A challenge to the discourse of development or development done differently:

The discourse of experts in the WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation

by

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs in partial

fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Political Economy

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Ottawa, Ontario

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Abstract

The 2017 coming into force of the WTO Agreement of Trade Facilitation, and its special and differential treatment provisions for developing and least developed countries, is expected to leverage substantial international development resources, along with the dominant discourse of development, including the deployment of Western-trained experts to support the implementation of complex border management measures on the basis of a neoliberal discourse of good governance. Critical development scholarship, informed by Escobar (2011), Ferguson (1994) and Li (2007) helps to inform the texture of expert-beneficiary relations, while a post-structuralist discourse analysis helps to reveal the underlying power relationships as reflected in texts and practices. This study will explore these dominant discourses, paying particular attention to the peer-to-peer expert deployment mechanism employed by the Brussels-based World Customs Organization and the case of Sierra Leone, which offers potential to challenge the dominant tactics employed by international development agencies.

Acknowledgements

First of all, I express my sincere gratitude to Prof. Doris E. Buss, whose patience, ideas, insights and tough critique opened my eyes to the possibilities of a critical inquiry into the TFA from within. Despite the distance, I have come to appreciate your intellect and your ideas, and am honored to consider you as a colleague and as a friend. I sincerely hope we can continue to exchange ideas and insights. To the Director of the Institute of Political Economy, Prof. Christina Rojas, your quiet support for the most unusual of students, who began this journey at a much later point in life. To Donna Coghill, the kind, knowledgeable and resilient face of the Institute, who guided my journey, buttressed by eight years, three international moves and a winter of discontent, your support and understanding was often the singular motivation that keep me moving forward. To Prof. Jane Parpart, whose encouragement of and support of independent research provided me with the intellectual tools to create knowledge. To Prof. Lisa Mills – your words of encouragement and your genuine interest in my study provided an important and critical push in the final crunch. To the faculty of the Institute, your openness to the experiences of a mid-career professional, and your flexibility that enabled me to balance work and scholarship. To the Department of Global Affairs Canada, the financial and managerial support to undertake mid-career studies, and an environment that encourages life-long learning. To my best friend of 20 years, Dr. Andrew Pinsonnault, whose experiences from the trenches of academia provided the basis for sanity when it was needed most. To my brother, Leland J. Taylor, whose deep understanding of what it means to be a Taylor and do one's best in the face of all circumstances, and who continues to bring out the best of my late father, Ian F. Taylor, P. Eng. To my loving partner, Alain Defoer for his enduring love, patience, encouragement, kindness and warmth. To the graduates of the Institute, whose friendship, pure intellect and

principles of social justice provide the inspiration for the world to be a better place. To the friends, colleagues throughout the global trade community, whose professionalism, integrity and commitment are an inspiration to governments and communities around the world. Finally, the inspiration from my mom, Dr. Judith A. N. Slimmon, who made me believe that a world where knowledge is created is an amazing place to be.

List of Acronyms

CBC	Capacity Building Committee
CCC	Customs Cooperation Council
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
DFID	Department for International Development
EUR	Euro
GBP	Pound Sterling
G7	Group of Seven
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
HMRC	Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ITC	International Trade Centre
NCTF	National Committee on Trade Facilitation
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PDA	Post-Structuralist Discourse Analysis
RKC	Revised Kyoto Convention
SAFE	Secure and Facilitate Trade
SDT	Special and Differential Treatment
TCGP	Trade and Competiveness Global Practice
TFA	WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation
TFC	Trade Facilitation Committee
TFAWG	Trade Facilitation Agreement Working Group
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WCO	World Customs Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization

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A challenge to the discourse of development or development done differently: The discourse of experts in the WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation

On 22 February 2017, the WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation (TFA) entered into force. This groundbreaking agreement, seeking to standardize, harmonize and simplify international trade procedures, is the first multilateral trade agreement to be accepted by the full membership of the WTO since the organization's founding in 2005. The TFA was initially conceived as a means to improve and streamline international trading procedures outlined in the 1947 General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) on matters related to transit, publication of regulations, and the rationalization of fees and formalities (OECD, 2009, p. 13). TFA negotiations lasted for almost 10 years. These largely technical discussions were based on established trade facilitation themes of standardization and harmonization, with proposals for common document formats and electronic interfaces between and among border agencies (Finger & Wilson, 2006). In their final form, the provisions of the TFA are designed to reduce the bureaucratic barriers associated with international trade through the application of business-friendly measures, such as the publication of import and export procedures, better coordination of border agencies' work, and expedited border procedures for those firms with strong compliance records. The TFA is premised on the view that inefficient border procedures, especially in developing countries, are adding unnecessary costs to business, while depriving governments of potential sources of revenue in the form of legitimate duties, taxes and fees. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) notes that these costs – known as trade transaction costs – may represent “up to 15% of the value of traded goods in some cases” (OECD, 2015, p. 2). Finger and Wilson (2006) suggest that logistics costs, such as demurrage – charges payable for delayed loading of a conveyance – and storage, are as important

as tariff rates in determining the “landed cost” of goods. With the growth of global value chains and “just-in-time” production systems, border delays are being viewed as a growing impediment to the free movement of goods (Finger & Wilson, 2006) and to economic growth.

Key to achieving agreement between developing and developed members was the TFA’s special and differential treatment (SDT) provisions, allowing “developing” and “least developed” country members to delay the implementation of the more complex measures and to request technical assistance and capacity building to this end. Negotiations leading to the SDT provisions included extensive discussions on how to systematically identify developing countries’ needs along with a framework for the delivery of technical assistance and capacity building to ensure uniform implementation across the WTO membership while acknowledging divergent national implementation capacities. Dating back to the 2005 consolidated communication from the WTO’s Africa Group, Finger and Wilson (2006) cite the position taken by developing countries that promoted a legally binding framework for technical assistance from developed countries, which was precise, effective, sustainable and flexible (Finger & Wilson, 2006, p. 16).

As a member-driven organization, the WTO relied on the inputs of its members, largely through permanent representative offices in Geneva, to negotiate the TFA. Ghafele (2004) suggests that the presence of developing country voices contributed significantly to the principle and agreed practices of SDT, despite the challenges developing countries faced in engaging with Geneva-based international organizations, especially when confronted with the better staffed missions of developing countries (Ghafele, 2004, p. 445). The final wording of TFA’s SDT provisions provide for “assistance and support for capacity building”, which “should be provided to help developing and least-developed country members to implement the provisions of this

Agreement, in accordance with their nature and scope” and that “the extent and the timing of implementation of the provisions of this Agreement shall be related to the implementation capacities of developing and least-developed country Members.” Meanwhile, Article 21 of the Agreement states that “donor Members agree to facilitate the provision of assistance and support for capacity building to developing country and least-developed country Members on mutually agreed terms either bilaterally or through the appropriate international organizations” (World Trade Organization, 2016, pp. 25-26).

Following the TFA’s 2017 coming into force, the WTO launched the process of “notification” under the SDT, alongside the traditional ratification process. The “notification” process provided the opportunity for developing and least developed countries to identify those provisions of the TFA that they could implement immediately (known as category “A”), those measures that would require more time to implement (known as category “B”) and those that would require more time and external technical assistance and capacity building (known as category “C”). Developing countries’ categorization exercises were generally supported by a group of international development agencies, including the World Bank, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), committing substantial resources towards this categorization effort. I will return to this question of categorization and the role of experts in more detail in chapter 3. Some of the more complex measures, expected to require higher levels of technical assistance and capacity building, include:

- Single window (TFA article 10.4) – This measure obliges countries to maintain a system by which traders submit documentation at a single entry point, allowing seamless processing by multiple border agencies, such as Customs, plant health, quarantine and standards.

- Authorized operators (TFA article 7.7) – This measure obliges countries to maintain special facilitative measures for those traders that meet established criteria, such as consistent compliance with Customs laws, appropriate recordkeeping and supply chain security.
- Measurement and publication of release times (TFA article 7.6) – This measure obliges countries to systematically measure and publish average times for the clearance of consignments.
- Risk management (TFA article 7.4) – This measure obliges countries to use risk-based controls, focusing inspection resources on those consignments that are identified as high-risk, while expediting the movement of low-risk consignments.
- Post-clearance audit (TFA article 7.5) – This measure obliges countries to move Customs controls away from the border and use “post-clearance” audits on traders’ premises to ensure compliance with Customs laws.
- Advance rulings (TFA article 3.1) – This measure obliges countries to provide binding rulings on classification and origin, so as to ensure consistency and predictability in terms of tariff rates.

The common thread among these complex measures is their “technical” nature, insofar as they all require extensive legal, analytical and policy capacities to implement successfully. A range of complex and inter-related technical interventions, such as legal reforms, stakeholder negotiations, process re-engineering and information technology systems’ integration underpin the implementation of these measures. All of the above measures are conspicuously absent from developing and least developing countries’ category “A” notifications, ranking in bottom five of the 35 measures notified as such (Neufeld, 2016, p. 13). It is expected that the successful implementation of the more complex measures will require the mobilization of an extensive

range of experts with specific skills and well as those with a cross-cutting understanding of international supply chains. As these measures begin to appear in countries' category "C" notifications in 2017 – 18, international development agencies and bilateral donors are already mobilizing resources in keeping with what Li (2007) refers to as a dominant discourse of development, which seeks to diagnose deficiencies and delineate a technical field (Li, 2007, p. 246) for expert intervention.

The SDT provisions of the TFA contained in articles 13 – 22 provide the formal legal framework by which international development agencies, including the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and bilateral development agencies will provide technical assistance and capacity building under this dominant discourse of development. These institutions have already demonstrated a capacity to adapt to a trade-focused discourse, as demonstrated by a growing proportion of global development flows being dedicated to trade-related technical assistance and capacity building (Berrittella & Zhang, 2014, p. 290). The development discourse, as it relates to trade, is based on a broadly accepted claim of the positive correlation between trade and economic growth, and the resultant imperative of supporting of developing and least developed countries' integration into the global trading economy (World Bank Group, 2013). I contend that this emergence of trade as a central object of intervention by the development community is reflective of development institutions' capacity to expand their reach into an increasingly diverse range of sectors, while maintaining the same discourse and power relationships that have endured since the late 1940s (Escobar, 2011, p. 46).

With the 2017 coming-into-force of the SDT provisions, the stage is now set for the extensive international development apparatus to assume a leadership role in delivering TFA-related support to "developing" and "least developed" countries. Enthusiastic prognoses of new

hope for the multilateral trading system has emerged in both academic and development circles. Eliason (2015), for example, views the TFA's implementation flexibility as a key capacity building opportunity, while development discourse emerging from the OECD and the World Bank imagine great potentials for poverty reduction, private sector development, economic growth, and integration into global value chains, specifically stemming from the streamlining of procedures and the standardization of trade facilitation rules across borders in accordance with the TFA (Eliason, 2015, pp. 644-646).

Despite its emergence as a growing area of intervention for international development agencies, trade facilitation has received very limited critical inquiry, especially from a critical development and governmentality perspective. Leading critical development theorists, including Escobar (1984, 2011), Ferguson (1994) and Li (2007) have concentrated their analyses on the more traditional "development" interventions, including nutrition, agriculture and rural development. Nevertheless, the same bilateral and multilateral development institutions, such as the World Bank and Global Affairs Canada (successor to the Canadian International Development Agency) that have been referenced in these authors' works are poised to be central actors in TFA implementation. The technical nature of the TFA, encompassing the development of new systems and procedures, defined by international standards is well-suited for the reproduction of a discourse of expert-driven planning, buttressed by the predominance of a neo-liberal discourse of good governance, which seeks to model the "Global South" in the image of the "Global North" (Springer, 2012, p. 933) and the deployment of technical / scientific solutions, which have received extensive attention in these authors' works.

What I propose to undertake is a critical inquiry into the "development discourse" that underpins the international agencies' forthcoming engagement in these areas. More specifically,

I question how technical experts relate to “beneficiaries” or “target groups”. What are the discourses and power relations that influence social practices between experts and beneficiaries in a structure like the TFA? Do different international agencies maintain different discourses that would further influence the texture of social practices between experts and beneficiaries, and can a critical development lens provide insight into these relations through the analysis of discourse? I intend to shed light on these questions through a critical discourse analysis of the TFA’s implementation focusing on a case study of the Brussels-based World Customs Organization(WCO). My fundamental thesis question is “do different imaginings of ‘expertise’ change the texture of relations between experts and beneficiaries of TFA-related technical assistance, and does this challenge the discourse of development, or is it simply development done differently?”

Applying the perspectives of three critical development theorists, including Escobar (1984, 2011), Ferguson (1994) and Li (2007), I will seek to demonstrate that the WCO, unlike other development agencies engaging in TFA-related technical assistance and capacity building, maintains a different discourse in defining expert-beneficiary relationships, represented by a set of practices that eschews the “city-based trustee” approach in favor of discourses of experience sharing and peer support. I will demonstrate this discursive formation reproduces a more communal and localized perspective on trade facilitation initiatives that are cast under the TFA, opening spaces for different voices, knowledges and experiences, while maintaining a suspicion of “city-based trustees”. By challenging the identity of “expert”, I will demonstrate that this challenge potentially represents a small step in challenging the powerful discourses of expert-mediated solutions and subverting the dominance this discourse in favor of practical, peer-based experiences and knowledges. While these challenges are not likely to challenge the underlying

neo-liberal precepts of trade facilitation and the presumed development benefits of international trade, nor are they likely to immediately change the very technical nature of the “development solutions” foreseen under the TFA, I will demonstrate that challenges to the discourse of experts represents an opening for different voices and experiences to be deemed “expert”, perhaps offering a subversion of certain forms of dominant Western expertise. With these insights, I will consider whether these discursive differences are simply “doing development differently” and leaving the unanswered political-economic questions of unanswered, or if they are in fact, challenging the presuppositions of development in some small measure from within.

This inquiry will be organized into the following chapters:

- **Chapter 1** will introduce the TFA and its origins in the 2005 aid-for-trade initiative, its positioning within a global governmentality framework defined by the neo-liberal discourse of good governance, and the critical development works of Escobar (1984, 2011), Ferguson (2011) and Li (2007).
- **Chapter 2** will establish the methodology for the inquiry, focusing on post-structuralist critical discourse analysis (PDA), and the identification of discursive formations through textual analysis that offer insight into power relationships and resultant social practices.
- **Chapter 3** will assess the statements that inform the dominant development discourses as they relate to the implementation of the TFA, using the actual SDT provisions of the TFA and two World Bank documents, providing insight into the dominant power relationships between experts and beneficiaries and resultant practices related to TFA implementation.

- **Chapter 4** assess the discourse of the WCO, with particular attention to the divergent expert-beneficiary relationships and practices using the case study of the TFA implementation programme that I managed between 2015 and 2018.

I present this inquiry in full recognition that I work within and among the institutions that uphold the neoliberal tenants of the TFA, and have done so in a professional capacity for more than 10 years. Therefore, it is not my intention to produce a critique of trade and trade facilitation as an instrument of development. I have worked among hundreds of well-intentioned individuals from across the trade and development community, and maintain enormous respect for the work that they undertake in often difficult and isolated environments.

CHAPTER 1: THE WTO AGREEMENT ON TRADE FACILITATION AND CRITICAL DEVELOPMENT THEORY

Trade liberalization and trade facilitation are broadly present in contemporary international development discourses, including those of the World Trade Organization (WTO), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the World Bank (OECD, 2009) (World Bank Group, 2013), which view them as instruments of economic growth, poverty reduction and productivity enhancement. This point of view is replicated in the international development policy frameworks of major bilateral donors, including Canada (Global Affairs Canada, 2013), the United Kingdom (DFID, 2017) and the United States (USAID, n.d.). For example, in the Department for International Development's (DFID) 2017 economic growth strategy, the statement "trade as an engine for poverty reduction" figures strongly as part of the United Kingdom's development assistance policy (DFID, 2017). Similarly, the World Bank's claim that "economic integration through trade and improved competitiveness is central to any effective development strategy" (World Bank Group, 2015) reflects of the dominance of a discourse that draws a direct correlation between trade liberalization and trade facilitation, and poverty reduction, although Escobar (1984) would argue that poverty and underdevelopment themselves are in fact long-standing discursive constructions of these same development agencies (Escobar, 1984, p. 378). These agencies are actively working to implement trade facilitation initiatives across a wide spectrum of spaces and scalar levels, with tactics encompassing infrastructure, systems, and reforms to policies and procedures at sub-national, national, regional and global levels in increasing alignment to the provisions of the WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation (TFA).

The TFA is poised to operate at multiple scales and across multiple sites. High-level implementation discussions, such as those related to the overall special and differential treatment (SDT) framework of the TFA, operate at the international level, generally taking place in Geneva under the leadership of the WTO, with close participation of related United Nations institutions and the World Bank. Meanwhile, infrastructural, legal and procedural matters are generally discussed and implemented at the national level, with linkages to regional and bilateral trade and Customs cooperation agreements, and specific procedural reforms taking place at individual border stations, including seaports, airports and land border crossings. The mix of government agencies, parastatals, private sector associations that are involved in international trade differ widely across regional and even national boundaries. This vertical and horizontal encompassment presents a complex analytical puzzle, where the distribution of knowledge and exercise of power is highly variable, and where actors occupy multiple subjectivities. It is in this complex setting that technical solutions, addressing questions of standardization, harmonization and transparency will be taken up by a core group of multilateral agencies as well as bilateral development assistance projects, employing the established logic and techniques of “development”, including the mobilization of experts with a mandate to frame the problems of this complex mix of stakeholders in a manner that is amenable to a technical solution. The technical solutions noted above can be traced to the 2005 Doha Development Agenda and the associated “aid-for-trade” initiative. It is worth briefly examining this recent history before investigating the discourse of the TFA in further depth.

