so, he reiterates that agonism is possible if there is a shared desire for order among the contending elements (Yamamoto, 2018).

Lois McNay, focusing specifically on Mouffe’s agonism, highlights this perceived drawback and attributes it to the primacy that Mouffe gives to the ontological status of the political without considering the actual existing power relations that take place on the plane of the politics (McNay, 2013, pp. 65-66). She further argues that this emphasis on the ontology and the exposure of the contingency of reality tend to foreclose the agenda of radical democracy that is to disclose and challenge the existing forms of domination and inequality (McNay, 2013, p. 66). Ontological reflection on the political, McNay argues, “carries within itself, then, the danger of reification, of becoming an empty abstraction that neglects the analysis of existing oppression in favour of formal models of democracy or what Bourdieu calls ‘a fictitious universalism’ unaccompanied by ‘any reminder of the repressed economic and social conditions of access to the universal or by any (political) action aimed at universalizing these conditions in practice’” (McNay, 2013, p. 66).

Criticism towards Laclau and Mouffe's emphasis on the ontological also comes from Wagenaar. He also describes its drawbacks in the context of the practical purpose of policy analysis as: "(1) the lack of ... empirical applications of poststructuralist political theory. (2) The relentless impermanence of social and political categories of phenomena ..., and a concurrent unwillingness to acknowledge the institutional character of many social and political arrangements. (3) The generalist, ineffectual nature of its ethos" (Wagenaar, 2011, pp. 154-155). However, Wagenaar acknowledges the merits of Laclau and Mouffe that he describes as: "(1) An awareness of deep difference as well as the prevalence of struggle (plus a commensurate conceptual vocabulary) as defining principles of politics. (2) A well-developed ethos of pluralism that functions as a critical standard against which to judge the democratic quality of policy making (Wagenaar, 2011, p. 154). In relations to the context of practical purpose of policy analysis Wagenaar also highlights the 'methodological deficiency' where he points to Glynos and Howarth's LCE as the most recent and promising attempt to formulate research methodology based on Laclau and Mouffe's theoretical framework. This will be discussed in further details in the Chapter III Research Strategy. The important point here is Wagenaar's critical highlight on the "... unending, disembodied discussions about the amount of contingency versus stability or the possibilities for political change ..." (Wagenaar, 2011, p. 155) in post-structuralist theoretical framework, including Laclau and Mouffe's.

Review on those critical responses towards Mouffe's agonism/agonistic pluralism and its theoretical underpinning present the image of divided opinion toward one same picture. On one hand, there are the likes of Norval, Roskamm, and Menga who focus their criticism, in various ways, towards Mouffe, and Laclau as well, overemphasis on antagonism. On the other hand, we also find critics, such as McNays' and Wagenaar's, that highlight the unending dialectics between

contingency and stability that seem, at least for them, do not provide stable ground to serve the practical purpose for either pursuing the cause of radical democracy or for policy analysis. The ambiguities presented in this section turn out to be not exclusive within Mouffe's conceptualization but also the responses toward it.

The review on two general kinds of criticism levelled against Mouffe's agonism/agonistic pluralism and its theoretical underpinning oscillate between two poles. On one hand there are criticisms directed toward the Mouffe and Laclau emphasis on antagonism both in the concepts of agonism/agonistic pluralism and the social as a result of hegemonic intervention. On the other hand, there are criticisms that focus on agonism/agonistic-pluralism and its theoretical underpinning on contingency. Closer inspection tells that these two are basically the underlying theoretical presuppositions of Laclau and Mouffe's theory of discourse and hegemony that underpins Mouffe's agonism/agonistic pluralism namely: the radical contingency and the primacy of the political. Laclau and Mouffe explicate how these two presuppositions are co-constitutive as well as constantly in tension with each other.

Those criticisms reviewed above have some valid points. Those points can be enumerated as following: i) the insufficient elaboration on the limits of agonism/agonistic pluralism as an order. The insufficiency on the elaboration on the dimension of coercion, as the limits of the objectivity of agonism/agonistic pluralism, is related to this point. Insufficient elaboration on this point also contributes to obscure the understanding of agonism/agonistic pluralism as an order that inevitably is based on a certain set of rules that the agent is expected to comply with. ii) There has been a lack in applying the theoretical framework of both agonism/agonistic pluralism and theory of discourse and hegemony for empirical research. As elaborated in the next section, this lack contributes to obstruct comprehensive analysis based on the underlying presuppositions of



Mouffe's agonism/agonistic pluralism that does not favour one at the expense of the other and highlights the constitutive role of their constant tensions.

The following section explicates how these valid points from the criticism levelled toward Mouffe agonism/agonistic pluralism are useful to pinpoint the dimension of coercion in Mouffe's concept as well as locating where she has insufficiently elaborated it. This requires careful inspection because while the criticisms have some valid points, they also fall into the same perceived mistakes they criticize in Mouffe's and Laclau's concepts. In order to disentangle these complex webs of ideas and concepts the inspection sets based two underlying presuppositions of radical contingency and the primacy of the political as its main reference.

## **2. Rectifying the Ambiguities: Radical Contingency, the Primacy of the Political, and the Absence of Constant Dialectics between Consent and Coercion**

This section discusses how this research responds to the ambiguities of Mouffe's agonism/agonistic pluralism elaborated in the previous section. The responses in this section revolve around two pivotal points, namely (i) the misrepresentation of the underlying presuppositions of radical contingency and the primacy of the political that support Mouffe's concept of agonism/agonistic pluralism and (ii) the ambiguity within Mouffe's own conceptualization that overlooks the import of identification and, as Roskamm mentions, 'the impossibility of antagonism in the final instance' (Roskamm, 2015, p. 397). These two points are important to disclose the underdevelopment of the dimension of coercion in Mouffe's conceptualization of agonism/agonistic pluralism as well as how to further investigate it within the framework of Post-Structuralist Discourse Theory (PDT). As mentioned in the end of the previous

section, the elaboration here is based mainly on the underlying presuppositions of the theory of discourse and hegemony, the radical contingency and the primacy of the political, and their continuous tensions that is constitutive for the social. With reference to these presuppositions, the validity of the criticism reviewed in the previous section can be measured and useful elements can be incorporated in this research.

The pivotal point in relation to the topic of coercion here is the underdevelopment of this topic in Mouffe's works and the tendency of the criticisms to overlook the underlying theoretical presuppositions in Mouffe's works. In the former, Mouffe only slightly touches upon the topic of how her agonism/agonistic pluralism is basically a hegemonic order that necessarily characterizes by constant dialectics between consent and coercion (Anderson, 1976; Davies, 2013). The limits of Mouffe's elaboration of this topic in her conceptualization have been pointed out by the critics such as Roskamm (Roskamm, 2015); Yamamoto (Yamamoto, 2018) and Menga (Menga, 2017).

Mouffe does not elaborate in detail about the limits of her agonism/agonistic pluralism. She only briefly mentions that the general characteristic of the form of conflicts an agonistic structure can be allowed is one that does not jeopardize the institutions or the political associations. (Mouffe, 2005, p. 20; 2013, p. 13). Mouffe's emphasis on antagonism is tightly related to her discussion on the constitution of identity or individuation of identity. Mouffe sees that such identity is not predetermined or given prior to one's insertion into a structure or a political community (Mouffe, 2013). However, Mouffe, following the underlying presuppositions of the theory of discourse and hegemony, sees that such community is not constituted on a certain privileged value or principle either. Through such a move, she aims to deconstruct the essentialist elements in both the liberal and the communitarian view of liberty, more specifically the view of the complete individual prior to its insertion into the political community of the former and the essentialist of a certain view of

common good in the latter. She aims to propose a certain form of political community that is based not on a single substantive view of ‘common good’ but by constant adherence of its subjects based on their acknowledgement that whatever their idea of ‘good life’ is, it is only possible to be achieved only in and through the said political community. She describes it as the following:

What we share and what makes us fellow citizens in a liberal democratic regime is not a substantive idea of the good but a set of political principles specific to such a tradition: the principles of freedom and equality for all. These principles constitute what we can call, following Wittgenstein, a 'grammar' of political conduct. To be a citizen is to recognize the authority of such principles and the rules in which they are embodied, to have them informing our political judgement and our actions. To be associated in terms of the recognition of liberal democratic principles: this is the meaning of citizenship that I want to put forward. It implies seeing citizenship not as a legal status but as a form of identification, a type of political identity: something to be constructed, not empirically given. (Mouffe, 1993, pp. 65-66)

There are two important terms which are seen to be pivotal here: ‘grammar’ and ‘identity’ or ‘identification’. Mouffe’s elaboration in the work quoted above does not further discuss these two concepts, since it focuses on the options of forms of political community that fits her description above.

She elaborates those concepts, especially on ‘identity’ and ‘identification’ in more detail in *The Return of the Political*. In the latter, she starts to explicitly elaborate the need of the political and democracy theories to consider and incorporate the dimension of ‘affect’ that is mobilized through political identification (Mouffe, 2005, p. 6). She points to the deficiency she perceives in the dominant liberal rationalist paradigm that has excluded the dimension of affect and this, she argues, has caused the unpreparedness to deal with ‘mass’ political movements such as nationalism. She elaborates these themes of affect and identification following Freud (Mouffe,

2005, pp. 25-29). There is a passage that is central not only for the discussion in the following section on responding to some of the critical responses toward Mouffe's agonism/agonistic pluralism but also to highlight the insufficiency of Mouffe's elaboration on the dimension of coercion in her conceptualization.

In comparison, it is clear that Mouffe equates 'the grammar', mentioned in former, with what Freud mentions as 'civilization' she refers to in the latter. From the two passages above it can also be drawn that it is through this process of identification with a certain 'grammar' or 'civilization, by way of libidinal investment, one's identity is constituted. Later in the same passage, she draws the idea of 'enjoyment' from Lacan, via Stavrakakis and Žižek (Mouffe, 2005, pp. 27-28), to demonstrate how the libidinal investment is mobilized, that cannot be reduced merely to symbolic identification but toward the incarnation of the Thing in one of the signifiers that is perceived (or sublimated) to be its incarnation (see also Stavrakakis, 1999, p. 131).

Once again, following this passage, Mouffe does not pursue further how the identification process is related to the continuous dialectics between consent and coercion of hegemony. She keeps using this elaboration to back her argument of the ontological status of antagonism as we/they or friend/enemy division. The import of this passage, however, lays in the hint that indicates how Mouffe perceives and places the antagonism she purports to portray, namely on the ontological plane. This is something that some of her critics do not take into consideration sufficiently, with Norval and Roskamm as exceptions. Many of the critics sometimes conflate between antagonism on the ontological and the ontical plane. Mouffe has anticipated this by distinguishing between 'political' and 'politics'. She defines the former as "the dimension of antagonism", while the latter as "... the set of practices and institutions through which an order is created, organizing human coexistence in the context of conflictuality provided by the political" (Mouffe, 2005, p. 9).

Mouffe's insufficient elaboration on the concept of grammar, identity, and identification has been proven to be costly for her. She becomes enmeshed in the oscillating process between ontological and ontical plane leading to the ambiguities in her framework as pointed out by Norval, Roskamm, and Menga. Unfortunately, many of the criticisms also fall into the conflation of antagonism between the ontological and ontical plane. Partially due to Mouffe's own ambiguity, they criticize Mouffe for her overemphasis on 'antagonism' with the image of substantive 'enemy' in their minds, either potential or actual. Roskamm aptly rectifies this by arguing that, drawing from Laclau, the category of antagonism or enemy here refers to structural principle and not a personal feature (Roskamm, 2015, p. 398). Antagonism as a structural principle is not something totally alien for Mouffe. Roskamm draws this understanding of antagonism partially from the *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, that Mouffe co-authors with Laclau, and some others from the *New Reflection of the Revolutions of Our Time*. The critical juncture, however, is Mouffe's incorporation of Schmitt's definition of the political that defines the antagonism as friend/enemy relations as if it is given and not discursively constructed. Therefore, it is not surprising that some critics perceive Mouffe as ambiguous on this matter (Roskamm, 2015; Menga, 2017).

However, I also find that the suggestions for Mouffe to replace the concept of antagonism with Derrida's concept of difference problematic. These suggestions presuppose that antagonism takes place only on the ontical plane and overlook one that takes place on the ontological. It gives the impression that there is only difference on the ontological plane. I would like to argue here that antagonism also takes place on the ontological level by drawing from Roskamm's description of it as structural principle and the sources he refers to, Laclau and Mouffe's *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* and Laclau's *New Reflection of Revolutions in Our Time*.

Let us begin the elaboration with a brief reminder on the underlying theoretical presupposition in Mouffe's agonism/agonistic pluralism, the radical contingency and the primacy of the political. This theory defines that all social formation is a result of a certain hegemonic formation to which the radical contingency is its conditions of possibility as well as its impossibility and the practice to constitute it is always political. Hegemony emerges as a particular social element come to represent the totality of the social. This totality, its configuration, the relations among its comprising parts, however, are never fully closed and fixed and neither do they follow pre-given objective law. They are a product of contingent articulation that is political in nature.

Radical contingency, Laclau and Mouffe argue, is the condition of possibility as well as impossibility for hegemony. The contingency here should be understood in the sense of radical contingency. Radical here means that everything social has equal potential equal to be altered and questioned. In this regard, total absence of totality and totality that is fully closed and completely internalized to all particular elements, are equally impossible. In the former, there is nothing fixed to alter in the first place and in the latter, everything is already neatly fixed in their position. Thus, the radical contingency here should be perceived as a totality that is only partially closed and fixed. The totality of the structure is always threatened by potential question and alteration. Laclau explains:

This link between blocking and simultaneous affirmation of an identity is what we call contingency, which introduces the elements of radical undecidability into the structure of objectivity. (Laclau, 1990, p. 21)

Laclau and Mouffe elaborate this radical contingency in detail in its relations to the notion of antagonism and its constitutive role. They define antagonism as the limit of all objectivity. Laclau specifies further that antagonism does not have any objectivity but it is something that prevents

the constitution of objectivity itself (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014, p. 112; Laclau, 1990, p. 17). This should be perceived in the sense that antagonism subverts objectivity into a limited threat or partial objectivity instead of fully complete and fixed one.

This decision, no matter how partial and transient it is, is a decision and decision-making is inevitably political. This is the second underlying presupposition of the theory of hegemony and discourse and Mouffe's agonism, the primacy of the political. Situated in the radical contingency, the nodal point around which the differential relations among diverse elements that comprise the society has to be determined in order to stabilize it. There is no pre-given law or natural order that determines what should be the nodal point or the certain form of differential relations. It is a result of articulation and it is always political because whichever the nodal point and differential relations constituted it always implies exclusion of other possibilities. Therefore Mouffe, with Laclau, defines the political logic here as double process of inclusion/exclusion. This is related to the constitution or drawing of frontiers inevitable in the overall process of fixation. It is this drawing of frontiers that Mouffe describes as the political and she argues that it always involves the articulation of we/they, or antagonism (Mouffe, 1993; 2005).

This is the point that scholars such as Norval and Roskamm highlight. Norval questions the ontological status of 'antagonism' in constituting difference or drawing the frontiers. While she acknowledges that all social realities, including meaning and identity, are constituted through differential relations, she critically examines whether this differential relation is inevitably articulated as antagonism. Antagonism here is defined as described by Laclau and Mouffe as: "the presence of the Other prevents me from being totally myself" (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014, p. 111). Norval's main argument is that antagonism or drawing the political frontiers is "... just one of the possible articulation among others rather than the essence of individuation of identity" (Norval,

1997, p. 73). In doing so Norval conceptually separates the constitution of difference and the drawing of political frontiers or antagonism that she perceives Laclau and Mouffe have conflated (Norval, 1997, pp. 69-70). She explicates that the complexity of identity formation cannot be merely reduced in the 'we/they' division such as in Mouffe's antagonism by referring to Derrida's deconstruction. By doing so Norval has highlighted the aspect of identity formation which cannot be articulated in we/they distinction but in terms of difference and not otherness.

However, it is this that I find equally problematic among this kind of criticism and in Mouffe's works. The radical contingency is not fully understood or elaborated in its dual dimensions of contingency and stabilization and their continuous tensions. Antagonism as defined by Laclau and Mouffe in the HSS cited above should be understood with regards to these dual dimensions of the radical contingency. The antagonist in Roskamm's 'antagonism as structural principle' should be understood on the ontological plane. On this plane antagonism is the constant instability that makes articulation an attempt to suspend this instability relevant but also at the same time impossible in the final instance (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014, p. 99). Mouffe, and Laclau, is fully aware of this sort of understanding of 'antagonism'. The main threat as well as the condition of possibility of stable meaning or identity is the contingency itself. The contingency marks the limits of reality that belongs to, using Lacanian term, the symbolic register (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014, p. 84).

This re-examination of the underlying theoretical presuppositions in Mouffe's agonism/agonistic pluralism against its critics that highlight Mouffe's overemphasis on antagonism also partially counters the criticism of the impermanence of the social and political categories as such presented by, among others, Schaap. Examining Schaap's portrayal on the relative deficit of Mouffe's agonism, it is apparent that in Schaap's view the deferral in Mouffe's agonism is seen as pure deferral. Undecidability here is equated with democracy, at least in term of *ethos*. This portrayal,



while it is true in depicting the focus of Mouffe's agonism on democracy as ethos, only partially highlights Mouffe's agonism and the contingent nature of society. Contrasting this depiction with Mouffe and Laclau's elaboration on 'radical contingency' immediately gives us the whole picture that they do not condone indecision or avoiding the moment of decision. Such a portrayal presents Mouffe's agonism as an endless game of pure deference. This is exactly what Mouffe, and Laclau explicitly reject (Laclau, 1990, p. 43; Mouffe, 1993, pp. 37-38; 145; Laclau & Mouffe, 2014, pp. 98-99). To put it in simpler terms, Laclau and Mouffe argue that in their 'radical contingency', total absence of decision and decision that is complete and fixed are equally impossible. The import of the moment of closure has been reiterated many times by Mouffe as well as Laclau in their various works. They again and again reiterate that they are not discussing the discourse of the psychotic where there is only an endless game of differences (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014, pp. 98-99; Laclau, 1990, p.43; Mouffe, 1993, pp.37-38; 145). However, they reiterate that this moment of closure, pertaining to the presupposition of the 'radical contingency', can never be fully closed, it is only a partial closure.

The critical comments highlighting the 'relentless impermanence' apparently focus on the aspect of the dislocation and impossibility of closure in the final instance and seem to overlook, or even disregard, the logical consequences these concepts of dislocation and impossibility of closure in the final instance imply: there has to be a structure in the first place (Laclau, 1990). This structure is always a result of articulation which is a practice of "constituting certain nodal points which partially fix meaning, and the partial character of the fixation here proceeds from the openness of the social ... of the constant overflowing of every discourse by the infinitude of the field of discursivity" (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014, p. 100). Thus, the impossibility of closure here should not be conflated into 'no structure' at all. Radical contingency describes a situation where there is a

structure, but this structure will never be able to totally hegemonize the field of discursivity in the final instance.

Bearing this in mind, however, the criticism highlighting the apparent constant deferral of closure does have a ring to it. Wagenaar aptly summarizes it in his comments that point out the lack of application of Laclau and Mouffe's theoretical framework for empirical research; the relentless impermanence of the social and political categories; and generalist, ineffectual ethos of the theory of discourse and hegemony. Though Wagenaar levels this criticism towards the general theory of discourse and hegemony that Mouffe develops in collaboration with Laclau, Mouffe's agonism/agonistic pluralism shares these weaknesses too. Glynos and Howarth have anticipated the weakness of Laclau and Mouffe's theoretical framework for empirical research which they describe as methodological and normative deficits (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 6). They develop a methodology derived from Laclau and Mouffe's theory of discourse and hegemony that Wagenaar sees as promising namely: The Logic of Critical Explanation (LCE). This will be further discussed in Chapter III Research Strategy. At this point, however, it is necessary to first define the main issue of the dimension of coercion in Mouffe's agonism/agonistic pluralism based on the mapping of her theorization and the critical responses levelled toward it.

### **3. The Challenge in Elaborating the Dimension of Coercion in Mouffe's Agonism**

The initial elaboration in this chapter has highlighted and located the dimension of coercion at the ontological plane as Laclau aims to describe in the quotation. In the same passage, Laclau further elaborates that human beings do not exist at that level of ultimate ontological and epistemological point of view. He points out that the continuous attempt to constitute the ideal society without any

kind of subordination, domination, and oppression is always a normative matter. This means that any discourse on ideal society is always an ethical discourse and its limits are "... essentially open and no final closure can be granted ...". The coercion signifies the rem(a)inder of these limits. In similar tone Mouffe gives us the hint when describing the specificity of her agonistic pluralism. The neologism of 'rem(a)inder' refers exactly to its two possible meanings. The coercion serves as reminder that a certain structure inevitably comes from the political origin that it tries to conceal. It is a reminder that there are elements subordinated and excluded in its constitution. The coercion also serves as the remainder of the political nature of the social, which owes its (re)production to the continuous stabilization of relations among its internal moments and elements amidst the ever present contingency and impossibility of its total eradication. Mouffe, with Laclau, encourage for the recognition and institutionalization of this constitutive lack of total stability instead of its concealment. Mouffe argues as following:

The specificity of pluralist democracy does not reside in the absence of domination and violence but in the establishment of a set of institutions through which they can be limited and contested (Mouffe, 1993, p. 146).

In her description, based on the elaboration above, it is easy to identify and locate where coercion as a structural principle already appears. It appears in "... the establishment of a set of institutions ...". and Mouffe fully acknowledges that it is impossible to totally eradicate it due to its ontological status.

The elaboration on the dimension of coercion in Mouffe's agonism on the plane of ontological is challenging here because the definition of "What coercion is ..." is already based on coercion as a structural principle. Laclau and Mouffe have elaborated this as the rem(a)inder of the impossibility of objective reality. What it is lacking, as Žižek highlights, is the elaboration on how

this constitutive lack of the structure or “the Other” should be complemented by elaboration of the lack of the subject and the role of social fantasy. This is the aspect that the theory of hegemony and discourse and Mouffe’s agonism/agonistic pluralism are both lacking. The lack on this aspect has broad consequences not only on the theoretical but also practical levels. Reflection on attempts to apply both the theory of hegemony and discourse and Mouffe’s agonism/agonistic pluralism on empirical cases demonstrate on the structural incompleteness; manifests in the form of “relentless impermanence of social and political categories” and the potentials of the ontological status of antagonism to justify exclusion and labelling of some elements as “enemy; which, some of them argue, reduce the practicability of these concepts and theories for positive application (Wagenaar, 2011; Roskamm, 2015).

Addressing this dimension of social fantasy is crucial because it determines whether the coercion as structural principle is taken as something ‘acceptable’, whether as natural law or in the name of order, or as oppression, no matter what the agent perceives to be what its true self is. Žižek’s critical response to Laclau and Mouffe theory of hegemony and discourse in the late 1980s and early 1990s has been taken seriously not only by Laclau and Mouffe but also the next generations of Post-Structuralist Discourse theorists. Yannis Stavrakakis explores and pursues further the investigation on the relations between affect and discourse (Stavrakakis, 2007). Jason Glynos and David Howarth’s *Logics of Critical Explanation* (LCE) through their concept of logic attempts to complement Laclau and Mouffe’s theory of hegemony and discourse with the dimension of social fantasy by adding the fantasmatic logics besides the social and political logics (Glynos & Howarth, 2007). In the LCE, Glynos and Howarth describe the fantasmatic logics:

to provide the means to understand *why* specific practices and regimes ‘grip’ subjects ... fantasmatic logics contribute to our understanding of the resistance to

change of social practices (the ‘inertia’ of social practices), but also the speed and direction of change when it does happen (the vector of social practices) (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 145).

The incorporation of fantasmatic logics to complement the social and political ones enables the research in the dissertation to understand and explain the affective dimension and, thus, goes beyond the structural principle to investigate the affective dimension.

Investigating the dimension of coercion from this perspective has two main implications that this dissertation also aims to address. *First*, it challenges the currently dominant understanding of coercion as empirical and objective phenomena by arguing that the phenomena of coercion are always ‘moralized’ ones (Wertheimer, 1987, pp. 202-241). In order to address this, Chapter II. The Problems with Coercion focuses on reviewing theories of coercion and how these theories are problematized based on the presuppositions of the theory of discourse and hegemony. *Second*, related to the first one and the ontological status of coercion, it is necessary to reiterate the distinct underlying ethics on Mouffe’s agonism/agonistic pluralism and the theory of hegemony and discourse. Both Laclau and Mouffe, in their collective and their own works, have repeatedly stated about the impossibility of reality as full and final objectivity; i.e. the impossibility of the social, the impossibility of democracy etc. Yet, it is because of the impossibility people keep pursuing and strive for it. The underlying ethics of this perspective is what is known as ‘the Ethics of the Real’ (Zupancic, 2000; Stavrakakis, 1999, pp. 127-131) that is reflected in Mouffe’s passage quoted above. While it is impossible to totally eliminate domination and violence, the specificity of pluralist democracy is determined in the establishment of a set of institutions through which this domination and violence are limited and contested (Mouffe, 1993, p. 146). The explicit acknowledgement of inevitable contestation indicates the incompleteness of the pluralist democracy as a structure that, based on this ethic, should be recognized due to its constitutive role

(Stavrakakis, 2007, p. 130). In this sense, the Ethics of the Real challenges the currently dominant Ethics of Harmony. The second chapter focuses its discussion on these topics to set the research strategy.

## **Chapter II. THE PROBLEMS WITH COERCION**

This chapter discusses the problem of coercion on the ontological plane. The problem of the topic on this plane is due to its elusiveness. Coercion on the ontological plane is entwined with what Zizek describes as ‘the sublime object’ of ideology (Zizek, 1989) and what Mouffe describes as ‘identification’. This topic is elaborated against the background in the current debate in social political theories in order to identify the research strategy required to investigate it. The elaboration here aims to highlight how this topic has been underdeveloped in Mouffe’s work and how this research contributes to its further development and the studies on the topic of coercion in general. As the elaboration on coercion here focuses on its operation on the ontological plane, what’s at stake here is, “How coercion at this plane is constitutive for the social?” Therefore, it is necessary to implore how coercion is embedded in the political that Mouffe and Laclau argue to be constitutive for the social.

### **1. Introduction: The Blindspot in Understanding Coercion**

The elaboration is presented as a review on Mouffe’s own work with focus on how her, or lack of, elaboration on coercion and the coercive dimension of agonism/agonistic pluralism. Specific references to other scholars who discuss the sort of coercion and its operation on the ontological plane are made here to specify how Mouffe’s elaboration is underdeveloped, but her work is still too promising to be discarded altogether. Those scholars are Perry Anderson, John Hoffman, Jonathan Davies, Slavoj Zizek, Pierre Bourdieu, and Steven Lukes. Their works have particularly contributed to the study on power and coercion, especially its operation on the ontological plane.

Anderson, Hoffman, and Davies shared the Gramscian root with Mouffe. They all agree on the centrality of the concept of hegemony and the notion of hegemony as ‘constant dialectics between consent and coercion’ or ‘coercion that commands consent’. Mouffe also emphasizes this aspect especially in her earlier works before *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, though she does not explicitly elaborate it further in her works on agonism/agonistic pluralism, it is still there though rather implicit. It seems that she takes it for granted when she constantly argues that subordination is inevitable as any social formation is always constituted politically. It is in order to make this central but implicit element in Mouffe’s subsequent works on agonism/agonistic pluralism that reference to these two scholars is important. Reference to these two scholars is also important for the review to specify how Mouffe falls short in elaborating the coercive dimension in her agonism/agonistic pluralism.

The review is also taken with reference to the works from Steven Lukes, Pierre Bourdieu, and Slavoj Žižek. Lukes’ work points to the latent dimension of power that operates in the background and eludes the agent’s awareness. Bourdieu points out that such operation of power takes place on the plane of the symbolic that constitute our reality and its domination always involves the agent’s complicity. These ‘agent’s complicity’ and ‘moralized aspect of coercion’, both operates latently, are what Žižek attempts to elaborate by arguing that the operation of such power comes at play through the operation of fantasmatic dimension.

The distinction between the coercion investigated here with more commonly studied on coercion is best represented through Byman and Waxman’s definition of coercion, quoted in the previous chapter, as “... the use of threatened force, including the limited use of actual force to back up the threat, to induce an adversary to behave differently than it otherwise would” (Byman & Waxman, 2000, p. 9). This definition of coercion is comparable to the situation of ‘under duress’ that



Wertheimer uses as starting point and then deconstructs in his study that is concluded as the more 'moralized theory of coercion' (Wertheimer, 1987). In Lukes' theory of three dimensions of power the coercion as Byman and Waxman define is located on the first and, to certain extent, second dimensions of power. It pertains on the manifest operation of power, either covert or overt, but does not address its latent operation. This latent operation of power has largely been unnoticed or perceived as the non-operation of power. To put it positive form, the latent operation of power manifests exactly in the constitution of what we understand as 'the normal state'. In relations to coercion, it serves to constitute 'the zero level of coercion' used to define what coercion is and is not (Žižek, 2009, p. 2).

Dahlian view of power, also known as the pluralist view of power, often serves as the basis for and echoes in most studies on coercion and violence. Starting with his seminal work, *Who Governs*, in the 1960s (Dahl, 2005). The operation of power or coercion is located and analysed in its exercise, such as presented in Byman and Waxman's. However, the coercion this dissertation aims to research is one that constitutes 'the normal state' or 'the zero level of coercion' based which the coercion such portrayed in Byman and Waxman's portrayal and the likeminded studies is defined. This research elaborates how the constitution of such 'normal state' inevitably involves coercion and this coercion is felt, most of the time and by the majority of those who subject to it, is not perceived as coercion or, if it is perceived to be so, is tolerated as something inevitable or natural. As this coercion constitutes our reality of coercion, coercion as commonly known, or coercion on the ontical plane, this coercion can be said to be ontological.

To facilitate relating this with broader underpinning theory of discourse and hegemony, the ontological coercion is related to the relations of subordination and the ontical one to relations of oppression. This equation, however, is not straightforward. It should be understood as following:

It is not a matter of exhaustive categories, such as reflected in the question, “What is included as relations of subordination, domination, or oppression?”. The proper question is, “How is relations of subordination perceived as such and not as relations of domination or oppression and how are they always potentially perceived as such?” This is how the equations of ontological coercion to relations of subordination and ontical one to relations of oppression are perceived in this dissertation.

There are several problems and challenges to elaborate coercion on the ontological plane that this chapter aims to elaborate. The, *first*, immediate problem in investigating the theme of coercion in general is similar to the problem in distinguishing and specifying antagonism as structural principle and antagonism as actual with substantive friend/enemy relations. The *second* problem is how to define the coercion on the ontological level as coercion apropos Mouffe’s concept of identification mentioned with reference to Freud, Lacan, and Žižek (Mouffe, 2005, pp. 25-29; 2014) and the contingency of the relations of subordination, domination, and oppression (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014, pp. 137-138). The *third* problem is related to the underlying theoretical presuppositions of ‘radical contingency’ and ‘the primacy of the political’ in applying Mouffe categories of antagonism and agonism on a specific empirical case in order to illustrate and portray how coercion operates and performs its constitutive role on the ontological plane. It just becomes one form of coercion among many others whose meaning or identity as coercion is contingent to its articulation.

Therefore, the point this chapter aims to highlight and elaborate here is not which structure is the truly and objectively non- or less- coercive, but how in the constitution and reproduction of structure in general, including the agonistic one, coercion is constitutive and ubiquitous. As any structure, the agonistic structure is also a product of a hegemonic intervention. This hegemonic

structure operates as *articulating principle* that unifies, or more aptly regulates, the articulation of other discourses that comprise it as its internal moments (Mouffe, 2013, p. 36). Such process inevitably involves the subordination of these diverse ideological elements to the articulating principle above. This subordination of these diverse elements as internal moments of the said articulating principle is neither predetermined or merely imposition. Such relations of subordination emerge through articulation and involve ‘intellectual and moral’ leadership from the hegemonic discourse. The coercive dimension here, therefore, is much subtler than merely domination described as ‘A is coercing B’. The coercive dimension here refers to what Lukes describes as the ‘third dimension of power’, where it operates in latent manner (Lukes, 2005). The operation of coercion elaborated in this chapter is best described by Žižek in his illustration about the identification of America to certain products such as Marlboro cigarettes and Coca-Cola. Where the certain product in the advertisements, as a signifier, is elevated to the Freudian position of, ‘It’ or ‘Ding’, instead of merely a signifier (Žižek, 1989, p. 108). This ‘It’ is the unattainable object or the X, the Lacanian object cause of desire. The corresponding product becomes more than merely a product, or more than merely a signifier, it also refers to something also that exceeds it as merely a signifier or product. In Lacanian term it becomes the ‘object *a*’. Laclau later confirms that Lacan’s ‘object *a*’ and hegemony are not only homologous but, more than that, identical. This is because both “show structural effects are possible which, however, are not structurally determined” (Laclau, 2015, p. 103). This ‘object *a*’ serves to quilt the endless contingency of naming or the endless metonymical slides between the signifier and the signified. It is necessary to prevent the discursive reality slides into the discourse of the psychotic (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014, p. 99; Mouffe, 1993, p. 97).

This stance that points to the contingency and incompleteness of the structure has been the underlying premise that Mouffe takes as the foundations of her theoretical endeavour, even prior to the *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, especially to counter the tendency of the economic determinism and class reductionism interpretation of Marx (Mouffe, 2013). In the *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, Mouffe with Laclau further their anti-essentialist argument to dissolve the remnants of determinism still found in Gramsci's elaboration on hegemony (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014, pp. 75-78). The definition and description of hegemony without the ideas of any privileged element (on the plane of the ontological not actual) consequently gives primacy to the political over the social. The bounds of class become overwhelmed by other demands and identities, which, with the absence of any privileged element, are ontologically on equal footing (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014, p. 77). Therefore, Laclau argues that religious fundamentalism and the most refined "Western" social democracy are on equal footing from a purely ontological and epistemological point of view (Laclau, 1990, pp. 242-243). The agent's acceptance to the coercive demand of the structure is based on something that can never be fully symbolized. It belongs to something else beyond the symbolic order. Its presence in the symbolic order can only be presented as its absence. Mouffe, especially in her earlier works prior to 'The Return of the Political' has elaborated this coercive aspect. However, in her latter works, it only gains little attention and development other than her rather brief elaboration on the role of affect and 'identification' referring to Freud (Mouffe, 2005, pp. 25-29). The discontinuity between her works prior to and after the *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* will be elaborated in details in the following section as an important part of the review, especially in relation to the coercive dimension.

In her earlier works, especially in her elaboration on Gramsci's hegemony and ideology, Mouffe emphasizes the distinction between hegemony and merely domination. She highlights the

dimension of ‘moral and intellectual leadership’, producing active consent, instead of merely domination of the ideology of the dominant group upon the dominated ones (Mouffe, 2013). Another critical point this review aims to foreground and highlight is the need to invoke something that is external to the structure to rearticulate coercion from structural principle into something positive or negative is the next central point this chapter aims to highlight and elaborate. In this sense, the explication of coercion here questions and criticizes the paradigms that see coercion as empirical and objective phenomenon and argue for it as a ‘moralized’ one. Central to this process of moralization is ‘identification’ and the constitution of subjectivity in which the affective dimension comes to the fore. As elaborated in the previous chapter, it is the latter that has not been sufficiently elaborated in Mouffe’s conceptualization of agonism/agonistic pluralism. On one hand, she criticizes what she calls ‘the moralization of politics’ where the propensity of labelling of those who hold different ideas and opinions as ‘enemy’, instead of ‘adversary’, becomes more prevalent (Mouffe, 2005, p. 75). On the other hand, she also argues for the central role of identification and the need to recognize the role of affective dimension for it if the agonistic pluralism is to work sustainably (Mouffe, 2005, pp. 25-29). In which between these two poles she does not sufficiently elaborate the impossibility of agonism/agonistic pluralism in the last instance, such as Roskamm highlights (Roskamm, 2015), and the ambiguous elaboration of antagonism on the ontological and ontical planes (Menga, 2017).

This chapter is concluded by explicating how the elaboration on the dimension of coercion in Mouffe’s agonism/agonistic pluralism requires exact acknowledgement of the affect. Mouffe has mentioned and briefly elaborated this dimension. However, this has not been fully reflected in Mouffe’s further theorization of agonism and its instrumentalization as empirical research. More systematic elaboration on ‘affect’ is provided by psychoanalysis through the notion of fantasy that

is central in the mobilization of identification or consent from the agent to subject itself to the corresponding structure. The systematic incorporation of ‘fantasy’ into the theoretical framework of PDT is provided by the Logics of Critical Explanation. The concluding section of Chapter II serves as an introduction to the explication of the research strategy and the analytical framework based on the Logics of Critical Explanation-LCE discussed in Chapter III.

## **2. Extricating Coercion at Work on the Ontological Plane**

The coercion that this research aims to investigate and elaborate is not something that can be straightforwardly located and identified. The term ‘coercion’ in the common usage does not refer to one that this research aims at. The general discourse of ‘coercion’, however, is useful to indicate the operation of such coercion this research aims to elaborate, that is one on the ontological plane. It works in the following way: the general discourse of coercion usually points to ‘the claim of being coerced’. In such articulation, the articulated ‘coercion’ means that “I am being forced to or not to do something that otherwise I would have not done if it was not for the intervention by external power”. Such statement presumes that the external intervention has caused a disruption of what the said subject perceives to be normal or the situation where there is zero level of coercion. The coercion that this research aims to address starts with the deconstruction of the givenness of the normality presumed above. Žižek describes this in his distinction between subjective and objective violence. The former refers to ‘the claim of being coerced’, while the latter refers to the ‘normal’ or zero-level of coercion against which ‘coercion’ as deviance or disruption to the normality is measured against (Žižek, 2009, pp. 3-4).

What is crucial at this initial stage in the problem of coercion on the ontological plane is to find out whether such subject and the zero level of coercion, based on which the articulation of ‘being

coerced' is possible, are given or not. On this topic, Mouffe explicitly states her stance. She sees that both the subject and the structure that regulates its articulation are discursively constituted. The latter is always a product of hegemonic intervention that governs how the subject articulates itself and its identities, demands, and protests. The relationship between the hegemonic structure and the subject, however, is not something that is straightforward. Mouffe describes it as following:

... (T)he intellectual and moral direction exercised by a fundamental class in a hegemonic system consists in providing the articulating principle of the common world-view, the value system to which the ideological elements coming from the other groups will be articulated in order to form a unified ideological system, that is to say, an organic ideology. This will always be a complex ensemble whose contents can never be determined in advance since it depends on a whole series of historical and national factors and also on the relations of forces existing at a particular moment in the struggle for hegemony. It is, therefore, by their articulation to a hegemonic principle that the ideological elements acquire their class character which is not intrinsic to them. (Mouffe, 2013, p. 36)

In this particular work, which was first published in the 1979, Mouffe explicitly distinguishes between hegemony and domination in her elaboration on Gramsci's hegemony and the attempt to break out from the dominant 'class reductionism' and 'economic determinism' in the interpretation of Marx. In this work, one concept through which she defines Gramsci's hegemony is *articulating principle*. This *articulating principle* is the concept that she argues unify the diverse ideological elements that comprise a hegemonic bloc. The hegemonic bloc itself is, instead of being comprised of a single element, inevitably includes plural and diverse elements therefore an articulating principle is necessary to unify them and it serves its center. The articulating principle stems from the fundamental element, or 'fundamental class', in Mouffe's work, which is actually just an

element like the others but managed to position itself as the universal representation of other elements that comprise the hegemonic bloc. An element acquires this hegemonic position neither predetermined or following an objective natural law but through its articulation. Through such elaboration, Mouffe attempts to provide non-reductionist interpretation of Gramsci's hegemony. Many elements in this work re-emerge in the *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*.

What is crucial at this point, however, is that through the elaboration of the plurality of ideologies and the role of the fundamental ideology as the articulating principle in an hegemonic bloc, Mouffe demonstrates how relations of subordination is not only inevitable but constitutive to hegemony. The subordination here, however, cannot be reduced to merely domination. Central to her argument here is the distinction between hegemony and merely domination between the fundamental ideology and the elements that comprise the hegemonic bloc:

A class's hegemony is, therefore, a more complex phenomenon than simple political leadership: the latter, in effect, is the consequence of another aspect which is itself of prime importance. This is the creation of a unified coherent ideological discourse which will be the product of the articulation to its value system of the ideological elements existing within a determinate historical conjuncture of the society in question. These elements, which have no necessary class-belonging, rightly constitute for this reason the terrain of ideological struggle between the two classes confronting each other for hegemony. Therefore, if a class becomes hegemonic, it is not, as some interpretations of Gramsci would have it, because it has succeeded in imposing its class ideology upon society or in establishing mechanisms legitimising its class power. (Mouffe, 2013, p. 38)

Mouffe presents her interpretation of Gramsci that is attempted to strike out the reductionist and determinism elements and by doing so describes the subtlety of the coercive elements that is more



than merely domination involved in the constitution of hegemony. On the same passage quoted above, she follows:

This kind of interpretation completely alters the nature of Gramsci's thought because it reduces his conception of ideology to the traditional Marxist conception of false consciousness which necessarily leads to presenting hegemony as a phenomenon of ideological inculcation. Now, it is precisely against this type of reductionism that Gramsci is rebelling when he proclaims that politics is not a "marché de dupes" (Gramsci 1975, vol. 3, p. 1595; Gramsci 1971, p. 164). For him, ideology is not the mystified-mystifying justification of an already constituted class power, it is the 'terrain' on which men acquire consciousness of themselves', and hegemony cannot be reduced to a process of ideological domination." (Mouffe, 2013, p. 38)

The interpretation of Gramsci's hegemony in Mouffe's work is marked by 'continuous dialectics between consent and coercion'. Hegemony, Mouffe describes, involves the operation of ideology that defines the agent's subjectivity (Mouffe, 2013, p. 30) that, on its turn, govern its articulation that produces the class character of the said ideology and not inherent to the ideology itself (Mouffe, 2013, p. 36). Through this interpretation, Mouffe elaborates how hegemony and ideology, for Gramsci, are more than merely epiphenomena but constitutes the agent's subjectivity.

