6
Methodical and Analytical Framework

There have been a number of earlier attempts to solve the PDA’s methodological deficit.¹ The so-called “logics approach” to discourse analysis by Jason Glynos and David Howarth (e.g. 2008, 2007) and the analytical approach to analysis of “hegemonic strategies” by the German political scientist Martin Nonhoff (e.g. 2007, 2006a, b) are – up to this point – the most advanced and elaborate efforts to operationalize research related to PDA.² No doubt, both the logics approach and the analysis of hegemonic strategies bring empirical discourse analysis associated with post-foundational discourse theory a substantial step forward. However, both approaches suffer from a number of methodological shortcomings that limit their application in concrete research projects. None of these approaches can therefore fully solve the PDA’s methodological deficit.

Nonhoff’s approach to analyzing hegemonic strategies is methodologically more sophisticated and methodically more elaborate than the logics approach because it is grounded on a rich set of heuristic concepts – such as ideal typical discursive relations and hegemonic strategies (e.g. Nonhoff, 2006a, pp. 238ff.) – which allow the analyst to render visibility to more or less hegemonic politico-ideological formations. However, the general applicability of Nonhoff’s approach is limited by its focus on political struggles and political ideologies. As a consequence of its narrow phenomenal focus, Nonhoff’s work does little to elevate PDA to a transdisciplinary research framework that can be applied in the empirical analysis of a wide range of themes and issues.

In contrast to Nonhoff’s analytical approach, the logics approach elaborated by Glynos and Howarth makes a claim for general empirical applicability on a range of social phenomena. The authors aim at developing a general logics approach to social research that enables us to identify the conditions rendering the “regime of practice” both
“possible and intelligible” (Glynos and Howarth, 2007, p. 10). The first part of this chapter (Chapter 6.1) will feature a short discussion of some of the methodological weaknesses I identify with the logics approach, which limit its empirical applicability, and which call for a more elaborate conceptual and heuristic framework than the one offered by Glynos and Howarth (2008, 2007). The second part of this chapter (Chapter 6.2) elaborates a phenomenal framework which, in its capacity as a theoretically deduced grammar of middle-range concepts, allows us to identify discourses, processes of discursive structuration, and discourses constituting patterns of practices of articulation and those being constituted by them. The third (Chapter 6.3) and fourth (Chapter 6.4) parts of the chapter are devoted to elaborating analytical and methodical guidelines that enable the discourse analyst to live up to the methodological ideal of holistic methodology (see Chapter 5.3).

6.1 From logics to discourse

Strictly speaking, the “logics approach to critical explanation” developed by Glynos and Howarth (2008, 2007) is not so much an attempt to operationalize post-foundational discourse theory, as it is an effort to develop and describe the contours of a new methodological-methodic approach to social research that challenges the prevailing methodological positions of positivism, hermeneutics and causal mechanisms (cf. Topper, 2010, p. 732). It is also worth noting that Glynos and Howarth make the concept of “logic”, which was mentioned only marginally in earlier works on PDA, to the single most central notion of their approach. In other words, the principal purpose of the logics approach is not to methodologize and operationalize PDA, but to develop an unprecedented methodical approach, which transgresses earlier theoretical and methodological contributions made to PDA in important respects.

Glynos and Howarth (2007, p. 89) refer to the concept of “logic” as a middle-range concept, which is “general enough to be used across a wide range of historical contexts for purposes of social science explanation, though [it] never achieve[s] law-like status” (cf. Rappert, 2007, p. 695). Unfortunately, the concepts of social, political and fantasmatic logics are little suited to fulfill the analytical functions and purposes normally associated with middle-range concepts.

Glynos and Howarth identify three different types of social, political and fantasmatic logics, the combination of which may “account for the institution, contestation and sedimentation of social practices and regimes” (Glynos and Howarth, 2008, p. 9; cf. 2007, p. 85). Glynos