The Doha Development Agenda and the TFA

Lamp (2017) highlights a contested interconnection between trade and the discourse of development and underdevelopment dating to the late 1940s. These first post-war decades,

Lamp (2017) argues, were formative in developing a discourse of “developed” and “underdeveloped” within the trade sector, where the divergent export promotion and import substitution interests of newly independent post-colonial states conflicted with the open trade interests of developed countries, who sought to maintain their position of dominance in the global economic system (Lamp, 2017, p. 483). Consequently, developing countries remained suspicious of the trade and development agenda. The Washington Consensus period of the 1980’s saw a greater promotion by the Global North of free-market ideals and an economic focus on trade liberalization, foreign direct investment and deregulation. The structural adjustment policies the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) during this period challenged developing countries’ policies of increasing exports and protecting domestic industry, while encouraging continued skepticism of the trade and development agenda (Lamp, 2017, p. 477).

This suspicion remained largely in place until the emergence of the “Asian Tigers” in the 1980s and 1990s, when developing countries became more amenable to what was to become the aid-for-trade agenda in the early 2000s (Hallaert, 2013, p. 654), culminating in the Doha Development Agenda of 2005. Here, international development organizations, including the World Bank and the IMF, were called upon to assist developing countries to better adapt to trade liberalization trends, resulting in the launch in 2005 of the “aid-for-trade” initiative under the stewardship of the WTO. The effectiveness of these early aid-for-trade initiatives was critiqued by Hallaert (2013), who concluded that these programmes suffered from lack of focus and results achievement, due in part to the lack of any concrete international framework (such as the TFA) around which to plan technical interventions (Hallaert, 2013, p. 659) and an inadequate understanding of local systems and priorities by the transnational expert communities who

played a central role in delivering “aid-for-trade” initiatives (Hallaert, 2013, p. 662). I will return to this question of localized understandings as part of the discourse of the WCO in chapter 4.

The Doha Development Agenda, including its most recent iterations related to the TFA, brings several factors together that would warrant inquiry from the perspective of critical development scholarship. The Agenda represents a complex bridging of the economic priorities of advanced economies versus those of developing economies, which leveraged the newfound enthusiasm of developing countries towards the emerging trade and development nexus (Hallaert, 2013, p. 654) allowing international development agencies to implement a growing number of programmes under the rubric of trade and development. These programmes represent an emergent insertion of development discourse into a policy field which is becoming increasingly prominent in the present-day priorities of international development actors, where beneficiaries, especially Customs administration and other border agencies, are being directed by a growing array of expert-mediated technical solutions to a set of perceived “problems” emerging from the complex of duplicative procedures and administrative requirements that exist at borders throughout the developing world (Eliason, 2015, pp. 644-645). For years after the launch of aid-for-trade, 2009 OECD statistics showed an increase of some 60% in “aid-for-trade” commitments over the 2002 – 2005 baseline (Berrittella & Zhang, 2014, p. 290). Berrittella and Zhang also report aid-for-trade’s contribution to global development assistance reached 25% of official development assistance flows by 2008 (Berrittella & Zhang, 2014, p. 290). In its most recent overview of its trade agenda, the Trade and Competitiveness Global Practice (TCGP) of the World Bank reported that it has implemented more than 120 Customs, border and trade facilitation projects since 1995 (World Bank Group, 2015).

The TFA and Governmentality

I suggest that critical development scholarship, informed by Foucault's perspectives on governmentality, is useful in interrogating the "discourse of development", along with the underlying power relationships and resultant social practices, allowing for a critical assessment of emerging development interventions, such as "aid-for-trade" and TFA implementation from a position that stands outside of the development discourse. While Foucault's writings were clearly crafted in terms of the nation-state, both Fraser (2003) and Larner and Walters (2004) suggest that Foucauldian perspectives on governmentality are applicable in the analysis of scalar levels beyond that of nation-states. Fraser (2003) further suggests that the identification of the "ordering mechanisms and political rationality" of emerging forms of global regulation like the TFA are worthy of a governmentality analysis, considering its ordering mechanism to standardize, harmonize and rationalize border procedures on a global scale, which is well suited to this type of analysis, in keeping with Fraser's (2003) argument that regulatory control is being re-scaled to multi-leveled economic edifices (Fraser, 2003, p. 167).

In addition to its positioning across multiple scalar levels, I contend that the TFA is part of "neoliberal discourse of globalization" best described in the context of development by Springer (2012), where he describes the reproduction of an overarching discourse of "good governance", which encompasses notions of curbing corruption, reducing poverty, and promoting growth and participatory development, all of which maintain large constituencies of support in international development agencies (Springer, 2012, p. 933). Li (2007) agrees with this understanding of good governance as neoliberal discourse that rewards competition and performance, and which seeks global alignment to the assemblage of governance in the Global North (Li, 2007, p. 240). Springer (2012) also argues that "good governance" can be read as a

discourse pursued by the Global North to define the Global South in its image” (Springer, 2012, p. 936). Salskov-Iversen, Hansen and Bislev (2000) agree that technologies of efficiency, automation, pluralism and transparency underpin this discourse (Salskov-Iversen, Krause-Hansen, & Bislev, 2000, p. 196). I argue that this broad discourse of “good governance” represents the discursive framework for the techniques and knowledges employed by the international community to support the TFA’s implementation, providing a structured framework through the SDT provisions for the Global North to define the Global South in its image. I will seek to demonstrate that these discourses are played out largely through the expert-driven delivery of standardized packages of technical interventions designed to regulate the conduct of border spaces, but where potential exists for alternative imaginings of the texture of expert-beneficiary relationships.

From the works of the above authors, I contend that a governmentality lens provides a framework for analyzing the regulatory nature of the TFA – encompassing specific standards for the orderly flow of goods across borders, as well as the disciplinary nature of the agreement, which seeks to regulate the conduct of a wide range of border agencies and traders in the interest of this free flow of goods across global value chains. A governmentality lens helps to explain the rationalization of governmental practice in trade facilitation, supported by a “delineation of concepts, the specification of objects and borders, and the provision of arguments and justifications”, which therefore makes it possible to “offer certain strategies for managing and solving the problem” (Lemke, 2007). Hence, a dominant discourse from the development perspective is that trade facilitation is necessary for economic growth and poverty reduction and that the specific TFA measures, such as Single Window and authorized economic operator, represent strategies for addressing the problem. At the same time, these mechanisms,

procedures, instruments and calculations are designed to shape and discipline the conduct and decisions (Lemke, 2007, p. 50) of the trading community.

In this respect, I contend that the TFA and its SDT provisions are a representation of a globalized and multilayered regulatory and disciplinary apparatus for trade and trade-related development assistance, which is designed to conduct the flow of goods across borders according to a discourse of development that upholds the neoliberal discourse of good governance. The multi-layered aspect of the TFA is of particular interest, given its operation at the global / multilateral level, the nation-state level and the level of individual border stations. A governmentality analysis on this basis would seek to identify how power and knowledge operate across these different scalar levels and how the deployment of technologies, tactics and practices of government are creating an increasingly disciplined global trading system, where social practices are being conducted through a complex apparatus where power operates across multiple poles. The manner in which the discipline of the TFA intersects with the localized practices with Customs administrations, especially at border stations, is worthy of further exploration – more specifically, how do expert-mediated solutions such as business processes rationalization intersect with localized practices among border actors? With the recent coming into force of the TFA, it is too early to fully explore this question within the context of this inquiry; however, it is worth exploring the expert-beneficiary relationships at this early point, which will potentially inform these developments at the TFA matures in the coming years.

An emergent aspect of this expert-beneficiary power relation is the work of international development agencies, which are set to play a central role in the implementation of the TFA under the SDT provisions. Arturo Escobar's seminal 1985 discussion of discourse and power in development provides a more precise framework for the application of Foucauldian

governmentality perspectives to the “discourse of development”. Here, Escobar (1984) argues that the deployment of the tactics and technologies of development is being employed to ensure “the conformity of its peoples to a certain type of economic and cultural behavior”, with specific designs on economic imperatives (Escobar, 1984, p. 382). The deployment of this framework of domination is through discourse – systematic structures that integrate power and knowledge, which are built through the application of specific technologies, tactics and practices that are designed to maintain power and control.

Given the extensive complex of processes, procedures and relationships within the international trading community, a governmentality interpretation would imply that the TFA’s provisions are designed to “optimize” these relations by the “application of calculated technique”, through the deployment of expert-mediated “governmental rationality” (Li, 2007, p. 266) to the processes and procedures of cross-border trade. The TFA’s provisions on Single Window, for example, are an ideal representation of the rationality of process re-engineering and efficiency, where calculated apolitical techniques will be applied in the diagnosis of existing trade information systems with the aim of engineering a solution that is purely technical, notwithstanding the complex social and inter-institutional power relations that make up border spaces. The range of solutions to the problematizations of the TFA are being actively catalogued by a growing cadre of trade and development experts who are producing large volumes of knowledge on the methodologies and benefits of trade facilitation – representations of truth that are garnered from these experts’ short-term exposure to localized experiences encompassing complex systems of social and commercial relations at multiple scalar levels, but which need to be organized in a manner to “scientifically ascertain certain social requirements” (Escobar, 2011, p. 45). The World Bank’s 2011 Border Management Modernization Handbook is a prime

example of this knowledge production, collating 400 pages of highly professionalized global expert perspectives on border management, modernization and reform into a single volume. The book acknowledges the contributions of an extensive team of World Bank experts and highlights the extensive editing and revision work by the Bank, resulting in the final product (McLinden, Fanta, Widdowson, & Doyle, 2011).

Critical Development Perspectives: Introducing Escobar, Ferguson and Li

I have selected the works of Escobar (1984, 2011), Ferguson (1994) and Li (2007) to frame this critique, considering my hypothesis that the TFA in its present formulation represents one of the latest iterations of international development institutions' "immanent adaptability to changing conditions" (Escobar, 1984, p. 387), where the established approaches of development – experts, technologies, planning, de-politicization – are being deployed through a structured discourse that promotes a global trade regime reinforcing the neoliberal discourse of "the Western Economy" – the ensemble of systems, power and significations that represent modernity (Escobar, 2011, p. xii), justified in the name of development, economic growth and poverty reduction. This mobilization of development requires the identification of a "beneficiary" or "target group" – the subject of the intervention. Li (2007) establishes these "target groups" as the subjects for expert-mediated solutions where experts "set conditions to encourage people to behave as they ought" (Li, 2007, p. 16) and where they are subjected to a growing variety of technical solutions from development agencies to this end (Escobar, 2011, p. 39). At the same time, I will argue that the expert mobilization approach employed by one of the major actors in the implementation of the TFA -- the World Customs Organization (WCO) – operates under a different set of discourses, particularly as it relates to the allowable knowledge and the power relationships between experts and beneficiaries. While these different discourses may not alter

the underlying neo-liberal precepts of the TFA, I see potential for a different imagining of how “experts” interact with “beneficiaries”, which in turn opens up greater spaces for discussion of localized practices. I will seek to demonstrate these differences through a post-structuralist analysis of the WCO’s discourse, framing it against parallel discourses of larger international agencies, using the World Bank’s TFA engagement as an example of this dominant development discourse. More specifically, I will seek to demonstrate that the WCO presents a peculiar case of set of practices for the delivery of TFA-related support, framed by a different set of discourses that inscribe meaning to experts and beneficiaries and their underlying power relations. In order to undertake this analysis, I will briefly examine the works of the aforementioned critical development scholars, whose reflections on the discourse of development provide the framework through which I will explore the divergences of the WCO’s expert deployment approach versus that of other agencies. Here, I will assess the extent to which non-dominant discourses are emerging as a result of this approach, and how these discourses are reflected and reproduced in practices and power relations among “experts” and “beneficiaries”.

I will seek to demonstrate that the WCO’s engagement with the dominant discourse of development as foreseen by the SDT provisions of the TFA has been the site of some unexpected effects, where development resources have been leveraged in new and innovative ways, resulting in different sets of power relations and practices. It is these unexpected effects that will form the subject of this inquiry, using the case study of an aid-for-trade programme managed by the WCO between 2015 and 2018. Before proceeding, I will discuss some of the key critical development works that will inform this inquiry, including Escobar (1984, 2011), Ferguson (1994) and Li (2007), and draw linkages between these authors’ theoretical concepts and the object of the TFA and the WCO as a site where practices and power relationships are being reproduced. Taken

together, the contributions of these theorists provide a framework to deconstruct and critique the development discourse – a discourse that has been relatively closed to inquiries of this nature (Faille, 2011, p. 217) (Li, 2007, p. 243). The contributions of these theorists have concentrated largely on the adaptability of the development apparatus to emerging neoliberal frameworks such as the TFA, the power-knowledge relations that emerge from the engagement of development experts, the reduction of socio-economic development issues to apolitical technical solutions and the orthodoxy of planning, and the role of development experts in formulating problems and proposing solutions.

The Contributions of Arturo Escobar

Arturo Escobar's seminal work on discourse and power in development speaks to a regime of Foucauldian governmentality, where "techniques, strategies and disciplinary practices" maintain a central influence over the "generation, validation and diffusion of development knowledge" in a regime of truth, power and knowledge. By depoliticizing problems of poverty, and establishing a universalizing system where problems are depoliticized and met with expert-driven technical solutions, this "development apparatus", suggests Escobar, maintains a high level of flexibility to adapt to a growing range of problems (Escobar, 2011, p. 46). While the nature of international development has undergone significant changes since its conception in the late 1940s, Escobar's suggestion that the basic discursive formation of development and underdevelopment has remained static represents the foundation for his understanding of discourse, power and knowledge in development (Escobar, 1984, p. 377). In drawing out the early history of development discourse, Escobar touches on the agricultural, educational and nutrition sectors, which formed the basis for early development programmes, and the resultant growth of international expert pools and in-country assessments addressing these questions and

devising solutions (Escobar, 2011, p. 41). He goes on to describe international development agencies' growing appetite for new problems, under the guise of delivering more apolitical expert-driven technical solutions.

Escobar (2011) suggests that the post-war development agenda represents of a new type of power relation that has been deployed in the developing world since the early 1950s – one which seeks to subjugate economic, socio-cultural and political systems towards those of advanced economies. He suggests that this new form of domination is subtler and more refined (Escobar, 2011, p. 336) than the dominations and subjugations of the imperial era and that it maintains a positive pro-growth and humanitarian mindset. For this subjugation to take place, Escobar argues that a discourse of underdevelopment needs to be constructed by developing countries – a discourse that maintains developed countries' control over developing countries and which maintains the international development profession – its institutions, its theories, its cadre of experts and its series of practices. The particular practice of “technification” – the identification of problems that are amenable to a technical or expert-mediated solution – is critiqued by Escobar (1984) on the basis that it seeks to ensure the “conformity of Third World peoples to a certain type of economic and cultural behavior” (Escobar, 1984, p. 387).

Escobar (1984, 2011) also suggests that counter-discourses can emerge against this discourse of development. The powerful discourse by which development is rendered technical and reduced to the rationality espoused by the international development profession is a powerful force in the management of development programmes (Escobar, 2011, p. 18). By leveraging knowledges as a countervailing force against this dominant discourse, Escobar (Escobar, 1984, pp. 388, 391) contends that marginalized or alternative discourse encourage the reproduction of practices that can better fulfill local needs and realize the potential of local human capital

(Escobar, 1984, p. 394). Despite the positioning of trade facilitation at the core of the neoliberal discourse on globalization defined earlier by the work of Springer (2012) and Li (2007), this inquiry will seek to identify and explain the differing discourses within the realm of the WCO's technical assistance and capacity building programmes that offer the potential for a different type of development engagement that reproduces the sharing of localized experiences as a potential counter to the powerful discourse of development.

Hence, while trade facilitation was not at the core of the development problematic in the formative years of the discursive formation, the development industry's "immanent adaptability to changing conditions" (Escobar, 2011, p. 44) allowed it to become the vehicle through which the discourse of international trade facilitation will be problematized, and where expert-driven technical solutions would emerge. The discourse of development provides the framework where uncomfortable political and cultural questions related to international trade can be obfuscated, and where solutions can be cast in a technical and scientific formulation with the support of a growing array of international experts. The early 2000s deployment of aid-for-trade was the vehicle in which the techniques, strategies and practices of development would emerge and would be applied with the aim of bringing about technical solutions to the complex problematic of cross-border costs and delays. As we have seen through Hallaert (2013), these solutions did not always have the intended effects, often failing on a misreading of localized practices. The SDT provisions of the TFA represent a further iteration of the development industry's mutability to changing conditions and its latest adaptation to the aid-for-trade agenda. Many aspects of the development discourse as discussed by Escobar (1984, 2011) and Ferguson (1994), such as the classification of countries into developed, developing and least developed are

written into the text of the TFA itself, as are the tactics and strategies for the problematization and delivery of technical solutions.

In order to reach a better understanding of the tactics and strategies of development, Escobar (2011) encourages an analysis of the document production practices within development agencies, as these practices reveal enunciative powers of experts and resultant social practices. He argues that these practices are representational of the power-knowledge nexus purported by Foucault and the generalized creation of “beneficiaries” as subjects for intervention being representative of a power relationship, where one group (experts or trustees) exerts power over another (beneficiaries or target groups), giving license for the former to impose programs on the latter (Escobar, 2011, p. 109). This “labeling”, linked to the work of development planners and the documentary practices that emerge from such processes is central in his critique of development. Using the example of nutritional studies, Escobar suggested that a particular transformation takes place when a discursive space occupied exclusively by technical specialists encounters the documentary practices of development planners (Escobar, 2011, p. 114). The insertion of the latter, Escobar argues, brings a universalizing structural and prescriptive rigor, where planning decisions are driven by experts and institutional procedures, and where the diverse and localized experiences of “beneficiaries” are lost to a universalizing categorization that can be planned and structured along pre-defined lines (Escobar, 2011, p. 111).