In an article published in 1988, *Hegemony and New Political Subjects: Toward a new concept of democracy*, Mouffe further elaborates the role of ideology and hegemony in the constitution of the subject, along with its contingency and precariousness. She elaborates as the following:

A person's subjectivity is not constructed only on the basis of his or her position in the relations of production. Furthermore, each social position, each subject position, is itself the locus of multiple possible constructions, according to the different discourses that can construct that position. Thus, the subjectivity of a given social

agent is always precariously and provisionally fixed, or, to use the Lacanian term, sutured at the intersection of various discourses. (Mouffe, 2013, p. 46)

Along the line of her attempt to shed the tendency of ‘economic reductionism’ and ‘economic determinism’ on the interpretation of Marx, Mouffe has argued for the ‘radical contingency’ and ‘the primacy of the political’. The former especially comes to the fore when she argues for the ‘non-necessary’ class character in any ideology and the subjectivity of its subject. While for the latter, she argues that amidst the ‘contingency’, the appearance of stability of character and identity are always a result of hegemonic intervention, which is political. While the terms of ‘radical contingency’ and ‘the primacy of the political (over the social)’ only become explicit in the *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, the centrality of these concepts have been apparent in her “Hegemony: from Gramsci to ‘post-Marxism’”. She further elaborates the role of hegemony and ideology in the constitution of subject in “Hegemony and new political subjects: Toward a new concept of democracy”, first published in 1988 (2013).

The subordination of the diverse ideologies to the fundamental ideology in a certain hegemonic bloc as the articulating principle has already given us the hint on the location and operation of coercion on the ontological plane. It is ontological because as articulating principle it enables the constitution of reality that belongs to the register of the symbolic. On the latter, Mouffe, with Laclau, elaborate further in detail in the *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* on the topic of social formation and over determination (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014, pp. 83-91). Basing the elaboration on Althusser’s idea that everything in the social is overdetermined and Freud; from whom the former borrows the concept of over determination, Laclau and Mouffe state:

The concept of over determination is constituted in the field of the symbolic, and has no meaning whatsoever outside it. Consequently, the most profound potential meaning of Althusser’s statement that everything existing in the social is

overdetermined, is the assertion that the social constitutes itself as a symbolic order.” (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014, p. 84)

The problem of coercion, however, is rather implicit here. Both in the “Hegemony: from Gramsci to Post-Marxism” and the Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, the term ‘subordination’ is used rather than ‘coercion’. However, it can be clarified that it is this subordination that refers to the ‘coercion’ on the ontological plane that this research aims to investigate. The clarification comes through examination on the conditions of possibility for this subordination that is the ‘unfixity’ (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014, p. 76). This ‘unfixity’ as the conditions of possibility for subordination is identical to Laclau’s exposition quoted in the beginning of Chapter I that he follows that “... (H)uman beings do not exist at that ‘ultimate’ level (of ontological and epistemological point of view)” (Laclau, 1990, p. 243). It is this ‘unfixity’ that makes ‘fixation’ necessary, even though it will always ultimately fail. Fail in the sense that the fixation can never be complete and permanent. However, no matter how partial and transient the fixation would be it is necessary in order to render the life intelligible. This fixation is the hegemony that takes place through the subordination of some particular elements to a certain element that occupies the role as their universal representation.

This subordination that necessarily involves the fixation of unfixity or hegemony is coercive. It is coercive in the general sense of the term as it makes things go certain ways which otherwise it would have not. Yet, the articulation of such coercion as coercive is not something straightforward. The articulation has to be carried out against something that is seen as ‘normal’ that this fixation presents itself as an obstruction. Mouffe elaborates this by, *first*, highlighting the contingency of subjectivity to class belonging—in her argument against class determinism—and, *second*, the agent is criss-crossed by multiple discourses and the subject position each of them entails. The

identification to one subject's position as the agent's identity or subjectivity is always over determination or, in other words, a result of hegemonic intervention. The articulation of certain fixation as 'coercive' takes place on condition that the corresponding agent identify itself with another subject position and identifies with it to become its subject and in doing so the former identity is perceived as an obstruction for the full realization of the latter. In such situations, the relations of subordination have transformed into relations of oppression.

If the coercive dimension of fixation is rather implicit in Mouffe's elaboration on hegemony, even though she is fully aware of it, it is more explicit in the works of, for example, John Hoffman (Hoffman, 1984) and Jonathan Davies (Davies J. , 2013). The subtlety of the coercive dimension of hegemony is more pronounced in those works as 'constant dialectics between consent and coercion'. The latter is not totally absent from Mouffe either. She is fully aware of it and therefore the concept of subjectivity and the role of hegemony and ideology for its constitution are central in her expositions. Later, she tries to further their relations with the concept of identification and affect (Mouffe, 2005, pp. 26-29). In line with Mouffe's description of Gramsci's hegemony, Hoffman also argues such dialectical relations between consent and coercion and the impossibility of highlighting one at the expense of the other. He argues that coercion will not last without consent. Taking the case of Stalin's rule in the USSR, Hoffman argues for hegemony as the constant dialectics between consent and coercion and his rejection of hypostatizing one over the other. He describes the dialectics between consent and coercion, reflecting on the case of Stalin's rule that is marked by massive coercion but also widespread popularity, as following:

There can be little doubt that the coercion during Stalin period was massive, macabre and at times almost appears self-destructive; yet this was a coercion which was political and social in character. The 'revolution from above' can only be

understood in relation to the popular enthusiasm ‘from below’. (Hoffman, 1984, p. 191)

With this, Hoffman criticizes the commentators on Stalin’s rule, who emphasize on either ‘consent’ or ‘coercion’ at the expense of the other. In a less explicit manner than Mouffe does, Hoffman also describes how hegemony operates as an articulating principle that involves the subjects’ consent even in such a political moment when coercion comes to dominate the scene such as in Stalin’s purge.

Davies develops his elaboration on coercion from a different angle and on a different issue, though he shares the Gramscian point of view with both Mouffe and Hoffman. Davies develops his elaboration on coercion mainly to demystify the notion of ‘network’ in the currently hegemonic discourse of ‘network governance’. The latter claims to offer a model of governance that is mainly based on ‘consent’, thus “...capable of redeeming the errors of both excessive statism and market liberalism and of fostering a new deliberative pluralism with the potential for an equitable, trust-based consensus about the means and ends of social life” (Davies J. S., 2011, p. 2). Davies, however, argues that such claims misrepresent the nature of ‘network governance’ discourse and its underlying ‘neoliberal’ agenda. He argues that its claim emphasises only on ‘consent’ and does not cover its coercive dimension. Portraying ‘network governance’ as part of neo-liberal hegemonic project, Davies argues:

Drawing from Gramsci’s theory of the integral state, the dialectical unity of state and civil society, it argues that coercion is the immanent condition of consent inherent in the condition of modernity. As long as hegemony is partial and precarious, hierarchy can never completely retreat to the shadows. This dialectic plays out in the day-to-day politics of governance networks through the clash between connectionist ideology and roll-forward hierarchy or ‘governmentalization’. (Davies J. S., 2011, p. 5)

Here Davies makes ‘double moves’ to replace the underlying presumption of the dominant discourse on network governance that seems to be hypostatizing ‘consent’. The first move involves the disclosure of the coercive dimension that the ‘network governance’ practice has been failing to eradicate. He refers both to theoretical studies and empirical cases of the ‘stubborn’ centralization, managerialism, and exclusivism plaguing the network governance practices (Davies J. S., 2011, pp. 55-74). This prepares the ground for him to formulate the question and elaborate the answer, through Gramscian lens, on “... (W)hy why hierarchical power remains pervasive and cannot be displaced by network power” (Davies J. S., 2011, p. 6). Through this lens, Davies is able to portray the ‘network governance’ as a hegemonic project and, thus, it always involves continuous dialectics between consent and coercion (Davies J. S., 2011, p. 101).

An interesting feature Davies points out is that the constitution of ‘network governance’ as a hegemonic discourse involves the promotion of certain particular signifiers such as the Freudian *Thing*. In this case it is the ‘network’ that, he argues, has been around for time immemorial in the governance process. He states:

If governance networks are old-hat, then the rise of network governance ideology is significant mainly because it makes a virtue of everyday practice. (Davies J. S., 2011, p. 57)

This *Thing*, in Davies’ case the ‘network governance’, is central in the elaboration in the following sections, related to the specificity of coercion in operation at the ontological level, furthering Mouffe’s elaboration on the role of affect and identification.

The review this far has shown strong indication that Mouffe is fully aware and understands the coercive dimension in the constitution of the social as a result of a hegemonic intervention. The subordination that she argues as inevitable in the constitution of the social has also been confirmed

by other scholars who share her Gramscian lens as they see the two are closely intertwined and impossible to extricate one at the expense of total eradication of the other.

Focusing on Mouffe and her interpretation on Gramsci's hegemony, her interpretation on Gramsci in "Hegemony: from Gramsci to 'post-Marxism'" reappears in a more refined and comprehensive manner in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*. This, in turn, serves as the theoretical underpinning for her to develop her notion of agonism/agonistic pluralism. The theory of discourse and hegemony that she develops with Laclau furthers the arguments of the 'radical contingency' and 'primacy of the political', purging the smallest propensity for 'privileging certain elements' in Gramscian notion. To be specific, what is purged is not the 'privileged position' but the notion of the 'given-ness' and 'permanency' of a certain substantive particular element that happens to occupy it in a certain historical moment. The position itself is necessary in any discursive constitution of reality. Which particular element that happens to occupy it, is determined by political struggle instead of a pre-given objective law. Thus, Mouffe and Laclau are aware that subordination, the coercive dimension of the constitution of the social, is ineradicable because it is the one that constitutes our reality and subjectivity. Without such subordination or coercion, what we have is the 'equality' that Laclau describes as seen from the 'pure ontological and epistemological view' (Laclau, 1990, pp. 242-243).

The ubiquity and constitutive role of subordination or coercion is confirmed in Mouffe's works. Such recognition, however, is insufficient to elaborate and answer the problem and questions this research aims to address. More elaboration to answer the questions of "How is coercion ubiquitous and constitutive?" is needed. Mouffe poses the same question but she does not explore and elaborate it further, even though she gives some hints (Mouffe, 2005, pp. 25-27). The hints that Mouffe gives revolves around two central concepts, 'hegemony as articulating principle' and

‘hegemony as constitutive to subjectivity’. In *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* and “Hegemony and the new subject” Mouffe elaborates the ubiquity and constitutive nature of subordination, as the potentials for antagonism and marks the limits of a certain hegemonic order. The subordination, however, does not necessarily present antagonism. Antagonism takes place “... when a collective subject ... that has been constructed in a specific way, to certain existing discourses, finds its subjectivity negated by other discourses or practices” (Mouffe, 2013, p. 51; see also Laclau & Mouffe, 2014, p. 111).

In this definition of antagonism, ‘self’ or ‘subjectivity’ becomes a central concept. The shift between relations of subordination and oppression or antagonism hinges on the certain ‘self’ with whom the agent identifies itself with and what obstructs its realization. Mouffe’s explication on the role of affect and identification in *On the Political* (2005, pp. 25-29) aims to further substantiate how such ‘self’ is constituted through identification. She attempts to elaborate in a more comprehensive manner the process of identification to explain why a certain structure and the subject position it entails become accepted by the agent through its identification or, in other words, what makes someone tick. As mentioned in the preceding chapter, Mouffe, however, does not elaborate this topic extensively. Her elaboration on the identification is mostly articulated as part of her exposition on the constitutive role of antagonism, the ‘we/they’ relations and the primacy of the political (Mouffe, 2005, pp. 27-28). In this particular elaboration, however, Mouffe points out the role of *enjoyment* in making certain discourse ticks to certain people. The enjoyment here belongs not to the structure but to the agent. Mouffe, however, does not further elaborate specifically the relations between the structure and the enjoyment at operation to constitute a certain kind of subject.



The lack of elaboration on this aspect in conjunction with the ubiquity and constitutive role of subordination or coercion that she argues has made her notion on agonism interpreted paradoxically as described in the preceding chapter. The fact that every social formation as a result of a hegemonic formation always involves coercion that demands or commands consent from the agent is only half of the story. What's missing is elaboration on why the agent complies or not to that demand and what the condition that makes one does or does not is. Mouffe herself states that, in the case of democracy, she argues against the determinism that everyone has equal predisposition towards liberty and equality. In the "Hegemony and the new political subject", she elaborates the conditions necessary for specific forms of subordination to produce struggles that seek for its abolition and argues: "As soon as the principle of equality is admitted in one domain, however, the eventual questioning of all possible forms of inequality is an ineluctable consequence" (Mouffe, 2013, pp. 50-51).

This explanation is related to her elaboration in the hegemony and socialist strategy on the relations of subordination, domination, and oppression. The admission of the principle of equality in one domain gives the exteriority of the discourses that constitute certain relations of subordination in other domains, rearticulating the subordinative structure in other domains as relations of domination. It hails or interpellates the subjects of the said structure to identify with the new discourse centred on the principle of equality to identify themselves with it and perceive the subordinative relations they have been subjects of as oppressive. The transformation from relations of subordination into relations of oppression refers to the transformation of those relations into sites of antagonism as defined above (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014, p. 137). It is important to underline here that the relations of domination and oppression are not necessarily coincidental (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014, p. 138). Central in the transformation from relations of subordination into

oppression is 'subjectivity'. Mouffe, however, does not elaborate this through the lens of 'subject' or 'subjectivity' either in the *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* or in the 'Hegemony and the new political subject'. The course of her explanation in both works takes the elaboration from the structural approach that define 'subject' and 'subjectivity' rather as 'subject position' as seen in the following quotation:

It is only to the extent that the positive differential character of the subordinated subject position is subverted that antagonism can emerge. (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014, p. 138)

In similar manner and tone, she elaborates it in the 'Hegemony and the new political subject' as following:

An antagonism can emerge when a collective subject –of course, here I am interested in political antagonism at the level of the collective subject–that has been constructed in a specific way, to certain existing discourses, finds its subjectivity negated by other discourses or practices. That negation can happen in two basic ways. First, subjects constructed on the basis of certain rights can find themselves in a position in which those rights are denied by some practices of discourses. At that point there is a negation of subjectivity or identification which can be the basis for an antagonism. I am not saying that this necessarily leads to an antagonism; it is a necessary but not sufficient condition. The second form in which antagonism emerges corresponds to that expressed by feminism and the black movement. It is a situation in which subjects constructed in subordination by a set of discourses are, at the same time, interpellated as equal by other discourses. Here we have a contradictory interpellation. Like the first form, it is a negation of a particular subject position, but, unlike the first, it is the subjectivity-in-subordination that is negated, which opens the possibility for its deconstruction and challenging. (Mouffe, 2013, p. 51).

Further, still in the case of democracy and the democratic subject, she describes:

People struggle for equality not because of some ontological postulate but because they have been constructed as subjects in a democratic tradition that puts those values at the centre of social life. (Mouffe, 2013, p. 52)

What appears on such explanation on ‘subject’ and ‘subjectivity’ is that the discursive structures seem to merely ‘interpellate’ the agent and the agent can arbitrarily choose some over the others. Those options also seem to be on equal footing and the political dimension embedded in the act of deciding which discourse and corresponding subject position to identify with becomes less pronounced. The constitution of democracy as the articulating principle and the sort of fundamental subjectivity come at the cost of subordination of other elements and subjectivities. This sort of exposition has two-fold consequences for the goal this research aims to address: *first*, it obscures the complex operation of coercion and its dialectics with consent in the constitution of the social and its subject, including the agonistic social structure. This contributes to the two opposing interpretation on Mouffe’s notion of agonism/agonistic pluralism since each takes her notion to the extreme poles of, on one hand, ‘constant deferral on any closure ‘ as if there is no closure at all vs. reification of antagonism, on the other. In other words, Mouffe fails to transmit the message of ‘radical contingency’ and ‘the primacy of the political’, two underlying theoretical presuppositions for her notion of agonism/agonistic pluralism, to her audience.

*Second*, the failure to transmit the message of these two underlying theoretical presuppositions leads to failure to grasp the specific ethic of PDT and the radical democracy project across the table. Mouffe’s agonism and its PDT underpinning stand for a certain ethical position that centred on the ineradicable and constitutive lack. Her audience become prone to either emphasizing the ‘contingency’ or justifying ‘antagonism’ at the expense of understanding of their discursive constitution. The ‘contingency’ or the lack of fullness as understood symbolically only comes into being after the symbolic field has been traversed. It always comes into being retrospectively (Fink,

1995, p. 27). On the other hand, as the ‘lack’ is only presentable through the symbolic register, it is also potentially (mis)interpreted as condoning or normalizing coercion and violence.

On this topic of subjectivity and the lack of its elaboration in Laclau and Mouffe’s *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, Zizek gives his optimistic criticism assuming that this lack is due to “... -‘a dizziness from too much success’, an effect of the fact that Laclau and Mouffe had progressed too quickly, i.e. that, with the elaboration of their concept of antagonism, they have accomplished such a radical breakthrough that it was not possible for them to follow it immediately with a corresponding concept of subject – hence the uncertainty regarding the subject in *Hegemony*” (Zizek, 1990, p. 250). Zizek argues that Laclau and Mouffe’s conclusions on social antagonism can be pushed further with reference to Lacan with regards to the topic of ‘subject’ that corresponds to a structure that is centered around the lack that is impossible to fulfil (Zizek, 1990, pp. 249-250).

### **3. Hegemony and Subjectivity: Coercion, Identification, and the Constitution of Subject**

If the previous section elaborates how Mouffe elaborates the structural over determination is constitutive to reality and identity. The elaboration leads to the topic of identification and the constitution of subjectivity. In the preceding paragraphs there have been brief elaborations on how this topic is relatively underdeveloped in Mouffe’s works, including the *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* she co-authored with Laclau. However, as Zizek points out, this relative underdevelopment does not mean that either Mouffe or Laclau are not aware of the consequences of their theoretical framework on the conceptualization of subject and subjectivity. Therefore, the

elaboration in this section starts from what Mouffe has said on this topic and the sort of coercion implied in those elaborations.

The constitution of subject here involves two simultaneous and reciprocal processes of what is known as ‘interpellation’ or ‘ideological hailing’ on behalf of the structure and identification from the agent. The following section discusses how these two simultaneous processes take place in the constitution of the subject and highlight the role of the fantasy to cover the constitutive lack both on the side of the structure and subject. The elaboration in this section aims to demonstrate to what extent Mouffe elaborates the ‘identification’, where she falls short, and how to further the elaboration on this topic in relations with the main issue of coercion on the ontological plane.

Mouffe has mentioned the constitution of subjectivity in her earlier works, prior to the *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* as seen in the preceding section. More comprehensive elaboration, however, can be found in the “Democratic Citizenship and the Political Community” published in 1992. In this article Mouffe attempts to configure the form of political community that she envisages the radical democracy project aims to constitute. She critically elaborates two major traditions of democratic polity and the certain kind of subjectivity that it entails; liberalism and civic republicanism. She tries to synthesize the two through the formula based on ‘radical contingency’ and ‘the primacy of the political’ that leads her to endorse *societas* over *universitas*. Mouffe borrows these categories from Michael Oakeshott. *Societas* refers to “...‘civil association’ designates a formal relationship in terms of rules, not a substantive relation in terms of common action.” On the contrary, *universitas* is described as “... engagement in an enterprise to pursue a common substantive purpose or to promote a common interest.” (Mouffe, 1993, p. 108). Mouffe describes ‘identification’ by referring to the citizenship in a liberal democratic regime as following:

What we share and what makes us fellow citizens in a liberal democratic regime is not a substantive idea of the good but a set of political principles specific to such a tradition: the principles of freedom and equality for all. Those principles constitute what we can call, following Wittgenstein, a ‘grammar’ of political conduct. To be a citizen is to recognize the authority of those principles and the rules in which they are embodied; to have them informing our political judgement and our actions. To be associated in terms of the recognition of the liberal democratic principles, this is the meaning of citizenship that I want to put forward. It implies seeing citizenship not as a legal status but as a form of identification, a type of political identity: something to be constructed, not empirically given. (Mouffe, 1993, pp. 65-66)

The phrase, “... be citizen is to recognize the authority of those principles and the rules in which they are embodied, to have them informing our political judgement and our actions” is central in this elaboration on ‘identification’ in Mouffe’s works. The centrality of that phrase is evident as Mouffe further specifies it in the next passage in the same article ‘to recognize the authority’ and ‘to have them (the principles and rules’) informing our political judgement and our actions’ that constitutes identification when she elaborates Oakeshott’s *societas*:

Oakeshott insists that the participants in a *societas* or *cives* are not associated for a common enterprise nor with a view to facilitating the attainment of each person’s individual prosperity; what links them is the recognition of the authority of the conditions specifying their common or ‘public’ concern, a ‘practice of civility’. This public concern or consideration of *cives* Oakeshott calls *respublica*. It is a practice of civility specifying not performances, but conditions to be subscribed to in choosing performances. These consist in a complex of rules or rule-like prescriptions, which do not prescribe satisfactions to be sought or actions to be performed but moral considerations specifying conditions to be subscribed to in choosing performances’. (Mouffe, 1993, p. 67)

Mouffe favours the *societas* over the *universitas* due to the context of proliferation of demands and identities along with “the disappearance of single substantive idea of common good and makes room for individual liberty.” (Mouffe, 1993, p. 67)

‘Recognition of authority’ and ‘to have them informing our political judgement and our actions’ imply the agent’s subscription to a certain authority. The meaning of the word ‘subscription’ may have evolved in the current usage. The term ‘to be subscribed to’ in the context of the passage above lexically implies a certain agent ‘to subscribe itself to’ what Mouffe is referring to. In the current usage subscription means, among other, ‘the acceptance (as of ecclesiastical articles of faith) attested by the signing of one’s name’<sup>1</sup>. This meaning may give the impression that the parties involved are, more or less, on equal relations. However, a further search on the meaning of this word leads to its archaic or obsolete usage where the ‘subordination’ element is more explicit. In its obsolete usage subscription also means the act ‘to admit to being inferior or in the wrong’.<sup>2</sup>

This aspect of ‘admission’ or active acceptance is crucial in Mouffe’s identification with the principles, as she distinguishes it with liberal doctrine of ‘supremacy of the law’. She underlines it by quoting Oakeshott:

Civility, then, denotes an order of moral (not instrumental) considerations, and the so-called neutrality of civil prescriptions is a half-truth, which needs to be supplemented by the recognition of civil association as itself a moral and not a prudential condition. (Mouffe, 1993, p. 68)

Mouffe equates Oakeshott’s ‘moral’ to her ‘ethico-principle’ as Oakeshott also argues that the ‘moral’ in the *universitas* cannot be derived from general moral principles. There are two

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/subscription>; accessed 17 June 2020; 6:19 am.

<sup>2</sup> <https://wikidiff.com/subscribe/submit#:~:text=is%20that%20submit%20is%20to,for%20a%20period%20of%20time>. Accessed 17 June 2020; 6:24 am.

consequences important to elaborate here apropos to the specific aim of extricating how identification takes place. *First*, Mouffe specifies that Oakeshott's morality refers rather to Hegelian *sittlich* relation in contrast to Kantian morality as in the case of Rawls (Mouffe, 1993, p. 68). Here, the demands for the agent's subscription are not perceived as subordination by the agent, at least those who subscribe to it. The agent often considers itself as the embodiment of the 'moral' itself. Yet, it is the mechanism how this identification, especially the drive for the agent to subscribe or not to subscribe itself to the ethico-moral principle that Mouffe has not fully elaborated.

In 2014, Mouffe published "By Way of a Postscript" where she attempts to highlight the dimension of passion in agonism/agonistic pluralism and the radical democracy project. Close examination will lead us to see how her definition of passion in this work can be related to the Hegelian 'sittlich relation' she uses to characterize the type of 'moral' in Oakeshott's 'moral' (Mouffe, 2014, p. 149;155). She describes passion as more than merely 'emotion'. The latter is usually attached to individuals, parallel to Kantian morality in Rawls, while passion is better to convey both the collective and individual. Furthermore, she chooses the term 'passion' over 'emotion' to better highlight the violent aspect of it to facilitate her to highlights the dimension of conflict (Mouffe, 2014, p. 149).

Mouffe's more specific elaboration on the discursive constitution of subject apropos the role of 'passion' can be found in this work. Mouffe relies on Spinoza and Freud's psychoanalysis to elaborate the role of passion and hegemony as struggle to mobilize passion. She refers to Freud to elaborate how identification (in the collective sense) is always constituted on the power of Eros, power that binds the agents together as a collective and it is malleable to go to any direction it is the task of agonistic politics to make sure that it goes to the intended direction, in her case; toward



counter-hegemonic movement. To elaborate specifically how ‘passion’ operates and how hegemonic intervention may intervene to direct it, Mouffe takes Spinoza’s notions of affection (*affectio*) and affect (*affectus*). She describes it as the following:

Like Freud, Spinoza believes that it is desire that moves human beings to act and he notes that what makes them act in one direction rather than in another are the affects. Bodies have the capacity of being affected and an affection, for him, is a state of a body insofar as it is subject to the action of another body. When affected by something exterior, the ‘conatus’ (the general striving to persevere in our being) will experience affects that will move it to desire something and to act accordingly. I find this dynamic of *affectio/affectus* helpful to envisage the process of production of common affects. And I propose to employ this dynamic to examine the modes of transformation of political identities, seeing ‘affections’ as the space where the discursive and the affective are articulated in specific practices. (Mouffe, 2014, p. 156)

In this passage Mouffe seems to find the direction to get further elaboration on identification at work. There are three aspects in her elaboration that simultaneously constitute identification, namely *affectio*, *conatus*, and *affectus*. However, Mouffe elaborates this topic rather with the intention to invite other scholars to contribute in further studies in this direction. In the “By Way of a Postscript”, this passage is located almost at the end of the article. This article is mostly comprised of summary and reiteration of what Mouffe has elaborated in her previous works. The absence of further elaboration of this dimension of affect and how it constitutes identification, while providing a direction, verifies the criticisms, such as from Roskam and Menga, that there are aspects in Mouffe that requires further elaboration. Review on Mouffe’s work so far, demonstrates that this is the furthest point she ventures with regards to the notion of identification. Her later published book *For a Left Populism* (2018) only briefly touches this topic.

Though it is underdeveloped, Mouffe has pointed to legitimate direction. Her description of hegemony as articulating principle through which the agent may acquire their subjectivity, in return for their subscription, is political because it requires the decision on which element to occupy the privilege position as universal representation at the expense of other equally legitimate candidates but also because it requires the agent to subscribe itself to it. From the point of view of the agent, this is also political as it requires it to decide whether to subscribe to the symbolic order or not. Even though the agent may be in far than equal position before the symbolic order as the *Other*, its decision is crucial for the sustenance of the symbolic order. In order to win the agent's subscription is by tapping into agent's affective faculty. But Mouffe does not give more comprehension on how this exactly works. The underdevelopment of this aspect of identification and how it is related to affect has consequences in potential interpretations on Mouffe's concepts of agonism and the primacy of the political. Mouffe specifies how power operates in hegemony, as the articulating principle that produces what Foucault describes as 'regularity in dispersion', emphasizing on the *regularity* in dispersion (in contrast to regularity on *dispersion*) (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014, pp. 91-92); and distinguishes between hegemony and domination (Mouffe, 2013, p. 38). She, however, does not specify how the coercion on both planes, though, they have the same operational mechanism, are perceived differently by the agents, leading to different responses. The difference hinges on the operation of this affect through identification. This is the point that needs to be made explicit and further developed.

As Žižek has described, in order to have a more complete depiction on the operation of antagonism and, consequently, agonism and its coercive dimension, it is necessary to develop the notion of subjectivity that corresponds with Laclau and Mouffe's PDT. As apparent in Mouffe's works following Žižek's response, she starts to think about this aspect more seriously (Mouffe, 2005, pp.

25-29; 2014) mostly by referring back to psychoanalysis from both Freud and Lacan. Contemporary to Mouffe, Laclau seems to venture further in his inquiry on this aspect, as apparent in his conversations with Glynos and Stavrakakis elaborated further by Stavrakakis in his, *Lacanian Left* (2007, pp. 66-108). This is soon followed with more systematic incorporation of the Lacanian elements in the PDT theoretical framework by Glynos and Howarth in the *Logics of Critical Explanation* (2007). The following section will discuss this topic.

#### **4. Fantasmatic Dimension**

Furthering what Mouffe has pointed out in the “By Way of a Postscript”, we can summarize at this point that the constitution of subject involves two simultaneous and reciprocal processes of what is known as ‘interpellation’ or ‘ideological hailing’ on the behalf of the structure and identification on the behalf of the agent. The following section discusses how these two simultaneous processes take place in the constitution of the subject and highlights the role of the fantasy to cover the constitutive lack both on the side of the structure and subject. The elaboration in this section demonstrates how the concept of fantasy is central to the discussion on the constitution of subject and coercion on the ontological plane yet it is largely underdeveloped by Mouffe. The discussion also elaborates how the incorporation of the concept of fantasy here is still in line with the notions of hegemony as a paradox, that manifest in its description as ‘the constant dialectics between consent and coercion’ or ‘coercion that commands consent’ such as in Hoffman’s and Davies’ elaborations, or ‘the willing consent to domination’ in Steven Lukes (2005, p. 150).

Lukes’ three-dimensional view of power gives prominence to the moment of the constitution and shaping of issue even before the moment whether this issue is included or excluded into the political field of decision making. Thus, for Lukes, the situation where the acquiescence appears

becomes the indication of the very moment where the most subtle yet most powerful form of power is in operation (Lukes, 2005, p. 27). Here Lukes argues that even when it seems that there is a universal acquiescence power still operates to exactly constitute such acquiescence. In other words, Lukes' third dimension of power explicates the latent manifestation of power in contrast to the covert and overt one elaborated in the two- and one-dimensional views of power respectively. He further describes: "to speak of the third dimension of such power is to speak of interests imputed to and unrecognized by the actors" (Lukes, 2005, p. 146). This 'unrecognized' aspect of the operation of power and its impact are also highlighted by other scholars, one of which is Pierre Bourdieu, who Lukes also refers to. Bourdieu's notion that is comparable to Lukes' third dimension of power is 'symbolic domination'. He characterizes it as following: "All symbolic domination presupposes, on the part of those who submit to it, a form of complicity which is neither passive submission to external constraint nor a free adherence to values" (Bourdieu, 1991, pp. 50-51). The agent's complicity and the characteristic that goes beyond external constraint or free adherence to values and "the interest imputed to" yet "unrecognized by the actors" are comparable not only to Mouffe's explication of hegemony as articulating principle (Mouffe, 2013) that produces *regularity* in dispersion (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014) but also give hints to how to further specify the sort of subjectivity that Mouffe explicates comes as a result of the agent's subscription into the fundamental grammar or articulating principle (Mouffe, 2013; 2013).

Relating this with the notion of coercion, the hegemony constitutes the benchmark or the point of 'zero level of coercion' as the point of departure to judge whether certain acts are coercive or not. On his reflection on violence, Žižek describes the former as 'objective violence' and the latter as 'subjective violence' (Žižek, 2009, p. 3). They are all constituted on the plane of symbolic through what Bourdieu describe as 'symbolic domination' (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 37; see also Lukes, 2005,

pp. 140-141). This third category of domination is exactly the same as how Laclau and Mouffe explicate the location and mechanism of hegemony (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014, pp. 83-84). These works, however, despite variation in angles and approaches stop short in explaining ‘What makes the agent subscribes itself to the structure?’”

Bourdieu indicates, through his explication on the concept of ‘habitus’, that this process of identification is the subject’s complicity that contributes to constitute symbolic domination and this identification happens beyond the rationality of ‘choice and constraint’ that he refers to as ‘habitus’ and describes to operate at the unconscious level (Bourdieu, 2013, p. 79; 81). The apparent “natural” quality of this objective structure, Bourdieu argues, is partly explained by the constitutive role of this structure to the subject itself. The subject owes its subjectivity to its subscription or submission to the corresponding structure. The other part of it is due to this reciprocal process between the structure and the subject that (re)produces each other. The former Bourdieu delineates as following:

Genesis amnesia is also encouraged (if not entailed) by the objectivist apprehension which, grasping the product of history as an *opus operatum*, a *fait accompli*, can only invoke the mysteries of pre-established harmony or the prodigies of conscious orchestration to account for what, apprehended in pure synchrony, appears as objective meaning, whether it be the internal coherence of works or institutions such as myths, rites, or bodies of law, or the objective co-ordination which the concordant or conflicting practices of the members of the same group or class at once manifest and presuppose (inasmuch as they imply a community of dispositions) (Bourdieu, 2013, p. 79).

And on the same passage he also delineates the latter as:

Each agent, wittingly or unwittingly, willy nilly, is a producer and reproducer of objective meaning. Because his actions and works are the product of a *modus*

*operandi* of which he is not the producer and has no conscious mastery, they contain an "objective intention", as the Scholastics put it, which always outruns his conscious intentions. The schemes of thought and expression he has acquired are the basis for the *intentionless invention* of regulated improvisation. Endlessly overtaken by his own words, with which he maintains a relation of "carry and be carried", as Nicolai Hartmann put it, the virtuoso finds in the *opus operatum* new triggers and new supports for the *modus operandi* from which they arise, so that his discourse continuously feeds off itself like a train bringing along its own rails (Bourdieu, 2013, p. 79).

This process of naturalization of history or, in Bourdieu's words: forgetting of history, is exactly the same as what Husserl refers to as 'sedimentation' as he also points out exactly this process of objectification of reality as certain subjective reality that takes up the position as the universal representation of other subjective realities at the expense of their possibilities to occupy the very same position. This sedimentation is in contrast to 'reactivation', which refers to attempt to reanimate the original contingent situation in which this objectification took place the first time (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 116).

This sedimentation, Bourdieu puts it, takes place at the unconscious level (Bourdieu, 2013, pp. 78-79). The constitution of the objective reality for those who are subject to this sedimented disposition or habitus takes place reciprocally with the constitution of the subject through their subscription to it. This constitutive role of the habitus somehow stays obscure to the subject but they constantly adjust other practices to it and by doing so they constantly reproduce the principle of production of this habitus in order to make the world intelligible for the subject (Bourdieu, 2013, p. 80). Bourdieu comes to define 'the choice of habitus' as something beyond consciousness and constraint or, in other words, beyond consent and coercion because it is located at the plane of unconscious and the unconscious implies the insertion of the subject into the symbolic order

through which the subject owes its constitution as a subject. Prior to that, this subject was not a subject and could not articulate either consent or coercion.

However, Bourdieu does not elaborate further on this topic of ‘unconscious’ and ‘unconsciousness’. In order to further elaborate it, it is necessary to turn to Jacques Lacan who focuses most of his studies on this topic. The Lacanian unconscious can be briefly defined as “the thing you don’t know that you know” and it is structured like language (Lacan, 2005, pp. 329-330) as Fink describes it: “(I)t is not something one “actively”, consciously grasps, but rather something which is passively registered, inscribed, or counted. And this unknown knowledge is locked into the connection between signifiers; it consists in this very connection” (Fink, 1995, p. 23). The constitution of subject takes place through one’s insertion into the symbolic order, into the webs of connections among signifiers, or this unconscious. The unconscious, however, does not need a subject (Lacan, 2005; Fink, 1995). This unconscious subject needs further elaboration to delineate the identification, central to our discussion on coercion, and its condition of possibility. It is here Lacanian triad becomes useful to further pinpoint the locus of the unconscious and how the constitution of subject takes place within and through this domain.

In Lacanian psychoanalysis, the concept of unconscious subject is related to other concepts of the imaginary, symbolic, and the real. The relation of these three is known as the “Lacanian Triad”. This triad explicates more on the structural dimension of the unconscious; more specifically on the impossibility of the fullness and the essential and constitutive nature of “lack” both on the structure as well as the subject it entails. Lacan further complements this conceptualization with the concepts of ‘drive’ and ‘*jouissance*’ or ‘enjoyment’ that explains the generating force for identification or subjectification on the behalf of the agent. Identification in the Lacanian sense denotes to the ‘psychological process whereby the subject assimilates an aspect, property or attribute of the other

and is transformed, wholly or partially, after the model or the other provides. It is by a series of identification that the personality is constituted and specified' (Laplanche and Pontalis quoted in Stavrakakis, 1999, p. 30). Lacan introduces two forms of identification namely the imaginary and symbolic identifications. He delineates the former through his concept of 'mirror stage' (Lacan, 2005, p. 2) while the latter through one's insertion into the symbolic order.

Lacan defines the mirror stage as identification indicated by the transformation that "takes place in the subject when he assumes an image" and the subject constituted through this assumption, the *imago*, he calls as the 'Ideal I' (Lacan, 2006, p. 2). This identification to a certain image gives the subject some sort of jubilant feeling as it provides him or her with a sense of mastery of fullness of the self. This sense of mastery, however, is ephemeral as the subject immediately has to encounter the facts that the ideal image is in contrast with the subject's lived experienced of limited, fragmented, and uncoordinated real body. The image, as in the mirror, always produces an incongruent picture against the real body. It could be inverted or distorted. Basically, it is always something alien and its assumption is always alienating (Lacan, 2006, p. 3; Stavrakakis, 1999, p. 17). Here Lacan also introduces us to the notion that the constitution of subject is always based on misrecognition or *meconnaissance* (Lacan, 2006, p. 7). Lacan also delineates how aggression comes out from this imaginary identification and the subsequent feeling of ambiguity and tensions. The assumptions of the image as one's ego is basically narcissism and, Lacan argues, the subsequent ambiguity and inevitable tensions due to the unbridgeable gap between the 'Ideal I' of this ego and the lived experienced of one's actual body (Lacan, 2006, p. 21).

The relational nature of the subject has started to appear since this mirror stage. The constitution of the ego always inevitably requires an external other that is different in order to acquire the unified self. This unity, however, as mentioned above is inherently unstable and constantly



permeated by the unbridgeable gap between the 'Ideal I' and the actual fragmented and uncoordinated body of the subject (Lacan, 2006, p. 10). It is to overcome these tensions, fragmentations, and ambiguity, and stabilize it that the symbolic representation becomes necessary (Stavrakakis, 1999, pp. 20-21). One's submission into the symbolic order, or language, makes him a subject in language. This subject is the subject of signifier. However, in order to constitute itself as a subject, one has to give up something that is the imaginary unity as it does not fully fit with the symbolic law under which the one has to subscribe to. In this sense, the subject is secondary to the signifier and the stability and unity constituted through the symbolic are constantly marked by lack that is the imaginary unity.

The insertion into the symbolic here, intended to stabilize and suspend the ambiguity at the imaginary, turns out to be unable to fill the lack, because the symbolic is never totally closed. It is never able to totally represent the represented. Lacan even argues for the impossibility of total and immediate representation. Pushing further Saussurean notion of sign and its two constitutive elements of signifier and signified, Lacan gives primacy to the signifier by arguing that the signified as such is impossible and the signified as we know it is constituted by chain of signifiers forming differential relations in specific order (Stavrakakis, 1999). All attempts to arrive at the signified constantly fail as the signifiers always slide metonymically over the signified. The symbolic order, thus, is never a totally closed order. As the subject is constituted in this register of the symbolic, the subject cannot be other but subject of signifier and as it seeks to find the unified self, marred by fragmentation and ambiguity in the imaginary, such attempt will always fail. Lacan refers to, and modifies, Saussurean structural linguistic by, respectively, attributing the constitution of meaning to the differential relations within a system of signs, or language, and giving primacy

to the signifier instead of the signified. These two characteristics of Lacanian symbolic order are those which presuppose its continuous failure to constitute itself as a total closure.

The unconscious subject here is related to this submission into the symbolic order. The process of the constitution of subject as the subject of the signifier, however, requires further elaboration as it involves not merely submission but also identification with the desire of the symbolic order as the *Other*, with capital O. This is what Bourdieu points as the ‘agent’s complicity’ necessarily involved in the symbolic domination. This will be further elaborated below. But it is worthwhile underlining here that the elaboration up to this point has demonstrated the impossibility of the structure as a totally closed, final, and transparent to itself but neither is the subject. The concept of fantasy (of fullness through one’s insertion into the symbolic order) is central as it explains the grips of the symbolic order or the discourse over the agent. As the signified is something that is impossible to attain, it is necessary to rearticulate the signified and the access to it. Within the Lacanian notion, it occupies new positions in the symbolic order. Following the primacy given to the signifier over the signified, Lacan argues that it is the signifier that constitutes the signified. This is possible because there is an inherent barrier between the signifier and the signified. The bar is produced by the meaning produced through the interplay of differential relations among signifiers that produces specific meaning to a specific signifier and, thus, the illusion of the signified (Stavrakakis, 1999, pp. 24-25). It becomes the fantasy that covers the lack of the symbolic structure. The tendency to believe the symbolic order to immediately and wholly represent the signified, the objective reality, comes into being because we believe in its existence (Stavrakakis, 1999, pp. 25-26). Thus, this belief marks its absence or makes its absence present as the lack that is constitutive for the symbolic order itself but is irreducible to it because it belongs to a different

register, the register that is unrepresentable neither in the register of imaginary nor symbolic, namely the 'Real'.