The Contributions of James Ferguson

Inspired by Foucault, James Ferguson characterizes the development industry’s particular regime of truth to be in a category of its own. Describing development writing both from the perspective of the academy and that of development professionals, Ferguson suggests that the regime of truth within this writing, even when presented under the authorship of credible

professionals and / or scholars has little connection to the truth. Ferguson's (1994) groundbreaking study of rural development in Lesotho is recognized as foundational scholarship in critiquing the technocratic and universalizing approach that tends to obscure the essentially political character of many development problems (Hickey, 2009, p. 473).

Ferguson's critique of development discourse and the resulting regime of truth is focused along three main lines of thought. Firstly, Ferguson questions the claims of truth within development discourse. He argues that the regime of truth established by the "development" discourse is based on the primacy of rationalizing the delivery of packages or standardized technical solutions maintained by development agencies (Ferguson, 1994, p. 68). In his detailed review of development discourse emerging from rural development programmes in Lesotho, he refutes many of the quantifiable metrics that define the "development context" (Ferguson, 1994, p. 41), as being contrived or outright fabricated, as a means to rationalize the delivery of a package of rural development supports despite their limited contribution to economic activity. Secondly, he draws a distinction between academic scholarship and development discourse, suggesting that the latter fails to produce a complete picture of social and economic relations in a similar manner to that of academic discourse, despite being largely crafted by professionals and scholars of high repute and capacity. Thirdly, Ferguson argues that the interventions of development agencies require a close association with nation-state policy implementation strategies as well as an assumption that these strategies can actually be applied in an apolitical manner by the state (Ferguson, 1994, p. 65). Similar to the writings of Escobar (1984, 2011), Ferguson suggests that the development agencies' engagement with the state is premised on the latter's position as an apolitical delivery agent of national development programmes and policies. The political construction of the state and the inequalities that are embedded within this

construction are left outside of the discourse, leaving the state as an impartial delivery agent for the delivery of social services (Ferguson, 1994, p. 69).

Ferguson also pays particular attention to the role of development projects in expanding the remit of the state, taking into account the development agencies' view of the state as an apolitical instrument of service provision and as an instrument of governmentality (Ferguson, 1994, pp. 255-256). By acknowledging that the expansion of state authority is an exercise of power and politics, Ferguson encourages an interrogation of development projects that goes beyond an assessment of stated objectives and more into an understanding of the unexpected "instrument-effects" (Ferguson, 1994, p. 256) in the political and cultural realms.

Within the context of trade facilitation, Ferguson's perspectives are important, as the representations of international trade as presented by international development institutions and the realities on the ground have the potential to differ sharply. The discourse of the TFA lends itself towards the measurement of specific trade facilitation indicators, such as the time and cost for goods to transit an international border, but provides little regard for the unique socio-economic setting of the border and the lived experiences of those that work in these spaces, nor to the specific organizational and governmentality contexts that define the practices of Customs officers who play a central role in these spaces. Hale (2010) characterizes the socio-economic setting at the border as a place that "defines and emphasizes differences between states, people and difference concepts of political, economic and social order", but also a space where practices that both divide and connect communities of interest are reproduced (Hale, 2010, p. 1). It is in this complex space that international experts are poised to frame standardized solutions on the basis of very limited exposure to these localized practices and the other questions beyond trade facilitation that impact border spaces. As well, by encouraging more legitimate trade and the

creation of more complex regimes of control over international trade, the TFA can be viewed as an instrument for developed countries to assert greater control over developing countries, through the deployment of standardized packages that are constructed along the lines of neoliberal rationalities of good governance, characterized by efficiency, efficiency, automation, pluralism and transparency (Li, 2007, p. 244) (Salskov-Iversen, Krause-Hansen, & Bislev, 2000, p. 96) (Springer, 2012, p. 933).

For example, the World Bank's ease of doing business report analyzes the time and cost for Customs clearance for what are perceived as "standard cases" such as the movement of a 20-foot container from a country's capital city to a port of exportation (World Bank Group, 2018, p. 105). This indicator, along with the broader suite of indicators related to establishing a business, enforcing contracts and the like, becomes the basis for the global rankings that are the hallmark of the ease of doing business report. In turn, a country's positive movement in these rankings becomes an indicator of success, while negative movements are viewed as the opposite. These indicators are widely deployed in the development discourse – for example, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) encourages countries to use these indicators to develop "national trade facilitation roadmaps" (United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, p. 13), focusing on measuring countries' movements up or down the rankings. By generalizing and reducing complex, multi-layered social relations to these generic indicators, it enables the development and deployment of standard technical assistance packages. The TFA adds further standardization by providing the technical framework for these packages, such as standardized Customs automation packages and standard approaches for the deployment of specific technical measures contained within the TFA's articles, such as risk management and Single Window.

The Contributions of Tania Li

Tania Murray Li's critical development perspectives provide a deeper understanding of the concept of "rendering technical". Echoing Ferguson (2011) and Escobar's (1984, 2011) critique, Li (2007) argues that "rendering technical" in effect removes the dimensions of politics and local power relations, leaving development agencies to a focus on the types of interventions that can be delivered by international experts and programmers. Little attention is paid to the political regimes and underlying power relations in beneficiary countries, while development interventions are viewed purely through an altruistic lens. Li (2007) further argues that the relationship between "experts" and "target groups" is born out of inequality. In this regard, Li (2007) suggests that improvement schemes, such as participatory development, could in fact be acting in a tyrannical manner, acting as a pole of power that seeks to "control, co-opt, contain and manipulate" people (Li, 2007, p. 270). Unlike much of the mainstream development literature, which is largely blind to the "pre-development" period before the Second World War, Li's (2007) analysis suggests that the development industry is representative of a modern form of imperialism, driven by neoliberal discourses of good governance (Li, 2007, p. 240) where competition and accountability loom large (Li, 2007, p. 230). Unlike the imperial period, where rulers were acutely aware of their power relationships with their subjects, Li (2007) suggests that the development experts have less awareness of their power, which is shrouded in the experts' knowledge of a particular subject matter and the beneficiaries' lack of knowledge of the same (Li, 2007, p. 270). Using the example of a World Bank-led rural development programme in Indonesia, Li (2007) describes the mechanisms where expert-planned and mediated development programmes are designed to regulate the behavior of defined "target groups" (Li, 2007, p. 16) in conformity with the Bank's neoliberal strategies of fostering responsibility and competition (Li,

2007, pp. 232, 234). Li (2007) explores the how the deployment of techniques and tactics to regulate behavior came into conflict with existing localized practices where the complex of social relations does not necessarily fall within the “bounded domain of social relations to be optimized by the application of calculated technique” (Li, 2007, p. 267). By focusing their efforts on the apolitical assemblage of objectives, knowledges, techniques and practices (Li, 2007, p. 386) against highly structured frameworks, Li (2007) contends that more uncomfortable questions regarding of production and appropriation (Li, 2007, p. 240) remain unaddressed by experts.

The TFA, observed through this technical assemblage lens, presents a particular case of “rendering technical”. Specific technical articles of the TFA, such as those mandating the use of risk-based clearance systems, preferred trader schemes, post-clearance audit and inter-agency coordination, require extensive expert competencies in data analysis, accounting, business process analysis, legal analysis, inter-agency negotiations and consultations. The implementation of advanced trade facilitation measures as outlined in the TFA is largely completed in the advanced industrial economies, as evidenced by the widespread ratification of the TFA across these countries. I contend that the TFA provides a fixed structure around which experts will be deploying the calculated techniques described above. Li’s (2007) understanding of the limits of expert knowledge suggests that the deployment of these tactics cannot regulate all behaviors at the border, as the complex of social, cultural and economic interactions in this space cannot necessarily be contained within these calculated solutions and reconfigured according to plan (Li, 2007, p. 17).

Li’s suggestion that the engagement of “expert consultants” limits the effectiveness of development initiatives, as experts maintain a certain level of distance or trusteeship to the

beneficiaries of development (Li, 2007, pp. 4, 15), and that experts give little regard to their positionality within this power relation, unlike the imperial rulers of the pre-war era, who were acutely aware of their power. Li's forces us to ask questions like "what is it that outsiders need to improve or fix?" and "why are we here?" (Li, 2007). International consultants, by virtue of their presence and their position as "experts" (Li, 2007, p. 28) provide them with preferential access to levers of power, supported by the assumption that they are an "expert" in the matter, and that their advice should be heeded. The work of such expert communities in trade facilitation is characterized by an extensive range of expertise in subjects such as Customs risk management, business process analysis, logistics / port management, auditing, intelligence, investigations and systems integration. Control of these expert networks and the production of knowledge rests in large measure with the major development institutions, including the World Bank, the IMF and the WTO, which ensures a broad alignment of expert perspectives with an overarching neoliberal discourse.

Theoretical Application

Applying the analytical lens of Escobar (1984, 2011), I will seek to demonstrate how the World Bank and the WCO are adapting to the coming-into-force of the TFA by describing the specific provisions of the TFA that allow for this adaptation, and by providing specific examples of texts and initiatives that flow from these provisions. Examples of the World Bank's discourse on its trade and competitiveness agenda and specific TFA assessments will be analyzed using a post-structuralist discourse analysis (PDA) approach, outlined in chapter 2. Both Ferguson (1994) and Li's (2007) perspectives will be employed in the interpretation of the discourse of trade facilitation and seek to demonstrate the differences between the discourse of the WCO and

that of the broader international development community as represented by the SDT provisions of the TFA and the work of the World Bank.

Li's (2007) perspectives will be employed in the interpretation of power relationships between development experts and the subjects of intervention, with a particular focus on Customs officers and other border agencies as the "target group" of development interventions. Li (2007) draws a careful boundary between "city-based trustees" and "deficient subjects" (Li, 2007, p. 15), suggesting that this divide is largely unbridgeable, despite programmatic designs to reduce said divisions (Li, 2007, p. 31). From a discursive perspective, trustees' knowledge provides a measure of power over subjects through the deployment of multiform tactics that direct conduct, albeit being bounded by the availability of a technical solution. Here, I will argue that the expert-beneficiary relationship within the WCO differs from that of other development agencies. Rather than acting as "development experts" or trustees, WCO experts are drawn from within the active ranks of the global Customs community. As such, Customs officers are not exposed to the discourse of development as part of their day-to-day work, and that the nature of the WCO's expert deployment mechanism makes the position of "trustee" a temporary one, and one which can in fact be reversed when the individual trustee returns to their day-to-day position of a Customs officer – a position that can actually make them the "beneficiary" of other development interventions. As such, I will seek to demonstrate that the texture of the power relations that defines the work of such experts – the assumption of a "hierarchy" or "trusteeship" as noted by Li (2007), assumes a different texture in the case of the WCO, considering the blurred lines between outsiders and "target groups", which I will contend opens space for deliberation of questions that potentially fall outside of the bounded domains of international TFA experts, while also potentially disrupting the expert hierarchies and trusteeship mentalities,

allowing for solutions to emerge from “within” the Customs community rather than from outside of it.

This inquiry will be based on my experience at the WCO as a senior programme manager for a three-year TFA implementation programme from 2015 to 2018. Over this period, I have been exposed to the work of some 40 WCO experts, spread across 10 countries. I was intimately involved with the WCO’s development planning process, producing multi-year TFA implementation plans for 10 countries in Africa and Asia. In parallel, I have worked closely with the extensive range of high-level TFA discourses from major development agencies, including the World Bank, UNCTAD, USAID and DFID. This exposure has provided me with extensive exposure and privileged access to both the discourse of trade facilitation and the networks of development experts that deploy this discourse through the complex network of social relations within the global trading system. I also appreciate and acknowledge my own position of having spent the better part of 20 years in the development business, including as a senior development officer at the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Global Affairs Canada (GAC) and as a senior programme manager at the WCO. I have engaged in many of the practices which have been actively critiqued by the aforementioned scholars, including planning, international expert recruitment and an active ignorance of political and economic factors that cannot be addressed by a development assistance solution. I have framed my recommendations to senior officials in Canada and beyond on the basis of the dominant neoliberal discourses of good governance and used them to rationalize actions and encourage certain conduct among beneficiaries, ascribing power to experts, managing knowledge resources, and evaluating the application of these practices on the subjects of the intervention. Nevertheless, as suggested by Li (2007), my intentions in these endeavors have been benevolent and they have been driven by

my personal desire to “make the world better than it is” (Li, 2007, p. 2) Nevertheless, this research has led me to question many of the practices that have been inherent in this role, and through this inquiry, I also hope to inform my own assumptions and practices within and outside of the development industry.

On the other hand, it is outside the scope of this inquiry to fully deconstruct the political aspects of aid-for-trade and TFA implementation at the country level. These relations and the unexpected instrument-effects of development programmes on political relations featured prominently in Li and Ferguson’s analysis. Within the trade facilitation space, the complexities of the social and economic relations between importers, exporters, producers, government agencies, parastatals and the manner in which they interact with the SDT provisions of the TFA, would be best analyzed through focused long-term field work after the TFA has been in force for some years, which would parallel the research undertaken by Ferguson (1994) and Li (2007). Unfortunately, such a research project is beyond the framework of this inquiry, both in terms of timing and complexity. Nevertheless, as one of the first critical interrogations of expert-beneficiary relationships in this early stage of TFA implementation, it is my hope that this inquiry will represent an opportunity to take a step back and consider non-dominant discourses before the momentum of the coming into force of the SDT provisions and the subsequent deployment “city-based trustees” becomes an overwhelming force.

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY: DISTILLING THE DISCOURSE OF TRADE FACILITATION

Using a post-structuralist discourse analysis (PDA) approach with methodological inspirations from Fairclough (2003, 2013), Naylor (2011), Ziai (2011) and Bacchi (2000, 2015), I will argue that a dominant discourse of development, with its tactics and techniques of expert-mediated problematizations and solutions, is at the core of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreement on Trade Facilitation's (TFA) special and differential treatment (SDT) provisions. I will also argue that the World Customs Organization (WCO) – the main international standard-setter for Customs administrations and a key player in the TFA's implementation – maintains a different discourse based on peer support and experience sharing that creates unexpected possibilities for different power relations, social practices and regimes of truth. I will apply this methodological approach to a specific case study of a trade facilitation programme that I managed at the WCO between 2015 and 2018, framing the analysis within a broader body of critical development literature, relying on the works of Escobar (1984, 2011), Ferguson (1994) and Li (2007). More specifically, I will be drawing on these authors' understandings of the discourses and power relationships that emerge between development experts and beneficiaries, including their accounts on the "technification" of development solutions.

The Programme, known as the HMRC-WCO-UNCTAD TFA Capacity Building Programme ("the WCO TFA Programme") was approved in March 2015, with the resulting grant agreement coming into force in May 2015. Her Majesty's Government of the United Kingdom provided the WCO with a grant of GBP 2.4 million to implement the WCO TFA Programme over period of just under three years, ending in March 2018. The WCO TFA Programme is a product of the growing concentration of development resources into the "aid-for-trade" agenda,

discussed in chapter 1. This concentration is well-represented in the United Kingdom's foreign policy objectives, which support an open international trading system (DFID, 2017, p. 10). The WCO TFA Programme is part of the United Kingdom's allocation of GBP 87.3 million to develop the trade sector in developing countries, which includes a GBP 15.0 million commitment between 2015 and 2022 to support the implementation of the TFA (Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs, 2017). This commitment is reflective of DFID's 2017 economic growth strategy, which seeks to build the potential for developing countries to trade more with the United Kingdom and the rest of the world and to integrate into global value chains, as part of a strengthened approach for "aid-for-trade" (DFID, 2017, p. 4).

As one of several United Kingdom-funded interventions in TFA implementation, the WCO TFA Programme was conceived as a partnership between Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC), the WCO and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), with a dual objective of supporting TFA implementation as well as expanding the "pool of WCO accredited experts" to support and deliver capacity building. The Programme's overall conception was based on an expression of the United Kingdom's desire to mobilize the WCO's particular delivery approach emphasizing peer support and "Customs-to-Customs" cooperation through the WCO's "Mercator Programme" (see chapter 4), and was premised on the delivery of extensive needs-based "in-country capacity building", with an emphasis on the deployment of United Kingdom-based expertise, along with that of WCO "accredited experts" (Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs, 2017). There was a strong initial expectation of United Kingdom-based experts from within HMRC and the United Kingdom's Border Force, which plays well into the neo-liberal discourse of good governance discussed in chapter 1. Unanticipated developments, especially the United Kingdom's vote to leave the European Union

in mid-2016, changed this calculus, as the availability of United Kingdom-based experts to undertake short-term foreign assignments declined markedly, allowing for greater use of WCO “accredited experts” from developing countries. This development allowed for the further replication of the WCO’s discourse of “Customs-to-Customs” peer-support, underpinned by a different set of power relationships between “experts” and “beneficiaries” versus the programmes maintained by the World Bank and other bilateral development agencies.

Using the PDA methodology, and the critical perspectives on expert-beneficiary relationships offered by Escobar (1994), Ferguson (2011) and Li (2007), I will seek to identify these practices by comparing discourses within WCO documentation to that of the WTO and the World Bank— both of which were also engaged in the WCO TFA Programme in some measure. I will argue that expert-beneficiary discourse and the underlying power relations of the WCO has produced a different set of practices and power relations, acting in a potentially counter-discursive manner to the dominant discursive formation of TFA implementation support. Through this study, I intend to represent these discursive differences through a PDA approach, using high-level WTO and World Bank documents that relate to TFA implementation, alongside similar documents produced by the WCO. The analysis of such texts, including their production, their content and their reception provide insight into the process of “meaning-making”. Fairclough (2003) suggests that the social effects of such texts are mediated by this process of “meaning-making”, opening an avenue for enquiry into how texts practically figure in social life, including social practices, which are mediated by discourse (Fairclough, 2003, p. 15).

While there is potential for this inquiry to reach into a deep critique of the “development apparatus”, of the fairness of trade facilitation measures for subaltern groups or to imagine a state of “post-development” as imagined by Escobar (1994), it is not my intent to offer such a broad

critique. I agree with Li's understanding that development professionals enter into this endeavor with good intentions (Li, 2007, p. 2) and with Tamas' (2007) in-depth analysis of the varied lived experiences of those that we identify as "development experts". In his analysis, Tamas (2007) cautions against a critique that paints all development experts, especially those in the World Bank and other Washington Consensus organizations, purely as agents of neoliberal hegemony imposing a universal disciplinary programme of governmentality on beneficiaries (Tamas, 2007, p. 902). Development professionals are informed by many social actors and flows of knowledge and power are much more complex, with the transmission of "official knowledge" representing only a segment of the overall knowledge flows (Tamas, 2007, pp. 903-905). This representation parallels my own experiences in the WCO TFA Programme, where the diversity of "beneficiaries" and "experts" and their power relations paints a much more complex picture than one which views all experts and beneficiaries as unified subjects.

I have chosen a PDA approach for this inquiry as it provides a methodological openness to analyzing texts alongside the social practices and social events that led to their creation and use. The approach parallels the poststructuralist approach taken by Escobar (2011), who highlights the importance of studying discourse and power as a means to critique the dominant practices of international development (Escobar, 2011, p. xiv). The PDA approach treats subject positionalities, such as beneficiary and expert, as flexible and open to redefinition and reconstruction through discourse (Baxter, 2002, p. 830). PDA can therefore be employed to observe, record and analyze discursive contexts to gain an understanding of social practices that define and reconstitute competing discourses. While it is beyond the scope of this inquiry to assess the validity of different approaches to discourse analysis, it is worth maintaining an awareness of the methodologies of conversational analysis and critical discourse analysis (CDA)

and to appreciate the ontological overlaps between these approaches (Fairclough, 2013, p. 178), which I will now briefly address.

Defining “Discourse”

While acknowledging the variety of overlapping and contrasting definitions, Fairclough (2003) views discourses as means of representing aspects of the world – the processes and structures of the material world, as well as the thoughts and feelings of the social world (Fairclough, 2003, pp. 26, 124). Purvis and Hunt (1999) go on to describe discourse in relationship to the “medium of language or non-verbal sign systems” (Purvis & Hunt, 1999, p. 485), which are representative of social actors and relations that underpin these systems, and as the conduit through which language and other forms of social semiotics play a role in the construction of social subjects and their relations to one another (Purvis & Hunt, 1999, p. 474). Different discourses offer different perspectives on the world, which are representative of social actors’ positionalities, as well as their social relationships. In addition to representing a present state of the material or social worlds, discourses also offer representations of possibilities or desired future states. Here, Bacchi’s understanding of discourse-as-policy is useful in describing discourse as an agenda for change insofar as it describes the “ways that accomplish goals they / we deem worthwhile” (Bacchi, 2000, p. 46). Discourses can complement one another, they can dominate each other or they can compete with one another. In sum, discourses represent the means by which social actors define themselves and their relationships to one another both in the present and in the future (Fairclough, 2003, p. 124).

For further structural clarity, Springer (2012), citing Foucault (1979), defines discourse as “a group of statements that belong to a single system of formation” (Springer, 2012, p. 931), which enables the reproduction and re-articulation of truths. Armstrong (2015), citing Purvis and

Hunt (1994) suggests that discursive formation in a PDA sense is focused on the “external or social conditions within which discourses are formed and transformed” and the “conditions that make that formation possible” (Armstrong, 2015, p. 31). Discourses, in turn inscribe meaning to certain statements, while excluding others (Panizza & Miorelli, 2013, p. 303). To interpret such meanings, one needs to analyze interpretations of statements, along with statements themselves, and how they figure in social practices. In this respect, Garrity (2010) suggests that discourse is best understood as a practice – more specifically a social practice, rather than an expression of thought (Garrity, 2010, p. 201) with discursive “statements collectively producing and reproducing discursive formations” (Garrity, 2010, p. 202), allowing for the re-constitution and re-articulation of truths. Echoing Graham and Armstrong, Garrity (2010) suggests that statements are less defined by their content and more by the action and social relations, which enable their dispersion as social practices. In order to draw in an analysis of power relations, “statements” need to have a material presence in a social sphere, underpinned by a representation of truth and a legitimization of knowledge (Garrity, 2010, pp. 203-04). The group of statements and the complex array of underlying social practices and events, bounded by the object of the TFA and related technical assistance and capacity building, will provide a system of formation for this inquiry, which will be further distilled in this chapter.

Parfitt (2012) also describes discourse as a function of power, implying that any discourse is likely to reflect the interests of those that hold power within the terms of that discourse and to exclude the interests of those who explicitly or implicitly oppose them (Parfitt, 2012). Put into the context of international development, the TFA and expert–beneficiary relationships, Parfitt’s argument suggests that a discursive understanding of these objects needs to take into account the complex web of complementary and conflicting positionalities of TFA

actors, and to understand how these different roles encourage or inhibit the exercise of power over other actors. Different discourses have the potential to reveal multiple poles of power and regimes of truth and knowledge, defined not only by their content, but by the social actors and social practices that produce and reproduce them. Within the context of development, Ferguson (1994) describes discourse as a form of knowledge that follows specific rules and prescribes “acceptable statements and utterances” (Ferguson, 1994, p. 18), while Escobar (2011) offers a more detailed post-structuralist perspective, noting that representations of development discourse are “not a reflection of reality, but constitutive of it” (Escobar, 2011, p. 130) insofar as they construct a socio-economic reality, such as a “development context” that delineates a set of conditions that are amenable to a development solution. This view is reflected by Li (2007), who highlights the explicit absence of reference to matters outside of a development experts’ remit within development discourse (Li, 2007, p. 11). My question therefore is whether the discourse of the WCO creates possibilities for different imaginings of “expertise” within the framework of the TFA, and how these imaginings are reproduced in practice and in discourse.

I am basing this study on the premise that the discourse of the TFA, especially the SDT provisions, are framed by this same discursive formation which shape permissible statements, ensuring in turn, that the form of required development interventions fits the solutions available from the relevant development expert. While these discursive forms enact regimes of power, they also produce intended and unintended effects, and can be slowly altered through the emergence of marginalized discourses, including discourses that eschew the development expert’s normalized position of power.

Post-Structural Discourse Analysis (PDA): An Introductory Typology and Methodology

At a general level, discourse analysis is the analysis of “statements” – texts and constituent elements of texts, paying regard to the rules which govern the production of texts and the enunciative powers over them (Fairclough, 2003, p. 123). Baxter (2002) and Fairclough (2013) highlight several methodological approaches to discourse analysis, including critical discourse analysis (CDA), post-structural discourse analysis (PDA) and conversational analysis, drawing out the main epistemological differences between the approaches, while also highlighting the epistemological overlaps that allow for an interplay of multiple analytical techniques (Baxter, 2002, p. 828). The conversational analysis approach championed by Jürgen Habermas (2007) and James Paul Gee (2014), for example, would be one which is focused on the detailed examination of a specific site of communication itself. The PDA approach, on the other hand, focuses more on an analysis of the competing power relationships in order to arrive at an understanding of the different subjectivities and the regimes of truth that emerge from discursive statements, while accepting the complexity and dynamism of social orders (Panizza & Miorelli, 2013, p. 302) and the lack of defined or singular structures and subjectivities. The PDA approach is premised on this appreciation of complexities and uncertainties (Graham, 2011, p. 665) and the underlying social conditions in which discursive formations take place (Armstrong, 2015, p. 31). This allows for a more interpretative analysis that eschews rigid methodologies and opens avenues for the interrogation of different and divergent truths, taking into account representations related to competing power relationships that emerge from discursive statements, and appreciating that discourse in a post-structuralist context is as much about what is said as it is about who says it and how they say it. Purvis and Hunt (1999) agree with the utility of PDA, arguing that the significance of discourse is not so much on the language or terminology, but in

the role that such discourse plays in the construction of multiple subjectivities through competing power relationships.

Fairclough (2013) defines discourse analysis as the examination of the languages associated with a particular social field, along with various semiotic modalities, such as body language and visual images beyond language (Fairclough, 2013, p. 179). Further defining PDA, Fairclough (2013) and Graham (2011) highlight the intertwining of language, actions and objects, underscoring the inclusion of all of these elements within an analysis that goes beyond an examination of text and talk (Fairclough, 2013, p. 181). PDA recognizes that individual actors – whether individuals or institutions – are not unitary subjects; rather, they occupy multiple subjectivities, where relations of power are constantly shifting (Baxter, 2002, p. 829), and where meanings are contextual and variable (Panizza & Miorelli, 2013, p. 302). At the core of the PDA methodology is an analysis of how language and social practices are interrelated, and how discursive practices privilege certain statements and enunciations over others. The PDA methodology also helps to identify powerlessness or disadvantages experienced by individuals and groups, while also helping to illustrate those sites of resistance where the disempowered may unexpectedly assume more powerful positions (Baxter, 2002, pp. 839-840). In this regard, a PDA inquiry pays particular attention to the role of competing discourses and how individuals and institutions navigate their positionalities, taking into account social, historical and cultural contexts (Baxter, 2002, p. 829).

A PDA approach views discourse as a form of social action, produced by actors rooted in the social world, with specific intents and strategies, interconnected in a multi-polar network of power relations. PDA helps us to understand how “social behaviors and practices construct and create individuals and groups” (Garrity, 2010, p. 202) and how power is applied in the formation

of certain discourses at the expense of others (Panizza & Miorelli, 2013, p. 302). More specifically, PDA helps to identify the means by which subjects are positioned as powerful or powerless through “competing social and institutional discourses” (Baxter, 2002, p. 828). PDA’s dynamic approach, which takes into account evolving and / or multiple subjectivities, along with differential and competing power relations is also helpful in revealing continuities and discontinuities, and the social practices that inform them (Ziai, 2011, p. 28). Methodologically, it requires an identification and questioning of discourses, proceeding to analyze how these discourses reproduce or transform relations of power, paying particular attention to those marginalized discourses that may not be part of the prevailing discourse. Within the context of international development, PDA provides insight into competing economic, political and cultural power relations, revealing the statements of truth through dominant discourses, and potential points of contestation through marginalized discourses.

Graham (2011) suggests that social relations within policy spheres, such as the TFA, maintain a tighter measure of control over the “concepts, procedures and boundaries” within the discourse and what statements are considered acceptable (Graham, 2011, p. 665), with the locus of power being less within the institutional machinery and more “within the workings of the discourse itself” (Armstrong, 2015, p. 33). Purvis and Hunt (1999) agree that it is within the professional or technical realm, where discourse is more constrained by “articulated rules” and where it exhibits a stronger coherence when compared to non-professional realms (Purvis & Hunt, 1999, p. 486). These rules and social practices, meeting in the intersection of power and knowledge operationalize the discourse with “regimes of surveillance and coercion”, while “excluding countervailing influences” (Armstrong, 2015, p. 31). This tighter measure of control

would be expected to reveal a more entrenched set of dominant discourses through a PDA analysis.

Discourse within policy spheres as described above can also be understood through Bacchi's (2000) discussion of "policy as discourse". In her understanding, Bacchi (2000) suggests that an "analysis of the ways in which language, and more broadly discourse, sets limits on what can be said" (Bacchi, 2000, p. 48), encouraging a reflection on how these limits define the solutions that "necessarily flow from the kinds of problem definitions that are produced" (Bacchi, 2000, p. 49). Policy-as-discourse analysis provides an insight into how words are ordered and combined to exclude or displace other combinations, with meanings emerging from the underlying power relations and social practices within the post-structuralist concept of subjectivization (Bacchi, 2000, p. 54).

Naylor (2011) provides additional methodological insight into the social construction of competing economic, political and cultural discourses and power relations, suggesting two analytical lenses – structural power and productive power – both of which are socially constructed and mediated through discourse. The structural power lens provides for an assessment of subject's relationships to one another within a particular power relationship, while the productive lens is focused on wider "meanings and significations" (Naylor, 2011, p. 182). More specifically, structural power is based on specific inter-related positions of subordination and domination, while productive power is a more socially diffuse power, which is based on the normalization of broad-based subjectivities and social practices (Naylor, 2011, p. 192).

In sum, PDA is based on an understanding of how social behavior is directed through discourse -- groups of statements, social practices and power relations collectively known as discursive formations. From this standpoint, "statements" are not merely words – they are forms

of knowledge, which both describe the workings of social practices and events, which in turn shed light on the competing power relations and institutions that underpin and reproduce these relations and utterances. They provide a framework in which a topic, such as trade facilitation, can be framed, reasoned with and categorized. In this sense, trade facilitation, the TFA and the WCO TFA Programme represent “thought-objects” – bodies of knowledge emerging from the human sciences that can be understood by a set of rules of discursive formations. PDA provides the linkage by which disparate discourses can be brought together to form an object that can be critically analyzed in terms of its ability to regulate individual and institutional conduct through competing discourses (Armstrong, 2015, pp. 29-30).

Despite Armstrong’s (2015) claim that dominant discourses systematically exclude marginalized discourses, and Graham (2011) and Purvis and Hunt’s (1994) claim that the dominant discourses of professional realms are more entrenched, this study will attempt to demonstrate that alternative conceptions of power relationships can be conceived from even the strongest neoliberal discursive formations like trade facilitation. Echoing Li (2007), I am opening the possibility for marginalized discourses on expert-beneficiary relationships to challenge the architecture of the prevailing discourses by way of discursive challenges from within international agencies (Li, 2007, pp. 7, 11) and where such countervailing influences may emerge into a more dominant narrative (Li, 2007, p. 212). Again, whether this is representative of simply “doing development differently” or “undoing development” in some small measure will begin to emerge in this analysis.

PDA as applied to the WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation

Despite the goods-oriented nature of the TFA, it must be appreciated that through the engagement of international development agencies, the SDT provisions are represented by a set

of rules and social relations between a myriad of subjects – both individual and institutional. These can be broadly captured under the framework of “development discourse” as described by Ferguson (1994). As applied to the TFA, there are a number of competing discourses which can be observed on multiple levels from the international organizations that champion trade facilitation, the donor governments that fund capacity building activities to the individual countries and government agencies that implement measures, to the traders that are actually moving goods across borders. In carrying out discourse analysis in a policy space such as the TFA, Fairclough (2013) suggests an initial analytical understanding of the “generic features of policy discourse appertaining to the relationship between problems and solutions” (Fairclough, 2013, p. 183). The problematizations and the proposed solutions on trade facilitation have been well-documented in both institutional and academic literature, including the example of McLinden, et al. (2011), however, as discussed in chapter 1, most of this analysis has been undertaken from within the framework of development discourse, where the problematizations are framed with the bounded social domain that is fixated on expert-mediated solutions. As suggested by Ferguson (1994), this discourse has a distinct purpose – the framing of technical solutions for a development intervention (Ferguson, 1994, p. 28). This inquiry is an opportunity to step outside of this discursive formation and to interrogate the discourses of the TFA from a position that does not presuppose the delivery of a development intervention.

Therefore, I suggest that a PDA approach is appropriate in the context of the TFA for two main reasons. Firstly, inter-stakeholder relations are at the core of the TFA. With its ambition to regulate and standardize all cross-border trading procedures, specific articles of the TFA, such as those addressing border agency cooperation, Customs cooperation, and consultations, as well as the SDT provisions, speak to a complex, fluid, multi-scalar and multi-polar set of social practices

involving private sector traders, brokers, Customs administrations, and other regulatory and policy agencies. Notwithstanding the history of aid-for-trade, the TFA's formal legal framework for donor-supported technical and capacity building assistance adds a new complexity to the social practices into this space, with the potential to reinforce or undermine existing power relationships at the supranational, national and local levels. As such, a PDA inquiry provides an appreciation of the social practices of TFA-related support by international agencies and the complex net of horizontal and vertical social relations that are largely left out by the work of traditional development economists, who tend to gravitate to globalized measures of "ease-of-doing business" and "trade facilitation indicators", with less regard towards the discourse that potentially perpetuates dependency and reproduces complex structures of domination.