It is necessary to underline here that for Lacan the lack is coextensive with desire. The subject here is constantly characterized by a continuously insatiable desire for completeness, founded in the mirror stage, producing fragmentation; ambiguity; and tensions which subsequently one attempts to solve through its insertion into the symbolic order. The insertion into the symbolic order makes it possible to transform the need into demand and the ego into subject. It should be borne in mind, however, that these two processes of ego and subject formations, or mirror stage and insertion into the symbolic order respectively, are not consequential or rigidly separable in one's life. The categorical distinction between the two is intended only for analysis sake. In actual life, the two processes are simultaneous. For example, even before one's birth, he or she has already been inserted into certain symbolic order by the parents. These two processes are at many points taking place simultaneously as exemplified in the case of sibling rivalry where one sibling resents the preferential treatment the parents give to the other that involves imaginary relations, in the sense of assumption of other's image as one's own, between the siblings as well as symbolic relations between them and the parents as the representation of the law (Fink, 1995, pp. 85-86).

The fullness promised by the symbolic order or 'the Other' is something impossible. The subject soon finds that 'the Other' is also lacking. Fantasy serves to support the symbolic order or 'the Other' by covering its lack. Fantasy here gives the 'substitute satisfaction' that is the displacement of lack from the subject onto something else while, reciprocally, constitutes the subject as the symptom of the symbolic order or 'the Other' as Žižek describes in his illustration on relations between Master and bondmen (Žižek, 1990, pp. 251-254). The fullness promised by the symbolic order is always in the form of negativity, either as something absent due to being obstructed or

deferred by something else or in the making. Its realization requires the agent's submission to or identification with 'the Other's' demand or desire. Here, the submission into the symbolic order serves the purpose of making possible the symbolic representation of the lack. The lack here, however, should not be understood as something that the subject carries with it prior to its insertion into the symbolic order. On the contrary, the lack as represented in and through the symbolic order or 'the Other', is the symptom of 'the Other's' lack. Since in Lacanian sense 'lack' is coextensive with 'desire', here the subject's desire is 'the Other's' desire (Fink, 1995, p. 59).

It is 'the Other's' desire that the subject has identified itself with what Lacan describes as the *object a* or object cause of desire for the subject. Fantasy is constituted with reference to this object *a*. Fantasy is central to our elaboration on coercion in its paradoxical relations to consent here because it, or rather its capacity to, covers the lack or incompleteness of the symbolic order or the structure determines the transformation of coercion as structural principle or subordination into coercion as oppression. In this sense, what becomes problematic is neither that 'the Other's' (the symbolic order) preference and its determination on the agent's nor its intrusiveness as it imposes its image or law upon the agents, both are necessary for identification at the imaginary and symbolic or; in other words; coercion as structural principle, but of how the fantasy gives 'substitute enjoyment' in place of the one that lost to castration (Fink, 1999, pp. 3-5). The coercion as structural principle becomes 'coercion as oppression' only when the fantasy loses its grips or its capacity to provide the 'substitute enjoyment' for the subject.

One's attachment to 'the Other's' desire or fantasy does not follow either objective natural law or rational principle. On the contrary it is based on irrationality known as affect, related to one's enjoyment or *jouissance* (Fink, 1995; 1999, pp. 3-5). Mouffe has mentioned how affect and identification are related to each other and should be given proper consideration in how

agonism/agonistic pluralism is formulated and used as an analytical tool (Mouffe, 2005, pp. 25-29). The affective attachment to the symbolic order is known as cathexis. In Freudian terms it is defined as investment of libidinal drive in a person, object or idea. The drive is a force, Freudian 'id' is its locus, and without the submission into the symbolic order, the drive "pursue their own course without any regard to what is appropriate or approved" (Fink, 1999, pp. 207-208). The submission of this drive into the symbolic order and the castration it entails transforms the drive into desire by channelling its force into the realm of representation and it works through the function of satisfaction instead of rationality. This affect allocates mental or emotional energy, or chatecs, to the symbolic order that determines the magnitudes of the symbolic order's grip on the subject. Highlighting less elaboration on this topic in the theory of hegemony and discourse and the broader Post Structuralist Discourse Theory-PDT, Stavrakakis brings up this topic of affect, putting Laclau's discourse theory and Lacan psychoanalysis into a critical dialogue, and tries to traverse the outline of this affect as it represents the limits of discourse or the symbolic order yet necessary and even co-extensive to its operation (Stavrakakis, 2007, pp. 98-100). Stavrakakis demonstrates how 'affect' is too elusive to incorporate into their theoretical frameworks for both Lacan and Laclau, yet both recognize the constitutive role of it; a position that Mouffe also takes with regards to her conceptualization of Political Agonism (Mouffe, 2005).

It is apparent that Lacan's symbolic order is parallel to Bourdieu's habitus as one's insertion into it involves his/her submission to the rules that regulate and constitute it (Stavrakakis, 1999, p. 33). However, here Lacan gives further explanation about what prompts one to subscribe itself to the structure. Lacan further provides explanation on the force that animates one to attach itself and give up its partial enjoyment. It should be reiterated here that the loss only comes into being retrospectively, that is after one inserts itself into the symbolic order and undergoes the castration

(Fink, 1995, pp. 63-66, see also Laclau, 2015, p. 102). Lacan also delineates the drive that precipitates one to identify itself, both in the imaginary and symbolic registers, to something outside itself thus further explains the subject's 'complicity' in the constitution of a symbolic order even though it means that he or she has to give it up as the condition of its insertion into it and also explicates the constitutive role of the coercion of the symbolic order in the constitution of the subject.

### 5. The Ethics of the Real and the Problem of Subsumption

There are two consequences that come to the fore from elaboration on the centrality of fantasy in determining the transformation of coercion from structural principle into oppression. *First*, all structure is inevitably coercive in the sense that it sets certain rules to suspend the otherwise unstable meanings and identities. Therefore Laclau argues that from a pure ontological and epistemological view, religious fundamentalism and the most refined "Western" social democracy are on an equal footing (Laclau, 1990, pp. 242-243). The centrality of the notion of fantasy here is because after recognizing the inevitable coercive nature of any structure and identity it entails, we end up being in a limbo as we seek freedom and there will be no freedom in any structure. However, this is exactly where the fantasy's role comes to the fore and becomes crucial because it puts us in the juncture.

*Second*, the kind of coercion as structural principle mentioned above is 'coercion that commands consent'. It enables the transformation of ego into subject and constitutes it as (symbolic) reality, including the reality of coercion, as long as the subject submits or subscribes itself to the structure. In actual situations, most of the time we find ourselves already situated and structured by certain structure. Even the coercion as it is discussed in this dissertation is available in and only through

the structure of symbolic order. So is its antonym, autonomy or liberty, the fantasmatic dimension that comes to the fore in the quest for liberty is a desire that belongs to the symbolic order that places 'liberty' as the master signifier. The articulation of liberty is only possible only after one's subscription into the symbolic order, which is inherently coercive, and its encounter with the order's lack or limits.

Agonism itself is a structure. As a structure it is possible only through this sort of 'coercion that commands consent'. It is this dimension that this dissertation aims to investigate and elaborate. Acknowledging this dimension enables further utilization of this frame for empirical analysis as the coercive dimension gives the exteriority of agonisms/agonistic pluralism and, thus, renders it identifiable. The disclosure of the coercive dimension also contributes to make explicit the specific ethics that agonism/agonistic pluralism is based upon, the so called "Ethics of the Real". The 'Ethics of the Real' is different with other ethical discourses as it is an ethic without ideal (Jacques Allain-Millier cited in Stavrakakis, 1999, p. 130). The ubiquity or the ontological status of coercion could initially cause a trauma for those who seek liberty or autonomy in its essentialist sense, on the plane of the impossible real. However, with more comprehensive understanding on the coercive dimension and its constitutive role in agonism/agonistic pluralism, this trauma can be overcome through identification with this specific ethical stance. Mouffe's arguments for the constitutive role of antagonism and the need to sustain this antagonism in its sublimated form echoes the notion of continuously encircling the 'Real' represented in the imaginary harmony where all social antagonism and dislocation are resolved. Mouffe argues that this agonistic structure is to be constituted based on common reference not to any substantive ideal but to common rules based on the extent of its capacity to continuously enable as well as regulate conflict and antagonism (Mouffe, 1993, p. 146). The proponents of the radical democracy project do

identify themselves with it and its cause not because of any substantive ideal it promises but because it keeps the contestation over ideals open as well as regulated. The central consequence from this ethical stance in the elaboration of coercion here is that the disclosure of the coercive aspect in Mouffe's agonism/agonistic politics should not be perceived within the lens of conventional ethics, where coercion is perceived as bad and liberty or freedom as good in them. On the contrary, disclosing the dimension of coercion in Mouffe's agonism/agonistic pluralism is the rem(a)inder of its lack, the lost unity, caused by the castration necessitated by the symbolic order. It serves to keep desire alive and repeat the next course of encircling the 'Real'.

After knowing the role of the fantasmatic dimension in the operation of coercion on the ontological plane, there are still challenges in designing the research strategy and applying a methodological framework that is in-line with the theoretical presupposition underlying Mouffe's agonism/agonistic pluralism. The PDT and Lacanian psychoanalysis favour 'non-essentialist' ontological and epistemological stance. Therefore, all of the social and political categories are always a result of articulation of difference and cannot be concretely predetermined. For example, from this lens, the concept of 'antagonism' cannot be defined based on certain concrete substantive or positive terms, such as class-antagonism, but always a result of articulation and their being always comes after and not prior to it. Therefore, it is impossible to define or label whether certain empirical forms of civil association are agonistic or not based on a predetermined set of criteria. Thus, if an empirical case is to be taken and analysed as a case of agonistic structure, it has to be taken involving analysis on 'what-prevents-it-of-being-such'. With regards to the illustrative case, how it is treated is best describe as an answer to the question of "How the case is agonistic?" instead of "Whether the case is agonistic or not?" This is also in line with both the PDT and Lacanian psychoanalysis presuppositions of the impossibility of the full objectivity as well as



Roskamm's critical response to Mouffe's agonism/agonistic pluralism of the impossibility to transform antagonism into agonism in the final instance.

For the methodological framework, there are several requirements for such framework; *first*, such framework needs to systematically incorporate the dimension of fantasy as ontological dimension that constitute social reality. *Second*, the framework has to enable this research to avoid or address the problem of subsumption while providing the tools to characterize the empirical phenomena without subsuming it under the conceptual categories as if the categories exhaust the empirical phenomena as universal or objective laws. The following Third Chapter discusses the research strategy and elaboration of the LCE as the methodological and analytical framework that meets the two criteria mentioned above.

## Chapter III. RESEARCH STRATEGY

### 1. Introduction: the Need for Methodological Framework for Empirical Analysis

This chapter focuses on the elaboration of the research strategy employed for the investigation. Before elaborating the research strategy, it is helpful to briefly summarize the points from the previous chapter. In the previous chapter, it has been mentioned that for the research at hand, there are several requirements needed for the methodological and analytical framework. *First*, such framework needs to systematically incorporate the dimension of fantasy as ontological dimension that constitutes social reality. *Second*, the framework has to enable this research to avoid or address the problem of subsumption while providing the tools to characterize the empirical phenomena without subsuming it under conceptual categories as if the categories exhaust the empirical phenomena as universal or objective laws.

The research strategy in this chapter draws mainly on the Logics of Critical Explanation - LCE that Glynos and Howarth develop as the instrumentalization of Laclau and Mouffe strand of PDT for empirical research. This is partially an attempt to respond to the critiques of methodological and normative deficiencies levelled toward Laclau and Mouffe's PDT. The centrality of this framework is three folds. *First*, the LCE is a systematic attempt to further incorporate fantasmatic dimension in the constitution of the social as elucidated by Laclau and Mouffe's theory of hegemony and discourse. As elaborated in the previous chapter, this fantasmatic dimension of social reality is just as crucial as the structural dimension, in Glynos and Howarth's LCE described as the social and political dimensions, for the elaboration of the dimension of coercion in Mouffe's

agonism/agonistic-pluralism. In the LCE, Glynos and Howarth give fantasy an ontological status that simultaneously comprises social reality with the social and political dimensions.

*Second*, LCE addresses the challenge of the problem of subsumption that rises as a consequence of the specific ontological standpoint of the PDT. In LCE, Glynos and Howarth offer the concept and practice of articulation to understand the social reality investigated (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 16). Elaboration in the first two chapters has demonstrated that the coercion as social reality is not something that is exhausted by its concept. There are many aspects of our social reality which are essentially constituted through coercion but not all of them are articulated as one, for example: the very name given to each of us by our parents and the practice of naming. Most of us acquire our names from our parents that, in most cases, we just take for granted. This is a blatant case of relations of subordination yet most of us just get along with it. Some even reify it by giving quasi-sacrosanct status to it, based on the argument that the names given to us by our parents represent their best wishes to us. This example gives us a hint that in order to stay true to the ontological standpoint of the PDT, it is central to uphold and accommodate the presupposition that social reality is the result of articulation that can never be completely predetermined. This is crucial in determining the case taken to illustrate the theoretical points this dissertation aims to argue and how to proceed with the analysis. As mentioned in the final part of the previous chapter, taking the case of Participatory Planning Partnership (PPP) and Collaborative Governance in North Ayrshire, Scotland as a case of agonism/agonistic-pluralism it should not be perceived that it totally represents it as Mouffe elucidates it.

*Third*, the LCE also highlights and reiterates the specific ethical standpoint that the PDT stands for. As discussed in the final part of the previous chapter, this specific ethical standpoint, known by the term of “the Ethics of the Real” is a crucial underpinning in justifying the relevance of this

study to elaborate the dimension of coercion in Mouffe's agonism/agonistic-pluralism. The notion of ontological status of coercion, or coercion as structural principle, can only be justified, without reifying it, within the ethical standpoint of 'the Ethics of the Real', an ethics that continuously pursue the conflictual harmony between the desire and the drive (Fink, 1999, p. 211) without any predetermined ideal.

This chapter is structured following the aforementioned three points. The section following this introduction elaborates in more details the LCEs and its three logics of social, political, and fantasmatic and how they are deployed as the analytical framework of the research here. There are two crucial points that require further elaboration from the LCE; that is *the problem of subsumption* and *the Ethics of the Real*. Each of these points is discussed in more detail in the next two sections. The final section concludes this chapter by describing and elaborating the research strategy derived from the methodological framework discussed in the preceding sections. This is the preliminary for the discussion in the fourth chapter that focuses on the justification of taking the case of Participatory Planning Partnership (PPP) in North Ayrshire, Scotland to represent a case of agonism/agonistic-pluralism.

## 2. The Logics of Critical Explanation

Glynos and Howarth develop the LCE as a methodological framework to make Laclau and Mouffe's theory of hegemony and discourse and the broader PDT more practical for empirical research. Pertaining to the underlying presuppositions of Laclau and Mouffe's theory of hegemony and discourse, radical contingency and the primacy of articulation, they attempt to straddle a line that is distinguishable from both the positivistic paradigm, believing in the existence of immediate

objective reality on one hand, and the nihilistic view that sees “anything goes” on the other (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 7). Through the LCE they aim to address the critiques of methodological and normative deficiency levelled toward Laclau and Mouffe’s theory of hegemony and discourse and the broader PDT paradigm by its critiques (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 6). The centrality of this methodological framework for the investigation on the dimension of coercion in Mouffe’s agonism/agonistic-pluralism here is located exactly in the aim of this framework to straddle a new line between those two poles of opposing paradigms.

The elaboration on the ontological status of coercion in the previous chapter presents us with a new and further challenge of “How is it possible to disclose the dimension of coercion in particular empirical phenomena if all social reality is basically discursively constituted?”; “Is there any ground to justify that certain coercion is domination and oppression instead of merely subordination?”; and “Considering its ontological status, is there any ground to justify coercion in general?” The first two questions are related with the critique of methodological deficiency levelled toward Laclau and Mouffe’s theory of hegemony and discourse, while the last question is related with the critique of normative deficiency of the said theory. Glynos and Howarth’s LCE helps us to answer these questions as the Logics of critical explanation provides the methodological framework that is based on the same ontological standpoint that sees all social reality is essentially characterized by radical contingency and constituted through articulation.

Glynos and Howarth describe the LCE by reiterating how they define the two elements that comprise it, namely the *logics* and the *critical explanation*. Glynos and Howarth describe their concept of *logics* in three senses of the term, namely, *first*, “the ways in which processes of theory construction and explanation are understood”; *second*, “... a particular approach or ‘style of reasoning’ in the social sciences that ..., comprising the grammar or assumptions and concepts

that informs a particular approach to the social world”, and *third*, the term ‘logics’ refers to “... a more substantive sense to constitute the basic unit of explanation of our (LCE’s) approach” (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 8). This conceptualization of logics is related to Glynos and Howarth’s definition of *critical explanation*, based on the PDT’s ontological presupposition of radical contingency and the primacy of articulation, that explains not only “... *what* sorts of things exist, but *that* they exist and *how* they exist” (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 11, italic from the original text). The LCE argues for the inseparability between explanation and critique, between rationality and affect, between context of discovery and context of justification (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 38), even though it acknowledges that they are irreducible to one another, but their co-implication is inevitable.

In explaining the phenomenon of coercion, the research presented in this dissertation aims to go beyond the claim of the objectivity of being, in this case coercion. While, its ontological status and constitutive role have been elaborated in the previous chapters, the elaboration here also aims to avoid both the pitfall of nihilistic, anything goes, and reification of coercion kinds of explanation. It is in this sense that Glynos and Howarth’s LCE offers a promising alternative as this framework also addresses very similar challenges. On one hand, it challenges the positivistic ontological presupposition of the immediate accessibility of objective reality from which the ethics of objectivity and value free scientific enquiry entailed. On the other hand, it also challenges the tendency of subjectivism that, while offering strong alternative to the positivist explanation such as in the case of hermeneutics, leads to the ‘anything goes’ kind of ethical standpoint due to the problematic ontological standpoint and relatively underdeveloped conceptualization to tackle the complex task of explaining the political constitution of belief and social practices (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 81).

In their attempt to straddle a middle way between the positivist and hermeneutic logics – logic in its first sense as “the ways in which processes of theory construction and explanation are understood” – Glynos and Howarth elaborate the mutual implication between the context of discovery and justification and incorporate it into the alternative logic that they advocate. In doing so, there are two major interventions that Glynos and Howarth propose in the LCE. **First**, Glynos and Howarth propose a new methodological approach or mode of reasoning: retroduction or abduction, as an alternative to the two more commonly known ‘deduction’ and ‘induction’. In theory construction retroductive approach sees, unlike either the deductive approach where the theory is always derived from laws or the inductive one; theory as summarized projections of data that moves to hypothesis and then to laws through three dialectical moments of *problematization*, *retroductive explanation and theory construction*, and *persuasion and intervention* (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 26; 38).

Glynos and Howarth dub the underpinning paradigm in LCE as “post-positivism”. The main contrasts between LCE and the positivist paradigm is characterized in the LCE’s projections of the relations between the context of discovery and the context of justification where and the extent of the retroductive cycle apropos the aforementioned three dialectical moments take place. The positivism paradigm situates the retroductive cycle to take place only in the moments of problematization, retroductive explanation, and theory construction that takes place in the context of discovery. The context of justification is only described as a moment of demonstration that the produced theory is subjected through a series of predictive tests based on predetermined scientific criteria to prove its truth/falsity. On the contrary, the post-positivism paradigm sees that the context of discovery and justification are not totally separated and the retroductive cycle takes place in both context across the three dialectical moments. The implications of such projection are three

folds: i), the projection of retroductive cycle across the three dialectical moments of both context of discovery and justification imply that the justification of a theory or an explanation can never be totally value free because it inevitably involves interpretive aspects upon which its ontological presuppositions are based. This interpretive dimension is crucial in determining the justification and acceptance of the new theories. It is at this point that the positivist paradigm tends to avoid and try to by-pass (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 34). ii) The imbrication between the context of justification and discovery and the more extensive retroductive cycle renders the criteria of validity and justification of a theory or hypothesis contingent (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 39). iii) the inevitability of interpretation transforms the moment of demonstration into moment of persuasion and intervention in the post-positivist view and they engage us at the ontological, political, and ethical levels. There is no neutral yardstick beyond interpretation (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 40).

**Second**, through the LCE Glynos and Howarth proposes a new definition of explanation and critique based on what they call ‘the ontology of lack’. Pertaining to the expansion of the retroductive cycle to cover the whole three dialectical moments and the mutually implicating context of discovery and justification, LCE expands the explanatory and critical roles that theory formation has to carry. This manifests in the extensive definition of *logics* in the LCE. LCE reiterates the explanatory and critical role of a theory or theory formation by assigning the task of explaining, not only, “... *what* sorts of things exist, but *that* they exist and *how* they exist” (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 11). Pertaining to the ‘the ontology of the lack’, LCE bases their approach on the presuppositions of “radical contingency and “structural incompleteness” (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 11). By doing so, the LCE discloses and highlights the political constitution of social reality as it explains how its constitution always implies exclusion of other possibilities,



demand for the subject submission as the symptom of its lack and covering of the structural incompleteness. It is this disclosure of the political origin, or “reactivation” in Husserl’s term, of social reality that is the central critical aspect of the LCE (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, pp. 116-117).

It should be underlined that the LCE gives primacy to the ‘political’, in line with Laclau and Mouffe’s PDT. The LCE, however, further specifies by, *first*, detaching the political from any particular site for the sake of analysis. The political is about making a decision in an undecidable situation or terrain and therefore the political is perceived as ontological category rather than an ontical one (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 114). Simultaneously, the political is irreducible to the social as well as the other way around. In order to specify the distinction between the social and political, Glynos and Howarth define the political as following: “... (A) demand is political to the extent that it publicly contest the norms of a particular practices in the name of a principle or ideal” (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 115). This refers to Laclau and Mouffe’s characterization of political struggle in which they describe it as “... a type of activity whose objective is transformation of a social relation which construct a subject in a relationship of subordination” (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014, p. 137).

Based on this irreducibility and specifications of the social and the political, the *second* point to be reiterated here is that the LCE aims to provide a methodological framework that provides systematic analytical tools to explain the dialectical relations between the political and the social (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 116). The social is characterized by sedimentation of a certain practice or set of practices whose origins are based on the exclusion of another practice or set of practices. This exclusion is only possible if it is situated against the background of undecidable terrain or the radical contingency. The political is the moment when this undecidable situation and

the political nature of the origin of a certain practice or regime is foregrounded, disrupting its stability and sedimentation.

*Third*, incorporating the fantasmatic dimension in the analytical framework is intended to make Laclau and Mouffe's PDT more suitable for empirical research. The LCE further elaborates the dialectics between the social and political by exploring further Husserl's concepts of 'sedimentation' and 'reactivation', leading to elaboration on the ideological dimension of social reality. The sedimentation of a certain practice or set of practices always involves what is called 'the forgetting of origin'. The origin forgotten is the incompleteness of the social (structure) marked by its political origin and its demands for the subject subscription to its rules. This process always requires the complicity of the subject to cover this structural incompleteness and this is where ideology plays its role. Borrowing Althusser's conceptualization of ideology, LCE perceives the function of ideology involves twin operations of recognition and misrecognition. The former imposes the 'obviousness as obviousness' that no one can fail to recognize. In other words, it structures one to take the social reality for granted either as something natural or objective. The latter refers to the necessary misrecognition of social reality that is always permeated by the ever-present gap between signifier and signified. In this sense, the LCE perceives ideology to stand also as an ontological category (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, pp. 117-118).

In LCE, the discussion on the ideological is correlative to the concept of the ethical. This is because the ethical, in relation with the radical contingency of social relations, is understood as the subject's respond to the 'ontological lack' of the social structure. The 'ethical' in LCE is irreducible to the concept of normative. It does not denote to specific ideal values or 'good practice' either. It is related to the subject's mode of enjoyment where, when situated in undecidable situations, the subject has to make a decision. The undecidable situation is the moment when the structural

incompleteness comes to the fore and the subject's decision to submit itself to it serves to cover this incompleteness. For the 'castration' of enjoyment that the agent has to undergo, the structure promises the fantasy of its (impossible) recovery. It is this promise and the subject's attachment to it that determines the structure's grips on the subject. The fantasy here can manifest in the forms of fullness, wholeness or harmony as well as threats or obstacles of its realization (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, pp. 119-120, 130-131; Glynos, 2008, p. 287). The fantasy is "the support that gives consistency to our reality" (Žižek, 1989, p. 144). The subject, in common parlance, is always a result of identification with something external to it. In contrast, the subject in its authentic sense is merely 'the distance between the undecidable structure and the decision' (Laclau, 1990, p. 39; Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 129).

The discussion so far has brought forward the two senses of 'logics' specific to LCE: (i) as the mode of theory formation intended for critical explanation and (ii) the retroductive mode of reasoning and the 'ontology of lack'. The following part of this section elaborates the third sense of the concept 'logics' in LCE that is as the name of its 'unity of analysis'. The third sense of the term 'logics' in LCE refers to the three logics of social, political, and fantasmatic; the basic units of explanation in LCE. Related to Wagenaar's critical response of "the relentless impermanence of social and political categories" in Laclau and Mouffe's PDT, leading to the lack of its application on empirical cases, the LCE uses the concept of logics to enable characterization 'of practices in particular social domain' (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 133). Following this, the logic of a practice denotes "to the rules or grammar of the practice, as well as the condition which make the practice both possible and vulnerable" (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 134).

In LCE, as well as in the PDT, practice or regime of practices becomes a central concept as well as a unit of analysis here because it enables the ontological presuppositions elaborated above to

re-describe ontical entities. The practice here is understood in the sense as ‘meaning production’ or social practice, or in other words articulatory one. Glynos and Howarth illustrate that “practice can be understood in terms of the way different dimensions of social relations – comprising the social, political, ideological, and ethical dimensions – are foregrounded or backgrounded, how they are articulated, and so on” (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 120). The concept of ‘logics’ is useful to characterize the practice or regime of practices investigated by its grammar and the dimensions of social relations they put into the foreground or background. It is noteworthy that the terms ‘logics’ does not refer to any substantive meaning or practice but only to which ontological dimension(s) is foregrounded or backgrounded (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, pp. 120-121). Through the concept of ‘logics’, the LCE aims to identify and characterize empirical practice or set of practices without subsuming them into a certain exhaustive category. The relations between ‘logics’, in general, is defined as ‘rules’ or ‘grammar’, whereby the practice or set of practices are non-exhaustive (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, pp. 139-140).

LCE is an innovative analytical framework for Post-Structuralist Discourse Theory and useful for this research. It facilitates not only the application of Laclau and Mouffe’s PDT on empirical research but it also enables this research to, *first*, systematically incorporate and elaborate the dimension of (social) fantasy. The introduction of ‘fantasmatic logics’ as one of the basic units of explanation in LCE answers this challenge. As it will shortly be further elaborated in the next part of this section, the category of ‘fantasmatic logics’ in LCE is a central basic unit of explanation besides the ‘social’ and ‘political’ logics. The dimension of social fantasy here is more explicitly stated and systematically incorporated as ontological dimension that, simultaneously with the social and political dimensions, comprise social reality, including antagonism; agonism; and coercion.

*Second*, LCE enables the research to address the problem of subsumption through the concept of ‘logic’. The concept of ‘logic’ and its relations to practice, as the generalization of empirical phenomenon, as non-exhaustive enables the identification and characterization of those phenomena whose elusiveness have been elaborated in the previous two chapters. These logics as the basic units of explanation in the LCE are important to identify and characterize the investigated practices while at the same time to stay true to the underlying theoretical presuppositions of Laclau and Mouffe’s PDT where all social reality is set against the background of radical contingency and discursively constituted through establishing differential relations. This enables us to characterize the empirical cases of not only the stabilization of radical contingency through articulation but also the potential and actual dissolution. For the sake of this research, for example, it helps to characterize how certain relations of subordination; as a structural principle of stabilizing the contingency, is transformed into relations of domination or oppression.

The LCE ontological standpoint presupposes that social reality is comprised of four ontological dimensions of social, political, ideological, and ethical. The LCE operationalizes this presupposition, through the concept of ‘logics’, into three basic units of explanation of political, social, and fantasmatic logics. As a basic unit of explanation, the social logics are mainly related to characterization of certain rules and ‘rule following’ a dimension of the certain practice or set of practices investigated and the conditions of possibility for such practice or set of practices (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, pp. 139-140).

When speaking about political logics, it basically focuses on the dimension of exclusion/inclusion necessary in the practice or set of practices investigated as signifying practice and how they are being contested and/or transformed (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 141). When we speak of agonism/agonistic-pluralism, it is described, among others, as the opposite of other formulas of

political relations which either deny the constitutive role of antagonism or reify antagonism as if it is a ‘battle between good vs. evil’ (Mouffe, 2005, p. 75). Agonism acquires its specificity through the differential relations to these formulas. The differential relations themselves are constituted through articulation and not predetermined. The political logics provide the means to locate the dislocations or the limits of the social reality of agonism/agonistic-pluralism. Here it becomes obvious that the articulation of the elements characterized as logic of ‘agonism/agonistic-pluralism’ described as social reality requires its individuation by drawing the frontiers or limits that distinguish it from what it-is-not (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, pp. 143-144).

The political logics in LCE are based on Laclau and Mouffe’s signifying logics of equivalence and difference (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 143;144). The ‘regularity in dispersion’ of the social logics is only possible as a functioning system if there are logics that produce effects of totality that is capable of constructing the limits and constituting the formation (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014, p. 130). Laclau and Mouffe aptly describes: “... (I)t is on the basis of its own limits that a formation is shaped as a totality” (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014, p. 129). The relations between the social and political logics can be illustrated as the relations between syntagmatic and paradigmatic poles. The construction of limits here operates through the suspension of the elements articulated as internal moments of a certain formation and their articulation as a totality, as a chain of equivalence against something that it-is-not. Mouffe’s articulation of agonism/agonistic-pluralism as distinct to other formulas of political relations suspend the differential relations through which its internal moments acquire their specific meanings and present them as a totality toward what it-is-not.

The discursive nature of this chain of equivalence indicates that this chain of equivalence is permeated by the ineradicable contingency and thus can always be potentially dissolved. Its dissolution operates through the logics of difference where the suspended or backgrounded

difference in the operation of the logics of equivalence is foregrounded. For example, one of the critical responses toward Mouffe's agonism/agonistic-pluralism comes from Eva Erman, who argues that Mouffe misunderstands and misrepresents the notions of conflict and antagonism by highlighting the ambiguity of those notions, either as descriptive or normative, in Mouffe's conceptualization (Erman, 2009, p. 1045). It is possible to debate upon the validity of Erman's criticism but the point here is that Erman dissolves the logic of equivalence Mouffe articulates by introducing new differences, by specifying the distinction between antagonism as descriptive category and as a normative one thus dissolving the limits, hence the totalizing effect of Mouffe's logic of agonism/agonistic-pluralism.

The political logics enables us to explain and elaborate how a practice or regime of practices, characterized through the lens of social logics, are instituted, contested, or transformed. Besides, this LCE adds another basic unit of explanation that is the fantasmatic logics. Following Laclau, Glynos and Howarth describe "... fantasmatic logics as the force behind those (political logics as signifying operations) process" (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 145). If the political logics concern with how a certain practice or regime of practices are constituted, transformed, or modified, the fantasmatic logics concern with the inertia, pace and vector of the transformation of a practice or regime of practices. The function of this basic unit of explanation is to systematically provide the means of how the constitutive lack on both the structure and the agent is covered. It explains why, though punctuated by contingencies, a practice or set of practices are still accepted as normal and part of everyday life or why a practice or set of practices previously seen to be unproblematic are suddenly questioned and become a target for transformation or modification. In relation to both the social and political practices, the fantasy operates to conceal the radical contingency that, in fact, the condition of the possibility of those practices themselves.

Initially, it may seem that the fantasmatic logics is more related to the social logics as something related to the resistance or inertia of a certain practice or set of practices toward change or, in other words, suppressing the political dimension of a practice. The fantasmatic logics, however, is also related to the political practices. The demand to defend or change a certain practice or set of practices is always articulated as social antagonism. It is always articulated that the defence or change of a certain practice or regime of practices would lead to the attainment of the lost/impossible enjoyment. In Glynos and Howarth's words:

If the function of fantasy in social practices is implicitly to reinforce the natural character of their elements or to actively prevent the emergence of political dimension, then we could say that the function of fantasy in political practices is to give them *direction* and *energy* ... (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 147)

Enjoyment is a central element in LCE's fantasmatic logics. The discourse's grip on the subject is determined by the mode of enjoyment it provides. It is necessary to underline here that the enjoyment is impossible in the final instance. Thus, the term 'enjoyment' here should be perceived as 'promised recovery of lost enjoyment'. The impossibility of enjoyment here, however, needs to be represented but since it is unrepresentable, it can only be represented as something that is lost. It is through this process, the fantasy that belongs to the structure; the register of the symbolic, structures the subject's mode of enjoyment as it defines what is lost and how to recover it. Glynos and Howarth elaborate this explicitly by stating:

(I)n concealing – suturing or closing off – the contingency of social relations, fantasy structures the subject's mode of enjoyment in a particular way: let us call it an 'enjoyment of closure'. Thus, ethics is directly linked to the logic of fantasy because, whatever its ontical instantiation, the latter has closure as its principle of intelligibility, whereas ethics is related to the 'traversal' of fantasy in the name of openness to



contingency corresponding to an ‘enjoyment of openness’ (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 151).

The explication of the ontological status of fantasy in LCE is central to the elaboration on the dimension of coercion in Mouffe’s agonism/agonistic-pluralism. It is central to the argument this dissertation aims to elaborate that the oscillation of coercion apropos relations of subordination, oppression; domination, as the function of identification that revolves around the lost enjoyment through fantasy and identification.

Before moving to the next section, it is important to briefly reiterate here that the logics described above are ontological framework. They are irreducible to specific empirical or ontical phenomena. Therefore, Glynos and Howarth describe that in their utilization to specific ontical phenomena, these basic units of explanation do not subsume in exhaustive manner the phenomena investigated but to characterize their operation, emergence, transformation, modification, and the force that drives it. For that reason, it is necessary to flesh out how as an analytical framework which is explicitly stated to operate at the ontological plane, the LCE is utilized to analyze Mouffe’s agonism/agonistic-pluralism. Their relations and the status of Mouffe’s agonism/agonistic-pluralism needs to be ascertained, especially considering that it is analyzed in relations to specific empirical phenomena of PPP in North Ayrshire, Scotland.

### **3. Addressing the Problem of Subsumption: Agonism/agonistic-pluralism as a logic**

The elaboration on LCE in the previous section demonstrates how as an analytical framework it still operates on the plane of the ontological. How it is utilized as an analytical framework on Mouffe’s agonism/agonistic-pluralism and the empirical case of PPP in North Ayrshire, Scotland needs to be fleshed out here. This section focuses specifically on elaboration of Mouffe’s

agonism/agonistic-pluralism as a specific logic through the elaboration of its ontological dimensions. The elaboration here is carried utilizing the LCE's three basic units of explanation, namely the social, political, and fantasmatic logics. The elaboration of agonism/agonistic-pluralism as a specific logic here also aims to foreground two things. *First*, it aims to identify its dimension of coercion on the ontological plane to further verify the elaboration in Chapter II. The elaboration of ontological dimensions of the logic of agonism points to specify how those dimensions simultaneously constitute 'agonism/agonistic-pluralism as a reality. Utilizing the LCE's basic units of explanation also makes it possible to elaborate the emergence, sustenance, transformation, and modification of its manifestations on the ontical plane. This is made possible as the LCE systematically incorporates the dimension of social fantasy as ontological category into its basic units of explanation.

*Second*, the elaboration of agonism/agonistic-pluralism as a specific logic also aims to explicate how the problem of subsumption is addressed in this research. LCE emphasis on articulation as the only relation that relates between a logic and certain practice or logic enables this research to address this problem of subsumption. The centrality of this concept of articulation is further foregrounded in the elaboration on how as logic or rules, the logic of agonism/agonistic-pluralism here does not and never will exhaust the practices on the ontical plane. On this plane, agonism/agonistic-pluralism always interacts with other logics in informing the actual practice or regime investigated. This understanding enables this research to address potential challenges such as, "Whether the empirical practice or regime of practices taken truly represents the conceptualized agonism/agonistic-pluralism or not?" or "How do you justify that the case taken is the genuine representation of the agonism/agonistic-pluralism as Mouffe conceptualizes it?" Such questions

are beyond the underlying presuppositions of the LCE. The question should be, “How is and to what extent the empirical case investigated agonistic?”

Identifying Mouffe’s agonism/agonistic-pluralism as a particular logic can be justified here. *First*, it is, basically a discourse and logic is synonymous to discourse (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 135). Laclau characterizes a social logic as “... a rarefied system of objects, as a “grammar” or cluster of rules which make some combinations and substitutions possible and exclude others” (Laclau, 2015, p. 76; see also Mouffe, 1993, p. 108). *Second*, this rule or grammar characterize, through articulation, a certain practice or regime of practices. For example, in her articulation to produce this discourse of agonism, Mouffe characterizes practices and regime by (re)articulating them to follow her concept of agonism as a certain grammar. She characterizes how democracy is basically constituted as an agonistic system, she (re)describes democracy as a regime of practices that follows certain rules that demand constant regulation and guarantee that undecidable moments come to the fore, manifest in the moments of election and other democratic *fora*, and promote these moments as the very conditions of its legitimacy (Mouffe, 1993, p. 108; Mouffe, 2000; Mouffe, 2018, pp. 56-57). After putting Mouffe’s agonism/agonistic-pluralism as logic of antagonism/agonistic-pluralism, then it is possible to characterize its ontological dimensions of social, political, ideological and ethical through the LCE’s basic units of explanation. The ontological status of coercion can be highlighted through explanation resulted from analysis on the ontological dimensions of the logic of agonism/agonistic-pluralism.

Contextualizing the logic of agonism in a specific empirical case helps to illustrate the theoretical point this research aims to foreground. The emergence of the logic of agonism/agonistic-pluralism is always situated in the myriad of contending logics or discourses. Mouffe specifically articulates her notion of agonism on the field of theory of democracy, in which she specifies her notion of

agonism in relations to other theories. On the theoretical plane this situation has been elaborated in rather more detail by Mouffe, and many other scholars. However, on the empirical plane such elaborations are less prevalent. The lack of elaboration of this logic of agonism/agonistic-pluralism on empirical plane partially contributes to its application in a rather subsumptive manner, such as in cases of planning presented by Schaap (Schaap, 2006) or critical responses such as presented by Roskamm (Roskamm, 2015) and Yamamoto (Yamamoto, 2018). As a logic or discourse, it is necessary that the analysis on this logic of agonism/agonistic-pluralism to include analysis on what-prevent-it-from-being-fully-itself, not only on the theoretical plane but also on the empirical one in order to produce critical explanation on it.

Elaboration on the theoretical plane focuses on defining the theoretical specificity of the theory endorsed. The specificity is constituted through juxtaposition and comparison with other theories. At some points, it may base its premise on a certain empirical problem or problematization. In the end, however, it always refers back to the particular theoretical framework that informs the referred empirical investigated. While this may serve the purpose to construct the specificity of the theory endorsed, especially for PDT that grounds its ontological presupposition on difference and the constitution of difference, it may obscure the fact that these ‘other theories’ are the conditions of possibility for the theory endorsed. The misportrayal of Mouffe’s agonism as an approach that continuously attempts to defer closure mentioned in the first chapter is just one example of this problem (Schaap, 2006). This misunderstanding reflects how Mouffe’s agonism/agonistic-pluralism is perceived as a single logic that totally exhausts the practices and it exists in and for itself.

Taking this theory onto the empirical plane, as a logic that characterizes a certain practice that inevitably interacts in conjuncture with other logics can serve to further foreground the

impossibility of this logic to exhaust the empirical plane. For example, the logic of agonism/agonistic-pluralism envisions political relations in which differences and adversarial interests in the society are acknowledged, regulated, and sustained. This logic *partially* installs the actual governance practices or regime. In the case of governance, the practices or regime installed by this logic of agonism are not merely one among many other practices prescribed as rules and mechanisms. They occupy central position as they determine whether the policies produced from the process are legitimate or not. This is homologous to the practice of election in democracy where, in order to acquire legitimacy, the stability of the ruling power has to emerge from the moment of an undecidable situation. Such a regime ensures that this undecidable moment is not only regulated but also determines its legitimacy.

However, the empirical practice or regime also shows that this logic is not the only logic that informs it. Other logics also informed the governance practices, such as the logic of administration that requires a higher degree of stability which on many points checks the dynamic and contingent nature of the practices characterized by the logic of agonism. Here, the logic of technocracy can be added. It installs practices or a regime that gives primacy to expertise; scientific soundness; and rationality to judge and regulate the governance relations and processes. These other logics may and always potentially subvert the empty space the logic of agonism provides and hegemonize it. As later shown in the following chapters, such moments may occur even without altering the practices that the logic of agonism installed. In such cases, the institutionalized agonistic practices could serve only to rubber stamp the decisions produced.