Secondly, the TFA and trade facilitation is highly dependent on the production and dissemination of knowledge, and the field is well-populated by a wide range of "experts", whose enunciative power to make statements as representations of truth is well-ingrained in the development discourse, along with a diverse range of "beneficiaries", encompassing social actors in the public, private and non-government sectors, as discussed above. As this will be the main thematic focus of this inquiry, I will highlight several critical sub-themes related to this power relationship from the works of Escobar (2011), Ferguson (1994) and Li (2007). Firstly, Escobar (1994) and Li (2007) highlight the transnational and cyclical nature of development expertise and the growing cadre of development experts that are undertaking diagnostics and devising technical solutions. Escobar (2011) and Li (2007) go on to note the sacrosanct nature of expert knowledge, (Escobar, 2011, p. 111) which produces powerful statements of truth (Escobar, 2011, pp. 20, 45) often through the production of texts. Escobar argues that this power relationship is especially prominent among World Bank experts, whom he contends are more driven by an

overarching neoliberal discourse, accompanied by the power of significant financial resources, and a closed system of knowledge production (Escobar, 2011, p. 166) (Enns, 2015). At the same time, Ferguson suggests that beneficiaries remain an undifferentiated mass in much of the development discourse (Ferguson, 1994, p. 241) while Li (2007) characterized the relationship between the two as bounded by a clear separation (Li, 2007, p. 15) of who is to be developed and who is to be doing the developing. It is this boundary that I will interrogate in greater depth in the forthcoming chapters, with chapter 3 demonstrating this clear separation in the context of the TFA, and chapter 4 suggesting a small step in re-characterizing this separation. Ferguson and Li also point to a governmentality that rationalized government intervention across a growing range of social spheres, even if it conflicted with localized social practices that operate outside the realm of the state, (Ferguson, 1994, pp. 72, 82), viewing the state as a neutral implementer of public policy, and viewing inflexibility, corruption or incompetence in the same as resolvable by more technical and capacity building solutions (Li, 2007, p. 133) under the neoliberal conception of good governance (Li, 2007, p. 240). Finally, Li (2007) suggests that marginalized voices can emerge and shift discourses, and “beneficiaries” – cast as a singular subject – can resist the dominant discourse of development through social events and resistance (Li, 2007, p. 212). Taken collectively, these themes – the primacy of expert knowledge, the generalization of beneficiaries as a singular subject for intervention, the role of experts in the prescription of technical solutions, the focus on state-based solutions, and the means by which the expert-beneficiary discourse can be challenged, represent the critical lenses that I will employ to distinguish between the discourses of TFA-related technical and capacity building support, with the WTO, the World Bank and the WCO providing the textual material for analysis.

Inquiry Methodology

In addition to the works of Escobar (1984, 2011), Ferguson (1994) and Li (2007), methodological insights will be drawn from Fairclough (2003, 2013), Garrity (2010), Naylor (2011), Ziai (2001), Bacchi (2000, 2010) and Fairclough (2003, 2013). Fairclough (2003, 2013) provides insight into the types of texts that are suitable for PDA, highlighting the importance of problematization, motivation and imaginations of future states. Garrity (2010) provides an understanding of discourse and power from a Foucauldian perspective that will inform the identification of statements and their underlying practices, including enunciative powers. Naylor provides additional insights into discourse and power through an understanding of structural and productive power and its reproduction through presuppositions, predications and positionings. Ziai (2001) provides a methodological example of a comparative PDA study of development documents that pays particular attention to problematizations, responsible actors and imaginings of future states, in keeping with Fairclough's approach. Finally, Bacchi (2010) provides additional insight into the process of problematization – encouraging a critical understanding that takes power relations into account, rather than viewing policy as a benign response to an existing situation.

With the above methodological insights in mind, I will analyze a set of representative documents from the WTO, the World Bank and the WCO, paying particular attention to the competing discourses within the “expert-beneficiary” relationship that is central to Escobar (1994), Ferguson (2011) and Li's (2007) reasoning. Paying particular attention to problematizations, presuppositions, predications and positionings that define the SDT provisions of the TFA within the broader discourse of development, I will analyze the documents' representations of emergent social practices of expert-mediated technical assistance and capacity

building, taking into account supporting textual and field evidence from the WTO, the World Bank and the WCO. The texts, described below, have been selected on the basis of their comprehensiveness in presenting a problematization or circumstantial premise, an imagination or goal premise, and a motivation or value premise (Fairclough, 2013, p. 187). They are comprehensive in terms of their problematizing and prioritization, means of action and lines of causation, identification of responsible actors, and imaginings of future states. In the case of the WTO and the World Bank, the proposed texts represent the official positions and products of the WTO and of the Bank as they relate to TFA implementation. In the case of the WCO, the texts have been selected on the basis of their position as the official records the deliberations of the most relevant working committees dealing with TFA and expert mobilization questions. They are also representative of my participant – observer engagement on the WCO TFA Programme from 2015 to 2018, where I observed the competing discourses of TFA implementation and their underlying social practices across multiple subjectivities. The texts are as follows:

- The specific legal text –of the SDT provisions of the TFA contained in articles 15 – 22 of the Agreement. A product of the discourse of the WTO, the SDT provisions inform the means by which international development agencies engage with developing countries in TFA-related support. In short, this text provides the official “rules of the game” for international development agencies’ engagement in TFA-related support.
- The World Bank’s TFA gap analysis for the Republic of Sierra Leone. This text is a direct consequence of the Bank’s May 2016 deployment of a “city-based trustee” to diagnose deficiencies and delineate technical solutions related to TFA implementation. It is authoritative insofar as it is demonstrative of the Bank’s framing of the problem of TFA implementation and of the expert-mediated solutions that are subject of this inquiry.

- Within the WCO, I will focus my analysis on the key documents that define the WCO Mercator Programme, which is the framework under which the WCO TFA Programme operated. I will pay specific attention the reports of the WCO's Capacity Building Committee (2016 and 2017 meetings), as reflected in the records of discussion of these Committees, focusing on statements that define the expert-beneficiary relationship within the WCO's discourse. These documents are stored within the WCO's member archives, accessible to all WCO members.

The identification of discourses within these texts will be based on the identification of representations – defined as particular ways of representing part of the physical, social or psychological world (Fairclough, 2003, p. 17). Representations reflect the social practices – the ways of acting – that are defined by language and which define certain possibilities to the exclusion of others (Fairclough, 2003, pp. 23-24). I will argue that these social practices, as represented in discourses within the above texts, have played a key role in establishing the dominant power relationships and subjectivities relating to TFA implementation, and that different representations in the WCO's discourse versus that of other international agencies has produced a different set of power relations and practices that are worthy of study.

Recognizing the potentially large number of themes, different representations and different discourses contained within these documents, I have chosen to limit the analysis to the theme of TFA expertise, allowing for a linkage to this theme's critical representation in the works of Escobar (2011), Ferguson (1994) and Li (2007), particularly with regards to their representations of power relations between experts and beneficiaries, discussed earlier. These works provide a critical development framework for the identification of relevant statements, and underlying power relations, looking specifically at the range of social actors in TFA-related

development interventions, including Customs officers in developed and developing countries, international experts, bilateral and multilateral development agencies, as well as the programmers and planners that oversee the complex set of power and knowledge relationships that are emerging from the work of international institutions in this growing field. While the works of Escobar (2011), Ferguson (1994) and Li (2007) are not directly related to trade facilitation, I argue that their collective critique of the complex of social relations between “experts” and “beneficiaries”, and related discussions regarding the “technification” and depoliticization of development interventions, are relevant to a PDA inquiry into international institutions’ present-day engagement with the TFA. It is on this basis that I propose to apply these authors’ reasoning to the case of the TFA and the specific case study of the WCO TFA Programme, focusing on a PDA critique of trade facilitation expertise.

Naylor’s (2011) approach to textual analysis, focusing of three textual mechanisms provides the ontological framework for a close reading of the documents undertaken in chapters 3 and 4. The first mechanism – presupposition – is based on the background knowledge of assumed truths. Presuppositions can be made of objects that exist and of the general character of particular subjects. In the case of the TFA, presuppositions are related to the generally assumed benefits of the TFA and the specific social actors that are involved in the practices of trade facilitation. The second mechanism – predications – establishes the specific qualities of a subject, and most importantly what they can and cannot do. It is through this mechanism that the subjectivities of beneficiaries, such as Customs officers, can be further interrogated, and where textual statements on the capacities of beneficiaries and experts can be explored in greater depth. The third mechanism – positioning – links subjects and objects to one another, revealing the nature of power relationships – inferiority, superiority, similarity and / or difference. This

mechanism, building on the previous two, provides the analytical framework for analyzing the power relationships between experts and beneficiaries of TFA-related support from international agencies (Naylor, 2011, pp. 181-182). In keeping with Naylor's (2011) approach, the analysis of these documents is designed to identify the discursive areas of agreement, where dominant narratives intersect, and where there is potential counter-discursive disagreement. Naylor (2011) suggests that such alignments or misalignments are vital, as they provide insights into power relationships between social actors (Naylor, 2011, p. 179) and help to bring marginalized discourses into greater clarity.

Naylor's (2011) approach will be complemented with Ziai's (2002) methodological approach, which integrates both thematic elements, or storylines, and textual elements (Ziai, 2011, pp. 30-32). His analysis of texts related to the UN Millennium Development Goals and the UN International Development Strategy analyzed divergent storylines, taking account of themes of poverty reduction, economic growth, development as a technical problem and imperatives of globalization and security. The textual analysis of these documents takes into account their topics and priorities, the objectives and lines of causation, responsible actors and proposed measures (Ziai, 2011, pp. 35-37). This methodology is in line with Fairclough's views on the pre-requisites for comprehensiveness of texts, including the importance of understanding problematizations. Taking the methodological inspirations from both authors into account, I will organize my analysis of the documents outlined in this chapter on the basis of a structure that presents the on the critical theme of expert-beneficiary relationships, as a storyline, with an analytical structure that examines each document on the basis of:

- its problematization / prioritization;
- its responsible actors and the allowable domains of knowledge;

- its imaginations of future states;
- its effects in discourse, subjectivization and lived experience.

Beyond the textual analysis, my analysis will be informed by my position as a participant – observer in the implementation of the WCO TFA Programme, which has provided me with a direct insight into the social relations at the international, national and local levels. I had the unique opportunity to oversee more than 100 specific TFA-related capacity building engagements in a range of developing and least developed countries, including Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Malawi, Pakistan, Palestine, Sierra Leone, Sudan and Zimbabwe. In addition, I engaged in regular dialogue with senior World Bank, IMF, WTO, World Economic Forum and UNCTAD officials in Brussels and Geneva, as well as ongoing dialogues with bilateral development agencies in London, Washington and Ottawa. This collective experience provides the intellectual and practical framework to distill the discourses and underlying power relations as they relate to this object of inquiry.

CHAPTER 3: THE DISCOURSE OF THE WTO AND THE WORLD BANK AS RELATED TO THE TFA

This purpose of this chapter is to examine the dominant development discourses of World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreement on Trade Facilitation (TFA) implementation, particularly as they relate to the engagement of international development institutions through the special and differential treatment (SDT) provisions, and the resultant expert-beneficiary relationships that are expected to emerge from these provisions. Applying the methodology outlined in chapter 2, this chapter will examine the discourses of the SDT provisions, followed by the examination of a World Bank document which provide a representation of the dominant discourse of development and the tactics of expert-mediated solutions within the framework of the TFA. Before proceeding, I will briefly introduce the high-level discourses of the WTO and the SDT provisions before proceeding to examine a case study of a World Bank TFA assessment in Sierra Leone, as a representative illustration.

The Discourse of the World Trade Organization (WTO) as it relates to the TFA

As the legal custodian of the TFA, the WTO offers a first entry point in understanding the discourses of the TFA. Cho (2014) has suggested that the overall discourse of the WTO is constructed in a manner that can “proceed in a strategic and manipulative manner” (Cho, 2014, p. 688) – in other words that the language used within WTO circles is designed to persuade and encourage a particular conduct. Cho suggests that the central discourse of the WTO is international norms, defined as “collective expressions about proper behavior for a given identity” (Cho, 2014, p. 688), and that these can be broken down into several sub-discourses, such as sharedness, rhetoric, and reproduction, which have been reproduced through a 60-year history of practices originating with the 1947 General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).

According to Cho (2014), these practices include discussing, arguing, debating, persuading, deliberating and learning (Cho, 2014, pp. 690, 692). As the meeting place for like-minded regulators, Cho suggests that the nature of discourse in the WTO is more participatory and less conflictual, best represented by descriptions of collaborative peer review framed by the normative discourse of WTO rules, which are formally codified into the *acquis* – the official and documented institutional records – of the organization (Cho, 2014, p. 694). At the same time, the consultative and participatory nature of WTO discourse described by Cho “opens spaces for less powerful actors to articulate their positions” (Cho, 2014, p. 702) through more peer-based relationships of like-minded regulators, versus those of experts and beneficiaries, despite Lamp’s (2017) suggestion that the categories of “developing” and “least developed” remain well-established in the discourse of the WTO (Lamp, 2017, p. 497).

As discussed in chapter 1, the TFA was developed through the input of the WTO membership, largely through their diplomatic missions in Geneva, where the discussions remained within the technical realms, again reflective of Cho’s (2014) like-minded regulators and Escobar’s (2011) technical communities of practice, and that developing countries’ early interventions contributed in large part to the SDT provisions. With the coming-into-force of the Agreement, the WTO’s role has shifted to that of a coordinator and a facilitator. In particular, the WTO’s Trade Facilitation Agreement Facility (TFAF) is designed as a means to connect developing countries with donors under the SDT framework (World Trade Organization, 2015), to which I will now turn. Here, I conclude by suggesting that the community of like-minded regulators in the WTO occupy a position as the custodian, the coordinator and the facilitator of the SDT provisions; however, the implementation of technical assistance and capacity building is

clearly within the realm of development agencies, where the discourse of expert-beneficiary relationships is best interrogated through a review of the SDT provisions themselves.

The Special and Differential (SDT) Treatment Provisions of the WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation (TFA)

The SDT provisions of the TFA provide the framework for international development agencies and donor governments to deliver technical assistance and capacity building to developing and least developed countries (see Chapter 1). The SDT provisions allow developing and least developed countries to gain the capacities to implement the technical provisions of the TFA within a reasonable, but flexible, timescale, and to provide a structured framework for this to take place. We recall that this framework is based on a “notification” process where developing and least developed countries identify those provisions of the TFA that they could implement immediately (known as category “A”), those measures that would require more time to implement (known as category “B”) and those that would require more time and external technical assistance and capacity building (known as category “C”). The topics and priorities contained within the SDT articles of the TFA set out the framework for categorizing TFA provisions (article 14), notifying the WTO of national categorizations (articles 15 and 16), and managing the implementation of those provisions in categories “B” and “C” (articles 17 and 18). Article 16 also outlines the divergent rules for developing countries versus least developed countries, with the latter being provided with greater leeway in providing their notifications and in implementing provisions. Article 21 provides the framework for “donor members” to provide “assistance and support for capacity building to developing country and least-developed country members”. The principles outlined in article 21.3 require donor members to “take account of the overall development framework of recipient countries” (article 21.3a), “promote coordination

between and among members” (article 21.3d) and “encourage use of existing in-country and regional coordination structures” (article 21.3e). Article 21.3f encourages “developing country members to provide capacity building to other developing and least-developed country members and consider supporting such activities, where possible” (World Trade Organization, 2016).

Article 22 sets out the framework for donors to provide information to the WTO on TFA-related capacity building, using established Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) reporting systems. The SDT provisions provide an indisputable categorization of WTO members into categories of “least developed”, “developed” and “donor”, with the statements of “developing” and “least developed” appearing 153 times in the TFA text reflecting a construction of hierarchical categories of donor, developing and least developed, which Escobar (2011) argues is a construction of development agencies themselves (Escobar, 2011, p. 18).

Article 14.2 provides agency to “developing” and “least developed” countries to “self-designate” the provisions to be categorized as category “A”, “B” and “C”. In practice, these categorization exercises have largely been mediated by development agencies, framed by the dominant technique of deploying “city-based trustees” (Li, 2007, p. 15) on TFA needs assessment missions. I have deliberately used Li’s (2007) term “city-based trustee” to represent the clear divide between the lived experiences of well-paid experts based in Western societies who reproduce these categorization exercises in different countries on a “fly-in, fly out” basis, and those of the Customs officers and traders in developing countries working at the front lines of international trade, characterized by low pay, difficult working conditions and isolated locations. The divide between a Western-educated lawyer “distinguished by his education and technical know-how” and his connections to the “transnational development apparatus” (Li, 2007, p. 15), and the Sierra Leonean civil servants, port operators and traders that inform this

chapter's case study is a vibrant representation of the rift between those doing the development and those who are to be developed.

Recalling from chapter 1 the importance of these categorizations for the provision of downstream technical assistance and capacity building, it was observed that no countries within the remit of the WCO TFA Programme (including Ethiopia, Sierra Leone, Zimbabwe, Bangladesh, Sudan) assumed full agency for this “self-designation” exercise, which requires a technical assessment of national legislation, regulations, policies, procedures and / or practices against the each of the 35 technical articles of the agreement. All such exercises were eventually mediated by an international actor, such as the World Bank, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the International Trade Centre (ITC) or bilateral TFA projects through the deployment of “city-based trustees”. The World Bank's guidance for experts in the production of TFA assessments provides insight into the conduct of these assessments, which generally take place in the format of a 2 - 3 day multi-stakeholder workshop in a local conference facility, along with several days of bilateral meetings with government agencies and port operators. For each of the 35 technical measures of the TFA, the World Bank's guidance – which specifically designates its use for “trade facilitation experts” (World Bank Group, 2015) – directs that experts provide a structured measure-by-measure assessment of the current policy, legal and procedural situation, suggested reform actions and technical assistance needs, along with a TFA categorization proposal (i.e. category “A”, “B” or “C”).

I conclude here that the SDT provisions of the TFA represent a clearly defined terrain where the tactics and technologies of development will be deployed in a manner that will maintain a clear power division between experts and “target groups”. Development agencies are well poised not only to define the problems through TFA assessments, but to deliver the solutions

through an array of improvement schemes designed to influence the behavior of social actors in complex border spaces. The texture of this emergent power relationship would warrant further study several years after the coming into force of the TFA, at which point a substantial base empirical evidence may come into view. This inquiry is not positioned to make these claims; however, I will seek to gain an initial insight into the discourse of expert-beneficiary relationships through an analysis of these relations as constructed during a May 2016 joint World Bank-WCO TFA needs assessment mission. Before proceeding, however, I will provide an brief introduction to the high-level discourses of the World Bank's Trade and Competitiveness Global Practice (TCGP), under which responsibility for the Sierra Leone assessment fell.