At this point, however, the relevant aspect to discuss is how such mode of analysis may address the problem of subsumption. When it is said that the case of governance regime represents a case of agonism/agonistic-pluralism, it should be perceived that it does not mean that this logic exhausts

the whole practices or regime. It simultaneously informs the practices or regime with other logics. Parallel to the theoretical plane, this coexistence sets the limits of the logic of agonism and is its condition of possibility as well as its impossibility. Pertaining to the presupposition of the radical contingency, it is impossible to find an empirical case that is totally congruent with theoretical description, including agonism/agonistic-pluralism. If one logic seems to become the universal representation of the practices or regime, it is always a result of hegemonic intervention. However, it is important to bear in mind that the links that connect both the theoretical frameworks and the logics, either in relation to difference or equivalence, are neither given nor predetermined. This is based on the presupposition that "... all that elements and relations are ultimately contingent and partial, and that their meaning and function is relative to the singular explanatory chain within which they are linked" (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, pp. 180-181; Laclau & Mouffe, 2014, p. 93). Therefore, besides the concept of 'logic', the LCE also gives primacy to the concept of 'articulation' in order to explain the relations between theoretical concepts and empirical analysis. The concept of articulation here refers to its definition by Laclau and Mouffe (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014, p. 100). With this concept of articulation, it becomes possible to construct relations not only between theoretical categories and empirical analysis, but also among theoretical elements and among empirical elements as well (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 180). The relations between logic of agonism and the governance practice or regime and other logics that simultaneously inform the practice or regime investigated are not necessary or predetermined by certain law prior to its articulation but are constituted through that articulation.

One instance where Mouffe articulates the specificity of her logic of agonism through reference to actual practice or regime is when Mouffe critically describes the rise of Tony Blair with his 'New-Labour' and its 'Public Private Partnership-PPP' policy as merely continuation of the 'neo-liberal

hegemony' initiated during Thatcher's era (Mouffe, 2005, pp. 60-63). In that instance, Mouffe sets the limits of what is agonism and what-it-is-not. The point is here is not the substance of what the 'New-Labour' advocates, but *that* and *how* it, through its policy, reifies the fantasy of Neoliberalism as the only possible alternative and delegitimizes most articulations the dislocations cause. Retrospectively, it can be rearticulated as following: the logic of Neoliberalism that the 'New-Labour' advocated is what the logic of agonism should have been able to subordinate as its internal moment and not the other way around. In this sense, the logic of agonism, just like any other logics, in order to hegemonize certain practice or regime needs to subordinate the other assemblages of logics by articulating them as its internal moments or to push them beyond the limits set by the equivalential chain through which the logic of agonism, as any other logic, hegemonize and articulate other logics as its internal moments. The constitution of the limits of the logic of agonism above reflects the basic function of political logics, the logic of difference/equivalence. The subordination is embedded in the very function of this logic as it gives only two options: either the other logics are subordinated or pushed-out beyond its limits. This explains why the dimension of coercion is congruent to the limits of an entity and why it has ontological status because the limits define the very being of the entity discussed. On this point, Roskam is right by saying that agonism owes its existence to its impossibility in the final instance as not all antagonism can be transformed into agonism (Roskamm, 2015).

However, the LCE provides further systematic critical explanation on this dimension by explaining how this coercion as structural principle can be transformed into coercion in subjective sense or from relations of subordination into relations of domination or oppression. The LCE's basic units of explanation that systematically incorporates the fantasmatic dimension as ontological category in the constitution of social reality makes this possible. Mouffe's critique of Tony Blair's New-

Labour, once again, can be a useful illustration. Through the lens of LCE it can be explained as the following. Mouffe uses agonism, and its ontological presuppositions of the primacy of the political, as a yardstick to decenter Tony Blair's policy and its theoretical underpinning that is based on the fantasy of 'The End of Ideology' as concealing its political dimension (Mouffe, 2005, pp. 59-60). Here, Mouffe foregrounds the political dimension by reactivating the undecidable situation that precedes and becomes the condition of possibility for Tony Blair's policy to make the decision through exclusion of other possible alternatives. In doing so, Mouffe also encourages the audience to relinquish the fantasy of fullness expected from the Neoliberal regime and to displace the libidinal investment or cathexis to other points. The displacement of cathexis decenters the subject and foregrounds its split nature. If through cathexis the subject previously perceives its subjectivity as a whole through its insertion into or identification with the corresponding logic or regime, the displacement of the cathectic point prompts the subject to start to question the rules that the logic installs and when the cathectic point is totally displaced to other nodal points, indicating identification with other logic or regime, the more the relations of subordination in the previous logic is transformed into relations of oppression. This is the situation that Laclau and Mouffe describe as the discursive exterior that interrupt the relations of subordination constituted by the dominant logic and the regime it installs (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014, p. 138).

The fantasmatic dimension is crucial here as this transformation is informed by the dynamics of the social agent's identification. The fantasy gives a logic or discourse its grips on the subjects by harnessing the subject's drive for enjoyment through its transformation into desire. As it is already mentioned, the desire is structured by the symbolic order or the discourse by promising the impossible recovery of the enjoyment the subject loses during its insertion into the symbolic order.



The insertion into the symbolic order, while castrates the subject of its partial enjoyment, also enables it to articulate or express it symbolically, though only in the form of its loss or absence. The element invested with this desire for fullness is the invested object or, in Lacanian term, the ‘object of desire’ or ‘object *a*’. Laclau equates his ‘hegemony’ to Lacan ‘object *a*’ as he argues that “According to Lacan, sublimation is to elevate an object to the dignity of the Thing (of the Freudian Thing, of course). This means that a certain partial object ceases to be a partiality within a totality – which would reduce it to mere moment within a global structure – and becomes partiality which *is* the totality” (Laclau, 2015, p. 103).

The pursuit for this object of desire, on its turn, gives the subject itself a ‘substitute satisfaction’ (Fink, 1999, p. 3). Crisis emerges when the ‘substitute satisfaction’ as the symptom of the Master, the dominant logic, gives diminished satisfaction to the subject (Fink, 1999, p. 9). For example, the fantasy that supports the hegemony of the neoliberal regime have somehow been diluted by a series of crises– such as ‘Global War on Terror’ followed with the European Crisis since 2008. More and more people have been voicing their disenchantment to the currently hegemonic and dominant neoliberal regime. Among others, this disenchantment is often articulated in the discourse that portrays neoliberalism as an oppressive regime. This is despite the fact that less than two decades before, its advent has been hailed as liberator. This does not mean, however, that those who face the crises are suddenly ready to accept another ‘substitute enjoyment’. Most of them rather want the regime to restore the satisfaction to the previous level (Fink, 1999, p. 9).

The elaboration on this section has demonstrated how the LCE enables the research to address the problem of subsumption through the concepts of ‘logic’ and ‘articulation’. In doing so, it has also elaborated the central role of the ‘fantasmatic logics’ in critically explaining the dimension of coercion in Mouffe’s agonism. However, there is another critical point to elaborate before moving

to elaborating the research strategy. This critical point is the ‘cathexis’ or ‘cathectic point’. It is mentioned above that the displacement of cathexis is central in the transformation of ‘coercion from structural principle’ into ‘subjective coercion’. Mouffe’s agonism, while still acknowledging the constitutive role of the ‘cathexis’; thus, the ontological status of fantasmatic dimension; aims toward a different sort of cathectic point, that is the point that is *impossible* to symbolically represent, with the emphasis on the ‘impossibility’ and not on its symbolic representation. This is related to the ethical standpoint that both the LCE and Mouffe’s agonism share, known as ‘The Ethics of the Real’. The next section discusses this topic in more detail.

#### 4. The Ethics of the Real

As elaborated in the previous chapter, the dimension of fantasy is central in the subject’s identification to the structure. The instance when a structure becomes more liberating or more oppressive for someone is determined by one’s identification or dis-identification to the said structure. It is necessary to bear in mind that the distinction is not black-and-white. There is a broad range of spectrum between these two extreme poles, sometimes known as *passive consent* or *passive resistance* to contrast them with their corresponding *active* counterparts. Along these variations, however, subjective identification is central to determine one’s position and response toward the structure it faces.

The LCE formulates identification in relation to the concept of fantasy, desire, and the constitution of subject. In line with the elaboration in Chapter II, the subject is constituted through one’s submission into the symbolic order, during which one has to give up its partial enjoyment that causes the subject to experience a *loss of enjoyment*. In return, the structure promises the

(impossible) recovery of this loss enjoyment. However, it is noteworthy that '*what its enjoyment is*' is unrepresentable to the agent itself prior to its insertion into the symbolic order. Thus, its insertion into the symbolic order enables it, as a symbolic subject, to articulate what its enjoyment is, though only in its negative form that is its absence or loss. It is necessary to reiterate here that the symbolic works through the function of difference among signifiers or elements, the representation of the loss-enjoyment is no exception. The enjoyment as the signified is impossible to be reached symbolically. Thus, one's attachment to the *enjoyment*, now symbolically representable as something that is lost or absent, cannot be grounded on the specificity of certain symbols because their meanings are not inherent to them but ascribed through their differential relations. It must come from somewhere else that is from the libidinal drive the subject invests to certain symbol – *cathexis* that represents its loss enjoyment. Thus, though the force that gives the structure or discourse its grips on the subject does not come from it itself, it creates the horizon that makes the enjoyment possible to be represented, even though only as a loss or absence. But this is how fantasy is constituted because this representation animates, not only constitutes, the desiring subject (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 147). Therefore, Glynos and Howarth argue that the fantasy structures the subject's mode of enjoyment (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 151). The ontological status of fantasy and fantasmatic dimension means that no social reality escapes it. Fantasy here does not refer to illusion that obscures the authentic, yet it should be understood as something that suppresses the political dimension or radical contingency of social reality (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 147). However, this does not mean that the fantasmatic logics operate only in the social practices. It also operates in the political practices.

As it has been elaborated above that based on the 'ontology of lack', the structure that informs practice or regime is never complete. It always lacks-of something. In order to support it a

fantasmatic support is required. Žizek defines fantasy as “the support that gives consistency to what we call “reality”” (Žizek, 1989, p. 44). However, this fantasy is not perfect either in supporting the ‘reality’. There are still moments of dislocation. Dislocation here refers to the ‘moment when the subject’s mode of being is experienced as disrupted.’ In other words, it is the moment when the subject is situated in the moment when the contingency of its social reality comes to the fore. Two possible responses may come from this dislocation, *the ideological* and *the ethical*. As mentioned above, the former refers to a response that conceals and denies the underlying contingency while the latter refers to a response that is attentive to it (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, pp. 110-111). LCE endorses the former over the latter based on its ontological presuppositions of radical contingency and the impossibility of the social. Consequently, it endorses identification that revolves around the ‘mode of enjoyment’ grounded on the ineradicable but constitutive lack of ground.

This does not mean that the LCE favors the ‘anything goes’ paradigm. As mentioned above, fantasy is only possible through the structure or the symbolic order, without it there is neither desire nor desiring subject (Lacan, 2005, p. 782; 826; Fink, 1999, pp. 66-67) but merely, in Lacanian term, *acephalous* or headless subject. Fink describes it as “a sort of non-subject, when thought of in traditional philosophical or psychological terms” (Fink, 1999, p. 208)) which pursues satisfaction. This is similar in the elaboration of ‘radical contingency’ in the first chapter, where it does not mean the total absence of fixation or closure but the impossibility to become full and permanent and, in fact, the fixation also has constitutive role and ontological status such as instantiated by the political practices.

Mouffe’s agonism/agonistic-pluralism and LCE share the same ontological presuppositions, the attentiveness to the ineradicable and constitutive lack and the corresponding ethical standpoint of

‘the Ethics of the Real’ (Žižek, 1991, p. 272). This ethical standpoint is based on traumatic experiences of how traditional ethics have promised us ‘the good’ and always ultimately ends in failure due to their inability to master the constitutive lack around which human experience is organized. The answer to these ultimate failures is not identification to new conception of good but to identify with the dislocation of these conceptions itself (Stavrakakis, 1999, pp. 129-131). This does not mean that attachment to ‘the good’ as defined by the traditional ethics should be avoided at all but this attachment is subjected to its status as ‘already dislocated’. In other words, as Župancic describes, “It is not that the pleasure is forbidden to the ethical subject but rather, that it loses its attractive power for such a subject; it is available and accessible, just no longer desirable” (Župancic, 2000, p. 8).

The imports of the elaboration of this ethical standpoint are two folds: *first*, it serves to address the potential misunderstanding as if this research, whether deliberately or not, reify or justify coercion. The elaboration on the dimension of coercion in Mouffe’s agonism/agonistic-pluralism and its ontological status demonstrates the legitimacy and justifies the ‘ontology of lack’ and the ‘ethics of the real’ as ontological and ethical standpoints respectively because it demonstrates that any entity can only come into being if it is able to determine its limits and the coercion is the mark of those limits. Agonistic entity is no exception in this case. The dimension of coercion in its constitution indicates that, as any other social realities or relations, it is marked by dislocations. *Second*, it further fleshes out the ethical aim and standpoint of the critical paradigm embedded in the PDT that both the LCE and Mouffe’s agonism/agonistic-pluralism shares that in turn helps for further characterization of actual agonistic practice. One of the central arguments in Mouffe’s agonism/agonistic-pluralism is her articulation that democracy is characterized and informed by logic of agonism (Mouffe, 1993; Mouffe, 2000; Mouffe, 2005). Mouffe exemplifies this with the

institution of election, the foregrounding of contingency of who will occupy the centre of the site of power, and the split of the summit manifest in the division between the ruling and opposition parties found in many democratic regimes. For the ‘emptiness of the centre’ character of democracy Mouffe refers to Claude Lefort (Mouffe, 1993, p. 105), while for the ‘splitting of the summit’ she refers to Niklas Luhmann (Mouffe, 2005, p. 120).

The Ethics of the Real is an ethic that sees the impossibility of closure as the ideal. No matter how fancy a logic may sound, it keeps looking for its impossibility in the final instance. Mouffe elaborates this extensively in her articulation of democracy as a regime informed by the logic of agonism. Central in this characterization of democracy as practice or regime informed by the logic of agonism is the centrality of veto and recall institutionalized as foundational rules. This is reflected in the mechanisms that characterize democracy such as the institutionalization of the principle of division of power, exemplify by Montesquieu’s *Trias Politica* and election. In the institution of election, the idea is even more radical as it institutionalizes the reciprocal veto among the democratic subjects but it renders all of the subjects on equal footing in exercising their vetoes. This manifests in the principle of *one man one vote*. The exercise of these practices is basically the moment of foregrounding the radical contingency that continuously permeated any social relations as it constitutes the undecidable situation, the condition of possibility for decision or closure and democracy assigns to these rules and regimes, thus the undecidable moment they foreground, the status of ground. Democracy is constituted based on the recognition on the constitutive role of dislocation and, thus, the need to regulate and institutionalize it. However, the disruption itself is only possible against the background of a sedimented practice or regime (Stavrakakis, 2011). This implies the impossibility of agonism in the final instance that Roskam highlights because the sedimented discourse or (articulatory) practice is the condition of possibility for agonism

(Roskamm, 2015). However, the ‘empty space’ at the center, to use Lefort’s term, is always potentially hegemonized by a particular content. In the case of Mouffe’s criticism to Tony Blair, it is less the Neoliberal substance that she resents rather than the hegemonic status that this particular substance enjoys and its strong grips on most of the subjects who still cling to ‘the Ethic of Harmony’. Her notion of ‘agonism/agonistic-pluralism’ is basically a call to shift from the ‘Ethic of Harmony’ to the ‘Ethic of the Real’.

At this point, it is easy to imagine how easy this call transforms into demand and from demand into command, in which the coercive nature comes to the fore. However, this should not be perceived as something negative. On the contrary, as a logic, agonism/agonistic-pluralism, is basically a set of rules and as rules it always prohibits, it always castrates. However, through the castration subjectivity becomes possible. Also, it serves as rem(a)inder of the impossibility of total objectivity that, on its turn, serves to prompts us further to embrace this ‘Ethic of the Real’.

## 5. The Research Strategy

There are two central points from the elaboration of the points on the problem of subsumption and the Ethics of the Real for the strategy in this research. *First*, the elaboration on the problem of subsumption specifies ‘articulation’ as the unit of analysis. The research here does not rely on the ‘exhaustiveness’ of a theoretical concept to explain the phenomena or case investigated. On the contrary, it can be said here that it is the ‘inexhaustiveness’ that demonstrates the main topic this research aims to address, that is coercion. As coercion is congruent with the limits of the being of social reality, discursively produced through articulation, the inexhaustiveness of a concept to explain the phenomena or case investigated implies the limits on which the coercive dimension

comes to the fore. If Laclau and Mouffe define articulation as ‘the constitution of certain nodal points which partially fix meaning’ (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014, p. 100) through which social reality is constituted as an objective totality points to one side of the ‘coin of social reality’, they also point to its other side when they define that this totality is defined on the basis of its own limits (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014, p. 129). Through the concept of articulation, it becomes possible to foreground the dimension of coercion and its ontological status because articulation is mainly concerned with constitution of certain nodal points and defining limits to stabilize the overflow of meanings. LCE’s three basic units of explanation help to characterize the logic investigated and its conjunction with other logics to characterize certain empirical phenomena. The systematic incorporation of the fantasmatic dimension in this methodological framework also provides the means to critically explain the transformation of coercion from ‘structural principle’ into ‘subjective coercion’ or from ‘relations of subordination’ into ‘relations of oppression’.

*Second*, elaboration on the ‘Ethics of the Real’ gives further guidance for this research and how it should be conducted. The dimension of coercion is congruent with the limits that are the basis of the objective totality of social reality; ‘the Ethics of the Real’ foregrounds the constitutive lack, both on the structure and the agent, that points to ‘what prevents it (the phenomena or case investigated) from (totally) being itself’. It is this point that this research should search and investigate in the said phenomena or case. Thus, for example, it is still possible to take the case of ‘collaborative governance’ to exemplify the logic of agonism even though in her works Mouffe explicitly criticizes it as what ‘agonism-is-not’. However, it is this articulation that relates ‘collaborative governance’ and ‘agonism’ – as a logic or discourse; it becomes possible to foreground the constitution of the limits of agonism and, thus, its being.



Another way the Ethic of the Real points to the direction this research should take to characterize certain practice or regime as agonistic is that if social reality and identity is to have essence then 'its essence is the lack of essence'. Mouffe's exemplifies this with her articulation on how democracy is basically a set or regime of practices that puts the institutionalization of the 'lack of essence' at its core. In line with this articulation, it is justifiable to say that the case of 'collaborative governance' is further intensification and expansion of the same logic on the field of social practices. The always partial nature of the characterization of certain practices or regime by a certain logic is in-line with the underlying premise of Laclau and Mouffe's PDT that all social reality and identity are basically results of hegemonic intervention. The partiality and temporality of the characterization are the manifestation of the ever-present overflows of meanings which makes hegemony, and articulation that produces it, possible as well as impossible as a totality in the final instance (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014, p. 93).

Based on the elaboration on the LCE and the Ethics of the Real as the specific ethical standpoint that LCE and Mouffe's agonism/agonistic advocate, there are some central measures and steps to be taken to analyze the dimension of coercion and its role in Mouffe's agonism. *First*, in order to specify how the agonism/agonistic-pluralism as a logic is or is not characterizing the practice or regime investigated, it is necessary to elaborate how the practice or regime said locates, identifies, articulates, and institutionalizes potential or actual impasse. In the case taken for investigation, that is collaborative governance, it may, initially, seem 'too obvious' that the logic of agonism characterizes it. This is because this regime owes its hegemonic position to the rhetoric of democratic recognition of growing plurality and diversity of demands and identities of the (post)modern society. However, over time, there has been mounting criticisms toward these practices or regimes regarding the shift of the balance toward certain logics that focus more on

stability at the expense of recognition over the constitutive role of antagonism (Inch, 2015; Dean, 2018).

The growing criticisms both on the theoretical and practical plane towards ‘collaborative governance’ facilitate the *second* step. This step involves critical explanation on agonism/agonistic-pluralism as a logic and its dimension of coercion through its interactions with other logics in characterizing the regime investigated. It will highlight how the logic of agonism/agonistic-pluralism engages politically in an attempt to subordinate or exclude other logics in order to characterize the investigated practices and how, in the process, it involves demands on the agents to ‘identify’ with specific kinds of ideals which basically serve as its fantasmatic support. This analysis carried in this step discloses the dimension of coercion both on the ontological and ontical plane. On the former, it discloses how the constitution of logic of agonism as an objective reality requires subordination and exclusion in order to define its limits. On the latter, it manifests in concrete governance a situation where its constitution involves practices of constant deconstruction of concrete logics or discourses that aim to cover the lack on the structure through ideological fantasies. This includes investigation on how the subjects of the practice or regime identify themselves with the structure’s cause and how they respond to those who hold different views.

The *third* step is locating and identifying the potential moments where the contingency becomes most apparent. In governance and public policy studies such a moment has been a relatively common object of studies, usually under the heading of *wicked problem* and *clumsy solution*. Wicked problem is a problem that is basically impossible to solve (Rittel & Webber, 1973). Any solution to address this problem always seems to be partial and transient, therefore the adjective *clumsy*. The legitimization of governance regime and its collaborative derivation today have, most

of the time, been articulated as a solution to these sort of problems that have been becoming more prevalent in the (post)modern society (Koliba, Meek, & Zia, 2010, p. 120). The discourse of collaborative governance, as elaborated in more detail in the following chapter, has been constituted basically around this notion of wicked problem. Even, implied in studies such as Kingdon's, it is not an exaggeration to describe that the practice of governance, to a large extent, is constituted that all problems are always, more or less, *wicked* and all of their solutions are *clumsy* (Kingdon, 2011).

In this research the data are acquired through review on literature, media, and policy documents. Data is also collected through several interviews and observation on community meetings. The reviews on the relevant literature and policy documents provide the data mostly for analysis on the theoretical plane though some of them also provide data on the empirical case used to illustrate the theoretical points. The media and policy review, interview, and observation provide data almost exclusively on the empirical case investigated. The observation and interview were conducted in the period between February-June 2018. The source persons for the interview were municipal officials and community organizers involved in formulating and implementing the PPP framework in North Ayrshire.

It is important to underline here that this research strategy is an attempt to line the research with what Mouffe, with Laclau, aim to achieve through their Radical democracy project and Mouffe's campaign in endorsing her agonism/agonistic-pluralism to broaden and deepen democracy into more aspects of social life. In that situation, as a logic, agonism/agonistic-pluralism co-exists and enmeshed in complex networks with other logics that simultaneously attempt to characterize the actual practices or regimes with the aim to hegemonize them. But beyond that, Laclau and Mouffe are fully aware of the impossibility of the society and democracy in the final instance as objective

beings and they owe their very beings to the incompleteness that constantly permeates their manifestations both on the ontical and ontological planes.

## Chapter IV. GOVERNANCE AS AGONISTIC STRUCTURE

The previous chapter has elaborated how in this research agonism/agonistic pluralism is perceived and treated as a concrete logic or discourse that attempts to characterize a certain practice or regime. In order to highlight its coercive dimension, the ontological status of this dimension, and the role of fantasmatic dimension to support it, it is considered better to demonstrate its manifestation in *a* concrete case. For that purpose, the case taken here is ‘collaborative governance’ in the region of North Ayrshire, Scotland. However, before focusing onto the specific case said, this chapter elaborates ‘how the discourse of collaborative governance is agonistic.’ The characterization here, as elaborated in the previous chapter, can never be complete and final. In characterizing the governance practice or regime, the logic of agonism has been undergoing ups and downs as it competes with other logics to hegemonize governance as a field of discursivity. However, as seen in the discussion below, one point that is important to reiterate in the case of the emergence of governance as a hegemonic regime is that this has been taking place in a situation where the contingency of social reality and relations become more obvious and prevalent. The elaboration of governance as an agonistic structure covers its conception and rise into its current hegemonic position since the 1980s; how it has been evolving across that period, and how along these evolutions it has developed new norms, values, and practices to serve the purpose of maintaining its hegemonic position by continuously playing the political game of equivalence and difference as well as maintaining the fantasmatic dimension that supports it as an ideology.

## 1. Introduction: Governance and the Logic of Agonism

There are two crucial points elaborated in this chapter: *first*, the identification of the two irreducible yet constitutive values or principles that underpin the idea of governance, namely authentic democratic governance and effectiveness and efficiency (see also Bäcklund & Mäntysalo, 2010, p. 342). In many ways, these two values or principles conflict with each other. However, *second*, their conflict and its continuation are constitutive for the hegemonic position of governance discourse. The irreducibility and continuous conflict between these two core values of the discourse of governance are the condition of possibility for the constitution of the ‘fantasy of the *coming* unity’ in which public matters can be solved in genuinely democratic ways as well as producing effective impacts. As the next section will demonstrate, the irreducibility of these two core values or principles of governance manifest in the absence of a single definition of what it means; the continuous transformations of its practices; and different focuses of its practices in across time and spaces.

The elaboration on its coercive dimension dives down on how these new norms, values, and practices involve subordinations and exclusions of other possible norms, values, and practices. These subordinations and exclusions in themselves, as mentioned in the previous chapters, do not necessarily articulate as coercion. Their articulation as coercion is related to the continuous interplay between the ever-present potential of perceived ‘lost unity’ caused by the imposition of certain norms, values, and practices under the regime of governance and the grips of the fantasy of unity the regime promises. The elaboration of this point covers the exclusion/inclusion process involved in the constitution of the hegemony of governance discourse, the symptoms of its lack in

its several main manifestations, and how this regime addresses those symptoms by continuously reconfiguring the fantasy of unity to its subjects.

Elaboration on these points leads to discussion on currently three strands of discourses on governance. The first one is the discourse that constitutes governance in a relatively much more positive way as the only possible game in town and how governance is synonymous with democracy, especially in its liberal interpretation. This is in-contrast to the second one that sees governance as just a façade of the emerging new forms of domination. Underneath the jargons such as participatory and inclusivity lurk more subtle forms of hierarchical relations manifested in the forms of technocratization and proceduralism in policy processes (Davies J. S., 2011). The third discourse shares the optimism of the first one. Yet it holds on to the presupposition that governance is neither democratic nor effective in itself (Torfing, Peters, Pierre, & Sorensen, 2012). This third discourse holds the assumption that whether governance is and will be positively or negatively correlated with democracy and policy effectiveness is contingent to its articulation (Torfing & Sorensen, 2012).

The portrayal of empirical practice or regime of governance from the point of view of theory of agonism/agonistic-pluralism is rather different. It sees the practice or regime analysed as a field of discursivity whose meaning is constantly contested and, simultaneously, any certain logic that may hegemonize it on certain moment cannot totally and permanently close the contestation. Section 5 of this chapter discusses this by juxtaposing this view and approach with review on similar studies carried out by Pia Backlund and Raine Mantysalo (Bäcklund & Mäntysalo, 2010) and Karen T. Frick (Frick, 2018).

## 2. Genealogy of Governance: Constant Tension among Irreducible Elements and Their Transformation into Agonistic Relations

This section elaborates the constitution of ‘governance’ as an agonistic structure that transforms the antagonistic relations of its two core values or principles into agonistic ones. The elaboration here starts with brief genealogy of the discourse of governance and its ascendancy into its current hegemonic position. This brief genealogy here focuses on, *first*, how the constitution and ascendancy of the governance discourse as hegemony is marked by contradictions and antagonisms among elements that comprise it. At some points culminating in the form of crises which reveal its political character. *Second*, the structure is never fully fixed and complete and continuously faces the potential of its dissolution due to its structurality that inevitably entails exclusion and dislocation. This incompleteness manifests in the contradictory and conflicting core elements that comprise this discourse and continuously competing for the position of nodal point in the discourse. This ‘lack of center’ makes the meaning of ‘governance’ contingent and elusive for any definitive, commonly agreed definition. Paradoxically, it is also this contingent nature that becomes the condition of possibility of its constitution as a hegemony (Offe, 2009, p. 556). *Third*, by identifying this constant lack of center, it becomes possible to identify and then elaborate the fantasy that covers this lack and maintains the grip of this discourse upon its subject. The fact that despite various critiques that have been leveled against it and cases of its failures, the discourse of governance is still hegemonic both conceptually and practically. This indicates that there is a certain fantasmatic dimension that supports it. Clauss Offe aptly describes it when he states that governance discourse projects the fantasmatic unity between the governor and the governed (Offe, 2009, p. 550), indicating it to serve the purpose of covering the ‘lack of center’ mentioned above.



The discussion here starts with identifying the most defining characteristic of governance. This initial phase is already tricky since this concept is elusive to any strict definition and, thus, what we have is a variety of definitions that are sometimes contradictory to each other. There is, however, a commonality among these definitions. All of them try to define governance in its contrast to ‘government’ (Offe, 2009, p. 551; Bevir, 2012, pp. 2-5). This is not a coincidence as the concept and practice of ‘governance’ emerges as a critical response and alternative to government (Pierre & Pieters, 2000, pp. 2-3; Bevir, 2012, pp. 4-5). More specifically, the main distinctive feature between governance and government here refers to the scope and mechanisms of governing process. The former refers to all governing processes which are not always consciously hierarchical as in the latter (Bever, 2012, pp. 2-3). As a critical response to government, the discourse of governance offers an alternative to what is portrayed as ineffective, inefficient, paternalistic, centralized, hierarchical and a top-down mode of governing. The discourse of ‘government’ had been enjoying a hegemonic position since the period following the end of the World War II up to the end of the Cold War in the late 80s and early 90s. Following that period, the discourse of governance has been taking its place as the hegemonic discourse. This rupture between what otherwise would have been the normal concept and practice of governing and the new one, is the point of departure of our elaboration in this section.

Focusing on this rupture is important to guide the discussion here because the governance discourse did not start when the term started to emerge in a much broader circle. The wider use of the term ‘governance’ as we understand it today started in the early 1990s. The development of concepts and practices that comprise it, however, can be traced back to the 1960s and 1970s. During this period many parts of the globe experienced what can be called multifaceted crises. Amidst the raging Cold War, this period also saw various political, economic, social and

environmental crises which on their turns prompted the emergence of various movements ranging from nationalist to environmentalist ones. Thus, it is not a surprise that this period saw the multiplication of demands and identities following the broadening awareness of crises and movements that emerged as responses to those crises. These crises also highlight the limits of the then hegemonic logic of government and regime of practices it installs, characterized by the state's central position and role as, in many countries, the respective regime became overwhelmed by these crises and multiplying demands and identities (Pierre & Pieters, 2000, pp. 52-67).

The concepts and practices of governing in the period prior to the 1960s and 1970s were dominated by the logic that positioned the state, especially the central government, at the center of public life. The state occupies not only a central position but also a hegemonic position as it stands outside and above the other particular elements in the society. The Keynesian model of economy was a vital element in this discourse of government. This model positions the state as the main guarantor for balancing between wealth production and distribution and, thus, justifies its intervention into the market. This is supposedly conducted through centralized, rational, and objective policy processes, implemented by equally rational, objective, and professional bureaucracy, based on the Weberian model. These are the building blocks of the welfare-state model that was dominant across the globe, especially in Western Europe during the post-war period.

This seemingly neat arrangement, however, started to find its limitations around the 1960s. Under the constantly looming threat of Cold War turning hot, the decade of the 1960s was marked with the financial crisis in the late 1960s and the 1970s; especially in the UK and US, exacerbated by the Oil Crisis (or Oil Boom for oil producing countries), indicated the symptoms of the growing scepticism and criticism toward the conventional mode of governing. The UK and US were specifically mentioned above, because some of the central elements of the governance discourse

gained its initial prominence as concepts and practices in the Anglo-American world, culminating in the Thatcherism and Reaganomics in the UK and US respectively in the 1980s.

The structural limits of this regime of 'government' were also further disclosed by criticisms levelled towards 'Modernity'. Post-modernism started to gain its grips on the public mind as more and more people echoed the doubts on the validity of the claims of human as 'fully-rational-being', 'the objectiveness of objective truth', and many other values the modernity project aims to install in the society. The 'government' discourse owes its hegemony, partially, to its ability to associate and identify itself with 'Modernity'. At that time, the 'state', perceived to be interchangeable with 'the government', presented itself and was perceived by most of the public as the very manifestation of this 'modernity' project. The deconstruction of its ideological fantasmatic support served further to deconstruct its hegemony.

It is noteworthy here that the studies on the genealogy of the governance discourse vary on their points of departure. Some studies set concepts and practices central to governance discourse, such as New Public Management (NPM), apart from 'governance' while some others put them as part and parcel of governance discourse (Klijn, 2012, p. 202). The distinction may be important for the sake of analysis for some of those studies, such as Klijn's. However, here NPM and 'governance' are bracketed into one discourse as both share many common elements articulated in the logic of governance. This is for the sake of highlighting how the governance discourse is actually comprised of diverse, even sometimes conflicting, elements as its internal moments and it owes its hegemonic position to its capability to balance these contending elements.

The diversity of the comprising elements of governance is also reflected by the absence of a commonly agreed definition of what governance is. Most people agree that governance, in contrast to government, is characterized by the structure of power relations that operate through

mechanisms other than command, control, obedience, and relies more on consent through much-less hierarchical ways. Here governance is perceived to refer to both a specific kind of structure of power relations and process (Offe, 2009, p. 550). Sometimes, governance is also used as a superordinate broader category for all processes of governing (Bevir, 2012, p. 5), in which the conventional mode of governing of 'government' is considered merely as one of its sub-categories (Offe, 2009, p. 521). The important point here is that any definition of what governance is always refers to its contrast to what-it-is-not and, in this case, it is the 'government' in the conventional sense, either as in relations of contradiction or superordinate-subordinate.

The discourse to roll-back the state's broad role, seen to be the source of its ineffectiveness; inefficiency; and lack-of-freedom for the public, came under several different names such as public-choice-theory in the US (Klijn, 2012) and the conceptual framework developed by experts in the Institute for Economic Affairs headed by Friedrich A. Hayek in the UK. These criticisms mainly focus on the nature of the state's intervention in broad aspects of socio-economic life which are perceived as a major impediment to the freedom of choice and economic growth. Later, these criticisms became inspiration for the public administration reforms in the US and UK that Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher carried out respectively. They believed that market mechanism is the best instrument to address public matters. The economic crisis that characterized the late 60s and 70s eras further heightened the criticism toward the hegemony of government discourse, to which the state central owed its central and determining roles in public policy and services process. It was during this time that people such as Thatcher and Reagan started to question, not only the efficacy of the so-called 'Post-War' consensus, but also its sustainability. It was also during this time that people like Thatcher and Reagan and their supporters started to articulate the state-centric

mode of governance, central in the welfare-state regime at that time, as part, if not the cause, of the crises at that time.

This is not the only criticism against the traditional state-centric mode of governing that stems from the tumultuous era of the 1960s and 1970s. Criticism also came from those who see the government carries their role as the guarantor of public welfare in heartless mechanistic way. This criticism is associated with various problems perceived to characterize this regime such as bureaucratization, irresponsiveness, and insensitivity to more profound social problems. This kind of criticism came around the 1960s. In the US especially, this strand of notion is usually known as ‘New Public Administration’. Its focus is on putting humans at the center of public management. The social context of society that was rampant with discrimination, injustice, and other dislocations sets this strand apart from not only classical and neo-classical public administration but also public choice theory (Gruening, 2001, pp. 7-9). The element of this strand did not gain prominence as NPM had at some points. However, its elements would return and gave its color on the governance discourse such as in Tony Blair’s regime in the late 90s UK. This discourse gives prominence to the organizational capacity to enable its members to fully develop and maximize their potential. This would become part and parcel of the collaborative governance discourse such as adopted in the UK under Blair’s administration onward.

The return on this element of wealth redistribution, though with modified meaning, as internal moment in the governance discourse are caused by multiple factors. *First*, it has been found that the market is just as fragmented as the state (Bevir, 2012; Bevir, 2007). The reliance on the market mechanism as the main instrument to tackle public issues poses the problem of uncertainty since it is prone to crisis and the presumed perfect market situation can never be fully reached. The market actors can never conduct the voluntary-exchange in, the presumed equal footage (Stone,

1997). *Second*, the broader paradigmatic shift from government to governance took place almost immediately after the end of Cold War that produces the liberal democracy discourse as the victor. This meant there was need to reconfigure and reconsolidate the dispersed elements previously attached to the two big opposing camps where each element had a different starting point. This partially explains why this particular discourse of governance is closely associated with the image of 'Third Way' in the sense of middle way, not only between the state and the market but among state, market, and society (Offe, 2009, p. 555).

The elaboration above has demonstrated the wide variety of elements that comprise the concept of 'governance', its elusiveness and, simultaneously, its fluidity and flexibility in different context. This elusiveness and fluidity stay up to this day as even in its most common understanding and usage. Its fluidity of meaning is still visible such as shown in its redefinition under Blair's administration. This fluidity indicates the continuously changing configuration of governance as a symbolic order and how in every instance of configuration change it also involves a process of redefining its borders or limits (Offe, 2009; Sullivan, Williams, Marchington, & Knight, 2013).

The dynamics in the discourse of governance so far seems to evolve around two opposing poles of internal moments in the discourse governance. Those two poles are effectiveness/efficiency in producing wealth and wealth redistribution and 'social justice'. Interestingly, these two elements represented two antagonistic ideals that took the center stage of cold war in the preceding era. The articulation of governance, especially in its collaborative governance variant, rearticulate those elements into its internal moments that takes over not only their meanings but also the potential and actual tensions between them. The tensions between them still exist and most likely will stay but it has been transformed into agonistic relations. This partially explains the capacity of the governance discourse to hegemonize public affairs as a field of discursivity. There are, however,

other aspects that require further investigation and elaboration. *First*, there is a need to elaborate and deconstruct the claimed ‘non-hierarchical’ mode of relations among the involved parties. Some scholars, such as Jonathan Davies, have made critical elaboration on this topic by exposing the hierarchical mechanism that underpins the operation of this discourse, thus deconstructing its ‘non-hierarchical’ and ‘consensus based’ claims (Davies J. S., 2011; 2013). The elaboration of its genealogy above also shows how this discourse achieves and sustains its hegemonic position not merely by accommodating broad diverse elements as its internal moments but also by simultaneously modifying their meanings, such as the meaning of social justice in the ‘New-Labour’ discourse. This re-articulation that modifies meanings is political in nature as it involves the logic of equivalence/difference leading to dual process of inclusion/exclusion.

*Second*, the elaboration above focuses mainly on the structural aspect of the governance discourse and its dynamics. Besides the structural aspect, there is a need to elaborate the aspect of the agency that simultaneously constitute governance as social reality. In this sense, there is a need to elaborate the fantasy that sustains the subject’s attachment to this discourse despite crises and failures that indicate its instability. Elaboration on this aspect is also crucial to supplement further explanation on the persistence of the discourse’s grips upon its proponents despite the fact that some scholars have deconstructed it and been critical toward its ‘non-hierarchical’ and ‘consensus-based’ claims. In this sense, elaboration on the structural aspect alone is not sufficient.

The following section elaborates the agency aspect as the other side of this coin of governance discourse by focusing on the fantasy that, not only supporting this discourse as hegemony by covering its constitutive lack, renders the subject to give their consent to the imposed limitation of possibilities.

### 3. Contestation and the Fantasy of Unity between the Governor and Governed

Offe, interestingly, highlights and argues that the discourse of governance owes its hegemonic position exactly to its elusiveness to attempts to specify its meaning. He argues that in such position, it becomes an arena of contending interpretations. He makes his analysis on specific context of two contending interpretations of ‘what governance is’ to the roles of the state as designer and guarantor of social order, with *substitution* on one hand and *extension* on the other (Offe, 2009, p. 556). This has been taking place without cancelling out the specificity of ‘governance’ constituted through the articulation of its differential relations to ‘government’. This is a further indication of how the discourse of governance is constituted and gains its legitimacy. It promises to be more participatory and inclusive to diverse social demands and identities in its process. Such claim has been heard long before in the 1970s when Thatcher made her claim that her proposal of market-based public management would address the people’s demand for freedom (of choice) better than the then dominant welfare-state regime.

The interesting point to highlight is that in these articulations there is no specification of the substance of ‘what this freedom of choice is’. Neither are the substance of ‘what substitution is’ or ‘what extension is’. The absence of specific substance on those issues is replaced by proposal of framework for process, characterized by recognition and institutionalization of the centrality of difference and contestation. This was a very appealing proposal for those who lived in that particular time period, characterized by social and political upheavals, especially the younger generations. The social and political upheavals, exacerbated by the oil crisis in the 1970s up to the 1980s, amplified and broadened the discontent and anxiety in many Western countries and overwhelmed the corresponding government, including the UK. The specificity in Thatcher’s



discourse is that her discourse advocates the beliefs that market mechanism is the most reliable framework for recognizing and institutionalizing the absence of a specific substance of what is known as ‘public goods’.

The discourse she advocated harnesses the force of various new demands and identities which deconstruct the traditional and conventional power structures as well as the corresponding regimes of truth. It is noteworthy that though this period has been romanticized as ‘the period of rebellion’ against establishment, the latter is more associated with industrial capitalism; broader perspective will present a rather different picture. This ‘period of rebellion’ was not exclusive in Western countries that adopted a liberal model of democracy such as France, UK, or Germany. Rebellious moments also took place in communist bloc countries. Prague Spring in, then, Czechoslovakia and Cultural Revolution in China took place around the same period. In the latter case, the establishment manifested in the form of the Communist Party of China and its bureaucracy. Despite the dominant narrative portray that the revolution was directed against the reminiscence of feudalism, ‘capitalist roader’, and many other negative labels, a closer look will show that this movement was more motivated by the spirit of anti-establishment and anti-hierarchy.

Unmistakably, the rise of the discourse of governance, Thatcherism included; in which ‘decentering the state’ has been its central moment, also tapped into the force from this anti-establishment sentiment. In its place, it proposed a market with values and practices such as competitive individualism, self-interest, and anti-statism – besides the traditional conservative values such as family, nation, duty, authority, traditionalism – as the alternative. Mouffe, following Stuart Hall, argues that Thatcherism owed its ascendancy into hegemonic position because it was able to articulate those elements under an equivalential chain as a response toward the raging crises of welfare-state at that time (Mouffe, 2018, p. 30).

The rolling back of the welfare-state, in the UK as well as in many other countries, manifested in the forms of the privatization, in various degree, of many public sectors. However, it turns out that this does not necessarily mean that the state is ‘withering away’. On the contrary, while the width of its authority may decrease, its depth, on the contrary, has considerably increased. The state and its government serve the role as market regulator and in order to carry this role it requires authority to regulate how the public conduct themselves as market actors. Normatively, the increase of state and government’s authority to regulate the conduct of the market actors is intended to ensure the presumed ‘ideal market situation’. However, different points of view present different pictures. It indicates the lack of the market structure as it requires its subjects to submit themselves to its rules and mechanisms. This submission cannot be guaranteed by the market alone, therefore there is a need for a state and government role as guarantor. It is not surprising that in some instances, this regime presents itself in its coercive face.

The main point here is that Thatcherism is a logic in which the market is expected to provide the framework to deal with and address the proliferation of demands and identities. In dealing with these demands and identities, the logic of market is, presumably, able to regulate not only the diversity but also the potential and actual conflict among those demands and identities, as exemplified in the case of ‘Green Economy’. This regime is intended as a ‘middle way’ to reduce the tensions and reconcile the demands for ‘economic development’ on one hand and demands for ‘ecological conservation’ on the other. The latter had been gaining stronger grips on the public as a discourse since the 1960s if not earlier. In the late 1970s and 1980s, it posed a serious challenge against the then dominant paradigm of economic development which was accused of producing wealth for the present generation through capricious consumption on nature and pushed it near to its limits of carrying capacity and, thus, compromising the rights of the future generations. This

ideological battle led to the emergence of the discourse of ‘Sustainable Development’ in the mid-1980s that since then has been integrated as a crucial internal moment in the discourse of economic development at least normatively.

Experience of many countries demonstrates that the presumption of an ‘ideal market situation’ did not materialize when economic liberalization was put into practice. It might work for some time to ease the tension on the state budget and stimulated the economy. However, the impacts of market mechanism soon appeared, such as the widening gap between the haves and have nots, transformation of the identity of citizen into market actor or consumer, and the apparent socio-political inequality that inequality in the relations among market actors entails. Those negative impacts disclosed the limits of market logic in ensuring the provision and delivery of public services. This also happened in the UK, when Thatcher started to implement her economic liberalization program. However, despite the apparent negative impacts, most of the public still persisted on their reliance on the logic of market to address the issues of public service provision and delivery. The end of the Cold War further presented a situation whereby the public had no other choice. In the UK, this manifested in the persistence of Thatcherism as a hegemonic discourse, regardless of the fact that she had to step down as Prime Minister in 1990 and the Conservative Party had to concede power to the Labour Party in the 1997. As described by many scholars and observers, Tony Blair’s administration and his ‘New-Labour’ did not make any significant change to Thatcherism. In fact, it further intensifies the penetration of the logic of market in some public sectors, such as Higher Education. Thatcher herself acknowledged that Tony Blair’s ‘New-Labour’ is her biggest achievement (Mouffe, 2018, p. 32).

The New-Labour under Tony Blair administration introduced what is known as ‘Third Way’, a form of politics beyond Left and Right. ‘Collaboration’ replaced ‘competition’ as the catchword.

Yet, the main difference with Thatcherism was the abandonment of some conservative elements in Thatcherism while retaining its neoliberal ones, thus further entrenching the hegemony of neoliberal discourse (Giddens, 1998, pp. 99-100). This regime establishes its hegemonic position by addressing the growing demands and identities that evolve and are based on the idea of autonomy leading to the development of a Post-Fordist network economy that the regime transforms into new forms of control. Through such strategy, this regime has been relatively able to co-opt and neutralize various demands and identities (Mouffe, 2018, pp. 33-34).

It is governance as New-Labour defines and conceptualizes it that, to large extent, defines our understanding of ‘what governance is’ today. As mentioned above, it has been characterized by the use of ‘collaboration’ as its catchword. This regime prides itself for its initiative to ‘take the citizens involved in decision making process.’ This term of ‘collaboration’ is a response toward the problematization that this discourse formulates as ‘project politics’ and the ‘politics of presence’. The former refers to “how to engage citizens in helping solve *particular* or *local* policy problems” while the latter is “how to enable citizens to voice their *interests, experiences and identities* in the deliberative process” (Newman, Sullivan, Barnes, & Knops, 2004, pp. 204-205, italic from the original text). This problematization is derived from a broader framework of ‘problem of representation’ which is perceived to be rooted in the domination of top-down, hierarchical, and bureaucratic approaches in policy process. These approaches obstruct genuine public democratic active participation in the policy process and contribute to make the democratic process focuses more on abstract problems and hardly touches public’s immediate concerns.

Collaborative governance aims to solve these obstructions by transforming the relations in the governance process to be less-hierarchical, more inclusive, giving primacy to a bottom-up approach and, therefore, giving primacy to community involvement and empowerment (Blair,

1999; Giddens, 1998, pp. 79-89; 104-11). Anticipating the high likelihood that such a process will disclose discord and conflict among interests and demands, the ‘collaborative governance’ discourse proposes public deliberation as a mechanism to regulate them. Thus, it is not surprising that this regime is full of various public *fora* intended for consensus building through deliberation as well as what is known as ‘co-production’ of public goods among government agencies and the citizens themselves. The hierarchical structure is also replaced with networks that cut across the public, private, and voluntary sectors.

While it acknowledges and, to some extent, institutionalizes discordance and antagonism, there has been criticism levelled toward this regime of collaborative governance. Mouffe especially, points out that this regime presents *agonism* without *antagonism*. This is because this regime is based on the very notion that the ‘*we/they*’ division is obsolete and, by placing neoliberal arrangement as *the only* viable alternative, it aims to reduce the occurring social, economic, and political problems as merely technical problems. Disruptions that emerge and disclose the ideological antagonism on which this regime constitutes are perceived merely as slight regressions that will eventually be solved once the parties involved adopt the liberal democracy and neoliberal arrangement wholeheartedly (Mouffe, 2018; see also Davies, 2013, pp. 22-23).

Mouffe’s criticism is echoed by other scholars who pointed to different aspects of the limits of the collaborative governance. Newman et al. highlight how literature on collaborative governance has not addressed the issues of difference, conflict, and dissent which are central to the practice of collaborative governance (Newman, Sullivan, Barnes, & Knops, 2004, p. 221). In this research, the ‘collaborative governance’ regime discloses its limits when the engagements were encountering issues or problems that could be categorized as wicked problems due to various factors. These factors range from the unclear division of authority on the policy and policy sectors

in which the deliberation was taking place; the grouping of categorization of the social elements; to the paradigm and grammar that inform the deliberation process and its results.

More ardent critiques come from scholars who highlight the coercive dimension of this regime of ‘collaborative governance’. Jonathan Davies discloses the coercive dimension that is embedded in the practice and regime of ‘network governance’ (Davies J. S., 2013). ‘Networks’ becomes an alternative concept to ‘hierarchy’ to describe, delineate, as well as prescribe the structural relations of actors involved in the governance process. This form of relation is often described to be less hierarchical, putting the actors involved in relatively much more equal positions to each other, and, thus, more democratic. More than a merely neutral description, this image of relations that the regime of collaborative governance constitutes has also been an image that serves as prescription for others to follow. No less than global institutions such as the IMF and World Bank have adopted and endorsed it for countries around the globe to adopt.

Davies’ critiques toward the dominant discourse of ‘network governance’ as part of the broader discourse of ‘collaborative governance’ provides crucial hints for the research presented here. Perceiving the discourse of ‘network governance’ as a hegemony, in the Gramscian sense it is characterized by continuous dialectics between consent and coercion, Davies aims to disclose the coercive dimension that is necessary in every hegemonic formation, yet it is obscured by the foregrounded concept of ‘network’. In this study, he points out that the coercive dimension comes to the fore when the ‘network governance’, as a regime, is unable to gain *trust* from its subjects and, thus, has to rely on its coercive means and apparatus (Davies J. S., 2013, p. 4; 8; 11; 13). The concept of trust here is *crucial* because it has imbrication to the concept of *identification*. Davies points out that this required trust, he uses the term: *homophily*, cannot be total and fixed. He presents examples of how network governance often works in situation where trust is low and, in

such situations, it relies on something else to maintain its cohesion: namely coercion. In the end, Davies concludes that coercion is ubiquitous and network governance cannot fully escape from it either (Davies J. S., 2013, p. 31).

It is in the transformation of ‘network’ from merely description into prescription that the dimension of coercion comes to the fore. The emergence of governance was initially based on claims of its recognition of the growing diversity of demands and identities that characterize the late-capitalist society and the absence of any single objective concept of ‘social goods’. It is also based on this argument, the discourse of governance and its family come to hegemonize the sphere of public administration. However, once it becomes hegemonic, it also suddenly meets its limits as it can never fully hegemonize the field of discursivity. The so-called ‘openness to difference’ almost immediately cannot be merely a game of ‘pure difference’. ‘Governance’, even in its ‘collaborative’ or ‘network’ forms, always requires rules and in defining these rules there are inevitably ‘decisions’ or ‘closures’, no matter how incomplete or transient it might be. In the current regime of collaborative or network governance, however, the way these differences are articulated and regulated has been fixated around the logic of market through various hegemonic strategies. One of these is the reduction of the subject into merely a ‘rational being’ that Mouffe and many other scholars heavily criticize.

In this case, the logic of agonism is articulated merely as subordinate internal moment in the discourse of collaborative or network governance. While it has been recognized as the condition of possibility for the articulation of ‘collaborative governance’, the impossibility of its total solution is covered up by confining the possible alternative solutions within the logic of market and, part and parcel to this, rational deliberation. The configuration of the governance discourse has never been the same since its ascendancy into a hegemonic position in the late 1970s and early

1980s, it has been changing overtime since Thatcherism with its New Public Management underpinning to ‘Collaborative Governance’ and ‘Network Governance’ under New-Labour and the subsequent Tory administration. These changes, however, have been evolving around the logic of market and dictated from above as described by Davies as ‘passive revolution’ (Davies J. S., 2013). These passive revolutions mark the crises that the governance regime faced and its attempt to maintain its hegemonic position.

The fact that passive revolution has been working so far indicates the strength of the fantasmatic dimension that supports the regime. One central image of the subject of the governance regime, especially in collaborative governance, is the collaborating subject. Such subject projects the image of an actively engaging subject that pursues to make the governor and the governed congruent. As mentioned above, the constitution of the governance regime is partially based on critiques that the establishment under the welfare-state regime has not been able to represent the day-to-day interest and concerns of the public. The governance regime, with its non-hierarchical arrangement promises to ensure that the voice of the common public and their concerns are given priority by the government and the government will not make any decision without their consent. Such image, however, is never fully realized. Yet, such fantasy still has strong grips on the subjects, despite the crises that the regime has been facing.

The term of ‘fully realized’ is used because, there are structural changes that partially fulfill the fantasy of the congruency between the governor and the governed. In the case of UK that has been emulated in many other countries, one of the main structural changes is the political devolution. Through this policy, the sub-national government acquires broader authorities to manage their own affairs. This policy plays a crucial role in maintaining the fantasmatic support of the governance regime as it enables local governments and, through the governance regime, local actors to manage



and make decisions on their own affairs. It is also noteworthy that this policy serves not only to strengthen the fantasy of congruency between the governor and the governed but also a fantasy inspired by nationalist imaginary, such as the case of devolution in regions such as Northern Ireland, Wales, and Scotland. Especially under the 'New-Labour', 'devolution' has been a central internal moment in the discourse of collaborative governance, alongside other moments such as community and participation. To some extent, the collaborative governance regime offers the fantasy of self-autonomy where devolution articulates and goes beyond administrative channels to reach directly to the community, referring to the fantasy of the congruency between the governor and the governed.

While Davies' discussion demonstrates coercion as a structural necessity for the continuation of a regime's hegemony, in this case 'governance'. It does not further elaborate how the fantasmatic dimension operates either to background or foreground the dimension of coercion. Davies elaborates the role of 'trust' in the constitution of 'network governance' as a hegemonic regime in dialectical relations with coercion. However, he focuses more on the ubiquity of coercion in any hegemonic formation or, in other words, the coercion as a structural necessity and does not elaborate further the role of trust in the foregrounding or backgrounding of the dimension of coercion. The discussion will return on this point in the next section.

The point that this section aims to reiterate is that the logic of agonism is a crucial moment in the discourse of governance and becomes more important as it has transformed into 'collaborative governance'. It owes its constitution as a hegemonic discourse due to its claim of recognition of the constitutive role of difference and conflict. Yet, once it was able to occupy the hegemonic position, it continuously attempts to foreclose the undecidability through the confines of consensus building through rational deliberation evolving around the logic of market. This foreclosure

manifests in various forms such as administrative domination, technocratism, to networks closure (Davies J. , 2012). This description and elaboration highlights that the logic of agonism does not exhaust governance as the field of discursivity but in conjunction with other logics simultaneously engages in a continuous game of hegemony whose stability is always contingent and transient.

The empirical cases elaborated in Davies' work shows that the dimension of coercion of the discourse of 'networks' is foregrounded when logic of agonism is subordinated to other logic(s). However, if coercion is ubiquitous, this dimension is equally inevitable if the logic of agonism occupies the position as nodal point that subordinates or excludes other logics. It is in this sense that it is possible and justifiable to use the case of 'collaborative governance' to disclose the ontological status of coercion. However, before elaborating the specific empirical case to illustrate this point, there is another issue that needs further discussion in this chapter that is the issue of trust that is related to the fantasmatic support of a certain regime that determines the transformation of 'coercion' as an ontological condition into subjective coercion. Davies' work does not discuss this distinction because it does not discuss the topic of 'trust' from the lens of Lacanian 'fantasy'. The next section discusses this topic.

#### **4. Mobilizing Obedience through Non-hierarchical Relations: Affect and Identification**

The previous section has elaborated how the term 'governance' has multiple meanings. It is constituted through the cross-cutting of various logics whose relations depend on their contingent articulations. When it is chased to the very end, the specific meaning of governance can only be found through the articulation of its differential relations to 'government'. While this demonstrates 'the lack of essence' of governance as social reality, it should not be perceived that this concept is ineffective in shaping the practice or regime that govern social reality. The fact that this regime is

still dominant despite the numerous criticisms and crises it has faced demonstrates its inertia. Davies' work may have demonstrated the ubiquity of the dimension of coercion in the relations that this regime constitutes, but it does not further elaborate why, despite this coercive dimension, its subjects are still relatively attached to this regime.

Davies does provide us with some hints when he mentions that "network governance theories focus disproportionately on the technologies of enrollment and consensus building" (Davies J. , 2012, p. 2698). While in this work Davies focuses the foregrounding of the dimension of coercion in the form of administrative domination, which in itself has multiple modalities, this section aims to rearticulate Davies' statement of the focus of the network governance theories on the technologies of enrollment and consensus building to focus on different aspects of this dimension of coercion where the subjects are complicit. This shift of focus is crucial here to address the puzzle of 'Why is not all coercion problematized as coercion?' that follows from the statement on the 'ubiquity of coercion' and, more importantly, 'the ontological status of coercion'.

In doing so, it is necessary to add the fantasmatic dimension as an analytical category in the elaboration on the 'collaborative governance' regime. This is what Davies does not do in his works. Incorporating the fantasmatic dimension as an analytical category, the elaboration on the dimension of coercion can go further than merely elaborating what Davies describes as the 'administrative domination' but also the situation that Bevir describes as "..., the process of governing need not be consciously undertaken by a hierarchically organized set of actors." (Bevir, 2012, pp. 2-3)

Klaus Offe elaborates this 'unconscious' aspect of the governing process when he argues that successful policy implementation is more related to the cooperative action of individual citizens than corporate or representative bodies. Further, they respond much less to government's

authoritative command or material incentives than to “political signals in the form of recommendations, information that has implications for behavior, programs with the purpose of consciousness creation, role models, alerts, disapproval, shaming, encouragement, appeals for prudent and responsible behavior, hints, moral campaigns and other “soft” forms of political communication between policy makers and citizens<sup>3</sup>” (Offe, 2009, p. 559). In this sense, Offe describes the political signals as similar to Althusser’s interpellation. This political signal addresses the individual as a subject of a certain collectively desirable pattern of conduct. Thus, besides acting the mode of governance through informal, voluntaristic, and network-like relations, the governance process also operates by activating the subject’s desire or cognitive and moral power in Offe’s term, as its resource to mobilize the subject’s cooperation and consent (Offe, 2009, pp. 559-560).

Here it is possible to relate Offe’s ‘political signaling’ with Mouffe’s ‘ethico-political’. The ‘ethico-political’ is the value or principle around which other signifiers are arranged in differential relations to produce meanings through articulation. The centrality of this value or principle is not given but is a result of hegemonic struggle, hence the term ‘ethico-political’ (Mouffe, 2000, pp. 103-104). This implies that there are individuals who subject themselves to this structure (of signification) and identify themselves with the said value or principle. This identification is based on more than merely rational calculation but, most importantly, involves libidinal investment. It is this libidinal investment that the political signaling appeals to. The point of investment, the

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<sup>3</sup> Interestingly, Javanese political philosophy the varieties of forms of command and the subject to whom the commands are addressed to are formulated in a maxim, “Semu bupati; esem mantri; dupak bujang or kuli”. It means the rulers should only demonstrate certain gesture to indicate their commands, government officials need only to smile, while the coolies need to be kicked on their backs to understand one.”

particular value or principle that serves as the nodal point, is overdetermined. Its installation as the nodal point happens at the expense of exclusion of other possible values or principles.

In the case of collaborative governance, the value of “recognition of differences for better public service” becomes the nodal point for most of its subjects. This is often said in one breath and in doing so many tend to forget that the correlations between ‘recognition of difference’ and ‘more effective public service’ are neither given or determined by any objective law prior to their articulation and the resulted correlation through articulation is always contingent and transient. This leads to the tendency of overlooking or covering-up the potential and actual antagonism between the two. The over determination on this value as the nodal points appear when, first, it becomes visible that their constitution as nodal points implies exclusion of other possible values and principles. This is apparent in the case of the constitution of governance and its other related concepts such as ‘collaborative governance’ that its relatively more stable meaning can only be gained by contrasting it to what-it-is-not such as ‘government’.

*Second*, the overdetermined nature also becomes visible during moments of the fixation of their meanings, implying the exclusion of other possible alternatives. Such a moment reveals what ‘recognition of differences’ and ‘better public service’ exactly mean and can be interpreted in various different ways. Yet they become meaningful when the polysemy is stabilized or closed. The reliance on the ‘logic of market’ to address both values of ‘recognizing differences’ and ‘better public service’, that persists despite modification through the New-Labour’s collaborative governance is an example of such a moment of fixation.

However, this is only possible to take place if the subject identifies themselves, not only rationally but also affectively, with those values and principles. As mentioned above, the constitution of ‘governance’ as a hegemony was preceded by growing sentiments and demands of recognition of

differences that was contrasted to their repression under hierarchical regimes of ‘modern state’ and ‘welfare state’. The ‘governance’ discourse harness these growing sentiments and demands and makes it possible to articulate them by providing the required signifiers; in this case ‘market mechanism’ and ‘deliberation’, which become the point of investment for its subjects. This explains the subject’s complicity or obedience despite the dimension of coercion that Davies describes. This may mean the subjects are unaware of the coercive dimension or, even if they are aware of it, the structure’s fantasmatic support operates to normalize it.

The operation of power on this plane manifests in the form of inertia that is latent in nature, that is related to Luke’s third dimension of power (Lukes, 2005). The subordination of the logic of agonism by the logic of deliberation or ethics of the real by the ethics of harmony occurs and has been reproduced by the operation of power in this dimension. It provides the subjects not only with a means to cope with dislocations that the hegemonic structure causes but also displaces and positivizes it. The latter is especially common among those who assume the role as activist or ideolog where they find the encounters with obstructions as part of ‘struggle’. In such situations, the fantasmatic dimension produces not only obedience but *active consent*, in contrast to the passive one in the Gramscian sense.

## 5. Governance and the Logic of Agonism

Elaboration on these points lead to discussion on currently three strands of discourses on governance. The first one is the discourse that constitutes governance in a relatively much more positive way as the only possible game in town and how governance is synonymous with democracy, especially in its liberal interpretation. This is in-contrast to the second one that sees governance as just a façade of the emerging new forms of domination. Underneath the jargon such

as participatory and inclusiveness lurk more subtle forms of hierarchical relations which manifest in various forms such as technocratization, formal-proceduralism, and rationalism in policy processes (Davies J. S., 2011). The third discourse shares the optimism of the first one. Yet it holds on the presupposition that governance is neither democratic nor effective in itself (Torfing, Peters, Pierre, & Sorensen, 2012). This third discourse holds to the assumption that whether governance is and will be positively or negatively correlated with democracy and policy effectiveness depends on how it is articulated (Torfing & Sorensen, 2012).

Thatcher's NPM and Blair's 'Collaborative Governance' represent the first strand. Those discourses constitute governance as hegemony by, not only associating but also, identifying governance with democracy itself. They further acquired legitimacy due to the end of the Cold War where the liberal democracy came out as the victor. As mentioned in many literatures, this moment gives the impression to many that 'liberal democracy' and associated mode of 'governance' have become *the only game in town*. Many people on the left spectrum of politics perceive that they need to modify their positioning by moving toward and closer to what is known as 'the center' as happened with Tony Blair's 'New-Labour'. While to a certain extent Thatcherism and Collaborative Governance have been viewed positively, especially with regards to the inclusions of broader non-state elements in governing as well as the decision and policy making processes, there have been mounting criticisms, especially against its claim as the only legitimate representation of democratic values and principles.

The elaboration in the previous section demonstrates how such critiques are launched by Newman et al. and Davies. Newman et al. describe that the collaborative governance's 'inclusiveness' is not without limit. Davies further elaborates these limits, criticizing the hegemony of the concept of 'networks' and its non or less-hierarchical claim, by disclosing the hierarchical and the dimension

of coercion that mark these limits of the collaborative governance. Both, implicitly or explicitly, echo critiques from other scholars who view ‘governance’ as merely a façade for the hegemony of the logic of market (Pierre & Pieters, 2000, p. 54). The government, as one of the subjects involved in the governance regime, also readily embraces it as it serves as the public face of spending cuts (Stokker, 1998, p. 39). In the view of these critics, the adoption of this governance framework by the governments in many countries is seen as the state-sponsored unburdening of the government from its public responsibility to deal with public matters (Davies & Pill, 2012).

Yet, there is another strand that is also critical of the discourse or regime of ‘governance’. This kind of critique shares some of the views of the hegemony of the logic of market; technocratism; and the government’s covert aim to unburden itself of its responsibility to address public matters in the governance regime. They, however, retain the argument the democratic potentials of governance because there is no necessary links between ‘governance’ and ‘democracy’ and their relations are contingent to their articulations (Sorensen & Torfing, 2007, pp. 236-239; Torfing & Sorensen, 2012).

The previous sections have elaborated how the practice and regime of governance is characterized by various logics, where the logic of agonism/agonistic pluralism is only one of them. In characterizing the practice and regime of governance it engages the other logics in continuous *hegemonic game*. The ability to win this game requires it to be able to manage the paradox of *emptying* itself from its particular meaning in order to be able to incorporate other logics as its internal moments on one hand and define its limits from what-is-not in order to constitute itself as an objective reality on the other. These two simultaneous processes imply that the constitution of hegemony of the logic of agonism necessitates subordination and exclusion. The elaboration above also demonstrates how the ‘forgetting of the origin’, referring to the sedimentation of a discourse



and the practices it installs that obscures its political origin, is determined by the identification of its subject. This identification hinges on the efficacy of the fantasy that supports it.

The facts show that there are moments when the logic of agonism is subordinated to other logics. However, it is necessary to underline that in such moments this logic is not necessarily excluded from the rules and mechanism of this hegemonic game. Thus, it is necessary to reiterate here that if the hegemony of logics of market and technocratism are seen as the root problem of dislocations and antagonisms and the logic of agonism is presented as their alternative, it does not mean that once it replaces them all dislocations and antagonisms would be immediately and automatically solved. The articulation of the logic of agonism in such case is mainly intended to deconstruct the fixations, disclose their incompleteness and political origin, and precipitate the circuitous oscillating movements between fixation-deconstruction. It is the principle and practice that the logic of agonism seeks to install into the governance regime in order to make it more democratic. Of course, as any other logic, it requires the constitution of certain subjectivity, implying that the agents' identification with the logic of agonism that involves not only rational calculation but also affective investment. Karen T. Frick describes the operation of governance regime and foregrounding its agonistic dimensions in three concrete cases of sustainable infrastructure in the US. She describes the operation of agonistic ethos as a situation where there is no permanent friends and permanent enemies (Frick, 2018, p. 12).

Frick foreground that the operation of agonism/agonistic-pluralism as a logic is characterized by the emergence of such logic that highlights the political dimension of any decisions and the underpinning values or principles. It implies its emergence as a moment that will pass to reemerge in some other time. It is this portrayal of how certain practice or regime of governance becomes or

does not become agonistic that is taken in this dissertation. This is somehow different to Backlund and Mantysalo's position (Bäcklund & Mäntysalo, 2010).

Backlund and Mantysalo conducted a research on the application of four theoretical frameworks on governance, they assume to be sequentially further development of the previous one-agonism being one of them as the most recent one-, on urban governance regimes in five cities in Finland. In this research they conclude that "At the level of planning practice it might, then, merely provide a further source of institutional ambiguity by offering new ideas for shallow practical reforms that, without further consideration, are imposed on top of existing institutional structures" (Bäcklund & Mäntysalo, 2010, p. 348). They draw such conclusion since from the beginning they assume that the development and adoption of a new theory of governance will replace the old one and, thus, they see the coexistent of different theories and competition among theories becomes a source ambiguity in practice and widen the gap between theory and practice (Bäcklund & Mäntysalo, 2010, pp. 333, 338, 348).

Backlund and Mantysalo correctly describe the relations between the development of theories of governance and its empirical practices by saying, "The empirical study reveals that while each paradigm shift in theory purports to replace the former theory with a new one, in practice the new theory emerges as a new addition to the palette of coexisting theoretical sources, to be drawn upon as a source of guidance and inspiration in organizing participatory planning" (Bäcklund & Mäntysalo, 2010, p. 338). But instead of lamenting this situation, this research investigates further this competition among various logics or theories of governance, focusing on how when the logic of agonism comes to the fore to inform and characterize the investigated practice or regime of governance it always necessitates coercion alongside consent.

The point here is that it is justifiable and legitimate to take the case of 'governance' to highlight and foreground the logic of agonism that installs some aspects of the regime and to highlight its dimension of coercion. It has also been elaborated above the role of fantasmatic dimension that supports the 'governance' regime, either by covering or normalizing its dimension of coercion. While this chapter has demonstrated in a rather general manner how the logic of agonism partially characterizes the regime of governance and continuously engages with other logics in hegemonic game over it as a field of discursivity, the next two chapters aim to elaborate how the logic of agonism engages in this hegemonic game in more specific and concrete cases of the Community Planning Partnership in North Ayrshire, Scotland.

## **Chapter V. NORTH AYRSHIRE COMMUNITY PLANNING**

### **PARTNERSHIP-NACPP**

This chapter focuses its discussion on critically describing the case of the Community Planning Partnership (CPP) in North Ayrshire (NA), Scotland. This case is taken considering the fact that North Ayrshire has been one of the pioneers and recognized as best practices in terms of public/private working initiative in Scotland (APSE, 2018, p. 5; 14). This is despite that this area has been struggling socially and economically to overcome the multiple deprivations it faces. The elaboration covers description of the NA area and how they have been putting the collaborative or participatory governance into practice since late 1990s.

The empirical data are taken and collected through policy document review, interview, and observation. The policy documents reviewed include the Scottish Parliament Act on Community Empowerment; Community Planning Partnership Reports; and third-party reviews. The interviews are conducted with five interviewees, comprised of two county government staffs, two community organizers, and one member of the locality partnership. From these interviews, one was conducted in May 2018 and four in July 2018. The observation was conducted earlier in March. The event observed was a meeting for the promotion of the concept of “Kind Society” and its potentials for application in NACPP scheme.

#### **1. Introduction: Collaborative Participatory Planning in North Ayrshire, Scotland**

The CPP regime is rooted in the idea of collaborative governance that revolves around the principle of community inclusion and empowerment for better public services. NA has been experimenting with multiple formulations of public/private partnership and participatory or collaborative

governance long before they arrived in the CPP framework. The CPP framework intends to drive the public/private partnership based on the public needs expressed and channelled through the CPP. This has become its model and has won NA the award mentioned above (APSE, 2018, p. 14).

The emergence of CPP and its ‘Collaborative Governance’ root is often articulated as an attempt to address the historical change marked by the cut of public spending and the need to devolve government’s authority on one hand and the demands for more active public engagement in dealing with public matters on the other (Services C. o., 2011, p. vi; ix). The former becomes a crucial issue to address as currently NA, as well as Scotland and the UK in general, has to address the impacts of the austerity measures, taken as a response toward the Euro crisis. It has often been depicted as burden sharing among the stakeholders across the public, private, and voluntary sectors. Differing and conflicting interests, needs, and demands are the first things that are likely to emerge in such situations, therefore the CPP aims to operate as a framework to harness the energy these engagements produced while regulating them to prevent their potential negative impacts. In doing so, CPP operates simultaneously with the Scottish Government’s framework that aims to align the projected Local Outcome with the National Outcome. The CPP has a broad role ranging from participating in the planning, delivery and oversight aspects of the Local Outcome plan as well as its alignment with the National Outcome plan.

This discourse of CPP as the ‘middle way’ has been the dominant, even hegemonic, discourse. However, there have been critiques toward this discourse. Some of the most crucial critiques question and problematize the real aim of collaborative governance. The question is “Whether collaborative governance is a strategy of community empowerment or abandonment?” (Davies & Pill, 2012). This question can also be addressed to CPP. In this regard *the community* and its

engagement in governance becomes a floating signifier. The trajectory is uncertain because it could be articulated for more democratic governance or for further entrenching the neoliberal's logic of market.

As elaborated in the previous chapters, the uncertainty of this trajectory is inevitable and cannot be completely eradicated. Recognition and institutionalization of the necessity, ineradicability, and, more importantly, the constitutive role of this uncertainty are the marks of how the logic of agonism characterizes the CPP regime. However, it has also been elaborated that a practice or regime can never be fully hegemonized completely and permanently by any single logic. CPP is not an exception here. As briefly described above, as a regime CPP is also informed by other logics which are intended to stabilize the uncertainty, such as the Single Outcome-Local Outcome framework, the audit regime and many others. The uncertainty or the status of community engagement and collaborative governance as a floating signifier has been highlighted by Rachel Haydecker. She elaborates how collaborative governance and the Scottish devolution policy have been used to demonstrate the Scottish distinctiveness relative to Westminster, especially in sectors such as health, higher education, and local government. Yet, despite this actual divergence, Haydecker predicts that convergence is more likely to happen in the future, including and because of the UK-wide welfare scheme where Scotland is still part of and the potential pressure that may come from the broader UK public if Westminster allows this divergence to persist (Haydecker, 2010, pp. 3-4).

The logic of agonism comes to the fore when public consultation and engagement are continuously institutionalized and conducted. Yet, it is always simultaneously checked by other logics that inform how the consultation and engagement are conducted and which ones are legitimate. The structure of the CPP is centered on these two paradoxical poles. Yet, this structural feature requires

fantasmatic support to maintain its cohesiveness. Therefore, interpellations are common in many public and policy documents related to this CPP, encouraging the public or ‘the community’, the commonly used term, to take an active role in the governance process through the CPP.

In this view, the CPP is crucial because it becomes the arena where the community engagement and the structure that makes it possible as well as prevents it from becoming an objective reality meet. While community engagement in various documents and formal and informal conversations is almost always given the highest priority, ‘the needs to regulate’ the said community engagement always follows it, such as in the Commission on the Future Delivery of Public Services Report’s recommendation (Services C. o., 2011, p. ix). The structure, as rules, can never fully exhaust the practice. In addition, the stated objective cannot always be stated positively such as in the socio-economic state of North Ayrshire that the CPP aims to improve. These two factors indicate the always present likelihood to challenge the structure or rules that govern the CPP as a regime. However, as elaborated in more detail later in this chapter, there have been no significant critiques or counter-discourse emerging toward this regime. Most of the critiques are rather partial, focusing on specific aspects of the regime.

In order to critically elaborate this phenomenon, it is necessary to put it in its specific context. The persistence of the themes of pressure on state budget leading to budget cuts and devolution in the discourse of collaborative governance in Scotland indicates their importance (Services C. o., 2011, p. vii). Therefore, after a brief general overview of North Ayrshire, one section of this chapter focuses the discussion of the CPP against these two themes as its context. North Ayrshire’s long experience with various participatory or collaborative frameworks is briefly discussed. The next section’s main focus, however, is the CPP from around 2015 to 2019.

The elaboration on CPP discusses its structure, the dynamics that have taken place and some reports and comments on its efficacy. This elaboration includes the problematizations of CPP. Interviews with several senior officers and community organizers reveal two prominent problematizations of encouraging and maintaining public participation and encouraging and institutionalizing collaboration among the stakeholders. Review on literature and policy documents sheds further light on these issues, revealing that the most crucial aspect besides the formal structural arrangement is the eagerness to actively engage in the governance process from the stakeholders. The latter is determined more by affective dimension than the formal structural arrangement. They are correlated but irreducible one to another. The fourth section discusses this topic.

The fifth section concludes this chapter by discussing and reiterating the findings for analysis in the next chapter. The identification of the findings is based on LCE's the three units of explanation of social, political, and fantasmatic logics. One important finding is how the Commission on Future Delivery of Public Services Report or Christie's Report has drawn the boundaries or limits presenting the constitution of a new logic in public service which CPP is a part of. It is also important to highlight the new set of regulations and practices that comprise a new regime and the new fantasy that supports it. As the new logic that this report has produced heavily characterized the CPP regime in North Ayrshire, it is important to see how its fantasmatic dimension works to address the structural and subjective lacks that comes to the fore over time and in various moments. Such structural lacks come to the fore when the efficacy of CPP turns out to be not as expected, for example in the 2018 North Ayrshire Economic Review (Institute, 2018) and 2019 Inspection on Healthcare (Inspectorate & Scotland, 2019) for adults in North Ayrshire or when the public are reluctant to actively engage in the CPP *fora*.



## 1. Overview of North Ayrshire

Before proceeding with description and elaboration of CPP in North Ayrshire, this section provides a brief overview of the geographical, economical, and socio-political aspects of this region. North Ayrshire is one out of 32 council areas in Scotland. It is located in the Southwest part of Scotland. It borders with Inverclyde, East Ayrshire, and South Ayrshire to its North, East and South respectively. The North Ayrshire council area is comprised of 6 localities of Arran, Garnock Valley, Irvine, Kilwinning, North Coast, and Three Towns. Irvine is the administrative center of this Council Area. Arran or the Isle of Arran is an island that comprises of more than 50% of North Ayrshire territory but inhabited by around 4% of its total population.

Demographically, based on the 2017 estimation, North Ayrshire is estimated to have around 135,800 population. Based on the 2016 estimation, Arran has 4,562 population; Garnock Valley: 20,128; Irvine: 39,517; Kilwinning: 16,181; North Coast: 22,827; Three Towns: 32,915. The Joint Inspection (Adults) report in 2016 states that out of this population, there are 85,535 working age population (16-64 years) or 60.5% of the total population. Among the 39.5% of the population out of working age, 17.2% were children and young people (0 – 15 years) and 22.3% older people (65+). (Inspectorate & Scotland, 2019, p. 5). This report also describes the negative trend of population growth in North Ayrshire and anticipates the emergence of ‘greying population’

Currently North Ayrshire engages in a broad program of regional regeneration after the decline of its industrial sector that started in around 1980s. Up to 2019, North Ayrshire, alongside with Ayrshire in general, are still struggling with the regeneration program. This is due to the relatively smaller share of the finance, communication, and professional sectors in comparison with the rest of Scotland. This has been mentioned as a factor of the differential economic growth (in terms of

GVA) between North Ayrshire and the rest of Scotland, where North Ayrshire along with the rest of Ayrshire are below the Scottish average (Institute, 2018, p. 8). Another factor is the relatively high unemployment rate in North Ayrshire that reached 6.4% in 2017/2018. While this is more than half of its highest peak of 14% in 2012/2013, it is still higher than the Scottish average of 4% (Institute, 2018, p. 10).

Currently, the socio-economic situation in North Ayrshire is challenging. It has been described as a place of 'sharp inequalities' (Inspectorate & Scotland, 2019, p. 6). The 2016 dataset of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) shows concentrations of some of the 5% most deprived of Scottish population in towns such as Kilwinning, Irvine, Ardrossan, Saltcoats, and Stevenston (Government, 2019). The economic review of this area in November reveals that North Ayrshire is the 5<sup>th</sup> most deprived area in Scotland and is also facing the problem of child poverty

where it is ranked the 2<sup>nd</sup> worst (Institute, 2018, p. 2).

**Figure 1. Map of North Ayrshire**



The North Ayrshire Council is a hung council. There are 11 Labour councillors, 11 SNP, 7 Conservative, and 4 Independent councillors. Since 4 May 2017 the government is run by a Labour Party minority government.

In terms of public finance, there have been relatively huge cuts in public spending. In some sectors, such as

healthcare, the demands and needs exceed the available budget (Inspectorate & Scotland, 2019).

This is partially caused by the ‘ageing community’ process that has been taking place in North Ayrshire that leads to the increase in demands for healthcare service.

## **2. CPP in the Context of Scottish Devolution and the Paradigm Shift in the UK**

The emergence of CPP in North Ayrshire is part of the Scotland wide policy to devolve power beyond the local authority down to the community. The intention is to ensure that the community receives public services based on their needs through their active engagement in the governance process (Parliament, 2015). This measure is also expected to make the public sector more efficient as the service delivered would be better-targeted and based on the consent of the recipients.

Achieving efficiency while enhancing the quality of the services have been stated as something paradoxical yet managing this paradox is exactly the desired goals of the public service reform in Scotland. This has been stated in the Christie’s report (Services C. o., 2011), which serves as the major reference in the formulation of the public service reform in Scotland since then. This report mentions the new situation of cuts in public spending, due to austerity measures under the impetus of the European financial crisis in 2008, yet this also occurs simultaneously with growing demand from the public that the local government has to address. This kind of challenging situation is often described as “to do more with less”. In order to cope with this new situation, there has to be a change in how the public sector deals with public matters (Services C. o., 2011, pp. viii-x).

The Scottish Government has decided to take ‘community planning partnership’ to address the said paradoxical situations. The Scottish Parliament decreed the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act in 2015. The main aim of this Act is to enhance the performance of its public

services through broader involvement of the community. This act requires the Scottish Ministers to determine National Outcomes which in turn inform the local outcomes and the local planning to achieve them (Parliament, 2015: Part 1 section 1 subsection 1; Part 2 section 4 subsection 1 and 4). The set ‘outcomes’, both national and local, serve as guidance as well as a benchmark to ensure the positive performance of the public services. This Act gives emphasis to the local level and local authority because the Act explicitly states: “The purpose is improvement in the achievement of outcomes resulting from, or contributed to by, the provision of services delivered by or on behalf of the local authority or the persons listed in schedule 1” (Parliament, 2015, p. Part 2 section 4 subsection 2). Parallel provision is not found on the part on ‘National Outcomes’.

This Act requires the local authority to carry this role through community planning and for that purpose it requires the local authority to establish ‘community planning partnership’ (Parliament, 2015: Part 2 section 4 subsection 5). The Act also further requires the local authority, in carrying the community planning, to divide its area into smaller areas that are known as localities. The localities engage in the community planning through their respective locality partnership (Parliament, 2015, p. Part 2 section 9 subsection 1 and 2). This Act also provides that the community planning partnership must prepare locality plans in relations to the respective local outcomes.

This Act does not specify the substance of the ‘outcomes’, both at national and local levels. It does not specify the general strategic sectors upon which the local outcomes should prioritize. In general, this Act focuses on *how*, and not *what*, the ‘outcomes’ should be determined and achieved. It does provide the National Outcomes as general reference and how they are determined but it does not specify what the National Outcomes are. In this framework, the local authority, through community planning, seems to have broad autonomy in determining their local outcomes and the

strategic sectors. The Act in general only provides that the local outcomes have to be in line with the National outcomes and should be periodically reviewed and amended when necessary.