The Discourse of the World Bank as it relates to the TFA

The World Bank's TFA-related technical assistance is presently delivered through the Trade and Competitiveness Global Practice (TCGP). It is worth touching briefly on the TCGP's mandate, as presented by the Bank in a 74-page overview of the TCGP, which is framed by the Bank's dominant themes of sustained economic growth, expanded market opportunities and private sector development (World Bank Group, 2015, pp. 10-11). The TCGP's mandate is to "boost the volume and value of trade, enhance the investment climate, and improve competitiveness in sectors, and foster innovation and entrepreneurship" (World Bank Group, 2015, p. 10). The document highlights a rapid response mechanism that draws "upon expertise found across the Bank Group" to "secure necessary assistance from the World Bank Group or other sources to implement reforms in line with the TFA" (World Bank Group, 2015, pp. 38-39), while providing a clear rationalization for the deployment of development assistance in these sectors.

The TCGP highlights its “global footprint with over 500 World Bank and IFC advisory staff working in over 80 locations around the world” (World Bank Group, 2015, p. 5) and a three-decade track record of engagement (World Bank Group, 2015, p. 2), highlighting a “comprehensive offer” encompassing a package of supports including data analytics, technical advice and financing (World Bank Group, 2015, p. 7), along with an extensive suite of knowledge products, including the Logistics Performance Index and the International Trade Costs Database. Techniques of country-specific trade and competitiveness diagnostics and in-country statistical capacity building supports (World Bank Group, 2015, p. 22) are highlighted, along with a prioritization of TFA (World Bank Group, 2015, p. 6).

The work of the World Bank and its relationship to neoliberal discourse, including that of good governance, has been studied extensively by Enns (2015), Li (2007), Escobar (1984), Storey (2000), Bayliess, ed. (2011) and through the work of the Bretton Woods Project. Enns (2015) provides a summary, suggesting a critical account of the Bank’s overly prescriptive and universalizing practices (Enns, 2015, p. 62). Here, I will pay particular attention to an aspect of Enns’ (2015) study that explores knowledge production within the Bank, in addition to Escobar (2011) and Li (2007), as they all provide insight into the Bank’s interests in the TFA and disciplinary nature of expert-mediated knowledge production within the Bank, therefore providing a basis for understanding the case study of the Sierra Leone case study. Enns (2015) explores the hierarchical editorial and approval practices at the Bank, where he concludes that these practices ensure the dominance of prescriptive and universalizing knowledges in line with the Bank’s vision of economic development (Enns, 2015). Enns (2015) cites practices in hiring, promotion, publication as mechanisms by which the World Bank maintains control over knowledge production, and ensures discursive alignment (Enns, 2015, p. 64) with the World

Bank's vision of economic development (Enns, 2015, p. 67). Li's (2007) discussion of the Bank's neoliberal rationalities, such as responsibility, competition, accountability (Li, 2007, p. 230) represented by the TFA helps to further explain the Bank's strong interest in the removing national-level trade barriers (Storey, 2000, pp. 361-363) as part of the TCGP mandate. The World Bank will be a key player in the SDT framework, just as it became an enthusiastic partner in the "aid-for-trade" agenda in 2005. Notwithstanding the rigidity of the Bank's knowledge production, Li's (2007) critique offers insight into how rigid discourses propagated by the Bank encounter resistance within the texture of social relations in local communities (Li, 2007, p. 241). Then question to be asked is whether the TFA presents a space where resistance takes place, or if it is a fulsome representation of discourse and power in development as understood by Escobar (1984).

Applying Escobar, Ferguson and Li to the Discourse of the TFA and SDT Provisions

Escobar (2011) explores the privileged power position occupied by development professionals (Escobar, 2011, p. xviii), especially in the question of whose knowledge matters, citing examples from the World Bank. Escobar also maintains a particular concern with discourses that are "universalizing and homogenizing Third World cultures in an ahistorical fashion" (Escobar, 2011, p. 8) and the manner in which knowledge is being concentrated within the development profession (Escobar, 2011, p. 18). Escobar (2011) expresses further concern with the growing range of experts proposing solutions across a widening range of sectors, and how they are maintaining power over local communities and the state (Escobar, 2011, p. 85) through the institutionalization of development practices. Li's (2007) analysis is useful in further understanding the power relationships within the World Bank where large teams of experts are "answerable in the last instance to the Bank" (Li, 2007, p. 241). Li (2007) also invites an

examination of the frame of social practices to be mediated by expert solutions, and an appreciation of the limits of expert-defined plans to regulate social behavior, despite best intentions. Ferguson's (1994) invites an exploration of the deliberate oversight of those political matters that cannot be resolved by a technical or expert-mediated solution (Ferguson, 1994, pp. 30-35). Escobar (2011) and Li (2007) invite an interrogation of the divide between experts and beneficiaries, where donors are entrusting Bank experts with the power to produce and enunciate knowledge as a "world class trustee" (World Bank Group, 2015, p. 11), which will allow for the delivery further expert-mediated solutions, along the lines of the SDT provisions.

These authors' understandings will offer insights into the underlying discourses and power relationships that mediated the production of the Sierra Leone TFA gap assessment, and whether these relationships parallel Escobar (1984, 2011), Ferguson (1994) and Li's (2007) understanding of power and development. I will attempt to answer this question through a post-structuralist discourse analysis (PDA) of the gap assessment report, focusing on the following sub-questions:

- How is the "problem" of Sierra Leone represented? Why are international experts or "city-based trustees" as represented by Escobar (1984, 2011) and Li (2007) the solution? What presuppositions and assumptions are at play?
- What is the allowable domain of knowledge for the assessment? Is it limited by the TFA? What power do experts possess? Does their knowledge matter?
- What are the effects on expert-beneficiary relationships? How are they reflected and reproduced in discourse?

I will proceed to provide a brief overview of the assessment, which will address the topics, priorities, responsible actors and imaginings that emerged from these discussions, and will then proceed to answer the questions above.

PDA of the Sierra Leone Gap Assessment and Reform Action Plan

A World Bank expert produced the Sierra Leone Gap Assessment and Reform Action Plan in September 2016, following a May 2016 World Bank-led needs assessment mission to Freetown, where I led an accompanying WCO delegation. This 167-page report provides a complete overview of Sierra Leone's compliance with TFA measures, noting that the country is only fully compliant with one measure, substantially compliant with six measures, partially complaint with 21 measures and not compliant with seven measures (World Bank Group, 2016, p. 4). The document is organized into an executive summary, a country context section, an article-by-article assessment of Sierra Leone's alignment to TFA provisions, and a reform action plan. The country context section is exclusively focused on trade, describing the country's exports and imports, against a background of widely available econometric data. The document further identifies those measures that should fall into category "C" – with 19 of 35 measures identified as such, and concluded that a National Committee on Trade Facilitation (NCTF) develop a "multi-year strategic plan for the implementation of actions identified in the report, with agreement of all relevant border authorities and relevant donor organizations" (World Bank Group, 2016, p. 21).

How is the "problem" of Sierra Leone represented? Why are international experts or "city-based trustees" the solution? What presuppositions and assumptions are at play?

With a set of categorization recommendations – a list of TFA measures, identified as category "A", "B" and "C", with notional implementation timelines for those in categories "B"

and “C” – the implicit representation of the problem is that Sierra Leonean border agencies “can’t implement certain measures when the TFA comes into force” and that they “can’t implement others without external support”. With this problematization in mind, the solution was to provide the Sierra Leonean government with an expert-mediated technical assessment of its readiness to implement the provisions of the TFA, which will frame the provision of technical assistance and capacity building under the SDT provisions. We recall from earlier that article 14.2 of the TFA provides agency to developing and least-developing countries to self-identify their categorizations; however, this agency in practice is constrained by the dominant discourse of development, which positions external experts as the only actors that can fully diagnose deficiencies and propose packaged technical solutions framed by category “C” recommendations. Here, we are reminded of the World Bank’s tactics for undertaking TFA assessments, which produces a structured measure-by-measure assessment of the current policy, legal and procedural situation, suggested reform actions and technical assistance needs, with experts being directed by the Bank to provide a categorization recommendations and notional timelines for implementation.

This presupposition of specialized TFA expertise of the Bank’s leading expert, framed by the discourse of development whereby only a trained foreign expert could discover TFA-related deficiencies in Sierra Leone, maintains a strong presence. In practice, I observed three cases under the WCO TFA Programme where a localized solution to the categorization was undertaken – Malawi, Zimbabwe and Sierra Leone. In all three cases, the localized assessment was viewed by external experts as being incorrect or over-ambitious. All three countries eventually underwent expert-mediated categorizations which resulted in substantial revisions to their categorizations.

The Sierra Leone gap assessment outlines the mandates of the various state agencies responsible for border control, including the Department of Customs, the Sierra Leone Standards Bureau, the Sierra Leone Port Authority, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security and the Ministry of Health and Sanitation (World Bank Group, 2016, pp. 30-35). Collectively, the report refers to them as “border agencies”, suppressing any discussion of power relationships between or within these agencies, reflecting Ferguson’s (1994) presentation of the state as a neutral implementer of expert-mediated policy solutions (Ferguson, 1994, pp. 225-226), and not a complex of local power relations that cannot be changed through the application of the calculated technique of the TFA. The next question to consider is the domain of permissible knowledge, and whether in fact it is limited by the TFA.

What is the allowable domain of knowledge for the assessment? Is it limited by the TFA? What power do experts possess? Does their knowledge matter?

We can see from the Enns’ (2015) study that the production of knowledge within the World Bank is tightly controlled, ensuring a discursive alignment to dominant narratives of the private-sector led growth and integration of developing countries into global value chains. This structure required the report to be fully reviewed and approved in Washington before it could be sent to Freetown. This review, along with the structured methodology to carry out the assessment, ensured allowable domain of knowledge was clearly framed by the measures of the TFA and the solutions that could be provided by experts. Recommendations to deliver technical “assessments”, “enactments”, “publications”, “definitions” and “technical support” represent the only acceptable solutions, considering their representation as apolitical technical solutions that can delivered by donors under the SDT provisions of the TFA.

The report does not touch upon the competing priorities faced by border authorities in Sierra Leone. It is silent on matters of balancing revenue generation with trade facilitation. It normalizes an understanding of the state as a single edifice of power, being silent on how border authorities position themselves within the Sierra Leonean polity, recognizing the potential for packaged technical interventions to be appropriated by “domestic actors to reinforce their dominance, or else weaken that of rivals” (Storey, 2000, p. 364) . It is silent on how other developing countries have addressed the same questions. It is silent on matters related to the working conditions and lived experiences of Customs officers and other border agencies, including questions of how they are recruited, trained, deployed, managed and paid. Most importantly, it is silent of the question of “how” – a wide-reaching range of solutions are cast in technical terms of “enacting legislation”, “enhancing policy / legal frameworks”, “establishing expertise”, “designate responsibility”, but provides little perspective on the means to navigate the complex of local power relations that would be needed to achieve any of these goals. Escobar suggests that expert discourses “produce powerful truths” (Escobar, 2011, p. 20). As the blueprint for structured technical assistance and capacity building, the document is poised to inform the planning TFA-related interventions under the SDT provisions for the next 3 to 5 years. International agencies, working under the framework of the SDT provisions will refer to this document as an authoritative representation of the truth as they plan improvement schemes along the lines of the TFA in Sierra Leone.

I conclude here by suggesting that the framework of the TFA assessment was strictly limited to the technical confines of the agreement itself, ensuring compliance with the procedural framework established by the SDT provisions and the Bank’s established technical methodology for carrying out these assessments. While localized experiences could provide insight into the

competing relationships between border agencies and of the complex of social relations at borders that fall outside the measures of the TFA, this knowledge remains marginalized in favor of technical prescriptions that falls within the strict bounds of the TFA. With this limitation in mind, we next consider the effects on the expert-beneficiary relationship and they are reproduced in discourse.

What are the effects on expert-beneficiary relationships? How are they reflected and reproduced in discourse?

The expert finalized the draft Sierra Leone report in February 2017 – more than six months after the May 2016 mission; however, in keeping with the Bank’s hierarchical approval framework as described by Enns (2015), it was to be approved in its final form by the Bank before being shared with the Sierra Leonean government. I contend here that the World Bank maintains its enunciative powers by making the author first and foremost accountable to the Bank, similar to Li’s (2007) interpretation. The clear divide between the city-based trustee – a Western-educated lawyer based in Geneva who drafted the entire report – and those to be developed in the ports of Freetown is stark. A comparison of Sierra Leone’s February 2018 TFA notification to the recommendations of the World Bank reveal that all 18 measures that were identified by the World Bank as category “C” were notified as such by Sierra Leone. In addition, eight measures that were identified by the Bank as category “B” were downgraded by Sierra Leone to category “C” (World Trade Organization, 2018). The reasoning for this change, which would be worthy of further study, unfortunately remains within Freetown’s corridors of power.

Summary: The Development Discourse of the SDT

I opened this discussion by suggesting that the SDT provisions of the TFA provide a clear mechanism for development agencies to insert themselves and deliver a growing range of expert-

mediated solutions. Based on the questionings in this chapter, I conclude “city-based trustees” will exert power in defining the TFA categorizations that will become eligible for technical assistance and capacity building under the SDT provisions. The tactics of TFA assessments are well-established by the World Bank and are replicated through the production of high-quality structured reports that offer representations of “what” needs to be done only as it relates to the TFA, but which is silent on “how” it is to be done within the complex of social relations that operate among broader actors. The “how” in terms of technical solutions is left to the donors and their networks of experts, which are positioning the TFA as part of a trade and development nexus defined by the example of the TCGP, opening the terrain for growing numbers of experts to propose solutions across a range of themes that have been connected in the development discourse as technical solutions to the complex social relations that define border spaces. I end this chapter by asking if there are alternative imaginings of “experts” that do not fit Li’s understanding of the “city-based trustee”? Would this imagining emerge from within the neoliberal discourse of good governance or from outside of it? Would they challenge the precepts of the TFA and its neoliberal rationalities, or would this challenge be window-dressing to the continued reproduction of the dominant discourse of development?

CHAPTER 4: THE DISCOURSE OF THE WORLD CUSTOMS ORGANIZATION

Before looking at the specific case study of the World Customs Organization (WCO), it is important to establish the high-level discourses that define the work of this Brussels-based organization. While not an exhaustive study on the discursive history of the WCO, the background is intended to provide insight into the organization's establishment and the origins of its present-day practices related to WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation (TFA) implementation. Customs as a governmental practice for generating revenues on trade dates to ancient times, while the current international Customs cooperation regime dates from 1952, with the establishment of the Customs Cooperation Council (CCC) – the official organizational title of the WCO. Bickel (2009) highlights the WCO's role as an "information broker between its members", and makes note of the organization's ability to constantly adjust "its organizational plan with regard to its members' requirements" (Bickel, 2009, p. 268). Bickel highlights the committee and sub-committee structure as one of the WCO's defining features, as it enables constant communication between the WCO Secretariat and its membership, encompassing a wide range of technical matters, ranging from classification, valuation, origin, enforcement, capacity building and trade facilitation. The committee and sub-committee structure ensures a constant flow of delegates into the WCO Secretariat, where professional alliances are built and where localized experiences are shared and debated among of like-minded regulators. The production of official knowledge within the WCO is aligned to these committees, where technical documents are prepared for discussion, approved by relevant committees, and official records of committee meetings are archived. The WCO's highest level committees – the Council and the Policy Commission – approve and oversee the strategic direction of the organization, with votes taken by a two-thirds majority (Bickel, 2009, p. 274), while various technical

committees oversee specific Customs matters discussed above. The WCO's 2016-17 Annual Report describes the WCO's position as "the global center of Customs expertise and the voice of the international Customs community" noting the WCO's role in providing "an ideal forum for Customs administrations and their stakeholders to hold in-depth discussions, exchange experiences, and share best practices on a range of international Customs and trade issues" (World Customs Organization, 2017).

Unlike many other international organizations engaged on the TFA agenda, the WCO has remained largely a technical organization, with its technical ranks staffed by Customs officers, and its work largely focused on the technical matters of Customs, such as tariffs, valuation, classification, rules of origin, enforcement, intelligence and procedures. I contend that the organization is not unlike the "pre-development" nutritional programmes described by Escobar, which remained within the "bounds of strict scientific discourse" (Escobar, 2011, p. 113) or of "like-minded regulators" described by Cho (2014) in chapter 3. It is also distinct in its relative lack of development economists or development planners within its staff rosters. Currently there are fewer than five such individuals within the organization, out of a reported staff complement of 191 (World Customs Organization, 2017), about two-thirds of which who are active Customs officers on secondment from their respective governments, while the other third are administrative staff recruited from the local labor market in Brussels.

The work of the WCO encompasses three technical directorates, covering questions of trade and tariff affairs, compliance and enforcement, and capacity building. Together, these technical directorates oversee some 50 technical meetings, covering a wide range of Customs-related topics, such as e-commerce, tariff classification, Customs valuation, information management, enforcement and private sector engagement in trade (Bickel, 2009). Within these

meetings delegates from Customs administrations across the world come together and debate and agree on measures related to the WCO's core portfolio, including the setting of international standards for Customs procedures, fostering international cooperation among Customs administrations, building technical and organizational capacity among the organization's developing members, and working to enhance the image of Customs as a positive contributor to socio-economic development (World Customs Organization, 2017, p. 3).