The Act provides that the Community Planning Partnership is comprised of the local authorities and the persons listed in Schedule 1 of the Act. In this framework, each of them is referred to as Community Planning Partner (Parliament, 2015, p. Part 2 section 4 subsection 5).<sup>4</sup> The CPP then determines the community bodies that are likely to contribute in the community planning especially considering those that represent those who experience inequalities of outcome due to

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<sup>4</sup> Following is the list of the persons in Scheduled 1 of The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act of 2015:

- The board of management of a regional college designated by order under section 7A of
- the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 2005 which is situated in the area of the local authority (remove the bullet point from this line – not required)
- The chief constable of the Police Service of Scotland
- The Health Board constituted under section 2(1)(a) of the National Health Service
- (Scotland) Act 1978 whose area includes, or is the same as, the area of the local authority (remove the bullet point from this line – not required)
- Highlands and Islands Enterprise where the area within which, or in relation to which, it exercises functions in accordance with section 21(1) of the Enterprise and New Towns (Scotland) Act 1990 includes the whole or part of the area of the local authority
- Historic Environment Scotland
- Any integration joint board established by virtue of section 9 of the Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014 to which functions of the local authority and the Health Board are delegated
- A National Park authority, established by virtue of a designation order under section 6 of the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000, for a Park whose area includes the whole or part of the area of the local authority
- A regional strategic body specified in schedule 2A of the Further and Higher Education
- (Scotland) Act 2005 which is situated in the area of the local authority (remove the bullet point from this line – not required)
- Scottish Enterprise
- The Scottish Environment Protection Agency
- The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
- Scottish Natural Heritage
- The Scottish Sports Council
- The Skills Development Scotland Co. Limited
- A regional Transport Partnership established by virtue of section 1(1)(b) of the Transport (Scotland) Act 2005 whose region includes, or is the same as, the area of the local authority
- Visit Scotland

social disadvantage. The reduction of the latter is specifically provided in the Act as the main governing principle for the community planning (Parliament, 2015, p. Part 2 Section 5).

The locality partnership is the further breakdown of this framework, intended to deepen the reach of the collaborative process. It is through the division of the local authority area into smaller areas the CPP makes comparisons among the areas to determine the strategic sectors. The comparison is framed based on identification of those who experience significant inequalities of outcomes relative to other persons who live in other areas within the area of the local authority and other persons who live in Scotland (Parliament, 2015, p. Part 2 section 9 subsection 3).

In North Ayrshire, at the locality level there are locality partnerships. The locality partnerships serve the main purpose, in general, to “develop, review, and implement the priorities of the Locality Plan for its area ...” This includes to collaboratively develop the locality plan in conjunction with the Single Outcome Agreement and the plans of the Community Planning Partners, monitor and review the progress of the Locality Plan, as well as to engage in the effort to influence and improve the delivery of public services to align with the locality plan (Council, n.a., pp. 5-6). With such function, the CPP draws its members from a broad array of backgrounds. Its membership is comprised of the council members who represent locality and other representatives of partner organizations, chairs of community councils or representatives of properly constituted community organizations (Council, n.a., p. 2).

According to the NACPP Terms of Reference (TOR), the membership of the locality partnerships comprises:

- all North Ayrshire Council Members who represent the locality;

- a Senior Lead Officer appointed by the North Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership, who will act as chief advisor to the Locality Partnership
- An officer representative from each of the following Community Planning Partnership organisations, namely:
  - North Ayrshire Council
  - Health and Social Care Partnership
  - Police Scotland
  - Scottish Fire and Rescue
  - Third Sector Interface
- An officer representative from each of the following Community Planning Partnership organisations; expected to attend where relevant to their work or expertise:
  - Scottish Enterprise
  - Skills Development Scotland
  - Strathclyde Partnership for Transport
  - Job Center Plus
  - Scottish Government
  - Irvine Bay Regeneration Company
  - Third Sector Interface
  - Ayrshire College
  - KA Leisure
- The Chair of Community Council within the locality (Council, n.a.)

The TOR also provide that the number of the community representatives in the Locality Partnerships are equal to the number of the elected member of North Ayrshire representing the

locality. They are appointed by the Locality Partnership, where prior to the appointment there is public process to invite expressions of interest for such membership. The TOR also state that all reasonable endeavours should be made in this process to ensure that such community representations include, at least, one young representative.

**Figure 2. Diagram of North Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership-NACPP Structure**



Source: <http://www.northayrshire.community/> accessed 16 July 2019

The North Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership (NACPP) is comprised of various elements ranging from locality partnerships, the strategic management team, community planning board, and 'Fair for All' advisory panel (see **Figure 2**).



In the Scottish context, the discourse of the public service reform has often been articulated as part and parcel of devolution. The discourse of Scottish devolution received relatively broader support among the public as it was articulated as an indispensable condition for the public service reform, in the sense that the need to make the state less-bulky and more efficient by devolving the political power and decentering the administrative power to the sub-national authorities. Scottish devolution as an ongoing process has been marked by continuous attempt to devolve and deconcentrate power to the local level (Lloyd & Peel, 2006). This tendency also appears in the design of the CPP in the Act and even stronger in the NACPP framework. As mentioned above, the former gives primacy to the local level as it becomes the nerve-center of the overall CPP framework. The NACPP implement this Act and further devolve the power to the locality level on the assumption that the closer the decision-making process the better the participation quality and, thus, the decision made.

As part of the broader discourse of devolution, the design of the CPP framework can be seen to be heavily influenced by the notion of *Third Way* which emerged and further transformed about the same period of the initiation of the Scottish Devolution. This notion of Third Way heavily influenced the Tony Blair administration, especially on the public sector, reflected in his administration's white paper on Modernising Government (1999). In this paper, the concept of modernizing government refers to the introduction of corporate management logics and practices into the public sector, partnership with private agencies in the public service provision and delivery, and the inclusion of the public as service users in the policy process to give them better options on what kind, to what quality, and access to public services. This paper also argues that devolution is a vital part of achieving those goals (Blair, 1999, pp. 11-12). The term 'devolution' here refers not only to the devolution of power from London to Edinburgh by the establishment of

Scottish Parliament or even town halls, but further down to local areas (Lloyd & Peel, 2006, p. 836). This is based on the argument that further devolution is inseparable in modernizing the state as it will maximize the front line in serving the needs of the communities (Minister, 2004, p. 13).

Allan Campbell traced the development of the concept of Community Planning in the Scotland context. He shows that in 1998, around the moment of the initiation of Tony Blair's administration and the power devolution in Scotland, Scottish Office (abolished soon and replaced by the Scottish parliament the next year) and COSLA published Scottish Office/COSLA Community Planning Working Group's Report and followed with the setting of five Pathfinder Community Planning projects, where the pathfinders were asked to formulate community plans and to discuss the experience and lessons they drew (Campbell, 2015, p. 2).

Looking on those official papers and policies may give us the impression that CPP as the manifestation of collaborative governance comes into being as a linear continuation of the devolution policy in Scotland in the late 1990s. However, deeper elaboration may demonstrate that its development is not as linear as it seems to be. Neill McGarvey elaborates how the 'central-local relations' is a dynamic issue in Scotland and how the devolution in 1997 did not always lead to further devolution to local authorities as some expected it to be. For example the Scottish Executive from 1999-2007 was perceived to be centralistic. Central-local tensions also manifest in various forms of "guidelines, targets, audits, regulations and the like coming from the Scottish Executive." (McGarvey, 2012, p. 160). Kim McKee's study on more specific policy sector of public housing in Glasgow during the same era also shows a similar tone of central-local tension (McKee, 2008). The current configuration of the Scottish 'central-local' relations is partly due to political agreement between the Scottish National Party (SNP) and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) (McGarvey, 2012). In this agreement the SNP promises to devolve more

power to the local authorities in return for political support for the implementation of its priority agenda across the Scottish local authorities (McGarvey, 2012).

In relation to the paradigm shift from ‘government to governance’ that preceded the program of ‘Modernising the State’ under Blair’s administration, McGarvey also argues that the ‘central-local’ issue in Scotland also evolved around it. He argues that the discourse of Scottish Devolution was aimed to counter the dismantling of the welfare-state carried under this paradigm shift of governing initiated by Margaret Thatcher in the late 1970s (McGarvey, 2012, p. 158). The discourse of political devolution that goes down to the local authorities was part of this broad counter discourse against the agenda of the dismantling of welfare-state imposed from London (McGarvey, 2012, p. 161).

It is in such context of continuous tensions around the issues of central-local relations; both between UK-Scotland and between Edinburgh-local authorities, and efficiency vs. participatory objectives the CPP comes into being. It is noteworthy that these processes of devolution and transformation of governing logic are continuous ones. In the case of power devolution, the Scotland Act 1998 has been amended twice through the Scotland Act 2012 and Scotland Act 2016 where more power is devolved to Scottish Parliament. The latter secures the permanence of power devolution to Scotland.

In the case of transformation of governing logic, in 2015, the community participation is formally provided and regulated through the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015. This act further secures the role of the community in the policy process and provides the statutory basis for CPP. This does not mean that before the promulgation of this act there was no arrangement to include the community in the policy process. Before 2015, it has the statutory basis from the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003. As pointed out in McKee’s work, such arrangement has already

been in place before 2015 in the sector of public housing (McKee, 2008). Also, North Ayrshire Council Area developed the CPP before 2015. In 2013, the CPP in this area formulated a document “Single Outcome Agreement” that maps out the intended outcomes, indicators, and challenges that they want to achieve through the CPP, based on the guidelines provided by the Scottish Government and COSLA in 2012 (CPP, 2013). The Community Empowerment Act 2015 specifically gives statutory purpose (Parliament, 2015, Part 2, Section 5).

The further devolution to the community that takes place in Scotland is sometimes dubbed as ‘double devolution’ (Mulgan & Fran Burry, 2006). The term ‘double’ here refers to two kinds of devolution that takes place simultaneously, namely, devolution from the national to sub-national governments and devolution from the state to civil society. This is apparent in the NACPP framework, because besides the emphasis on the local authority as mandated by the Act, the NACPP framework adds another emphasis on devolution to the community level through the locality partnership.

The focus on the locality here is intended to enhance the efficacy and efficiency of the resource allocated on public services. The framework is designed to give priority to areas with significant deprivation, identified through the SIMD. Further, referring to the Christie Commission’s report, the community engagement is intended not only to identify what public services they need and want *firsthand* but also to encourage further engagement in co-production or co-creation of those public services (Sutton, 2017). In the end, it is expected that the communities are able to run these services by themselves and the government resources can be allocated to other areas (CH, 2018). NACPP comes with bold initiatives with regards to the issue of inequality by adopting the Fair for All Strategy as an overarching strategy for its partnership projects. Not many CPPs have adopted

such strategy (EY, 2018; Partnership, 2016). Structurally, a Fair for All Advisory Board has been installed in the overall NACPP framework (see **Figure 2**).

### **3. Encouraging Collaboration and Participation: the Challenge of Mobilizing the Communal Sense**

The NACPP demonstrates many innovations in pursuing the goals of reforming public services through collaborative governance. Those efforts have not gone unnoticed. The multiple awards North Ayrshire Council (NAC) has won; ranging from creating economic growth and employment, waste management, efficiency in service delivery, environmental services (APSE, 2017), to Best Public/Private Working Initiative in Scotland (APSE, 2018); are some of the recognition it earns for its endeavours on participatory planning. This, however, does not mean that the NACPP framework is not without its shortcomings or defects. Besides the more apparent shortcomings such as structural deficiency; the problem of coordination; and other problems commonly recurring in public policy and the governance process, there is also a persistent challenge with regards to raising the communal sense. The latter becomes central because it is one of the main factors that maintains the cohesiveness of the community and its members' willingness to collaborate as a community.

The CPP framework both as provided in the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 and the NACPP framework tend to be perceived from the paradigm that gives primacy to consensus. However, further investigation through interviews as well as literature and policy documents review reveal that this consensus, as a complete and fixed totality, is absent. The absence of the consensus manifests in various forms. One of its persistent manifestations, as it has been recurring in the interviews as well as literature and document reviews, is the perceived lack of communal

sense among the communities. This ‘lack of communal sense’ is not uniform either among the communities in North Ayrshire. One officer told us that ‘communal sense’ is stronger in places such as small islands within the North Ayrshire Council’s area. On the contrary, it is more fragmented in bigger island such as in Arran (CH, 2018). The same interviewee also expressed his belief that not even all of the councillors agree with the three priorities of the NACPP. Another interviewee also acknowledges that this ‘lack of communal sense’ also manifests in the relations between the community representatives and the community they are supposed to represent. The situation was even worse in some areas that had a bad experience with ‘community council’ in the past. (SM, 2018).

Our interviewees’ roles are related to liaising among the stakeholders, especially between the partners and the communities as well as among them; they express that the challenge of getting the community together is more challenging than ensuring the alignment of the locality plan with the local and national outcomes (SM, 2018). To a certain extent, the interviewee mentioned that these parameters facilitate the coordination and mobilization of the communities and their diverse needs and demands. While they are addressing the challenge to raise the ‘communal sense’ at the community level and across communities within the locality, all of the interviewees are aware that they also need to address the challenge to rise the ‘communal sense’ across ‘North Ayrshire’ area. In the interview, one of the interviewees mentioned that this has been carried out by projecting the communal view outward in order to raise the sense of interdependency among the communities within the locality and across the localities across North Ayrshire.

In order to address the potential and actual impacts of disagreement with regards to the priorities, one of the interviewees refers to the formally adopted ‘evidence based’ approach (Sutton, 2017, p. 10) to identify, determine, and justify the decided priorities to neutralize the disagreements. Tools

such as the SMID provide the ‘objective’ evidence that such approach requires. The interviewee, however, acknowledges that such ‘objective’ justification is still contingent to the policy performance and the potential backlash if the policies taken do not perform as expected (CH, 2018).

As mentioned above, another strategy to address the fragmentations among the stakeholders is by recognizing the potential and actual differences and the potential and actual impacts they entail. Such strategy is deployed simultaneously with conditioning the stakeholders to identify themselves with the partnership project and consider themselves as well as other community planning partners and locality partners as commonly belonging to the same place. One of the interviewees reiterated this in the sentence of “We are working together” intended to “make change” (SM, 2018). CPP has been articulated as ‘place making’ through ‘space opening’ for the broader public (Sutton, 2017). This articulation refers to the attempts to make public services to be the place for the broader public to engage with preceded with opening it as a space which previously the public had limited access to. ‘Working together’, These sentences of ‘Make change’, ‘Place making’, ‘Space Opening’ do not have any given specific meaning of their own, the practice in the field, the interviewee mentioned to us, means that they have to be creative to articulate the specific demands of the communities with the set locality plans. The position of such locality partnership coordinators is exactly located in the middle between ‘the policy demands’ and ‘the community demands’ and it is their assigned function to bridge them.

However, the attempts to combine these two goals of partnership and community involvement through the framework of collaborative-governance, is not as smooth as it may seem. A glance at the continuous attempts prior to the enactment of the statutory basis for CPP through the Community Empowerment Act 2015 show ruptures and antinomies that CPP, as well as any

collaborative arrangement, has to tackle. The report of the Pathfinder Project for Community Planning by COSLA in the late 1990s comes with conclusions that the ambition to combine these two ideals of partnership and community involvement lead to several paradoxes that such a framework has to tackle. This study lists these following tensions and irreducibility between the ideals of ‘partnership’ and ‘community involvement’:

- The tension between **visioning** and strategic thinking and then making the vision an **operational reality**
- The tension between a **focus on partnership** and a focus on **community involvement**.
- The tension between an emphasis on **partnership**, and especially the development of a strategic partnership process, and the emphasis on the development of a council’s role as a **community leader**.
- The tension between providing **leadership for partners** and **leadership for the community**.
- The tension between a focus on **process** and **strategy** and on **outcome** and action.

(COSLA, 1999, p. 8)

This report also mentions the emergence of shared visions and leadership as central concepts, especially to deal with those paradoxes. Shared vision and leadership later would be adopted and formalized as part of the official framework as the Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) that served as the common reference for the stakeholders involved in the CPP to orient their engagement in policy process. In the Community Empowerment Act 2015 a similar concept also appears under the heading of Local Outcomes, through which the policy process at the local level is calibrated with one at the national level manifests in the National Outcome. The centrality of shared vision



and leadership in this report becomes one distinctive feature of collaborative governance that gives the primacy on consensus among the involved parties, in contrast with adversarial and managerial models (Ansell & Gash, 2011).

In these endeavors the managers and coordinators recourse to a strategy of reaching into the public's affective dimension. The managers and coordinators whom we met during the interviews often demonstrated optimism, despite the challenges they were facing in conducting the CPP and Locality Partnership. They seemed to have strong beliefs that they work differently with any other previous or current collaborative engagement in other areas and what they are doing will lead to positive results. This strong belief seems to be based on the conviction that 'it is up to them to determine whether there will be change or not'. Since 'the space' is now open for them to make their voice heard and actively engage in the public services sectors where they expect to make change, they have the chance that they have been waiting for. It is this sort of optimism and conviction that the managers, coordinators, and other committed agents aim to propagate among the broader public.

During the field work from February to July 2018, there was initiative to insert the concept of 'kindness' into the NACPP framework. The NACPP was collaborating with the Carnegie UK Trust from January to March 2018 on this initiative. This initiative aims "to encourage kindness in organisations and communities, to improve wellbeing and support empowerment as part of our Fair for All strategy. The partnership aims to work across public, private and third sectors and with individuals and communities to actively apply the learning from the first phase of the Trust's kindness project within the context of existing collaborations to tackle poverty and create equity" (Partnership, 2018). Two interviewees explicitly mentioned that this initiative is intended to reach

into the affective dimension of the community members (CH, 2018; SM, 2018), whom one of the interviewees described as ‘being too self-centred’ (CH, 2018).

It is interesting to see that ‘the kindness’, perceived as relational kindness, is on one hand intended to bridge the gap between the formal organisations and communities, on which its overlap is argued to be the site of the intended wellbeing and empowerment, but also, on the other hand, have disruptive potentials. The act of kindness, this initiative argues, sometimes requires going beyond the formally stated rules in order to build connections across differences. In organizational context, this sometimes means transgressing the guidelines, rules, or regulations for the sake of ‘doing the right thing’ (Ferguson & Thurman, 2019, p. 3). The latter is confirmed by our interviewees, especially those who have the role of collaboration and engagement managers and coordinators. They often have to recourse to ‘informal ways’ in order to reach out to the diverse communities in their areas (CP, 2018; SM, 2018). The report of this initiative in 2019 explicitly states the import of the ‘informal aspects’ of the collaboration that previously had been perceived rather as an obstacle for the proper functioning of the organizations. It argues that the acts of kindness often take place in this ‘informal domain’ and, though often denied, has constitutive role for the overall functioning of the related organization. Therefore, the Kindness initiative argues for institutional and organizational change in order to incorporate the ‘informal aspect’ and embed it in the organization as organizational culture (Ferguson & Thurman, 2019, p. 3; 9).

The Kindness Initiative is a more explicit articulation of recognition of the inevitable lack in the structure and its contingency, its constitutive role, and the institutionalization of its recognition. The report also reiterates how the act of kindness is defined by its voluntary nature. At first glance it seems paradoxical to embed it into the organization whose nature is defined rather by its hierarchical and compulsory principles. This explains why the Kindness Initiative has its focus on

the informal aspects of organization. The Kindness initiative complements the existing formal arrangements intended to address the always present contingency through obligatory review on the National Outcomes, Local Outcomes, and Locality Plans provided by The Act.

#### 4. Conclusions

The previous section has elaborated CPP in the context of devolution and participatory policy making in Scotland and the UK. The elaboration finds out that both contexts are in continuous dynamic. The devolution does not end merely with the enactment of the Scottish Devolution Act 1998 but it is continuously evolving, reflected in two amendments, so far, in 2012 and 2016. This is also the case with the participatory policy making framework, in the form of CPP that started to emerge as early as mid-1990s, about the same time as the referendum for Scottish devolution and the beginning of the devolution era for Scotland, and continuously altered up to the enactment of the Community Empowerment Act in 2015.

One of the main strengths and advantages of the CPP framework in North Ayrshire and Scotland in general is that it has been built upon a rich accumulated stock of knowledge. As pointed out in Campbell's working paper, its development started in the late 1990s. In that span of 20 years, there have been multiple researches, studies, and pilot projects taken, from which various lessons and experience are drawn and challenges anticipated. Therefore, it has more knowledge and legitimacy to articulate that it is different with other, previous and current, collaborative and participatory governance arrangements. North Ayrshire has produced the SoE in 2013 and experimented with Community Participatory Planning for years since then. It won the Association of Public Service Excellence-APSE's 'Council of the Year Award' in 2017, after being nominated for four consecutive years. This award is achieved through innovations in collaborative-governance in

various sectors of public services, ranging from creating economic growth and employment, waste management, efficiency in service delivery, environmental services (APSE, 2017), to Best Public/Private Working Initiative in Scotland (APSE, 2018).

The current NACPP framework distinguishes itself from CPP in other areas through its initiative to give primacy to the communities through its Locality Partnership framework and the adoption of a 'Fair for All Strategy'. The adoptions of these measures draw the boundaries that outline the NACPP in contrast with CPP in other areas or previous collaborative arrangements. This has served to make the NACPP stand out, indicated by multiple awards it has won. The main challenge, however, is how to maintain this achievement. Previously, it has been mentioned that collaborative governance is based on the paradox of how to achieve two irreducible goals, of partnership and community involvement, simultaneously. The success of CPP as a form of collaborative governance is defined by the ability of the stakeholders to continuously maintain the delicate balance which is continuously changing from time to time. CPP in North-Ayrshire describes this continuous attempt as its dimensions of 'designing how we work together' and 'agreeing on our priorities' (Sutton, Engaging communities to co-produce Locality Partnership: Scottish First, 2017). For example, despite its achievement in the Public/Partnership initiative, the Economic Review and Joint Inspection on Health and Social Care give a description of challenging situations that NACPP still has to tackle in the future. This situation may make some people question the efficacy of the overall NACPP strategy or to foreground the fragmentations and disagreements previously backgrounded in the attempt to pursue the stated goals and priorities of NACPP.

Continuously drawing inputs; manifested in various forms, ranging from gossips and grumbles in coffee shops or tea houses to formal petitions and policy recommendations; is one way to continuously sense the dynamic situation and to respond accordingly in order to maintain the

delicate balance. This is central because this delicate balance greatly affects the shared vision and leadership upon which the collaborative governance is based as it binds together the diverse stakeholders with diverse interests and identity to stay and actively engage in the collaboration process.

The delicateness of this balance is due to the nature that setting priorities always imply exclusion of some alternatives. These alternatives in actual policy process mean fellow stakeholders' interest and demands. Without careful measures, these inevitable exclusions may lead to the dissolution of the shared vision and the failure of the collaborative framework. Kingdon elaborates the complexity of this process of agenda or priority setting, that involves more than merely technocratic procedures and evidence but also takes into account the political moods of the stakeholders involved (Kingdon, 2011).

In order to maintain this delicate balance, it is noteworthy that CPP rely on informal channels to engage with the communities besides the formal ones in CPP conventions and meetings. McGarvey describes that, in contrast to the UK society, Scottish society still retains its informal relations horizontally and vertically. This aspect, he argues, has not been explored adequately (McGarvey, 2012, p. 161). Such approach may serve various functions and goals at once, such as: identifying and reaching 'hard to reach groups'; which would also make the otherwise unheard input heard and considered in the policy process and maintaining flexibility and responsiveness of the CPP and prevent it from turning into another stiff and bulky bureaucracy. It is not surprising that the NACPP collaborates with the Carnegie UK Trust in the Kindness Initiative Network. As elaborated above, this initiative aims to reach the affective dimension to support the operations of the formal organizational structure.

The elaboration above has demonstrated how NACPP is simultaneously characterized simultaneously by multiple logics. The logic of technocratism still appears, especially in the articulation of the priorities for North Ayrshire that should include regeneration in terms of economic development as part of the regeneration project. However, its position seems to be not as dominant as in the previous years as the NACPP explicitly states its emphasis on ‘community engagement’ in co-design and a co-production framework (Sutton, 2017). The elaboration has also revealed that the NACPP framework is not immune to fragmentations and various strategies to address these fragmentations.

The strategies that reach out into the affective dimension become some of the most prominent ones in dealing with the potential and actual fragmentations. Besides the available formal arrangements such as periodic review and framework for revision, amendment, and reformulation of the priorities and how to achieve them, the strategies that reach out into the affective dimension provide more means to deal with the ever-present contingency. The ‘Kindness Initiative’ is a distinctive strategy among other strategies that aims to reach out to the stakeholders’ affective dimension. It owes its distinction to its underlying premise that foregrounds the ‘informal aspects’ as the site where ‘kindness’ takes place and its constitutive role for the operations and durability of the related organization’s formal structure. It also discloses and recognizes the disruptive potentials of ‘kindness’ because sometimes it necessitates transgressions of the existing formal rules, regulations, or guidelines.

By giving the emphasis of the CPP framework on the community empowerment through engagement in and through the Locality Partnership, the NACPP seems to have decided to engage with the contingency head-on. The logic of agonism seems to become more dominant in this sense and subordinating other logics. In doing so, the managers and coordinators have become aware of

the role of the affective or fantasmatic dimension that had been often excluded under the guise of 'informality'. The hegemony of logic of agonism, however, does not mean that subordination is totally eradicated and the hegemony can be fixed once and for all. The next chapter focuses the discussion on the 'dimension of coercion' in the operation of the logic of agonism in and through the NACPP regime and its contingent nature.

## **Chapter VI. CRITICAL EXPLANATIONS ON NORTH AYRSHIRE**

### **COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP PLANNING – NACPP CASE**

As elaborated in the previous chapter, collaborative governance has been around in Scotland since the late 1990s. Its adoption and implementation have been going through numerous changes and modifications. These changes and modifications reflect the diversity of logics that characterize its practices and regime. The logic of agonism is only one among those logics that continuously engages in the hegemonic game, competing with other logics to characterize the practices or regime of North Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership (NACPP). This chapter discusses the NACPP regime through the lens of LCE focusing on how the logic of agonism engages in the hegemonic game in order to highlight its dimension of coercion. The analysis through the LCE involves the deployment of its three basic units of explanation of Social Logics; Political Logics; and the Fantasmatic Logics (Glynos & Howarth, 2007). The Social Logics highlights the logic of agonism as a rule or grammar that informs daily social life, especially in the governance processes within the framework of NACPP. Elaboration on this aspect involves analysis of how and to what extent the logic of agonism becomes the norm that informs the practices of day-to-day social life under the NACPP, especially in relation to other logics. The latter takes the analysis on the political dimension – analysed through the Political Logics – of the logic of agonism in informing the NACPP regime. The constitution of the logic of agonism as hegemony necessitates its articulation as a nodal point under which other logics are subordinated or excluded. It is through this process each acquires their specific meanings as well as modification of their meanings. Though the limits signify the impossibility of the logic of agonism to hegemonize the practices or regime, in this case the NACPP, its constitution is necessary for the emergence of the logic of agonism as an objective



being. The limits that signify the lack of the investigated phenomenon as objective being and its ‘ignoble beginning’ may always be potentially articulated as antagonism and, on its turn, to its dissolution. It owes its sustenance to the fantasmatic dimension which means its grips on its subjects who perform the practices that belong to the regime. The operations of this fantasmatic dimension determine whether the limits, either in the form of subordination or exclusion, is perceived as something natural, normal, or necessary or as coercion in subjective sense.

### **1. Introduction: The Regional Revitalization through Co-Production**

The following sections discuss the NACPP through each of those basic units of explanation. The second section discusses how the NACPP installs a new set of practices; norms; rules; regulations; procedures and guidelines. The articulations of collaborative governance including CPP as ‘normality’ is prevalent in the policy statements; documents; media coverage; and even daily conversations in the current state of democratic society. They and their performance define the meaning and identity of NACPP. This section elaborates how such articulations always involve contrasting with what-it-is-not. This elaboration leads us to the discussion in the third section that elaborates the limits of NACPP. As it has been elaborated in the Second Chapter, the constitution of something as objective reality necessitates the defining of its limits, which are the conditions of its possibility as well as, simultaneously, impossibility as a total and fixed objectivity. One of the manifestations of this political logic, often articulated simultaneously to inseminate the fantasmatic dimension that supports the NACPP regime, is that it-is-different with other previous or current collaborative arrangement. It is need-based and ‘the community’ takes the lead. The elaboration involves contrasting these articulations with critical voices from scholars such as Jonathan Davies and Madeleine Pill (Davies & Pill, 2012). The fourth section elaborates the fantasmatic dimension

that covers this lack that manifests and, thus, serves to sustain the regime's grip on its subjects. The resort to affective dimension to maintain the cohesiveness of the NACPP regime elaborated in the previous section is deeply related with this dimension and, thus, is discussed in more detail in this chapter. The fifth section reiterates the dimension of coercion and its ontological status in agonism/agonistic pluralism which has its source in the nature of hegemonic game through which agonism/agonistic pluralism acquires its specific meaning.

## **2. NACPP: The New Grammar**

The Social Logics is a unit of analysis in the LCE that focuses the analysis on the aspect of 'rule' and 'rule following' (Glynos & Howarth, 2007). In that sense, as an analytical tool, this concept is utilized to identify and characterize a concrete practice or regime of practices, in this case the NACPP to identify the specific rules or grammar that make those practices or regime meaningful. Some of its aspects have been discussed in the previous chapters, especially in Chapter IV, but it is better to briefly reiterate them here due to their import for the discussion here.

The regime of NACPP has its roots in the dynamics of the paradigmatic shift 'from government to governance'. This has been articulated in many literatures as well as policy documents and statements along the spectrum whose poles are those who see this paradigmatic shift as a façade of the neoliberal hegemony on one pole and those who see it as necessity with regards to the expansion of democracy (Pierre & Pieters, 2000; Bevir, 2007; Bevir, 2012) . The initial stage of this paradigmatic shift has been characterized by the emphasis of the introduction of managerialism logic previously common in the private sector into the public sector. This was justified as a manifestation of the recognition of the public's right for freedom of choice and the government's accountability to make public services more efficient and effective. This took place

during the Conservative's rule under Thatcher and Major, often known under the heading 'New Public Management'. While it seemed to work to ease the tension and constrain the state's budget as under this arrangement many public sectors were privatized, it turned out that it caused another ardent problem as it widened the socio-economic gaps and excluded those who were unable to engage in an arena informed by the logic of market on equal terms as their other counterparts. This manifested in the doubling of the relative poverty rate during Thatcher's administration and John Major's; her successor, reflected in the GINI coefficient (Shepard, 2003, p. 6).

This has been followed with Tony Blair's New-Labour through its collaborative governance that aimed to rectify the defects that Thatcherism had by reintroducing some aspects of the social welfare program but targeted mainly to enable the individuals to engage in the arena predominantly informed by market logic. It can be said that the meaning of the social welfare program is modified in this articulation. It does not mean the fulfilment of citizen's rights by the state but rather as state's intervention to constitute or to mould the kind of subject that the market requires (Davies & Pill, 2012; Ives, 2018). Jayasuriya elaborates this phenomenon and describes it as 'socialization of liberalism' (Jayasuriya, 2006). Blair's policy does not question, much less challenge the hegemony of the logic of market in public sector through the reintroduction of the social welfare policy. In fact, the social welfare policy is rearticulated in subordinate relations to the logic of market, reflected in the emphasis of the intended impacts of the social welfare programs to enable the recipients to compete in the job market (Grover, 2003).

Across these changes, the narrative of 'the necessity to change the public sector' persists. The articulations often revolve around two principles which sometimes sound irreducible but are often articulated in one breath. They are 'the need to reduce the tension on the state budget through efficiency' on one hand and 'the need to empower the society, to enable them to collaborate in

dealing with public matters'. This articulation also appears in the Christie Commission's Report as 'do more with less' (Services C. o., 2011), referring to the situation where there has been growing demand for public services, yet less resources available. This does not mean that most people are not unaware of the dilemma. They, however, seem to rather acquiesce or even actively support the 'collaborative governance' regime such as the NACPP based on its positive articulation of such as 'collaboration', 'inclusiveness', 'participation' etc. rather than its negative counterpart of reduction of public spending and constraint on the state's budget. On some occasions, the positivization of the latter; such as in the term of 'efficiency', is also proven to be appealing to some of the public. The public acceptance to this NACPP regime may not always be based on the acceptance of its positive articulation. Some indications of rather passive acceptance or acquiescence are also found, mentioned by one of our interviewees (CH, 2018). Such passive support or acquiescence is often based on the perception that 'there is no other option available'.

The regimentation of certain practices ranging from those which are legal-formally installed by the laws to rather semi- and informal practices further 'normalize' the NACPP as a regime. This normalization operates exactly through their very performativity. This includes activities such as formulations of Local Outcomes, Locality Plans, the partnership meetings, community meetings, and reviews of those set outcomes and plans. Some of these activities are formally institutionalised and provided by the laws, such as the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015. Some others, if not the majority, are rather informal or semi-formal at best. Even within these formally institutionalized practices, informality still permeates. The interviews disclose that these informalities are often more effective strategies to mobilize collaboration from the communities (SM, 2018).

The relatively broad acceptance of the NACPP framework is also based on the articulation of NACPP with democracy. NACPP, as manifestation of ‘collaborative governance’, is associated with the expansion of democracy, involving a broader public in the arenas where they previously had limited access. Such articulations usually follow the discourse of ‘the need for a new way of governing and administering public services.’ The positive articulation of the necessity of collaboration associates it with public inclusion and participation in dealing with their own matters. Further, the emphasis on ‘the community’ in the articulation of ‘collaboration’, manifests in the initiative to establish the partnership at the locality level and the adoption of the ‘Fair for All Strategy’ can also be seen as influenced by the ‘traditional’ divergence of Scotland in comparison with other parts of the UK (McGarvey, 2012). This may also contribute to a relatively broad acceptance among the North Ayrshire public, as part of Scotland, toward the NACPP and the Locality Partnership frameworks.

Interestingly, in order to ensure that the voices from the communities are heard, they have two kinds of representatives among the members of the locality partnership, beside the other members representing the locality partner organizations. The communities are represented by the elected council members representing the correlated locality and by the community representatives. The maximum number of the community representatives in the locality partnership is designed to be equal with the number of the members from the elected council (Council, n.a.). This can be seen as an attempt to ensure that the voice of the communities is substantively represented in the planning process on one hand and, most importantly, recognition that representation cannot fully represent the represented on the other. Instead of more truly representing the communities, the proliferation of the communities’ representatives in this arrangement rather discloses the split of the represented communities or its lack as a totally objective entity.

Despite the apparent dilemmas or contradictions and even ineffectiveness, such as represented in the Economic Review (2018) and Joint Inspection on Health and Social Care (2019), the majority of the public seems to be quite content with the notion of collaborative governance in the form of NACPP. This also happens in the broader context of Scotland, especially indicated by the decree of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act in 2015. Thence, the NACPP has become the framework as well as the arena that regulates the engagement and collaboration among the stakeholders or the regime's subjects. What some of our interviewees told us about the disagreements that still take place in the partnerships could also be interpreted as disagreements over the specific concrete policy substances rather than the overall partnerships framework (CP, 2017; SM, 2018). They tend to perceive it as something that is inevitable and constructive for the performance of the partnership frameworks both at the NACPP and Locality Partnership levels. They also tend to see this inevitable difference and conflicts of interests and demands from among the stakeholders can be solved through the available legal-formal arrangement supported with the adoption of an ethical standpoint compatible with the values that underlie the NACPP framework, such as exemplified in the 'Kindness Initiative'.

The 'normalization' of the NACPP regime often involves the articulations of it as an entity. In such articulations, NACPP is contrasted to something that it-is-not in order to give it an outline and specify what sort of entity this NACPP is. This indicates the political dimension in the constitution of the NACPP as an entity that the next section discusses.

### **3. The Political Logics: the Limits of NACPP**

Much of the literature and policy documents reviewed and parts of the interviews articulate the NACPP and Locality Partnership as if they have a shared vision and consensus across the public

in North Ayrshire and the localities that comprise it. However, this ‘shared vision’ and ‘consensus’ are not as stable and all-encompassing as they may sound or seem. At the end of the previous section, it is mentioned that in order to give an outline and specify the NACPP as an entity, it is often articulated in contrast to what it-is-not. Such articulation indicates that its status as a ‘shared vision’ and ‘consensus’ is unstable and, thus, has to be frequently reiterated. Furthermore, such articulation indicates that the constitution of NACPP as an entity involves either subordination or exclusion of other possibilities. The Political Logics from the LCE provides the means to analyze the political dimension of an entity or reality by disclosing how its constitution involves continuous attempts to stabilize the ever-present contingency and the political nature of such attempts. Its political nature comes from the necessary dual process of inclusion/exclusion through the signifying logics of equivalence/difference in order to stabilize and specify the identity or meaning of the said entity or reality (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 141; 143).

Such contingency and transiency of an entity or reality can never be fully eradicated. Even on entities or realities that may seem to be straightforward, they are always permeated by this contingency. The moment when a consensus or shared vision and leadership are established, however, do not necessarily mean total eradication of tensions. For example, COSLA’s study mentioned in the previous chapter argues that CPP in general is plagued by multiple tensions. One of them is the tensions between the goals of partnership on one hand and community involvement on the other. The irreducibility of the two elements of partnership and community involvement or participation may be suspended at certain times, but it can never be totally eradicated (COSLA, 1999). COSLA made this study in 1999. Over time, there is still no permanent solution to solve this tension. As shown in McKee’s study in the case of community-based housing governance in Glasgow (McKee, 2008). The community-based frameworks in the housing governance does give

the tenants options and opportunity to engage in the housing policy and make it more effective as they define what the policy is and should be based on their lively experience. However, from the lens of governmentality, this framework is still subjected to a certain 'regime of truth' imposed from above that conduct how the community should conduct themselves within this community framework. There are still regulations that put constraint on what the tenants can and cannot do with regards to the housing policy within this framework. Therefore, McKee's paper concludes that this framework of devolution of power to the community paradoxically runs in parallel with centralization of political control as the government, both at local and national level, through their control over the parameter for community governance. The NACPP also faces similar situations though with some variations (JM, 2018).

The interviews also disclose simultaneous challenges of engaging the communities to actively participate in the governance and policy process. Sometimes, the community is articulated in singular form. However, in its actuality, the community is comprised of diverse and constantly changing elements. Collaborative governance as huge as NACPP inevitably has to deal with and address these diverse communities and their correlated demands and needs which are not always compatible and sometimes even conflicting, with one another. Furthermore, these communities are not static. They are dynamic and irreducible merely to communal identity based not only on territory but also interest (Lightbody, 2017, p. 1). Some communities are harder to reach than others. In such situations, these communities are more likely to be ignored in the governance and policy processes and their interests left unaccommodated in the policies (Lightbody, 2017). Lightbody argues that those 'hard to reach groups' are more likely to be ignored in community engagement because it is easier to ignore them than attempting to eradicate the barriers that made them harder to reach (Lightbody, 2017, p. 6).



These tensions that manifest in the concrete practices of the NACPP regime are often solved through resorting to the available mechanisms that are intended to facilitate decision making in such undecidable situations. This may range from mechanisms which are legal-formally installed to rather semi-formal or informal mechanisms. In one of the interviews mentioned in the previous chapter, disagreements over the priorities in NA are solved rather through the former; through the use of an evidence-based approach (CH, 2018). Other interviews, in a rather general manner, disclose that the coordinators and managers often resort to an informal approach to solve such tensions, especially when engaging with the communities. Regardless of the formal/semi-formal/informal distinctions, the point here is that the decision made in such an undecidable situation always implies double operations of inclusion/exclusion. Some or all aspects of the conflicting interest have to be modified or excluded altogether for the sake of making the intended decision and suspend the undecidable situation.

Referring to the CPP framework in The Act as well as its application in the NACPP, it is important to mention here that there is logic of agonism that comes into play to facilitate the decision making in such undecidable situations. The NACPP, following the provision of CPP in the Act, tends to make sure that every decision making process and the decision produced are always subjected to review and the chance to modify or amend it (Parliament, 2015). Thus, in this sense, the NACPP, and the CPP framework in general, recognizes the *wicked* nature of most of the problems that it addresses, actually and potentially in the future, and the *lousy* nature of the solutions it produces to address them and institutionalize the mechanisms and procedures to modify or amend them.

However, it is noteworthy that the domination of the logic of agonism in this aspect of the NACPP does not make it immune to subordination or exclusion. In such moments, the logic of agonism subordinates or excludes other logics such as the logic of technocratism or managerialism. The

‘hard evidence’ such as produced through the SIMD, in such moments, could be sidelined or incorporated to support the review on certain concrete decisions in order to revise or amend them. The ‘hard evidence’, and its underpinning logic of technocratism, is subordinated to the logic of agonism as it does not determine the ultimate decision in and for itself but is constantly subjected to review. So is the logic of managerialism, where it has to allocate resources, against the underpinning efficiency principle, to accommodate the constant review process. This is homologous to the subordination of those two logics under the logics of agonism in electoral regime in democracy. It is not a secret that holding elections expends huge resources and the results can never be fully predicted beforehand. They often produce elected officials against any objective calculations. Yet, the undecidable situation has to be opened up, so the public can decide for themselves whether to stabilize the undecidable situation. This is because such a regime like democracy bases its legitimacy on the recognition and institutionalization of the constitutive role of decision in such an undecidable situation (Lefort, 1988; Mouffe, 2000).

The domination of the logic of agonism is not total and fixed either. In many other moments, it is the turn of this logic to be subordinated to other logics. This is reflected in various critical voices directed toward the idea of ‘collaborative governance’ that underlying the NACPP. Some of these critical voices come from the *left* that pointing to the strong and prevalent elements of neoliberal ideology in ‘collaborative governance’ as well as in the CPP framework. This is despite the fact that in Scotland’s context, as pointed out by McGarvey, the discourse of local government is often articulated as a counter-discourse to the dismantling of the Welfare-state initiated under Thatcher’s administration (McGarvey, 2012). One indications of the domination of the neoliberalism in the NACPP, as well as in the general CPP framework, is the replacement of the subject position of citizen into ‘service user’ or ‘consumer’ of public services. Haydecker argues that such divergence

will diminish in the future due to the centrally imposed procedures and mechanisms as well as their dependency to resources transfer from the Westminster and the limited options that Scotland has as long as they stay as part of the UK (Haydecker, 2010).

Davies and Pill critically elaborate other aspects of the CPP and collaborative governance. They highlight the constant tensions between the logic of empowerment and the logic of abandonment of the public to deal with their own matters in the CPP framework (Davies & Pill, 2012). They critically argue that the collaborative and partnership framework should be perceived against the background of continuous cuts in public spending that ultimately leads to the abandonment of the citizens by their governments, both at the national and sub-national levels. In the context of urban revitalization, they argue that this tendency is parallel with the growing replacement of need-based public funding with market focused growth strategy (Davies & Pill, 2012, p. 16). Davies also criticizes the discourse of partnership, specifically ones that he describes as semi- or formal model of partnership and favours the bottom-up informal governing network. For the former he refers to the network governance promoted by New-Labour which for him articulates 'partnership' as "... the institutional mechanisms through which social consensus is mobilized in pursuit of neoliberal socioeconomics goals" (Davies J. , p. 201; see also Ives, 2018).

The NACPP tries to address the critics by re-opening up the undecidable situation and foreground it by establishing the locality partnership, where the communities are expected to have a more equal footing in the partnership framework. It is also intended to mobilize a bottom-up informal model of partnership and the needs-based citizen-led regeneration programs that Davies and Pill favor. This, however, does not permanently solve the problems that people such as Davies, Pill, Ives and many others highlight. Lightbody's report emphasizes that equality of access is insufficient to tackle this challenge. This is because having equal access does not mean that each

group has equal influence on the outcome of community engagement. This may come from various sources, such as level of education, language barriers, disability, and gender (Lightbody, 2017, p. 9). Lightbody argues for the need to provide facilitation in order to make sure that anyone involved in community engagement has the same footing in the process (Lightbody, 2017, p. 10). In this sense, equity becomes a necessary measure to ensure that everyone has equal footing in the community engagement process.

The emergence of the concept of equity indicates another lack that may plague the NACPP regime. In two documents produced in the same year, Sutton's *Engaging communities to co-produce Locality Partnerships: a Scottish First* and *The Fair for All Strategy*, there seems to be tensions putting 'equality' vis-a-vis 'equity'. Sutton explicitly states that the locality planning partnership is intended to create 'equity'. This is articulated as part of the Fair for All Strategy (Sutton, 2017). However, the term 'equity' appears only twice in The Fair for All Strategy document. A term that has similarities of meaning with 'equity' is 'proportional universalism'. This term appears in the section on reducing inequalities in access to healthcare services, that is supposedly universal but there are many factors that may differentiate one's access for such services even though they potentially have equal access (Partnership, 2016, p. 6). This may indicate a strategy to implicitly rearticulate the emphasis of the broader policy of CPP that focuses rather on reducing inequalities, reflected in the priority given to those who live in areas which are significantly deprived in comparison to others in Scotland.

The primacy given to the concept of equity can also be potentially articulated as a strategy for liberalization of public service and social policy. The logic may slide to the direction where certain groups or communities, considered to be facing barriers for having equal footage in the collaborative governance, claim to be entitled to preferential treatment, manifesting in various

forms that may lead to protest from other groups. These groups may fall under the category of those who are unable to engage equally on their own in collaborative government. This category may come into being only within a series of categories and cannot stand on its own. The most likely scenario is this category made in differential relations to its other, the category of “those who are able”. This may not necessarily be the case. However, reflecting on various cases of social policy in various countries, such categorization is part of the broader strategy of ‘socialization of neoliberalism’ (Jayasuriya, 2006). In such a scenario, preferential measures, in the name of equity, claimed to be intended for the sake of equality, become an instrument of social stratification and part of strategy of normalization of the subject position as ‘market actor’ instead of ‘citizen’ (see Ives, 2018).

The elaboration in this section has demonstrated that the political dimension of the NACPP involves with the constant tensions between contingency of an undecidable situation and the attempts to stabilize it. NACPP, as a framework of collaborative governance, cannot be determined *a priori* as neoliberal institutional instrument as Davies describes, though such possibility does exist. This is because their relations are contingent to articulation. Certain aspects of the NACPP recognize the ineradicability of the contingency and its constitutive role and have been designed to institutionalize it. However, foregrounding the contingency through the institutionalization of the logic of agonism is still a stabilization nonetheless and as a stabilization it can never be total or permanent. The undecidable situation it foregrounds has to be backgrounded through the decision made in such situation that serves as a closure. On its turn, it is this closure that becomes the condition of possibility for the logic of agonism to continue to come to play by deconstructing it and foregrounding the contingency once again and thus is the logic of hegemonic game. It is impossible in the situation of both pure closure and pure difference. Thus, the limits of the NACPP

have to be continuously drawn by making a decision in an undecidable situation because otherwise, there will be no NACPP as an entity.

This continuous hegemonic game, however, requires players. The social and political dimensions elaborated in the last two sections focus the discussion on the structural aspect of the NACPP. The following section focuses the discussion on the aspect of the agent in relation to the structure and how they become subjects that become the players in the hegemonic game. With regards to the constitution of the subject, the structural aspect discussed in the last two sections explains only to the extent of subject position. The topic discussed in the next section, however, moves further by discussing the subjectification or how and why the agent embrace the subject position the structure provides.

#### **4. The Challenge for Active Participation: Mobilizing Identification with the Collaborative Governance**

The constitution of subject, as elaborated in Chapters II and III, involves the fantasmatic dimension. The latter refers to the grips that a discourse has over the subjects (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 145). Amidst the multiple fragmentations and contingency of the structure, such as elaborated in the previous section, the fantasy serves as ‘the support that gives consistency to what we call “reality”’ (Žižek, 1989, p. 44 quoted in Glynos & Howarth, 2007: 146-147). Glynos’s study on the specific role of fantasy in sustaining workplace practice is highly relevant to the analysis of the fantasmatic dimension of the NACPP regime, in which the logic of agonism partially characterize (Glynos, 2008). This is especially crucial to see the role of the discourse of ‘Kindness’ to provide the fantasmatic support for the NACPP regime.

Glynos describes that fantasy has three key features. They are: “First, it has a narrative structure which features, among other things, an ideal and an obstacle to its realization, and which may take a beatific or horrific form; second, it has an inherently transgressive aspect vis-a-vis officially affirmed ideals; and third, it purports to offer a foundational guarantee of sorts, in the sense that it offers the subject a degree of protection from the anxiety associated with a direct confrontation with the radical contingency of social relations” (Glynos, 2008, p. 287). These features that Glynos elaborates are useful for the analysis of the operation of the fantasmatic dimension that supports the NACPP regime, especially the discourse of ‘Kindness’.

One of the main persistent challenges of the NACPP and the Locality Partnership has been to encourage the members of the communities to actively engage in the collaboration processes. In order to address this challenge, the NACPP often resorts to reaching out into the communities’ affective dimension that belongs to the register of the fantasy. Formally, the NACPP has collaborated with the Carnegie UK Trust in the ‘Kindness Initiative’ project. Informally, the agents of the NACPP, especially the locality partnership managers and coordinators, have often resorted to numerous informal approaches in order to convince broader communities and its members to actively engage and participate in the collaborative processes. The former tries to identify and nurture the conditions that make ‘act of kindness’ possible and try to embed them in the NACPP organization as organizational culture (Partnership, 2018; Ferguson & Thurman, 2019). The latter does similar things by tapping into the already existing and embedded cultural dimensions in which the communities and their members have emotional attachments in order to encourage them to identify themselves as the NACPP subjects.

This is comparable to Davies description of ‘partnership’ as ‘mobilization of consensus’, though consensus here does not necessarily direct toward ‘neoliberal socioeconomic goals’. This is

because, as mentioned above, the relations between the NACPP and neoliberal goals are contingent to their articulations and not predetermined prior to it. The point here is that if a regime is to be functional, it requires the constitution of a certain kind of subject that is constituted through the agent's identification or submission to the regime as an (symbolic) order. As elaborated in Chapter III, one's submission into the symbolic order is driven by the agent's constant pursuit of fullness which has no specific objective but only for the sake of pursuing. One's submission into the symbolic order gives symbolic representation that becomes the objective that the subject's pursue as the object of desire. What the structure is lacking is what's presented to the agent as its object of desire which is promised to the agent as long as it inserts and submits itself into the regime as a symbolic order.

The 'Kindness Initiative' seems to operate in this manner. It taps into people's deepest desire, 'to be desired by others'. What makes one desired by other people can never be objectively determined. Such absence of a specific objective indicates something that can never be fully symbolized. In this situation, 'Kindness' becomes the representation of this something that is absence and cannot be fully symbolized. This is also indicated by the emphasis this initiative gives to the informal dimension of organization and the voluntary nature of the act of kindness (Ferguson & Thurman, 2019). Related to this, this initiative even goes as far as recognizing the constitutive role of transgression that sometimes the act of kindness requires and, thus, foregrounds the subject's agency to make a decision in such situations. It aims to condition the subject to make a decision in an undecidable situation, a situation that signifies the lack of the structure, and take upon themselves how to deal with this lack.

The transgression, however, is also seen to be constitutive for the operation of the regime. This is indicated by the report's elaboration that relates to the act of kindness with attitude toward risks.



In the framework of ‘opening up space’ that NACPP aims to achieve, the attitude towards risk is crucial because such process sometimes puts the subject in a diametrical position against some sedimented rules. Ferguson and Thurman observe the difference in attitudes between public sectors and community organisations where the former is more submissive to the formal organizational and structural rules and regulations while the latter is more innovative and willing to take the risk of paving a novel path to achieve what they aim for.

Besides encouraging the subject to dare to decide in an undecidable situation, the discourse of ‘Kindness’ also simultaneously aims to limit the possibilities of the decisions that the subject may take in such a situation. The rather obscure of ‘what kindness is’, the report only describes it as ‘relational’, ‘potentially disruptive’, and anything but ‘what it is’, provides the imaginary unity that transforms the drive pursuing fullness without object into desiring impossible fullness through attainment of a specific object, no matter how vague it may be. Its transgressive potential is checked by the overarching sense of community, related to which certain act is determined whether as ‘kind’ or not.

The focus on the ethos of ‘Kindness’ is also stated to have potential to deal with the contingent efficacy of the formal NACPP regime of economic regeneration. Ferguson and Thurman mention in the report that relates to the persistent problem of poverty in North Ayrshire:

We have been concerned about talking about kindness in the midst of rising inequality and the broader context of austerity – and indeed it has, at times, been challenging to talk about kindness alongside unavoidable cuts to services. And yet, we have found a receptiveness to think about kindness in relation to poverty. Kindness is a value that is important for North Ayrshire – and for other local authorities, such as Calderdale

Council (2019) – *because* poverty persists, despite their award-winning innovation (Ferguson & Thurman, 2019, p. 18)

More specifically addressing the challenging situation described by reviews such as the Economic Review and Joint Inspection on Health and Social Care in North Ayrshire, in the same passage Ferguson and Thurman continue:

There is a sense, therefore, that a focus on kindness might just provide a different framework that enables local and national government to improve outcomes and reduce inequalities. However, alongside this hope is a recognition that it is not just a means to an end but of value in its own right. Even if material outcomes do not change, North Ayrshire Council can still make a difference to day-to-day experiences (Ferguson & Thurman, 2019, p. 18).

In this sense, the discourse of ‘Kindness’ seems to play the role in helping the subjects to deal with the anxiety related to the direct engagement with contingency of social relations such as manifested in the challenging situation described in the reviews on the NACPP.

Up to this point, the elaboration on the discourse of ‘Kindness’ and its articulation with the NACPP has shown that it has the three features of fantasy that Glynos describes. It has a structure of narrative that articulates the idealized situation either in the beatific or horror forms. The narrative of Kindness puts the beatific narrative on how a ‘random act of kindness’ has proven to be able to brighten someone’s day and encourage the audience to imagine the upscaling and institutionalize ‘Kindness’ into organizational scale. Ferguson and Thurman’s report also explicitly describe that the ‘Act of Kindness’ located beyond the confined space of formal rules, regulations, procedures, and guidelines and its performativity often requires the subject to transgress them. This transgression does not necessarily mean a symptom of dissolution of the correlated regime. On the

contrary, it sustains it by enabling its subjects to deal with the anxiety that is related to the contingency of the social relations or the structural lack of the regime.

However, up to this point, the research so far is still unable to determine whether ‘Kindness’ as fantasy operates as ideological or ethical fantasy. Critical scholars such as Haydecker, Ives, and Davies may give the description that the overall context tends to drive the ‘partnership’ and collaborative arrangement toward further expansion and entrenchment of neoliberalism. However, as elaborated in the section on the political dimension of the NACPP, the determinacy of those factors that those scholars describe on the trajectory of the NACPP is still contingent to its articulation. The attempt to rearticulate equality into the direction of ‘equity’ that emerge in the documents on ‘Fair for All Strategy’ and the Locality Partnership Framework demonstrates this contingency. The contingency of the ‘Kindness’ discourse, whether it is ideological or ethical, is related to the contingency of the NACPP. Ferguson and Thurman are also aware and anticipate that emphasis on the informal aspect and the communities’ capacity to manage themselves does not mean that the responsibility should be totally given to them. This is the neoliberal scenario that Davies and others have been critical about. Therefore, Ferguson and Thurman argue that the intervention from the state and government is still necessary, especially to create the conditions favorable for the ‘Act of Kindness’ (Ferguson & Thurman, 2019, p. 18).

The point here is that the fantasy determines one’s identification or dis-identification with the regime and its mode of subjectivity. On its turn, the identification or dis-identification determine how the structural limits and limitations, necessary for the constitution of the regime or structure as an entity, are perceived whether as something necessary or as coercion in a subjective sense. This operates whether the ‘Kindness’ provides the fantasmatic support for the NACPP as an institutional mechanism for mobilizing social consent to achieve the neoliberal socioeconomic

goals or to support the logic of agonism in order to pursue further expansion of democratic principles in broader social fields. In either case, the identification implies the agent's submission to the prohibition that the correlated regime or structure entails and, in return, acquires the promise of impossible fullness in the form of fantasy. The only difference between the two possible scenarios mentioned above is on their points of libidinal investment or cathexis. The neoliberal discourse offers a certain substantively reified signifier as the point of cathexis, such as individual freedom and autonomy, while the logic of agonism offers exactly the contrary that is the absence of such a substantive point of reference.

The following section specifically discusses the dimension of coercion in the logic of agonism based on the elaboration of how it partially characterizes the NACPP regime. The discussion highlights how the dimension of coercion comes to the fore in the operation of logic of agonism in the practice or regime that it characterizes or installs in the case of NACPP.

### **5. The Demands for Identification: The Coercive Dimension of Agonism**

The dimension of coercion in the logic of agonism in the case of NACPP comes to the fore in the elaboration of the political dimension of NACPP. The strongest characterization of this regime by the logic of agonism is in the areas where the regime defines its limits that distinguish itself with other modes of partnership or collaboration. From the previous elaboration it is apparent in the NACPP framework where it decides to recognize, foreground, and directly engage the contingency of community participation in the planning process through the locality partnership framework, the adoption of the 'Fair for All Strategy', and the collaboration in the 'Kindness Initiative Networks'. The coercive dimension of the logics of agonism comes to the fore in such moments because its operation implies subordination and exclusion of other logics.

However, the traces of the subordination and exclusion can still be found in the other registers of social and fantasmatic dimension. From the elaboration above, in the social dimension, there are multiple rules and regulations, both formal and informal, foregrounding the contingency of any closure that the subjects use to live with to organize their affairs in the NACPP. The NACPP framework designs that public consultation through meetings are held regularly, in each there are always potentials to review and, if necessary, modify; revise; or amend the previous decisions. Furthermore, the emphasis on the ‘community’ in the NACPP partnership framework is operationalized by foregrounding their split or their lack as total objective unity. This is reflected in the formulation of membership in locality partnership, where the communities are represented by elected council members and community representatives in the partnership.

In the register of the fantasy, the trace of the subordination and exclusion is found in the specification of a certain kind of subjectivity that NACPP, with its emphasis on the ‘community partnership’, requires. The interviews highlight the centrality of ‘communal sense’ if the NACPP framework is to function as expected. The lack of it has been one of the main challenges that NACPP has to address. There has been a persistent dilemma in addressing this challenge that NACPP has been facing. *First*, communal sense is not shared evenly across communities in North Ayrshire. In some areas, communal sense can still be found among the close-knit communities. In other areas the sense of communities is fragmented across various communities. In some other, communal sense has been replaced or modified by individualistic sense of modern society. This is somehow contrary to the NACPP design that requires ‘communal sense’ across communities in the North Ayrshire area and across council areas as well.

*Second*, the NACPP agents are aware that such communal sense cannot be imposed but should emerge authentically and voluntarily from the communities themselves as recognition of

differences and interdependency among them. This communal sense or the lack of it cannot be reduced into a matter of cognitive matter either as it is related more to the affective dimension. The communal sense in this NACPP discourse or logic is represented as something that is absent that the subjects should desire following their submission into it as a symbolic order. However, communal sense or the lack of it is not effective enough to constitute the object cause of or object of desire. It is in this context 'Kindness' has a crucial role as positivisation of the negativity of the 'lack of communal sense'.

The positivisation here is not total either. As apparent in Ferguson and Thurman's report, there is no specific formulation of 'what kindness is' (Ferguson & Thurman, 2019). The report only gives outlines to it but does not elaborate its substance. The specificity of this 'Kindness' discourse points to the domain beyond the symbolic order, its disruptive potentials, and its recognition of the constitutive role of transgression. This discourse, to a large extent, keeps open the contingency in two senses. First it does not specify what 'Kindness' and 'Act of Kindness' mean. Second, it encourages the subjects to recognise the contingency of the regime as a symbolic order and the constitutive role of its transgressions. It is in this sense that it is justifiable to argue that this discourse is characterized by the logic of agonism.

However, it should be bore in mind that subordination and exclusion are not absent in the adoption of this discourse of 'Kindness' to provide the fantasmatic support for the NACPP regime. For example, it subordinates the quality of 'rule following', in the sense that it deconstructs its determination claim on the performance of an organization by arguing that transgression also positively contributes to the sustenance of the organization practice or regime. This does not mean that rules and regulations are totally unnecessary. In fact, they are the conditions of possibility for transgression. For transgression to take place, it requires the symbolic order to transgress in the

first place. In this sense, the relations between transgression and the (symbolic) order are comparable to Laclau's elaboration on relations between 'temporality' and 'spatiality'. On one hand, the symbolic order, as the spatiality, cannot fully hegemonize its transgression, as temporality. On the other hand, the temporality has no chance whatsoever to hegemonize the space but only to foreground its incompleteness (Laclau, 1990, pp. 41-42).

The subordination and exclusion, as the dimension of coercion in any other logic, takes place as closure or as making a decision in an undecidable situation. The foregrounding of contingency and the underlying undecidable situation that indicates the operation of the logic of agonism is also a closure or decision in an undecidable situation. Its institutionalization, as in any other practice or regime, also requires fantasmatic support that sustains the correlated practice or regime by keeping its subjects within the grips of the practice or regime. In other words, it sustains the practice or regime by continuously constituting certain kinds of subjects that the correlated practice or regime requires.

The main point of this chapter is to highlight the dimension of coercion of logic of agonism drawn from the concrete case of the NACPP regime. The elaboration in this chapter foregrounds that as logic, agonism/agonistic pluralism continuously engages with other logics in characterizing or hegemonizing certain concrete practices or regimes. Even though it centres on the idea of the contingency of any closure associated with coercion, its engagement in hegemonic game to deconstruct the fantasy of totality of any closure is also a closure nonetheless. Mouffe, and Laclau, are fully aware that the radical contingency of any social realities does not mean that there is no closure at all. The radical contingency should be understood as the impossibility of closure as totality in the final instance. Continuous difference does not mean that there is no decision at all, but the difference of the decision as an unquestionable final decision once and for all.

The following chapter discusses how the elaboration on the logic of agonism and its dimension of coercion against Mouffe's general theoretical framework of agonism/agonistic pluralism. Its operationalization as a logic that is competing with other logics to hegemonize certain concrete practice or regime gives further insight on this concept of agonism/agonistic pluralism.



## Chapter VII. THE DIMENSION OF COERCION IN MOUFFE'S AGONISM

This concluding chapter highlights how the research and elaboration presented in the previous chapters answered the research questions and problem stated in the opening chapter. The highlight here covers the following points: (i) how coercion operates on the ontological plane and how it is constitutive for the social within Laclau and Mouffe's framework of PDT; (ii) the more specific elaboration on coercion at work to constitute agonism/agonistic pluralism as a social reality. The elaboration on this point also answers the specific research questions set in the first chapter; (iii) The application of PDT theoretical presuppositions for empirical research through research strategy based on Glynos and Howarth LCE; (iv) The theoretical and practical implications and contributions of this research in the several relevant fields of study. This also includes recommendations for further research and study. This chapter is divided into 4 sections with each focusing its discussion on each of those points above.

### 1. Introduction

To begin with, the stated research problem and questions this dissertation aims to address are as following: The main research problem is: **“How to explicate coercion on the ontological plane and define its constitutive role within the framework of Laclau and Mouffe's theory of discourse and hegemony?”** Putting this problem within the context of Mouffe's agonism/agonistic pluralism, the problem is further specified in the questions: **“How does coercion operate in the constitution of the agonistic structure and agonistic subject?”** and **“How is the shift of coercion between ontological and ontical planes always possible?”**

The following sections describe how this research has addressed those problems and questions and, by doing so, contributes to the discussions on democracy, agonism, and coercion; further development of PDT in its relations to the topic of fantasy and how it is employed for empirical research. Last but not least, the elaboration on ‘coercion’ from the lens of PDT contributes to further open up the path for investigation on the relations between discourse and *jouissance* or enjoyment addressing the critics of normative deficiencies levelled toward PDT in general and also Mouffe’s notion of agonism/agonistic pluralism. The latter points to the import of understanding Mouffe’s agonism/agonistic pluralism within a specific ethical framework of the Ethics of the Real that underlies Mouffe’s concept of agonism/agonistic pluralism.

## **2. The Ontological Status of Coercion: How It Works to Constitute the Reality**

One of the contributions of this research is to foreground the status and role of coercion by arguing for its ontological status. In other words, coercion is the condition for the constitution of our reality. As elaborated in the first three chapters, the coercion here specifically refers to one that operates on the ontological plane. As the name suggests, this is the plane that is related with the constitution and nature of our reality. The ontological plane here is contrasted against the ontical plane. While, the latter refers to the reality as we see it, the former focuses on the matters of how we come to see what we see as we see it and what makes it possible. This is the nuance on the elaboration of coercion presented here. Instead of elaborating whether a certain practice or set of practices can justifiably be categorized as coercion, this dissertation focuses on addressing how we come to see a certain practice or set of practices as coercive, what makes such views possible, and whether in this process of enabling there is coercive dimension involved.

Basing the investigation and elaboration on the constitution of reality on Laclau and Mouffe's presuppositions, it becomes clear that the operation of coercion on the ontological plane to constitute the reality involves the constant tensions between the radical contingency and the primacy of the political. Both are co-constitutive in their continuous tensions in the constitution of reality that is basically social and articulatory and belongs to the register of the symbolic (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014, p. 100). They are co-constitutive because the social is always a results of certain hegemonic intervention that takes place in the field of articulatory practices that is marked by contingency as "... 'elements' have not crystallized into 'moments'" (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014, p. 120). The contingency, however, comes into being only when there are attempts to suspend or stabilize it through articulation. Therefore it cannot be said though it can be shown in the very articulatory practice which is political in nature (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014, p. 113; 120).

Coercion at work can be found in the articulation or articulatory practice itself. This is based on Laclau and Mouffe's formulation as they describe the practice of articulation as:

..., consists in the construction of nodal points which partially fix meaning; and the partial character of this fixation proceeds from the openness of the social, a result, in its turn, of the constant overflowing of every discourse by the infinitude of the field of discursivity. (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014, p. 100)

Their description elaborates not only the co-constitutive nature of 'radical contingency' and 'the political' but also how the dimension of coercion plays its part to constitute the social reality through articulation that is intended to fix something that is always 'could have been otherwise'. Yet, it is this fixation, which is political in nature and the coercive dimension is embedded, that is necessary as without it contingency would have been impossible as it becomes absolute. Contingency comes into being as the fixation becomes something that is impossible but necessary.

It is impossible in the sense exactly, as Laclau and Mouffe have described above, due to “the openness of the social” and “constant overflowing of every discourse by infinitude of the field of discursivity”. Necessary as the attempted fixation is needed to make the contingency come into being.

The term ‘impossible but necessary’ seems to capture the co-extensive nature of the two underlying presuppositions in Laclau and Mouffe’s theory of discourse and hegemony (Glynos, 2015) and their subsequent works. The elaboration on the response toward criticism levelled against Mouffe’s agonism/agonistic pluralism and its theoretical underpinning has shown that this tension or paradox yet co-constitutive nature of radical contingency and the primacy of the political have been overlooked. Consequently, the majority of the criticism shares the tendency to overemphasise on one presupposition not only at the expense of the other but also their paradoxical yet co-constitutive relations. Therefore it is not surprising to see that there are two camps of criticism towards Mouffe’s agonism/agonistic pluralism that seem to be contradictory to each other even though they elaborate the same theoretical concept.

Since the elaboration of the dimension of coercion in Mouffe’s agonism in this dissertation takes the ontological plane as the starting point, foregrounding and making more explicit this paradoxical yet co-constitutive nature between radical contingency and the primacy of the political is central. The elaboration stresses the need to keep in mind two things; (i) the ‘radical contingency’ does not mean there is no fixation whatsoever, since it would have meant total fixation which is impossible, but it should be understood as the impossibility of total and permanent completeness. The latter refers to the situation where there is always fixation or demand for it, no matter how transient and partial it is; (ii) This fragile stability is what makes fixation or suspension of the contingency continuously necessary and relevant despite its impossibility in the

final instance. With this understanding in mind, it becomes possible to locate and identify the coercive dimension on the ontological plane. This dimension is embedded in articulation that aims to suspend the contingency. In other words, it is embedded in the political that precedes the social.

On this point it is rather clear that Mouffe, and Laclau, are aware of the inevitability of the dimension of coercion and its constitutive role to the reality. Their elaboration on antagonism and articulation are followed up with elaboration on hegemony and autonomy (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014, pp. 125-128). This is further followed up with elaboration on the relations of subordination, domination, and oppression and how these relations always potentially shift from one to the other (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014, pp. 137-139). The elaboration on the unity and autonomy is helpful to further locate and describe coercion at work to constitute the latter. Laclau and Mouffe present autonomy here as the result of a certain unified system that is in turn always a hegemonic formation. In that sense Laclau and Mouffe argue that, “Autonomy, far from being incompatible with hegemony, is a hegemonic construction” (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014, p. 127). The constitution of any hegemony always necessitates a political moment where, in the context of the absence of an objectively given universal centre or privileged element, a particular element is set to occupy the position as universal representation of other particular elements. Which particular element is to occupy this position, as it is not predetermined nor given, is always the result of political struggle as the decision to set one particular element to occupy the said position implies the exclusion of the other element. The elements articulated become the internal moments of the discourse, while those that are not become elements (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014, p. 91). It is through this articulation that the meanings and identities of the moments and elements are fixed and specified. Including which particular element that serves as the ‘nodal point’. The constitution of certain nodal points is central here because it is required to suspend the continuous metonymical sliding of the signifier

over the signified. The latter refers to the total closure which is impossible, therefore its absence has to be marked and a certain signifier is constituted to signify it in the form of its absence.

Mouffe started to write her concept of agonism/agonistic pluralism after she co-authored the HSS with Laclau and she must have had this in her mind when she wrote it down. Fully aware that agonism/agonistic pluralism is basically an order and just like any other orders it requires the compliance of its subjects, she elaborates this issue in her work on the form of political communities preferable to agonism/agonistic pluralism, between *universitas* and *societas* (Mouffe, 1993, pp. 66-73) and 'identification' (Mouffe, 2005, pp. 26-27). In those works, however, she does not sufficiently mention and elaborate on how the constitution of such an order requires 'compliance' from among its subjects. In *The Return of the Political* she modifies Oakeshott's conception on 'societas' by stating that such political community based on the common reference to certain ethico-political principles and rules is always a result of hegemonic intervention that necessarily involves the drawing of frontiers between 'we' and 'them'.

To introduce conflict and antagonism into Oakeshott's model it is necessary to recognize that the *respublica* is the product of a given hegemony, the expression of power relations, and that it can be challenged. Politics is to a great extent about the rules of the *respublica* and its many possible interpretations; it is about the constitution of the political community is not something that takes place inside the political community as some communitarians would have it. Political life concerns collective, public action; it aims at the construction of a 'we' in a context of diversity and conflict. But to construct a 'we' it must be distinguished from the "them", and that means establishing a frontier, defining an 'enemy'. Therefore, while politics aims at constructing a political community and creating a unity, a fully inclusive political community and a final unity can never be realized since there will permanently be a 'constitutive outside', an exterior to the community that makes its existence possible. Antagonistic forces will never disappear and politics is

characterized by conflict and division. Forms of agreement can be reached but they are always partial and provisional since consensus is by necessity based on acts of exclusion. We are indeed very far from the language of civility dear to Oakeshott!  
(Mouffe, 1993, p. 69)

Reading this passage what immediately comes to mind is “How agonism/agonistic pluralism distinguishes itself from other orders that always potentially subordinates or excludes it and how it maintains its hegemonic position.” However, what Mouffe comes to elaborate in the same passage is more about how Oakeshott’s model overlooks the antagonistic dimension that constitutes the political community he envisages in the sense of how it has to deal with diversity of demands from among the elements that constitute it. In other words, Mouffe still elaborates the antagonistic dimension in Oakeshott’s model but still focuses on something that is inside the political community that is contrary to her own criticism to Oakeshott’s model in the quotation above.

What is missing is that she overlooks that as an order, agonism/agonistic pluralism is impossible in the last instance. This is what Roskamm and Yamamoto highlight in their criticisms toward Mouffe. Mouffe continuously evades the questions with regards to “What to do with those who refuse to identify themselves with the ethico-political principles of agonism/agonistic politics?” This question is crucial especially when it is put against the backdrop of the quote from Laclau cited in the very beginning of this dissertation. Following Mouffe’s, as well as Oakeshott’s argument that, what binds together the members of the political community is not certain substantive ideals of common goals but rather common set of rules, the refusal to comply with the ethico-political principles that agonism/agonistic pluralism endorses manifest in the very notion of foundationalism or essentialism. This can be found in, as Laclau states, both religious fundamentalism and the most refined of ‘Western’ social democracy. Mouffe does describe and

envisage the implications of her concepts on the empirical issues such as multiculturalism and refugees in relations to the limits of agonism/agonistic pluralism. This, however, does not comprehensively convey explicitly the coercive dimension necessarily involved and the compliance demanded from the supposed subjects (Mouffe, 2005, pp. 120-123). Most of Mouffe's elaboration focuses on the antagonism whose recognition of its constitutive role she uses to distinguish her own model of democracy as agonistic-pluralism with other models including different conceptualizations of agonism, such as Connolly's and Arendt's. This explains why for some of her critics, Mouffe seems to overemphasize antagonism. Especially, the term 'enemy', which Mouffe takes from Schmitt, rather confuses the antagonism and its constitutive role she aims to highlight as it tends to blur the line between antagonism on the ontological and ontical plane. Menga focuses his criticism to Mouffe on this point (Menga, 2017).

This dissertation takes the elaboration on coercion starting from the ontological plane by referring back to how Laclau and Mouffe conceptualize antagonism in the HSS. In the HSS, they define antagonism as a situation where 'the presence of the 'Other' prevents me from being totally myself' (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014, p. 111). The identity of 'self' here is understood as discursively constructed, through the suspension of the contingency and fluidity of meanings and identities, which can never be fully eliminated. The antagonism here refers to this contingency and fluidity that always potentially dissolve the stability, the partial fixity, of the meanings and identities of the 'self' produced through articulation. In this sense, in line with Roskamm, antagonism is portrayed and understood rather as a 'structural principle' than a 'personal feature' (Roskamm, 2015, p. 398).

This is the first central concept to locate and identify coercion at work on the ontological plane. The political moment of suspension of the fluidity of meanings and identities through articulation



and the contingency that it pushes to the fringes but always potentially dissolve the stability produced. The suspension of the fluidity, of the overflow of meanings and identities across the field of discursivity, is the primal coercion. This coercion serves to suspend the meanings and identities of the elements or signifiers by ascertaining their differential relations in a (partially and temporarily) stable structure and by such stabilization it becomes possible to make sense of our reality. Otherwise, the elements or signifiers would have constantly fleeting, ever changing relations of difference and reality would be totally impossible. The inevitable dislocations caused by this stabilization are what Laclau and Mouffe argue as the ever present possibility of antagonism (Laclau, 1990, p. 42). Mouffe in her agonism/agonistic pluralism brings this argument further by stating the constitutive role of antagonism and the need to acknowledge and institutionalize it in order to overcome the current crisis of liberal democracy.

The second central point is that this primary coercion corresponds with the compliance and submission of the subjects to the corresponding structure, in this case agonism/agonistic pluralism, for its constitution as a reality. It is necessary to bear in mind that agonism/agonistic pluralism is still an order that is based on certain rules or set of rules. Acknowledgement of antagonism as the limits of the objectivity of the corresponding political community and its constitutive role and the need to institutionalize it is the central rules in the constitution of agonism/agonistic pluralism as a reality. These rules require the subjects to submit themselves to it. This aspect tends to be overlooked especially because Mouffe puts her argument against the existing essentialism and foundationalism manifests in the current dominant neoliberal regime. The immediate image that comes to the fore is the deconstruction of the current essentialized dogmas and rules, especially ones that pertain to the idea of 'The End of Ideology'. While this is true, it covers only half of her overall argument, as she also discusses about the continuous need for new regimes after the

deconstruction or modification of the previous ones. This is in line with Laclau's elaboration on the relations between the sedimentation of certain discourse or hegemony that he describes as 'space' and its disruption as 'moment'. The disruption here refers to the moment when the contingent nature of the space comes to the fore. The 'moment' can never hegemonize the space but, the other way around, the space can never totally hegemonize the moment. The latter is the excess of the contingency that the space attempts to stabilize but can never be able to fully do so (Laclau, 1990, pp. 41-42).

The elaboration in the previous chapters has put forward that these two points of the stabilization of the fluidity of meanings and identities through the introduction of a certain set of rules that govern the differential relations among the elements as internal moments of certain discourse and the demand for compliance from among its subjects are where coercion at work on ontological plane at work is located. These two points serve as a lens to highlight the coercive dimension of agonism/agonistic pluralism that is presumed as an order. As any order, its constitution always involves certain rules or set of rules whose compliance with are demanded from its subjects. In the previous chapters, however, the elaboration on the latter is preceded by elaboration to justify how coercion on the ontological plane can be justified as 'coercion'. The elaboration in Chapter II grapples not only with the justification of coercion on the ontological plane as coercion but also to highlight the contingency of its meanings.

### **3. Objective Coercion and the Constitution of Subject: the Contingency of Coercion and the Role of Fantasmatic Dimension**

The contingency that becomes the condition of possibility, and impossibility as well, for the constitution of reality through articulation also permeates the concept of coercion. This is best seen

in, among others, the debate on the nature of coercion how it relates to issues of border policy and refugee between Arash Abizadeh (Abizadeh, 2008; Abizadeh, 2010) and David Miller (Miller, 2020). Abizadeh opens the debate by arguing that the current border control policies are unjustifiable from the point of view of democratic theory. This is because it draws its justification from certain group of people, the citizens of the corresponding country, that does not match with the supposed subjects of democracy who are, he argues, unbounded by national borders (Abizadeh, 2008, p. 38). Abizadeh argues that the current regime of unilateral border control invades individual autonomy, especially of those would-be immigrants, and for a truly democratic border control regime their consent is required to justify the imposition of such a control. David Miller responds against this by distinguishing between coercion and prevention, and the latter need not necessarily prevent autonomy. In the case of border control, though Miller acknowledges it may restrict freedom, it does not give rise to democratic entitlement. Abizadeh responds back by arguing that Miller misses his point as what he is trying to say is that in order to be democratically justifiable any law should owe its justification to those who subject to it and he argues that Miller's response to his original text, with the whole distinction between coercion and prevention and between actual and hypothetical coercion, seems to evacuate the domain of democracy theory (Abizadeh, 2008, pp. 127-128).

There are three points found to be crucial for the elaboration of coercion in this dissertation. *First*, Abizadeh defines the coercive dimension as invasive for the autonomy in the current regime of border control only by measuring it from the normative point of view of democratic principle. By doing so, he arranges all forms of coercion into a single chain of equivalence and portrays them as contrary to the democratic principle. *Second*, Miller deconstructs the chain of equivalence that Abizadeh constitutes by introducing distinctness of the forms of coercion through the categories

of coercion and prevention and actual and hypothetical coercion. Referring to Joseph Raz's principle of individual autonomy that Abizadeh uses to justify his argument that the current border control regime is invasive to individual autonomy, he argues that not all of those categories mean the invasion of individual autonomy and the current border control regime falls into this category. *Third*, acknowledging the weight of Miller's response, Abizadeh appeals to the normative judgement in his original text to back up his argument by arguing that Miller's response, while it is technically true seems to evacuate the domain of democratic theory.

The debate is illuminating due to there is there being an 'unsaid' dimension of coercion but this is hardly shown almost, especially in Abizadeh, namely the submission into and compliance with democratic principle. Abizadeh overlooks the 'unsaid' dimension of coercion by assuming that autonomy comes prior to one insertion and submission into the structure. Referring to Joseph Raz's principle of individual autonomy, which specifies a concept derived from liberal principle, he conflates the two competing values within liberal democracy by focusing only on its liberal dimension. In doing so, while correctly stating that according to democratic principle the promulgation of (coercive) law owes its justification to those who are subject to it, he also generalizes that all would-be immigrants subject themselves to democratic ideals and principles. Subject themselves here refers to more than merely having certain laws based on democratic values and principles imposed upon them but to include identifying themselves as democratic subjects.

Miller, on the other hand, retains the same assumption in his response to Abizadeh. The only difference is that Miller argues that the specific forms of coercion that he constructs through specifying the categories in Abizadeh's general category of coercion do not invade individual autonomy. This does not change the underlying assumption that 'individual autonomy' is assumed to be complete and constituted prior to one's insertion into the structure or symbolic order. The

‘castration’ the subject has to undergo as demanded by symbolic order is this ‘unsaid’ coercion. This ‘unsaid’ coercion that both Abizadeh and Miller take for granted is exactly what this dissertation aims to interrogate and elaborate. The ‘unsaid’ coercion manifests in the reference to the democratic principle as the governing normative principle that governs the Abizadeh vs. Miller debate on what is and is not coercive and whether the currently dominant border control regime is coercive or not. The debates between Abizadeh and Miller say very little about this ‘unsaid’ dimension of coercion as coercion and how it is actually the thing that makes the whole debate possible.

Abizadeh actually does bring this to the fore when he refers to the democratic strategy for justification, in contrast to the liberal one, as he states: “The key difference, then, between liberalism and democratic theory is that while the former engages in a strategy of hypothetical justification to establish the justness of institutions and laws through which political power is exercised, the latter demands actual participation in institutionalized practices of discursive justification geared to establishing the legitimacy of political institutions and laws” (Abizadeh, 2010, p. 41). He further specifies that the democratic strategy, in contrast to liberal strategy that focuses on substance: saying that a justification is “owed to all those over whom power is exercised” is to say something about the process: that all such persons must have the opportunity (1) to actually participate in the political processes that determine how power is exercised, on terms that (2) are consistent with their freedom and equality” (Abizadeh, 2010, p. 41). Yet, he puts a constraint on these conditions by putting them merely within the terrain of consciousness as if the rationality on which their autonomy and freedom is something fully complete and transparent to them prior to their insertion into the symbolic order or structure. This debate helps to ‘extimate’ what has not been covered in the mainstream debate on coercion that is referred to as the ‘unsaid’

coercion. This is apparent on Abizadeh's side when he constantly refers to democratic principle as the normative reference, such as his rhetorical appeal in his statement: "Anyone who accepts a genuinely democratic theory of political legitimation domestically is thereby committed to rejecting the unilateral domestic right to control and close the state's boundaries, whether boundaries in the civic sense (which regulate membership) or in the territorial sense (which regulate movement)." (Abizadeh, 2008, p. 38) In contrast to his assumption that takes the centrality of this principle for granted, PDT sees the centrality of such normative principle, in this case democracy, as not something given and predetermined but always a result of hegemonic intervention. Mouffe uses the term 'ethico-political' to refer such normative value. The role of this 'unsaid' coercion to make such debate on freedom and coercion possible is paradoxical. However, isn't this sort of paradox the feature of the coercion on ontological plane that was discussed in the previous section? Therefore, the elaboration on the dimension of coercion and how it works on the ontological plane is taken following this trace.

Such paradox, especially in relation to democracy, liberty, and constraint or coercion, is hardly new. Rousseau has elaborated this and described it in a sentence that is parallel to Laclau's most favourite expression of 'impossible but necessary' that is 'forcing people to be free' (Rousseau, 1999, p. 98). Bourdieu provides further hints to this paradoxical relation between consent and constraint or coercion when he describes, "All symbolic domination presupposes, on the part of those who submit to it, a form of complicity which is neither passive submission to external constraint nor a free adherence to values. The recognition of the legitimacy of the official language has nothing in common with an explicitly professed, deliberate and revocable belief, or with an intentional act of accepting 'norm'" (Bourdieu, 1991, pp. 51-52). It is this 'complicity' and 'submission' which are beyond consent and constraint that makes Abizadeh's assumption and

focus on the manifestation, both overt and covert coercion, problematic. The dimension of coercion that this dissertation aims to interrogate and elaborate is not only ‘unsaid’ but also sometimes ‘unrecognized’. More than merely overt or covert, this dimension is ‘latent’. The latter pertains to what Lukes describes as the ‘third dimension of power’ (Lukes, 2005). It becomes the ‘unconscious’ that Žižek describes as something that ‘we don’t know that we know’ (Žižek, 2016, p. 265).