Core to the WCO's self-description and how it positions itself among international organizations dealing with TFA matters is the organization's unique technical competency in matters related to Customs and TFA implementation, best described in a 2017 assertion describing the WCO "the only international organization competent to set standards and propose solutions in the area of Customs" and that Customs administrations must be "assigned their proper role in the implementation of the TFA, bearing in mind that approximately 90% of the TFA context is related to Customs matters" (World Customs Organization, 2017, p. 2), encouraging a positioning of Customs administrations as the preeminent actor in national-level TFA implementation. The WCO's TFA implementation guidance reflects these statements, suggesting that "Customs should be at the center of national implementation efforts" (World Customs Organization, 2017, pp. 8-9). This discourse, positioning Customs and over other border agencies, and the WCO's positioning as the global standard-setter for Customs, is largely absent from the World Bank's discourse discussed in chapter 3, which describe Customs as one of several border stakeholders, along with trade, health, agricultural, immigration authorities, along with port operators, brokers, clearing agents and traders.

Following the negotiation and announcement of the TFA in 2014, the WCO announced the launch of the "Mercator Programme" as a strategic initiative to support the implementation of

the TFA. The WCO describes the “Mercator Programme” as a strategic initiative to support the harmonized and expeditious implementation of the TFA using core WCO “instruments and tools”. The Mercator Programme maintains a “dual-track” approach with an “overall track” focusing on the refinement of “instruments and tools”, expanding “accredited expert” pools (these terms will be addressed below), mobilizing donor funding and coordination, alongside a “tailor-made track” premised on the delivery of TFA-related technical assistance and capacity building at the national level according to “member needs” (World Customs Organization, 2017, p. 2), generally through “missions”, where WCO staff and “accredited experts” are deployed for short periods, not exceeding two weeks per “mission”.

The WCO maintains approximately 50 “instruments and tools”, such as the Revised Kyoto Convention (legally known as the International Convention on the Simplification and Harmonization of Customs Procedures), the SAFE Framework of Standards, the Risk Management Compendium, and guidelines for post-clearance audit and coordinated border management that assist Customs administrations in implementing the provisions of the TFA. In the WCO’s understanding, “tools” are non-binding informal publications developed by the WCO to assist Customs administrations and traders in the field of Customs, while “instruments” refers to the formal international legal conventions maintained by the WCO, including the Revised Kyoto Convention and the Harmonized System Convention, which require formal accession by member governments. Taken together, these “instruments and tools” provide an understanding of the frame of the WCO’s allowable knowledge. The knowledge base of the organization undergoes regular updates through the relevant committees, which Bickel (2009) highlights as one of the organization’s defining structures for knowledge production. Many of the “instruments and tools”, such as the WCO Risk Management Compendium and the Single

Window Guidelines are in fact compendia of “member best practices”, representing localized solutions to TFA-related problems rather than specific technical prescriptions. Connecting the knowledge within these “instruments and tools” to national-level Customs administrations is mediated by several tactics, including the committee structure, the publication of documents on WCO members’ website, the maintenance of a large e-learning platform and in-country “missions” mediated by WCO staff and “accredited experts” the broader Customs community. It is this last technique that I will explore in more depth, as it offers a basis for comparison with the expert-beneficiary relationships discussed in chapter 3.

“Accredited experts” in the WCO sense represent “in-kind” contributions of expertise from the organization’s membership – hence experts are recruited *only* from within the ranks Customs administrations. Unlike World Bank or other international experts, WCO “experts” are nominated by their home Customs administrations and are subjected to an “accreditation” process within the WCO where their technical and delivery capacities are assessed, and where they are given an understanding of WCO instruments and tools, which they are expected to understand and promote while working on WCO “missions”. Generally, WCO members are asked to “commit to release officials for a maximum of twelve weeks during the three years following formal accreditation” (World Customs Organization, 2017). For clarity, I emphasize that WCO “accredited experts” are full-time employees of national Customs administrations, and only assume the mantra of “international expert” for those few weeks a year when they are engaged in WCO business. They are not paid consulting fees and only draw their regular salaries from their respective governments while temporarily serving the WCO. In 2017, the WCO reported that 57% of the year’s 340 capacity building support missions used such “accredited experts”, underscoring their critical role in the WCO’s delivery approach (World Customs

Organization, 2017, p. 5). This practice of identifying, accrediting and deploying “accredited experts” is a deeply ingrained practice within the WCO, while the practice of contracting external experts is met with suspicion and strict procurement rules established by the organization’s Finance Committee, along with a 2017 policy where “external experts / expert consultants account for a very small percentage of the overall available pool of WCO experts and are only ever approached when a WCO accredited expert...from a member administration is unavailable, or there if a very specific reason why it is necessary to invite someone externally” (World Customs Organization, 2017). For the remainder of this chapter, the term “accredited expert” will be used to represent this concept.

Applying Escobar (1984, 2011) and Li (2007) to the WCO

We recall Escobar’s (2011) critique of development experts being based on firstly on his concern that a growing sectoral creep, where solutions to the problems of the Global South are being planned by a growing array of Western experts from across the disciplinary spectrum, citing examples of demographers, educators, urban planning specialists and rural development experts (Escobar, 2011, p. 85), who are exercising power over localized relationships between communities and the state. He critiques the manner in which only expert knowledge, such as that held by World Bank officials and other Western-educated experts, is considered the only valid representation of truth (Escobar, 2011, pp. 110-111). Li’s (2007) critique is based on an understanding that expert-mediated problematizations must be oriented towards a technical / scientific development solution that can be delivered by experts. Li’s suggestion that expert-mediated interventions that “encourage people to behave as they ought” (Li, 2007, p. 16) discounts localized power relationships among the “target groups” whose behavior is to be mediated, which presents a challenge when the domain of social relations to be optimized does

not fully represent the complex of existing power relationships. These authors' understandings will offer insights into "accredited experts", and whether this represents a challenge to the discourse of development described in chapter 3, or if it is simply development done differently? I will attempt to answer this question through a post-structuralist discourse analysis (PDA) of the records of discussion of the 2016 and 2017 WCO Capacity Building Committee (CBC) meetings, focusing on the following sub-questions:

- How is the "problem" of experts represented? Why are "accredited experts" the solution? What presuppositions and assumptions are at play?
- What is the allowable domain of knowledge for "accredited experts"? Is it limited by the TFA?
- Do "accredited experts" have the same powers as "experts" described by Escobar (2011) and Li (2007), and the example from chapter 3? Does their knowledge matter?
- What are the effects on expert-beneficiary relationships? How are they reflected and reproduced in discourse?

I will proceed to provide a brief overview of the 2016 and 2017 CBC meetings, which will address the topics, priorities, responsible actors and imaginings that emerged from these discussions, and will then proceed to answer the questions above.

The Discourse of the WCO Capacity Building Committee

The CBC is one of the more established discussion forums within the WCO, with the first such meeting taking place in 2006. As the main annual consultative meeting for the WCO Secretariat's Capacity Building Directorate, this committee takes up questions of capacity building delivery, expert accreditation and mobilization, and provides a showcase for the

presentation of best practices in Customs capacity building. The 2016 and 2017 meetings were strongly focused on imaginations of the future state of capacity building with the coming into force of the TFA (World Customs Organization, 2017).

The WCO Secretary General's opening remarks for the 2016 meeting highlighted the multifaceted challenges facing Customs administrations, including revenue pressures, security concerns, and the complex balance between combatting illicit trade and facilitating legal trade. While brief mention is made of development themes, including the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the need to attract more donor support, the overall messaging of the Secretary General's opening reinforced the need to sustain and broaden the WCO's capacity building methodologies in an increasingly complex global environment. The topics and priorities addressed by the 2016 Capacity Building Committee encompassed questions of capacity building and sustainability (paragraphs 19 to 33); a report on WCO capacity building delivery for the year (paragraphs 34 to 48); TFA-related capacity building (paragraphs 49 to 68); a presentation on a new expert management policy (paragraphs 73 to 84); questions of project management and donor coordination (paragraphs 85 to 100); partnerships with academia and the private sector (paragraphs 101 to 109) and measuring performance (paragraphs 110 to 121).

Building on deliberations in 2016, the report and documents of the 2017 CBC highlighted the need for more structured approaches to support Customs modernization and reform efforts, including an acceleration of TFA implementation through the use of WCO "instruments and tools". The specific topics and priorities addressed by the 2017 CBC encompassed a keynote address on the linkages between trade facilitation and capacity building (paragraphs 14 to 22), stakeholder relationships and the TFA (paragraphs 23 to 44), the WCO Mercator Programme and its operating modalities (paragraphs 45 to 76), a report on WCO deliveries in the reporting year

(paragraph 77 to 94), a discussion on measuring the effectiveness of capacity building (paragraphs 95 to 110), project management in a Customs context (paragraphs 111 to 122), deployment of WCO experts (paragraphs 124 to 140), trade facilitation in insecure environments (paragraphs 142 to 152), Customs – tax cooperation (paragraphs 158 to 168), gender equality and diversity (paragraphs 170 to 182), initiatives in training and professional development (paragraphs 183 to 192) and collective action to promote integrity and anti-corruption (paragraphs 198 to 209).

The discussions of the CBC maintained a strong emphasis on the “member” as a responsible actor. This term appears 115 times in the 2016 report and 124 times in the 2017 report, generally reflected in statements of “member experiences”, “member needs”, “member feedback” and “member perspectives”. At the same time, the term “developing and least developing countries” is conspicuous in its almost complete absence from these reports, appearing twice in the 2016 report and only once in the 2017 report. A close read of the reports reveals numerous contributions from developing countries including Cape Verde, Gambia, India, Belize, Sierra Leone Gabon and Peru, which were provided with speaking opportunities in equal measure to developed countries, revealing an openness to the knowledge and localized experiences of developing countries.

It is worth noting that the timing of these meetings (2016-2017) represents a period where the “accredited expert” model was being actively debated in reaction to the coming into force of the TFA, with a prioritization to maintain and deepen the “accredited expert” approach in the face of a more complex donor coordination environment. At the same time, the meetings reproduced longer-standing WCO discourses of maintaining balance with Customs’ other functions of revenue generation, enforcement and protection of society, while maintaining an

openness to localized practices. It is worth noting here that reports of the CBC are silent on the organization's methodologies for aligning its peer support model to the notifications submitted to the WTO. No structure is provided for the WCO to specifically align its efforts on those provisions notified as category "C".

How is the "problem" of experts represented? Why are "accredited experts" the solution?

What presuppositions and assumptions are at play?

The CBC documents cite congoing pressures on Customs administrations and other border agencies to modernize and reform their processes. While the TFA provides a new time-bound and legally binding impetus for modernization and reform, the fundamental framework for modern border management as defined by the WCO dates back more than 10 years, and is best understood in the WCO's Customs in the 21st Century Policy document, which envisions "adaptable, strategically focused Customs administrations, which promote reduced compliance costs for legitimate traders, more effective and efficient targeting of high-risk movements, and greater confidence and mutual recognition among Customs administrations of each other's programmes and controls" (World Customs Organization, 2009, p. 2). It suggests that the benefits of Customs data sharing, border agency coordination, intelligence-driven risk management, Customs-trade partnership, modernized process and the deployment of technologies, professional, knowledge-based organizations and integrity (World Customs Organization, 2009, p. 8) represents the foundational framework for Customs reform and modernization. This solution is well-aligned to an underlying neoliberal rationality of good governance and principles of efficiency, which I contend does not contradict the discourses explored in chapter 3.

With modernization and reform as the proposed common-sense solutions, the implicit representation of the problem is that Customs administrations in developing countries lack the capacities to respond to the TFA, and that WCO “instruments and tools” addressing matters of revenue collection, economic competitiveness, enforcement and organizational development and “accredited experts” are among the solutions. The WCO’s on-line TFA implementation guidance is the organization’s flagship guidance on the TFA – it provides WCO members with an article-by-article analysis of the TFA, drawing specific linkages between all 35 technical measures of the TFA and related WCO “instruments and tools” and national-level practices that have been built up through a concentrated effort on the part of the WCO to collect member experiences for inclusion in the tool.

This underlying problem representation provides insight into what the WCO is seeking to change, which is to consolidate and expand its model of peer support in an increasingly complex global environment, where Customs administrations are facing a multitude of challenges at the border, including, but not limited to, the time-bound pressures related to the coming into force of the TFA. At the same time, the WCO is seeking to mobilize and coordinate the growing concentration of international development support in TFA-related support, including growing volumes of ODA funds being provided to the WCO in direct support of the Mercator Programme. At a time when “city-based trustees” are increasingly providing TFA-related support, Customs administrations are representing their problems through a wider lens, taking into account questions of revenue collection, enforcement and societal protection, in addition to trade facilitation. The distinction that I draw here is how the global Customs community’s mechanism to create and produce its own problems from this wider perspective and its own remedies in the form of “instruments and tools” is distinct from a diagnosis and remedy from the

perspective of a “city-based trustee”, especially in a setting where and where knowledge of localized “member experiences” plays a role in maintaining a suspicion of external experts, claiming that “Customs has very sensitive information and this information could be vulnerable after using external experts” (World Customs Organization, 2016, p. 10).

If this distinction is to be maintained, it presupposes that only individuals within the Customs community can fully understand the problems faced by Customs officers, and that Customs administrations *want to engage* with their peers through the sharing of “member experiences”. With 176 out of 180 members engaging in capacity building activities in some measure, the interest of Customs administrations in engaging with one another is strong (World Customs Organization, 2017, p. 5). There is also a presupposition that Customs administrations *want to receive* advice from their peers, and that they value such advice, either as a complement or as an alternative to that of “city-based trustees”. The WCO has argued that this peer-support approach supports the building of professional alliances between Customs officers and their administrations that are unlike the traditional expert-consultant models (Taylor & Tornstrom, 2017, p. 26), with the “Customs-to-Customs” approach defining the WCO’s model of capacity building (World Customs Organization, 2018, p. 2). It assumes the existence of a coherent community of practice, similar to the expert communities in nutrition cited by Escobar (2011) that by nature, maintain problematizations within the bounds of their technical / scientific discourse (Escobar, 2011, p. 113). In the case of Customs, trade facilitation is one of several institutional responsibilities, and where the domain of social relations at the border to be understood and problematized extends beyond the technical measures of the TFA.

I am not contending that this understanding of Customs’ functions runs counter to the neoliberal discourse of good governance in chapter 1. The modernization and reform discourse

of the WCO is well-aligned to the underlying neoliberal concepts of responsibility and corruption aversion – behaviors that Li (2007) cites as desirable under a technical rendering of a “target group”. Where I see discursive disagreements is in how the creation of a problem and its resultant solution from the perspective of an introspective community of like-minded regulators differs from that of the “city-based trustee” approach, where technical solutions are framed with the solutions that a development agency can provide. The next question to consider, therefore, is what the allowable domain of knowledge is for the “accredited experts” that operate within this community of like-minded regulators?

What is the allowable domain of knowledge for “accredited experts”? Is it limited by the TFA?

Escobar (2011) presents an understanding of development experts as those trained in the Western tradition of diagnosing technical deficiencies and proposing solutions, while Li (2007) presents experts as trained to conduct social behavior through the delivery of apolitical technical solutions. Here, I will explore how the character of the WCO’s “accredited experts” diverges from this understanding. As Customs officers, “accredited experts” come from varied backgrounds, many having worked multi-decade careers in Customs immediately following secondary school. In the case of developing countries, we cannot assume that they are “Western-educated”. My own interactions with hundreds of Customs officers saw “years served” as a primary identifier of expertise versus “degrees possessed”. As discussed earlier, the process for becoming a WCO “accredited expert” consists of a nomination from the head of their administration, selection for, and successful participation in an intensive 2-week “accreditation workshop”, and the successful delivery of a “mission”. One “accredited expert” characterized “his passion and excitement that he experienced during the accreditation workshop” at the 2017

CBC meeting noting the “great opportunity for his personal development” (World Customs Organization, 2017, p. 17).

The WCO TFA Programme saw 88 individual deployments of “accredited experts” between 2015 and 2018, of which 53 were from the ranks of developing and least developed countries, including Uganda, Mauritius, Jordan, South Africa, Swaziland and Lebanon. These “accredited experts” invested significant efforts in building their understanding of the TFA and of the WCO’s “instruments and tools”; however, these investments are measured in weeks versus their years of service in their home governments. By definition, they all possessed the localized experience of being a Customs officer, which is seen to have value in the discourse of the WCO, as reflected in statements of “experience sharing”. While an individual “mission” may be premised on addressing a particular article of the TFA using the relevant WCO instrument or tool, the presence of “accredited experts” in the company of fellow Customs officers invariably creates a space for discussions that touch on the broader mandate of Customs, and the lived experience of being a Customs officer. My exposure to these 88 deployments saw deliberative discussions framed by experience sharing and collegial relationships on how TFA solutions intersect with localized practices within Customs administrations, including recruitment, training, professional development, compensation and pressures to meet revenue targets, which became allowable knowledge, as did a wider range of social, economic and cultural practices at the border.

The example of Sierra Leone provides further insight into this question of allowable knowledge. We will recall from chapter 3 that the WCO and the World Bank carried out a joint TFA needs assessment in May 2016. While the World Bank framed its problematization of the Sierra Leonean trading environment within the strict bounds of the TFA through the production

of the 167-page report cited in chapter 3, which was thoroughly edited by the World Bank hierarchy over an 8-month period, with clear recommendations for reform and external technical assistance. In contrast, the allowable knowledge, while still being framed by the TFA focus of the Mercator Programme and the WCO's "instruments and tools" was expanded to include the lived experiences of Customs officers in seven other developing countries. During this same 8-month period, WCO "accredited experts" from Lesotho, South Africa, Kenya, Bangladesh and the Maldives were deployed, sharing their experiences on both TFA-specific and wider "organizational development" questions. The mechanism by which knowledge was constructed and reproduced through these peer-based relationships did not assume or seek a singular technical truth that only an expert can distill. Several "accredited experts" were in fact undertaking their first international mission in keeping with the CBC's position to prioritize opportunities for newly recruited experts while minimizing the use of "external experts and consultants" (World Customs Organization, 2016, p. 10). Understandings of how South Africa carries out post-clearance audits, how Kenya measures the release times of goods, how Lesotho undertakes organization-wide strategic planning, how Bangladesh carries out risk-based clearance and how Ghana eliminates costly destination inspection functions, are representative of the range of localized knowledges that were permitted, and that could be easily enunciated in the absence of structured oversight and templates from a "city-based trustee".

On the other hand, we must interrogate the knowledges that are disallowed. An "accredited expert", unlike an international expert, still represents a foreign government, albeit under the guise of the WCO. They are constrained by power relationships within their own governments, which maintain the power to approve nominations and release-from-duty orders to undertake WCO "missions". Open contestation of the TFA and of the international standards

established by the WCO is not a terrain upon which an “accredited expert” will venture, nor would an expert venture into open contestation of their own government’s official policies. While I did not observe any expert venturing into these terrains, I contend that any expert who does so would be quickly removed from the WCO’s expert rosters, and could certainly face consequences within their own governments.

I conclude by suggesting that the allowable knowledge of “accredited experts” is based primarily on their localized experiences, with a high-level understanding of the connections between the TFA and their lived experience, as well as those lived aspects of the Customs profession that fall outside of the TFA’s specific technical measures. The deployment of large numbers of developing country experts legitimizes, and in many respects, prioritizes the localized knowledges of these “accredited experts”. I also conclude that this openness does not provide “accredited experts” license to present knowledge that would portray their own governments in a negative light, nor does it provide them with agency to propose solutions outside of the neoliberal rationality of the TFA. To do so would be incredibly risky for an “accredited expert”. With an understanding of the allowable knowledge, the next question to consider is how this knowledge are reflected in power relations.

Do “accredited experts” have the same powers as “experts” described by Escobar (2011) and Li (2007), and the example from chapter 3? Does their knowledge matter?

Escobar and Li both draw attention to the enunciative power that experts hold over beneficiaries, where only certain expert knowledges, such as those produced by World Bank experts, and which have been normalized by the regime of truth and norms of development (Escobar, 1984, p. 387), matter, and where the relationship between experts and “target groups” maintains a clear division between those to be developed and those doing the developing.

A post-structuralist understanding of “accredited experts” would suggest that these individuals occupy multiple subjectivities – moving between a formal hierarchical power relationship within their home governments, where they could very well be the beneficiary of an expert-mediated development solution, to one where they occupy the position of “expert” for a short period of time. Of all the “accredited experts” that I engaged with over the course of the WCO TFA Programme, everyone enthusiastically took up the opportunity to undertake a “mission” and were genuinely excited at the prospect of sharing their expertise, and of occupying the position of “expert”, if only for a short period of time. Being an “accredited expert” provided the opportunity for younger, mid-career Customs officers to temporarily assume the identity of “expert”, while not fully internalizing the position of trustee in the sense defined by Escobar and Li as the product of years of training in the tactics and techniques of development.

This same post-structuralist understanding would also suggest that the space for “accredited experts” share localized knowledge does not provide them with agency to criticize the trade policies of their home governments, as they remain subjugated to these power relations. At the same time, in terms of lived experiences, I observed “accredited experts” who enjoyed little to no interaction with top management in their home governments being received by, and engaging with heads of Customs administrations in their roles as “accredited experts”. This presented them with the opportunity to exercise an unexpected level of power, although my observation through the WCO TFA Programme was one characterized by collegial positionalities, where the positionings of “inside Customs” versus “outside Customs” dominated over the positioning of “trustee” and “target group”, and where practices defined by trust, confidence, shared experiences and respect predominated (World Customs Organization, 2017, p. 9).

The extent to which these collegial practices was actually recorded by “accredited experts” is varied. Here, I recognize that the educational attainment and experiences of “accredited experts” is varied, as were the mandates that they are asked to fulfill. Some missions resulted in highly professionalized and structured reports, some resulted in summary notes, while others were simply recorded in a short “mission report” and archived. The WCO is not without editorial functions; however, the rigidity of these functions in an organization of 191 individuals is much less structured than those of the World Bank, as discussed in chapter 3. Nevertheless, formal reports, such as technical diagnostics, are sent under formal cover of the WCO, after being approved internally, and they do generate reactions from members, where they outline how they have responded to the recommendations. For those “accredited experts” with the capacities to articulate precise recommendations, they were encouraged to do so, and they were often presented with further opportunities to undertake a follow-up “mission” on the basis of the knowledge they produced. Nevertheless, as specific technical recommendations on specific Customs matters, I contend that they do not exert a power to manage and control countries and populations in the manner similar to that of the World Bank TFA assessment in Sierra Leone from chapter 3, yet they do maintain a measure of power over groups of Customs officers who look to them for advice and collegiality

I conclude this section by suggesting that “accredited experts” occupy multiple subjectivities which constrain their enunciative power over matters that do not represent broad agreement with the tenants of the TFA or of the broader understanding of the role of Customs as reflected by the WCO’s discourses. With an understanding of the positionalities of “accredited experts” we now consider the question of the effects on expert-beneficiary relations and how these effects are being reflected in discourse.

What are the effects on expert-beneficiary relationships? How are they reflected and reproduced in discourse?

The WCO's aspiration to deepen the "Customs-to-Customs" model effected the deployment of a tactic to shift from ad-hoc "one-off missions" to a "project management" approach, based on multi-year plans (World Customs Organization, 2017, p. 10), where "accredited experts" would play a key role in maintaining an ongoing dialogue with those developing countries that expressed an interest in the "Mercator Programme". The purpose of this shift in tactic was to deploy more frequent and structured missions. "Accredited experts" were poised to play a leadership role in the oversight of these multi-year plans, with Sierra Leone being among the first countries to come under this new practice. The approach foresees "accredited experts" taking on greater roles in managing these multi-year relationships and in undertaking planning exercises, leveraging the potential for more open and honest dialogue that does not rely fully on external expertise to define the problem and propose the solution. At the same time, the WCO is also investing efforts in a professional development system to further enhance the skills of accredited experts, including their understanding of the TFA. Describing her country's engagement with the Mercator Programme, the delegate of Sierra Leone described the "trust and confidence of the executive management and staff" (World Customs Organization, 2017, p. 9) in the "accredited expert" who had been engaged with Sierra Leone since the May 2016 joint mission. The shift in tactic allowed for a wider imagination of "Customs-to-Customs" discourse to include longer-term collaborations between members, mediated by the community of "accredited experts". Besides Sierra Leone, interesting cases worthy of mention include Sudan, Afghanistan and Ethiopia.

In Sudan, where development assistance flows have been curtailed as a result of international sanctions that have been imposed on the country, and where the country remains on the sidelines of TFA as a consequence of its stalled WTO accession bid, the WCO was posed to be among the few international actors poised to offer support to the Sudanese Customs Authority. Here, a “Customs-to-Customs” partnership with Jordan enabled Sudan to roll-out its first risk selectivity system, with no additional expert mediation. In a country which inspected all of its incoming consignments at late as 2015, it is now inspecting around half of incoming consignments, with low-risk cargos proceeding with minimal documentary checks.

On the other side of the spectrum, Afghanistan, the beneficiary of billions of dollars of expert-mediated support, found the “Customs-to-Customs” approach to be highly refreshing after 15 years of largely failed Western-backed attempts to establish control governance (Brinkley, 2013) over a state with little tradition of such forms of governance. For the head of the Afghan Customs administration, with whom I am in regular contact, the “Customs-to Customs” approach helped him to understand the myriad of challenges facing his administration without the pressures or mistrusts associated with external experts. Landlocked Uganda proved to be a viable partner for Afghanistan, where localized experiences on working in conflict-ridden border spaces, training Customs officers from varied educational backgrounds, overcoming corruption and creating decent workplaces became allowable knowledges. The two countries are proceeding with a bilateral memorandum of understanding to solidify this relationship.

Ethiopia was convinced of the importance of investing in “soft skills” related to training and professional by an “accredited expert” from Swaziland— an area that had been absent in the standardized technical and training solutions of other international development actors (Taylor & Tornstrom, 2017, p. 27), whose expert-produced technical solutions largely ignored the chronic

staff turnover in the Ethiopian revenue authority due to the absence of a suitable expert-defined technical solution. Here, the “accredited expert’s” engagement led to the implementation of a new training platform in Ethiopia’s local language. In the case of the WCO TFA Programme, this redefinition allowed the likes of a several young British Customs officers, a Ugandan assistant commissioner, a South African Customs attaché, a Jordanian information technology systems operator, a Mauritian Customs information technology director, a South African Customs attaché and many others to redefine possibilities of being an “accredited expert”.

While none of these “solutions” represent a direct challenge to the neoliberal discourse of competition and efficiency that underlies the TFA, it imagines a space where these solutions do not necessarily require the complex of development experts that concerned Escobar, nor does it require the complex organizational structure of a development project, which concerned Ferguson (1994) and Li (2007). Nevertheless, I argue that these solutions imagine a repositioning, where countries viewed as typically inferior in the development discourse find themselves acting as models for others.

Summary: The Discursive Formation of the WCO

I opened this discussion by suggesting that discursive statements contained within the WCO’s texts, including “experience sharing”, “national practices” and “member” point to a different power relationship where the lines between “expert” and “beneficiary” are blurred, and which opens up possibilities for a different understanding of expert-mediated solutions to the TFA within the WCO. Based on the questionings in this chapter, I conclude that “accredited experts” operate in a space where their localized knowledge matters, with little regard played to an “accredited experts” base in a developing or a developed country. Provided that knowledge is constrained by the bounds of the Customs profession, of which the TFA is only part, and an

alignment is made to relevant WCO instruments and tools, including but not necessarily limited to those that are defined as TFA-related, the “sharing of experiences” through “accredited experts” presents a relatively open terrain for the exchange of views among like-minded regulators. Here, localized practices can be openly shared in a collegial manner, even as “accredited experts” temporarily assume the position of “expert” as a guest in a “beneficiary” country. I pointed to a setting within Customs where suspicion of external experts exists, which further legitimizes the claim of Customs to devise solutions to its own problems. At the same time, “accredited experts” are constrained by the power relationships in their home governments which exert power influences deciding who gets deployed on a mission. These subjugations constrain “accredited experts”’ agency to question the precepts of the TFA itself, or their government’s commitment to it.

Returning to the critical perspectives of Escobar (2011), Ferguson (1994) and Li (2007), we can respond to the question of whether “accredited experts” are “puncturing expert schemes and exposing their flaws” (Li, 2007, p. 26) or simply representing a different manifestation of the dominant discourse of development. We can also consider if the WCO’s deployment of “accredited experts” is constraining the “process that brings the Third World into the politics and expert knowledge and Western science” (Escobar, 2011, p. 45). Finally, we can consider whether they are drawing into question the role of the state “as a machine for implementing development programmes... and engineering economic growth” (Ferguson, 1994, p. 65). Here, I contend that the answer to all three is a qualified “no”. “Accredited experts”, like the “city-based trustees” discussed in chapter 3, approach the problem of the TFA in the same way – a lack of capacity to implement the TFA, hence a solution to deploy capacity building measures, albeit framed by a different frame of acceptable knowledge. They cannot challenge the underlying neoliberal

rationality of the TFA or its precepts of good governance. On the other hand, the WCO's use of "accredited experts" is creating a space where the appropriateness of foreign experts can be interrogated, and where tactics can be deployed to maintain some problem representations within the collegial confines of Customs community. As well, in the extreme cases where the dominant tactics and techniques of development are either absent (Sudan), or entirely overwhelming (Afghanistan), I do see an opening where further critical inquiry could reveal deeper challenges to the dominant discourse of development.

Conclusion

I entered into this study in an attempt to understand how the WCO has been able to maintain a privileged level of access and influence in TFA implementation in spite of a very limited quantum of financial resources. Between 2015 and 2018, the WCO TFA Programme expended approximately EUR 250,000 in each country of engagement, including Sierra Leone, Afghanistan and Ethiopia, which have been referenced in this inquiry. This amount pales in comparison to the multi-million dollar budgets maintained by the World Bank and other development agencies noted in this study. Despite this low level of expenditure, the WCO TFA Programme maintained considerable success when measured against the performance frameworks of development agencies, with heads of Customs in these countries expressing high levels of support for the Programme's work and providing the WCO with high-level audiences that have not been afforded to other development agencies with greater financial resources. This study is an attempt to understand why this has happened and the role that development discourse has played in reproducing expert-beneficiary relationships.

The critical works of Escobar (1994), Ferguson (2011) and Li (2007) have collectively outlined a "discourse of development", which is highly adaptable to shifting international development priorities. This discourse is based on a framing of complex social or economic problems in a manner that is amenable to an expert-driven technical solution. The 2017 coming-into-force of the WTO TFA, and its SDT provisions provides a new framework for established development discourses to gain significant traction in this area. The technical nature of the TFA, requiring competencies in legal analysis, business process analysis, systems integration, procedures specification, negotiations and consultations, provides the entry point for large volumes of expert-driven technical solutions. Building on the discourse of "aid-for-trade", where

expert-driven technical solutions to trade barriers are occupying a growing proportion of development assistance flows, the TFA provides a renewed framework for the reproduction of the dominant development discourse and the underlying power relationships between “experts” and “beneficiaries” as part of a broader discourse of trade and development. The PDA methodology was employed in this inquiry on the basis of its flexible epistemological framework, which has allowed for the analysis of multiple subjectivities and multiple poles of power, while also providing the methodology flexibility to integrate textual analysis, power relations and observed practices.

I have demonstrated that the SDT provisions of the TFA provide the structure through which the practices and techniques of development are formally integrated into TFA-related capacity building. By establishing a rigid subjectivity of developing and least developed countries, a power relation has been established between “donors”, who commit to provide “capacity building”, and to frame such assistance under the structure of the SDT provisions. The expected prominence of complex technical measures, such as Single Window, risk management, post-clearance audit and coordinated border management within category “C” notifications, and their universal application to all WTO members, sets the framework for the development experts to frame the acceptable knowledge on these matters. The World Bank has already initiated this universalizing trend through the 2013 publication of the Border Management Modernization handbook, which address the full range of TFA measures in a single comprehensive document, the production of which was led by the Bank’s leading expert in trade facilitation, along with a team of Bank-selected experts (McLinden, Fanta, Widdowson, & Doyle, 2011).

The World Bank provides an example of how the dominant development discourse is applied in the case of the TFA. The works of Storey (2000) and Enns (2015) demonstrated the

hierarchical framework for the production of knowledge within the Bank, while Escobar describes how development knowledge has become professionalized within a regime of power that privileges the truths produced by Western-educated development professionals (Escobar, 2011, p. 45), and where technical solutions are framed with this discourse in mind through enunciative power of Bank experts who produce TFA needs assessments using the structured frameworks provided by the Bank. I have demonstrated that this discourse frames the Bank's engagement on TFA related matters, where trade facilitation exists within a Western-dominated regime of truth, connected to a broader neo-liberal development discourse that encompasses private sector development and competitiveness, and where the Bank's roster of "world-class trustees" and knowledge products reproduce a power relationship that draws a clear distinction between "clients" and "trustees".

Through an analysis of the records of discussion of the WCO's Capacity Building Committee, I have demonstrated that a different model of expert mobilization is deployed in this institution, which is informed by the WCO's discourse of "membership", "sharing of experiences", "Customs-to-Customs" and "instruments and tools". I have demonstrated that this model enables the sharing of practices among like-minded regulators, opening a terrain that goes beyond the prescripts of the TFA, but that does not have agency to touch on radical territory that would challenge the established functions of Customs or any political position taken by their government. Within the frame of allowable knowledge defined in chapter 4, I have described a set of practices from the "accredited expert" model more collegial and less hierarchical than those framed by "city-based trustees", and where the developing countries enjoy greater access to positions of "expert" power, even if only temporarily, and where their power to direct conduct is moderated both by their own capacities to generate knowledge and by the collegial and

advisory character of the relationships. This discourse has opened up new possibilities enabling collegial collaboration between Customs administrations of Afghanistan and Uganda, as well as Swaziland and Ethiopia are demonstrative of this alternative approach, which eschews the dominant discourse and power relations that define expert-beneficiary relationships in TFA implementation. This discourse, which I have argued is deeply embedded in the WCO, has produced a different representation of “expert”, which sets in motion the possibility for different relationships between “experts” and “beneficiaries”, which prioritizes membership and service in the Customs community over one’s credentials. Secondly a discourse of Customs-led technical solutions driven by the Customs community itself, have allowed for the sharing of localized practices that are not mediated by the discourse of development, and where relationships become peer-to-peer, resulting in more collaborative and honest interactions. While the WCO’s discourse of “instruments and tools” tends to parallel Escobar (1994), Ferguson (2011) and Li’s (2007) critique of technically-focused solutions that exclude of those political or economic matters that fall outside of the TFA’s technical remit, a closer look at these technical solutions has revealed a less rigid practice, allowing for a sharing of “national experiences” provided it is maintained within the allowable frame of knowledge.

Areas for Future Study

With the SDP provisions coming into force in early 2017 and category “B” and “C” notifications still being submitted to the WTO in Geneva, there are opportunities for future studies to critically assess the discourse of TFA implementation as it reaches its more mature stages. A more in-depth study of the discourses of the TFA as a set of social practices mediated by the discourse of development could employ the methodologies of critical discourse analysis and more structured conversation analysis within the framework of in-depth field studies,

undertaking critical inquiry on the political and cultural relations that are absent from the discourse of development. The implementation of the TFA offers rich terrain for such an inquiry, with an extensive range of stakeholders and power relations operating across multiple poles, with multiple subjectivities and multiple interests. I contend that such an inquiry could only take place from outside of the development discourse, if the uncomfortable truths are to be uncovered.

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