The paradox points to the contingency of coercion on the ontological plane, to the cathexis process that takes place simultaneously with articulation. The constitution of a certain nodal point that the latter produces is supported with the infusion of libidinal drive into the empty signifier that becomes the nodal point. The infusion of the drive into these certain signifiers elevate them into the position of Freudian *Ding* or ‘the Thing’ (Žižek, 1989, p. 108). The latter refers to the constitution of certain fantasy to support certain discourse and the reality it produces (Žižek, 1989, p. 44). The nodal and cathectic points, however, are never fully fixed. The most recent example is how easily the public change their mind in the attempt to contain the spread of the Covid-19. In Indonesia and also in some other countries, initially there was strong resistance against regional or national-wide quarantine measures due to its severe restriction on freedom of movement and socio-economic impacts. This opinion, however, shifted in a matter of days when the majority of the public demanded even stricter restrictions of mobility than initially proposed. These two competing discourses equally involve subjection of the agents into a certain set of rules supported by a certain fantasy. The discourse on quarantine is obvious but the discourse that prioritizes freedom is more subtle and only in such context of an undecidable situation does its coercive face becomes apparent. It requires the agent to comply with it by putting the primacy on freedom over

anything else. In the case of the Covid-19 outbreak, it is even above the freedom (of fear) from being infected.

The point is not one which is the true representation of freedom or liberty but how each turns out to involve the dimension of coercion just as Laclau's description quoted in the very beginning of Chapter I. The only difference is the cathectic point on which the respective adherents invested their libidinal drive and how each structure makes it possible. Mouffe's agonism/agonistic pluralism as a structure or order are not an exception. The distinguishing specific feature of this agonism/agonistic pluralism is that it gives primacy not to the fullness of any principle in the positive sense but the impossibility of such. Further, the identification to the primary coercion enables the adherents to define what they see as coercion, as the obstruction to the realization of what they identify with, as something that its eradication will enable them to realize the fullness of their identity.

The coercion on the ontological plane turns out to provide the 'surface for inscription' for the desire for fullness, which is absent and therefore it is desirable. This explanation on primary coercion or coercion on the ontological plane is based on the Lacanian triad and his concepts of desire and fantasy that is based on the assumption totally, in contrast to one that both Abizadeh and Miller adopt, the agent's split subjectivity. In such way now it becomes possible to hold it in parallel with Laclau's elaboration on the relations between hegemony and autonomy in which the latter is only possible through the former. In Lacanian sense, the autonomy that Abizadeh refers to, can only be articulated only after and through its insertion into symbolic order to constitute differential relations with what-it-is-not or what obstructs its full realization. Though it can be presented only in its negative form that is its absence or incompleteness. In return for the



‘enjoyment’ castrated from the subject, the subject becomes able to articulate its need into demand and its ego into subject.

Therefore the primary coercion is not necessarily felt as coercion or ‘invasion of autonomy’ because the autonomy owes its existence to it through identification. Identification here is defined as the ‘psychological process whereby the subject assimilates an aspect, property or attribute of the other and is transformed, wholly or partially, after the model the other provides. It is by series of identification that the personality is constituted and specified’ (Laplanche and Pontalis quoted in Stavrakakis, 1999, p. 30). As the subject becomes able to articulate its needs into demands through its insertion into the structure or symbolic order, the symbolic order, in return of the castration of the subject’s enjoyment, gives the promise of its impossible recovery through their submission.

What we have here is something that fits exactly Laclau’s description of ‘impossible but necessary’. The fullness or incompleteness is something impossible but it is necessary both for the subject and ‘the Other’. The subject needs it to give stability to their reality so they can understand and live correspondingly even though not fully. Sometimes even when the subject realizes that it experiences incomplete life, the subject gains consolation through the fantasy that it at least knows what is missing that makes its life incomplete. The fantasy has the narrative features of the ideal and the obstacle to achieve it. It also has a transgressive aspect besides the formally stated ideal that is also purported to give its capacity to protect the subject from anxiety in experiencing the contingency of its life (Glynos, 2008, p. 287). This fantasmatic dimension explains the grip of the structure, or the discourse, upon its subjects (Glynos & Howarth, 2007). This includes ensuring the subject’s quiescence, or the agent’s complicity in Bourdieu’s word, in having the castration and restriction the structure imposes upon them.

The subject's identification to the structure via the fantasy also determines the shift of coercion on the ontological plane to the ontical one or the shift from the relations of subordination to relations of oppression. What is accepted as the (social) norms in one moment could be seen as coercion in the next second if the subject's identification shifts to a different cathectic point and fantasy and the previous one is perceived to obstruct the full realization of the new identity. This process can go on indefinitely because every structure or order commonly belongs to the symbolic order or 'the Other' whose fundamental mechanism is repression.

The agent's complicity, to use Bourdieu's term, is located in its moment of decision whether to sacrifice the yet unknown enjoyment the symbolic order demanded or to continue in the imaginary realm of the ego. At this moment there is no subject, there is no 'I', as the subject only emerges through one's insertion into the symbolic where the 'ego' is transformed into 'subject' and the 'needs' are transformed into 'demands'. Without further going into the Lacanian psychoanalysis, it is enough to say that the subject is and can only be constituted through the agent's insertion and submission into the symbolic order.

This ontological view on the constitution of the subject is in contrast to one that sees the subject is constituted outside and prior to its insertion into the symbolic order. In such a view, the insertion into the symbolic and the castration that it demands would have been defined as outright coercion and thus illegitimate because it violates the subject's fullness assumed to be prior to its insertion into the symbolic order. On the contrary, the ontological view employed in this research sees that the subject is the product of the coercion or repression of the subjectification or subject constitution process itself. In such a view, coercion becomes more nuanced than a straightforward exhaustive category. The coercion that makes subjectification possible does not necessarily always appear as coercion in the subjective sense for the corresponding subject because the subject identifies itself

with the symbolic order or structure through which it becomes a subject. The transformation of coercion in objective sense into a subjective one requires the shift of this identification.

It is on this concept of identification that the import of fantasy and fantasmatic dimension becomes explicit. The fantasy here is related to the concept of desire, referring to the desire that the subject identifies itself with and expects to satisfy through its insertion into the symbolic order or structure. The desire here in general can be defined as the desire for fullness that has been lost to the castration, yet the symbolic order promises that this 'lost fullness' would eventually be recovered if one keeps itself submitted into the order. It has been said that such 'recovery of lost fullness' is impossible, but it is necessary to keep the subject believing that it is desirable and possible in order to maintain its submission to the symbolic order. This 'believing' act is actually the libidinal investment or *cathexis* on a certain signifier, a process of upholding a certain signifier into the position of Freudian *thing*. The transformation of objective coercion into subjective coercion hinges on the shift of identification, in other words the shift of point of libidinal investment or cathectic point.

This demonstrates coercion at work on the ontological plane and how it constitutes certain subjectivity. Taking this to look at Mouffe's agonism/agonistic pluralism, the coercive dimension and how it operates to constitute it as a reality can be identified and specified. The elaboration in Chapter II and Chapter III explicate how Mouffe's agonism/agonistic pluralism introduce a certain set of rules for the would-be subject to comply with. Mouffe explicates these rules mainly through juxtapositions of her concept against other concepts, such as Habermas's deliberative democracy (Mouffe, 1999); Arendt's pluralism; and Connolly's agonistic respect. In doing so, besides explicating the specification of her agonism/agonistic pluralism, Mouffe also defines what agonism/agonistic pluralism should and should not. It is here the normative element of her

intervention becomes apparent. It is noteworthy to once again underline here that this normative element should be understood in correlation with the underlying presuppositions of the radical contingency and the primacy of the political.

The elaboration on coercion at work on ontological plane to constitute reality foregrounds the continuous dialectics between coercion and consent. This is the studies from Jonathan Davies that sees, through the lens of Gramscian hegemony, that coercion is ubiquitous even under the currently dominant regime of collaborative governance (Davies J. , 2013; Davies J. , 2014). What distinguishes the elaboration in this dissertation, however, is its attempt to grapple with the aspect of ‘beyond consent and coercion’ that Bourdieu points out in his description on the subject’s complicity in constitution symbolic domination. The elaboration demonstrates that the coercion at work on ontological plane is constitutive to the subjectivity or the ‘self’ of its adherents. It gives them the sense of fullness even though it comes in the form of its absence as something that is missing but could be recovered as long as it maintains its compliance with the structural rules. The submission here is beyond rational calculation. It involves affective dimension and operates as the ‘unconscious’ as described above, as ‘something that we don’t know that we know.’

Mouffe’s agonism/agonistic pluralism comprises of certain set of rules around certain ethical value just like any other order. The main difference here is that the ethical value points to the ‘lack’ or ‘incompleteness’ that agonism/agonistic pluralism argues to be constitutive and ineradicable. The ethical value that it stands for, however, is not some sort of completeness, not even in the negative form of its absence but its impossibility. The specific ethical stance that Mouffe takes here is what is known as ‘The Ethics of the Real’. In contrast to other ethical stances that displace the positivity of completeness or fullness to a certain ‘Thing’ that is still yet to come, known as the ethics of harmony, The Ethics of the Real is an ethic without ideal as it recognizes the impossibility of

completeness and its constitutive role instead of covering it (Stavrakakis, 1999). In relations to the fantasmatic logics, Glynos and Howarth distinguish between the former and the latter through the terms ‘ethical’ and ‘ideological’ fantasy respectively (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 14). Mouffe agonism/agonistic pluralism and its PDT underpinning are obviously stands on the former. It is the ethical stance that Mouffe’s agonism/agonistic pluralism demands its subjects to identify with as the drive for the continuous attempts to sublimate antagonism. Identification and compliance with this set of ethico-political principles and the derived set of rules becomes the frontiers that separate and define agonism/agonistic pluralism as reality from what-it-is-not. Those who do not comply and identify themselves with them are pushed to the fringe of the social space.

Combining the elaboration on Mouffe’s agonism/agonistic pluralism and its theoretical underpinning in Chapter I and on coercion at work on ontological plane on Chapter II, the locus and modus of the coercive dimension in Mouffe’s agonism/agonistic pluralism can be specified. How this can be used for empirical analysis, however, requires further interrogation. Analysis on the empirical case of ‘Community Participatory Planning’ in North Ayrshire is conducted to illustrate agonism at work, including its coercive dimension, and how to apply this framework for empirical analysis. The challenges are best described by Wagenaar as the weakness of the PDT for empirical analysis; namely: this framework’s lack of application on empirical analysis; the impermanence of social and political categories and phenomena; and the generalist; ineffectual nature of its ethos (Wagenaar, 2011, pp. 154-155). This conclusions on the attempt to apply Mouffe’s agonism/agonistic pluralism and its theoretical underpinning is elaborated in the following section.

#### 4. Illustrating Agonism/Agonistic Pluralism at Work: the Case of North Ayrshire

##### Community Planning Partnership

When this framework is employed in order to analyse the empirical phenomenon of the NACPP as the illustrative case, it soon becomes apparent how a certain symbolic order which initially perceived as liberating in comparison to the previous one could transform into an oppressive one. The collaborative governance regime adopted in the NACPP has been promoted as a regime of governing that gives the common people at the sub-national level more voice in the policy process. While such moves have been lauded by the majority of the public, the same public also have concern that such a move is only a façade to justify ‘the abandonment of the public by its government.’ Furthermore, the collaboration is not as simple as many have foreseen or expected. It involves complex and intricate rules, mechanisms that manifest in endless cycles of meetings, debates, and manoeuvres not only between the government; both national and sub-national; but also among various elements that comprised the society.

Investigation and analysis on the empirical case of NACPP, however, points out that while the contingency becomes more explicit, the whole structure and mechanism regulating the *fora* that it entails are designed and employed not only to accommodate the contingent situation but also to stabilize it. This has often been overlooked by the tendency to presume consent as rather apolitical matter and it would be very likely to be achieved as long as the parties involved are given the opportunity to decide for themselves. On both models of governance; one relies on market mechanism and the other on governance through public deliberation, there is one common underlying presupposition that the subject precedes the governance structure and it is not constituted after its insertion and submission into it. It can be added that the subject here is also

often presumed to be complete, either as a rational being pursuing maximization of benefits/minimization of risks or as a social being pursuing harmony. The discourse of collaborative governance in the case analysed often involves those two presumptions. While these presumptions have been effective in constituting an appealing fantasy, especially through juxtaposition between collaborative governance against the state-centric model that it replaces to highlight the merit of the former, the limits of such fantasy often come to the fore especially when the involved parties are facing deadlock in the decision making process. In such a moment, the political dimension of consensus comes to the fore and becomes more obvious, revealing that the subjects involved are neither completely rational or solely pursue harmony.

The analysis on this empirical case does not intend to justify whether this case represents or does not represent agonism/agonistic pluralism as Mouffe has envisaged. The empirical analysis here is rather intended to answer the question of, “How is and to what extent the NACPP agonistic?” The question is formulated in such a way as to comply with the underlying PDT presuppositions that is also the underpinning of Mouffe’s agonism/agonistic pluralism. The reality of agonism/agonistic pluralism is not something complete and fixed either. In line with Roskamm’s criticism to Mouffe, agonism/agonistic pluralism is impossible in the final instance. Agonism/agonistic pluralism is treated not as features or qualities permanently embedded in a certain practice or set of practices but as logic that one certain moment characterizes them. As logic, agonism/agonistic pluralism can never totally and permanently hegemonize the practice or set of practices investigated as it always continuously engages in discursive battle with other logics for the hegemonic position.

Putting agonism/agonistic pluralism in such a way enables the empirical analysis to see its political origin, its sedimentation into norms, and its contestation or resilience as well as the fantasmatic

dimension involved. The coercive dimension is ubiquitous in each of those moments. The dynamics, however, vary from one moment to the other as each moment involves different form and magnitude of tension between coercion and consent. The LCE presupposes three ontological dimensions of reality, the social; the political; and the ideological and ethical dimensions. These three dimensions also serve as the basic unit of explanation to describe a certain practice or set of practices and how and why they work. As basic units of explanation, the three ontological dimensions are conceived in terms of logics: the social logics; the political logics; and the fantasmatic logics respectively. When it is applied for explaining a practice or set of practices, Glynos and Howarth describe logic as "... the rules or grammar of the practice, as well as the conditions which make the practice both possible and vulnerable" (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 136). In relation to the main focus of this study, the coercion at work on the ontological plane, LCE facilitates to relate this plane with the ontical one as the three basic units of explanation can be grasped in relations to the ontological/ontical distinction (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 153).

The analysis on the empirical case is focused to identify when, how, and why the logic of agonism/agonistic pluralism comes to predominantly characterize the regime of Collaborative Planning Partnership in North Ayrshire. The specific case of NA is selected for the reasons elaborated in the previous chapters. The analysis, or explanation is probably more appropriate, describes how when this particular logic comes to the fore to characterize the regime investigated, it does so by excluding or subordinating other logics as consequences of the operation of certain rules or grammar that comprise it. In the cases explained, this manifest in the detail rules and regulations how the existing decisions and policies have to be subjected to continuous review in which moment they could be questioned, debated, changed, or modified. Such process itself, at



least formally, is stipulated to involve as wide as possible community members through their representatives.

The currently adopted collaborative governance framework has been articulated mainly in the narrative of bottom-up, participatory, and community self-reliance. The narrative of pressure and inability of the state to cope with all aspects of public life often accompanies this narrative. In the latter it is often stressed that the conventional way of dealing with public matters, referring to state centric model of governance, is not an option and the only possible alternative is for the other non-state elements to take greater role. The economic decline, exacerbated by the current crises, in NA is often articulated as the factors that put them in the current position and justifies the adoption of the collaborative governance model at the sub-national level. NA has been one of the most deprived areas in Scotland and UK. In 2018 it stood as the 5<sup>th</sup> most deprived local authority in Scotland (Institute, 2018, p. 16). In this narrative the adoption of the collaborative governance framework at the sub-national level is articulated as the most viable and feasible way toward economic recovery.

Other dominant logic which articulates the current regime is the discourse of ‘devolving the power to the community’. The project to set sustainable and workable collaborative governance framework in NA is related to the Scottish’ attempts to gain broader autonomy. The dominant discourse on this issue is that the power devolved should not stop at parliament house nor city halls but has to go down to the community. This discourse seems to predominantly characterize the regime of CPP in North Ayrshire. The specific articulation of this discourse in the council area also puts the emphasis on ‘equality’ as the ethico-political value intended to govern the dynamics of the policy process. It is important to underline here that NA Council has been experimenting with the collaborative governance framework for decades, even before the decree of Scotland Act

in 1998 that secures power devolution to Scotland. The council has won several awards for this initiative, which means that their work is widely acknowledged.

The discourse that strongly characterizes this regime positions the community as the main actor in the governance process, especially on determining what, how, and to whom the public services are to be delivered. The dominant discourse puts high expectation that the communities involved could arrive at consensus. When the expected consensus is harder to achieve than expected and to ensure that the consensus achieved is effective, several procedures are developed to facilitate the process, such as evidence based tools and frameworks and the deployment of community organizers among the communities.

The contingency of the consensus, however, is given specific attention and formally institutionalized in the framework. The consented plan is continuously subjected to periodic review where it can be problematized and questioned. This is based on the consideration on the contingency of the situation that the communities are facing and impossible completeness of knowledge and information upon which the decisions are based upon. One of the disruptions to this stability found during the field research, however, is the economic review by the end of 2018 that describes that the economic performance in NA did not improve as expected (Institute, 2018). Rather a grim picture is also presented in the public sector, especially in relation to health care services (Inspectorate & Scotland, 2019).

Such a moment is critical as it could cause a drift on the subjects' cathectic point. New fantasy was then introduced in order to maintain the subjects' attachment and submission to the structure and the structure's cohesiveness, such as 'the Kind Society' project. Such fantasy operates to provide some sort of foundational guarantee that the subjects may use as protection against the anxiety caused by the contingency of the social situation and relations (Glynos, 2008, p. 287; see

also Žižek, 1989, p. 44). As long as the subject holds to this fantasy and identifies itself with the symbolic order to which this fantasy belongs to, the subject will continue to perceive the coercive castration it causes is perceived as something natural and keep itself subordinate to it.

Relating this with Laclau and Mouffe's relations of subordination, domination, and oppression, it can be said that the transformation from one form of relations to the others hinges on the drift of this cathectic point supported by the fantasmatic dimension. The same logic is also applied to Žižek's category of 'objective violence' and 'subjective violence'. It is important to underline here that the transformation from relations of subordination to the oppression ones or objective violent to the subjective one does not mean that the subject who endures the coercion has found the ideal fullness in and for itself. The new ideal of fullness, that it found hindered by the dominant structure it faces, also belongs to the symbolic order just with a different structural combination and a different fantasy, giving the corresponding subject new cathectic point.

The actual and potential transformation of objective coercion into subjective one and *vice versa*, is related with the fantasmatic dimension that supports the corresponding discursive reality. The fantasmatic dimension here corresponds with identification and the constitution of subjectivity in the engagement between the structure, which is essentially discursive, and the agent. The discussion on how this transformation is always possible and the possibility cannot be fully eradicated starts with how the coercion on the ontological plane constitutes not only the corresponding entity but also its subject. In the constitution of the latter, it involves the subject's submission. This is in line with Bourdieu's argument that symbolic violence always involves the agent's complicity. However, as discussed in the earlier chapters and because it involves the fantasmatic dimension, Lacanian perspective is considered to be able to provide more detail and systematic explanation here.

The lack of structure manifests when it demands the agent to submit themselves in order to become its subject. This is parallel to the closure as coercion on the ontological plane that defines the being of the structure discussed since the agent's decision to submit itself to the structure implies subordination and exclusion of other possibilities. Such explanation, however, does not comprehensively address the question on how coercion on this plane, objective coercion, always potentially transforms itself into subjective coercion. Such explanation requires elaboration on how a discourse has or does not have grip on its subjects and this is exactly what the concept and category of fantasmatic dimension is for (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 107). The fantasmatic dimension here serves to constitute the subject's desire and enjoyment that inform its attachment to a certain discourse. Therefore, Glynos and Howarth see the subject here as the subject of enjoyment (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 151).

Fantasy as "the support of the cohesiveness of our reality" (Žižek, 1989, p. 44) is specified as having the following characteristics: (1) It has a narrative structure which features, among other things, an ideal and an obstacle to its realization, and which may take a beatific or horrific form." (2) "It has an inherently transgressive aspect vis-a-vis officially affirmed ideals." and (3) "It purports to offer a foundational guarantee of sorts, in the sense that it offers the subject a degree of protection from the anxiety associated with a direct confrontation with the radical contingency of social relations" (Glynos, 2008, p. 287). In the concrete case of NACPP this is apparent in the discourse of 'kindness' that provides the 'fantasy of being kind subject' that exceeds beyond the boundaries of material gains (Ferguson & Thurman, 2019, p. 18). The role of the fantasy is to tap into the agents drive and transform it into desire by giving it a symbolic representation as the object (cause) of desire (Lacan, 2005, pp. 579-580; Fink, 2004, p. 22) is apparent here. It informs the agent about something that they should desire and the promise to attain it through their submission

into the structure of NACPP. In the highly contingent and dynamic structure such as NACPP, the discourse of 'kindness' appeals no longer to the rationale of technocratic effectiveness and managerial efficiency as the idealized image, but deeper into the agent's affection. It incites the agent to identify itself as the subject of the corresponding structure as it perceives that what it desires can only be achieved or satisfied through their submission that entails its castration, into it. The agent's submission into the structure entails behaviors that are symptomatic in nature. Because, the final and full satisfaction is impossible and in order to maintain the cohesiveness of the structure that constitutes the reality, the source of satisfaction is substituted from the symptoms (Fink, 1999, p. 3). The subject becomes attached to the symptomatic enjoyment without achieving what it initially desires to attain and through it the structure maintains its grip on the subject. In such a way, the coercion at the ontological plane appears to be something natural as the subject owes its subjectivity to it and cannot denounce it to be coercive without risking to lose its subjectivity.

The mechanism mentioned above also serves to provide "a degree of protection from the anxiety associated with a direct confrontation with the radical contingency of the structure. This appears in how the discourse of 'kindness' explicitly emphasizes the need to venture beyond the boundaries of formal procedures and mechanisms. In such a way, the political dimension of the structure may well become apparent, as its constitution and maintenance requires the transgression of its frontiers or boundaries, but its dislocatory or coercive impacts become less sensible. This is because the transgressing subject feels that it is relatively free from the limitations or closure caused by the structure during the moment of transgression, while it can still acquire the symptomatic enjoyment by doing so.

If we look into the logic of agonism, it becomes obvious that as any other discourse, it requires the fantasmatic dimension in order to constitute a certain form of subjectivity. The logic of agonism gives emphasis on the contingency and fluidity, correspondingly it requires the sort of subjectivity that acquires its satisfaction through enjoyment that is related to them. This sort of subjectivity can be illustrated through the description of psychotherapy for the obsessive. Fink, in his attempt “to take Lacan at his word, to read his texts *a la lettre*—that is, both literally and to the letter” (Fink, 2004, p. vii), describes that the treatment on the obsessive is directed to enable the analysand to recognize the lack in the Other or the structure, symbolized as  $\Phi$  (capital phi) thus enables the subject to recognize the imaginary phallus ( $\phi$ , with lowercase phi) and stop to make it as the condition of its desire (Fink, 2004, p. 36). This should be understood as the absence of identification. The identification that Lacan denounces is the identification of imaginary unity that evolves on the  $\phi$ , the phallus as a sign instead of signifier that lacks signified, or the other *ego* ( $a^1$ ). On the contrary, he identifies the identification on the register on the symbolic, exactly to the lack of unity, which is, nonetheless, still identification.

The transformation of the coercion on the ontological plane or objective coercion into a subjective one occurs when the subject feels that the enjoyment provided by the fantasy is decreasing. In such a situation, the subject perceives that its subjectivity is threatened, signifying the lack of identification. Such a situation may lead to, at least two options which is the subject's to decide, *first*, keeps reifying the cathectic point on the object (cause) of desire and keeps bouncing on the wall that manifests in the decrease of enjoyment it faces. Or, *second*, as described by Fink in the treatment for obsessive in psychoanalysis, recognize the lack of the structure and stop to make it the condition of its desire. In both scenarios, desire and enjoyment play a central role. The main difference, however, is the sort and source of enjoyment. Glynos and Howarth describe that in the

former, the structure constitutes the subject's enjoyment as the enjoyment of closure, while in the latter it is the enjoyment of openness (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 151).

The presence of enjoyment in both scenarios of ideological and ethical fantasy implies that the operation of logic of agonism also requires desire. The latter belongs to the structure of the register of the symbolic. With regards to Mouffe's agonism and the Radical democracy Project, this leads to another question that is, "How is it possible to constitute desire (for democracy) if its bases of stabilization, no matter how contingent and transient it is, is deconstructed?" Mouffe with Laclau have explicitly stated that they base their theoretical formula on the ideas of 'the impossibility of the social' (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014; Laclau, 1990, pp. 89-92) and 'the impossibility of democracy' (Mouffe, 1993) in the final instance. This ambiguity is well recognized by Glynos and Howarth who explicitly describe that elusiveness of this concept in capturing empirical phenomena as, once an empirical fantasy is defined as fantasy, especially by the corresponding subject, it no longer functions as a fantasy, that is to support the cohesiveness of our reality (Glynos & Howarth, 2007).

The case of collaborative or participatory governance is taken for several reasons. *First*, as an empirical case, this research considers that it is necessary to take the theoretical framework elaborated above on empirical research to address some of the major critics toward Mouffe's agonism/agonistic pluralism and the PDT that underpins it. *Second*, in relation to the specific topic of this research, the dimension of coercion in Mouffe's agonism/agonistic pluralism, the case of collaborative or participatory governance is a very interesting one as it has been claimed that it stands for anything but coercion, mentioned in diverse terms but especially 'hierarchy', 'top-down approach' etc. Related to the former, the case is a good one to demonstrate how the 'consent' championed in the collaborative or participatory governance is always accompanied by demands for compliance with certain rules from among the subjects that differentiate and characterize it

with other regimes or mode of governing. As elaborated in the previous chapters, coercion operates on ontological plane exactly through this fixation that implies the exclusions of some possibilities for the constitution of the reality investigated. On the latter, the case is a good example how on the empirical plane the discourse never exhausts the field of discursivity as the elaboration in the previous chapters demonstrates how agonism/agonistic pluralism as a discourse or logic competes with other discourses or logics to characterize the practice or regime of practice investigated.

The case of NACPP taken without defining as representation of agonism/agonistic pluralism for granted. Heuristically, as a logic or discourse, agonism/agonistic pluralism cannot fully and permanently hegemonize the NACPP regime as the field of discursivity. Therefore, in order to analyse its coercive dimension, it is necessary to identify and locate the moments when the discourse or logic of agonism comes to the fore in characterizing this regime of NACPP. In this way, the concepts of coercion as well as agonism can be employed to investigate the empirical case without being reified. It is necessary to underline here that what agonism refers to is not specified to certain substance either but hinges on the underlying 'ontology of lack' that Mouffe, as well as Laclau, formulate in their two underlying presuppositions of radical contingency and the primacy of the political. In other words, the discourse or logic of agonism/agonistic pluralism in the practice or regime investigated is identified by certain articulations that highlight and foreground the 'lack of fullness' in certain meanings or identities and, thus, the political origin of their constitution in the practice or regime investigated.

This can be further specified, following Mouffe's conceptualization of agonism, that the said articulations are recognized as constitutive for and institutionalized in the practice or regime investigated. Therefore events such as public consultation, public deliberation and public review in the collaborative governance regime investigated are central in this research. Those events are



indicative of the moments where the supposedly fixed decisions or policies are questioned and new decision has to be made to stabilize them, whether it is continuation; revision; or alteration of those policies or decisions. This, however, does not mean that with these events formally institutionalized in the regime analysed, the collaborative or participatory governance regime in NACPP becomes essentially agonistic for several reasons. *First*, it becomes one only during this moment when the contingency of the relatively stable decisions, policies, and the issues they address are questioned, debated, and potentially maintained, altered or abandoned altogether. This moment is politically constituted and those involved should make the decision with awareness that the decision made, whatever it might be, is subject to another cycle of review and questioning. Alternatives or options excluded in one event possibly still come back in the next cycle as equal candidates with ones adopted. *Second*, even with such a formal arrangement where contingency is recognized and institutionalized, it will never totally and permanently hegemonize the regime as a social space. It manifests only as a moment and as Laclau describes, the moment will never hegemonize the space. *Third*, in relation to the second, there are also empirical examples how such a moment of foregrounding the contingency, even after it is formally institutionalized, becomes merely instrumental in reproducing the hegemony of certain discourse on the regime. This potentially could take place in NA with the discourse of ‘kind society’. The case of Collaborative Governance in Nantes, France is another example of how this scenario becomes actual (Griggs, Howarth, & Feandeiro, 2018).

The last point in the previous paragraph points to the most specific coercive dimension in Mouffe’s agonism/agonistic pluralism; the underlying ethics that is the Ethics of the Real. This specific ethical position is required for the subjects to identify themselves with since otherwise those moments when contingency come to the fore would serve a totally different kind of purpose than

what agonism/agonistic pluralism intends to. What this Ethics of the Real refers to has been elaborated above and in the previous chapters, but the point here is that the logic of agonism/agonistic pluralism ‘demands’ from among its subjects not only compliance to certain rules but also identification with certain ethical values.

Defining these features of agonism/agonistic pluralism as how Mouffe conceptualizes it and locates them in the practice or regime analysed are important but they are not the only important steps in this research. No less, or even more important step, especially in relations to the main topic of this research, is to demonstrate and elaborate how the agonism/agonistic pluralism moment requires specification if it is to be intelligible and feasible. Specifying the aspects that constitutes it is what brings agonism/agonistic pluralism into being. It indicates that agonism/agonistic pluralism as reality belongs to the register of the symbolic which its fundamental mechanism is repression as it always belongs to castration from the agent as the condition for its insertion into it to become its subject.

The coercive dimension of Mouffe’s agonism/agonistic pluralism especially its operation on the ontological plane becomes more obvious when the analysis and elaboration takes this path. Besides specifying its features both through substantive elaboration and juxtaposition with other concepts, analysis that goes back and forth between ontological and ontical plane is recommended. For such research, LCE becomes a very useful analytical framework and tool as it addresses what Wagenaar describes as the main weaknesses of the PDT (Wagenaar, 2011, pp. 154-155), and by extension; Mouffe’s agonism/agonistic pluralism. Through its analytical categories of social logic, political logic, and fantasmatic logic, it provides the tools that enable the research strategy to stabilize the categories of social and political and the phenomena without essentially subsuming the phenomena investigated under those categories.

Worthy to underline here is the import of the category of the fantasmatic logic and how the LCE acknowledges its ontological status and systematically incorporates it in its framework. The systematic incorporation of the fantasmatic dimension in the constitution of reality facilitates the elaboration coercion and its ontological status in a non-essentialist way yet more visible. In the case of Mouffe's agonism/agonistic pluralism, the demand for the subject to identify itself with the certain ethical stance would have not been harder to foreground without this category as basic unit of explanation. Through the fantasmatic logics it become possible in this research to investigate how the castration demanded by agonism/agonistic pluralism, as well as any other structure, does not necessarily lead to its articulation into antagonism. The fantasmatic dimension plays a central role to determine both the resistance to change and the speed and direction for change of the investigated practice or regime (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 145).

The elaboration on the case of the NACPP shows that the discourse of 'Kind Society' serves this fantasmatic function in two senses. *First*, it is intended to mobilize the broader public attachment to the NACPP framework and, thus, become more actively engaged in it. *Second*, it also serves the function to condition the subjects to be able to cope with messiness and the structure's constitutive lacks (Ferguson & Thurman, 2019) as in the moment this research was conducted, the framework did not lead to the expected area revitalization. During that moment, the latter might be more crucial considering the socio-economic situation in North Ayrshire as reflected in the reports.

Mouffe falls short on these aspects. She understands and elaborates the social and political categories with emphasis on the latter both in the HSS and her works thereto. However, she does not further develop them into a methodological framework that would have rendered her theoretical concepts applicable for empirical analysis. One that she misses here is to further develop the concepts of 'moment' and 'space' in relation to hegemony that Laclau has elaborated

(Laclau, 1990, pp. 41-42). This is actually what Glynos and Howarth do in the LCE. The underdevelopment of this aspect in Mouffe's works on agonism/agonistic pluralism greatly contributes to the ambiguities in her elaboration and use of the concept of antagonism that critics such as Menga, Roskamm, and, earlier, Norval have pointed out. Without the mediation of those categories as logics it would have been very hard to stabilize the social and political categories and phenomena and Mouffe's agonism/agonistic pluralism would be seen as either to overemphasize the contingency or the antagonism.

Besides the underdevelopment of analytical categories for simultaneous explanations of social and political dimensions, Mouffe's elaboration on agonism/agonistic pluralism does not systematically incorporate the fantasmatic dimension. She comes close when she discusses the form of political community envisaged to embody the agonism/agonistic features (Mouffe, 1993) and the role of affect and identification (Mouffe, 2005, pp. 26-29). However, the category of fantasmatic dimension, which is crucial to explain 'identification' and 'affect', has not been systematically incorporated in her conceptualization. This fantasmatic dimension is crucial in explaining the coercive dimension of the structure or symbolic order in general and, the main object of this dissertation, agonism/agonistic pluralism in particular. The fantasmatic dimension, upon which identification is based, is also crucial to demonstrate and explain how even in such a formally agonistic arrangement such as collaborative governance, different cathectic points and ethos could transform the reality both on the levels of the structure and subject. This can be seen in the discourse of 'kind society' articulated against the context of the dislocations caused by relatively below expectation policy performance the NACPP has produced per 2018.

## 5. Theoretical and Practical Implications: The Fantasmatic Dimension and the Ethics of the Real in Mouffe's Agonism/Agonistic Pluralism

To conclude this dissertation, this section discusses the implications from the investigation and elaboration in the previous chapters. The elaboration has shown the constitutive role in the constitution of agonism/agonistic pluralism as an order just as any other forms of order. This coercion has the ontological status as it is necessary to suspend the overflowing of meanings as they have limitless potential configurations that coercion comes to stabilize and makes the reality meaningful and intelligible. The stability produced, however, is never complete and permanent. Mouffe's agonism/agonistic pluralism centres exactly on this impossibility. The impossibility here, however, should be perceived as 'impossible but necessary'. Mouffe with Laclau have elaborated and conceptualized this in the *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*. Laclau, especially, gives great detailed elaborations on this 'impossible but necessary' concept that provides rather simpler expressions of the underlying theoretical presuppositions; the radical contingency and the primacy of the political; in their theory of discourse and hegemony.

The ubiquity of coercion has been demonstrated in the elaboration above, even in agonism/agonistic pluralism that is centred on the futility of it in the final instance. The stability that it is intended for is something impossible. But this does not mean that this dimension can be discarded. It should not be essentialized either. The former may lead to the discourse of psychotic, while the latter to obsession. Mouffe's agonism/agonistic pluralism, in line with the theory of discourse and hegemony she co-authored with Laclau, takes the path in between those two poles, a path that is described as 'Traversing the Fantasy' in Lacanian Psychoanalysis (Žižek, 1990, p. 259). The path taken by Mouffe's agonism/agonistic pluralism further engages with the

impossible, the traumatic kernel, of the social. This premise of the ‘impossibility of the social’ is true even for what Mouffe envisages as agonism/agonistic pluralism. The elaboration in this dissertation demonstrates that agonism is impossible in the final instance. Its coercive dimension marks its limits to be permanently and totally complete.

While the elaboration on the coercive dimension of Mouffe’s agonism/agonistic pluralism demonstrates that, as any other structure that belongs to the symbolic register, it demands castration from its subject, the next central question would be, “What does it specifically demand?” The substantive specific enjoyment demanded may have to be found in the specific empirical context. On the ontological plane, however, it can be specified that agonism/agonistic pluralism demands the enjoyment of the fantasy of fullness. It means shifting the cathectic point on two aspects. *First*, the point should represent the inevitability of lack; *second*, it also requires the shift of emphasis of enjoyment from “the absence of *fullness*” to “the *absence* of fullness”. The absence of fullness because desire (for fullness) belongs to the symbolic register and in the symbolic register fullness can only be represented by its absence. The shift of emphasis from the fullness to its absence that the Ethic of the Real demands may not change the existing structure but it changes the direction and energy of where to go from the existing structure. Furthermore, this process needs to be institutionalized as a recurring cycle as the new structure also operates in the same manner and has to be responded to, based on the same ethic.

Further question such as, “Which cathectic point to that represents this lack?”, once again, substantively have to be looked for in the empirical context. On the ontological plane, however, there have been some clues, such as provided by Yannis Stavrakakis. Stavrakakis argues that in such situations the recognition of this constitutive lack and its institutionalisation requires, in the context of radical democracy, sublimation and identification with the symptoms (Stavrakakis,

1999, pp. 131-134). Sublimation from the point of view of the Ethics of the Real is different from one based on the ethics of harmony. The sublimation here does not refer to the ‘common good’ but, in contrast, to its impossibility. Stavrakakis describes its operation as:

What I want to suggest is that sublimation moves beyond traditional ethical identification by taking into account the dimension of the impossible real. But what is most important in sublimation and relates to our discussion on democracy is that sublimation creates a public space. Although it can only be individual it nevertheless creates a public space—a certain unifying field (Stavrakakis, 1999, p. 131)

Stavrakakis further describes the unifying field created by this sublimation as involving the creation of space that represents the faith left by the loss of the *Thing*, in which the individuality can be addressed publicly without reducing the former into the latter, and “... the possibility of constructing a ‘material’ edifice around the recognition of the real, the recognition of the lack that cross-cuts the subject and the social field” (Stavrakakis, 1999, p. 132). Referring to Lefort’s characterization of democracy, Stavrakakis describes that this sublimation is what democracy is all about.

Merely sublimation is not enough since sublimation is inevitably contaminated by fantasy of imaginary unity that in the end may lure the identification of the sublimated object with the Thing and colonization of the field of sublimation. Therefore, sublimation here needs to be accompanied with the identification with the symptoms. The symptom here refers to “... that which is ideologically thought to introduce disharmony in the social that would otherwise be harmoniously unified under a certain utopian ideal” (Stavrakakis, 1999, p. 133). Putting the emerging and proliferating ‘liberation movements’ nowadays within Stavrakakis’ framework, these movements can be perceived as the symptoms that represent the unrepresentable in the dominant and hegemonic symbolic order.

While I agree conceptually with the sublimation and identification of the symptoms as ways to traverse the fantasy, instead of bypassing it, and recognise the constitutive role of the 'lack', I may have some reservation for which symptoms that we should identify ourselves with in the context of promoting the Radical democracy Project. There are several reasons for these: *first*, the symptom here is theoretically unlimited. It could range from the articulation of dislocations in various political movements we are familiar with to something that was probably unthinkable before. *Second*, some of these so called liberation movements are no less obsessive than the dominant or hegemonic order that causes the dislocations in the first place. It is based on certain harmonic ideals that presuppose, once the dominant or hegemonic order structure is eradicated, all dislocations and antagonisms would disappear too. This overlooks that after the dissolution of the previous order, new order will eventually replace it and every order inevitably causes its own dislocations and even owes its constitution to it. This is due to the dimension of coercion that is embedded in its ontology.

In such situations, at this point, a possible way through is, following Stavrakakis, to identify with the symptoms and sublimate it in relation to the Thing, the impossible to achieve. The point here is to keep the constitutive lack at the centre of the picture. Thus, in responding to the 'liberation movements' it is necessary, in identifying with them, to keep in mind that the 'New Order' advocated is inevitably constituted around the same constitutive lack and how such lack would be addressed, ideologically or ethically, in their order would be the main parameter whether they are worthy for ourselves to identify with or not.

This, however, requires further investigation and deserves its own research. The point made in the previous paragraph is mostly conjectural and still tentative. It is based on the points found and elaborated on the dimension of coercion in Mouffe's agonism/agonistic pluralism and its relations



with the fantasmatic dimensions, and how the latter still belongs to the register of the symbolic order that begets coercion in the first place. A more comprehensive answer for the question that this section specifically is addressing deserves research of its own. There are many aspects not comprehensively elaborated or even unelaborated, such as drive and *synthome*, in this dissertation. Investigation and elaboration on these concepts in relations to coercion and its contingency apropos its fantasmatic dimension is necessary to further answer the said question more comprehensively.

‘Keeping the constitutive lack at the center’ becomes the main point that this dissertation aims to reiterate and argue for. Coercion or coercive dimension inevitably involved in the constitution of any order signifies this lack as it marks their limits. Foregrounding and explicating this dimension in operation in Mouffe’s theory of agonism aims to demonstrate that agonism/agonistic pluralism is not and never intended to become a panacea to eradicate all dislocations and antagonisms, in fact it is constituted with acknowledgement of their constitutive role at its centre. Understanding the ubiquity and constitutive role of coercive dimension in the constitution agonism/agonistic pluralism as any other orders helps to critically assess the criss-crossing discourses, especially during this time of crisis, that promises total eradication of all current miseries as well as better understanding on radical democracy project and the agonistic relations that Mouffe’s envisions as the main form of political relations in such democracy.

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