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DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTIONS OF SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL ACCOUNTING IN BRAZIL: THE CASE OF PETROBRAS

CONSTRUÇÕES DISCURSIVAS DA CONTABILIDADE SOCIAL E AMBIENTAL NO BRASIL: O CASO DA PETROBRAS

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Discursive constructions of social and environmental accounting in Brazil: The case of Petrobras

Tese apresentada ao Departamento de Contabilidade e Atuária da Faculdade de Economia, Administração e Contabilidade da Universidade de São Paulo como parte dos requisitos para a obtenção do título de Doutor em Ciências.

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Eu dedico esta tese à minha amada mãe, pelo esforço e dedicação.
Ela é meu grande exemplo de superação e amor.

AGRADECIMENTOS

Aos que me apoiaram nessa jornada,
Grandes amigos e fiéis parceiros para a conclusão desse trabalho.

Desejo muita paz no coração, esperança em momentos difíceis,
Saúde sempre e alegria para um mundo melhor.

Boas energias!

“One of the central tenets of Hegemony and Socialist Strategy is the need to create a chain of equivalence among the various democratic struggles against different forms of subordination. We argued that struggles against sexism, racism, sexual discrimination, and in the defence of the environment needed to be articulated with those of the workers in a new left-wing hegemonic project. To put it in terminology which has recently become fashionable, we insisted that the Left needed to tackle issues of both 'redistribution' and 'recognition'. This is what we meant by 'radical and plural democracy'”

Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe

November 2000

“With love and patience, nothing is impossible”.

Daisaku Ikeda

RESUMO

Voss, B. L. (2016). Construções discursivas da contabilidade social e ambiental no Brasil: O caso da Petrobras. Doctoral Thesis, Faculdade de Economia, Administração e Contabilidade, University of São Paulo: São Paulo.

Em 29 anos da publicação "Nosso Futuro Comum" apresentado pelas Nações Unidas, ainda há um considerável debate entre governos, sociedade civil, grupos interessados e organizações empresariais sobre o que constitui o desenvolvimento sustentável e, portanto, há evidência da contestabilidade do discurso sobre sustentabilidade. A proposta desse estudo é entender esse debate em um contexto de desenvolvimento econômico no Brasil e, em particular, entender e criticar as construções discursivas de contabilidade social e ambiental [CSA] relacionadas à estatal Petrobras, assim como discutir a literatura brasileira de CSA. A análise baseada na *Discourse Theory* [DT] usa redescrição retórica para analisar vinte e dois relatórios da Petrobras entre 2004 e 2013. Eu investigo as noções políticas através do emprego da metodologia chamada *Logics of Critical Explanation* [LCE]. A LCE tem cinco passos metodológico: problematização, explicação retrodutiva, lógicas (sociais, políticas e fantasmáticas), articulação e crítica. Os resultados sugerem que a hegemonia do desenvolvimento econômico opera para obscurecer retoricamente o desenvolvimento da sustentabilidade que mantém o *core business* da Petrobras igualmente concebido como acumulação de capital. Igualmente, essas articulações também ilustram como as construções de CSA operam para servir o propósito da empresa com pouca (ou nenhuma) profunda mudança na integração com a sustentabilidade. A literatura brasileira de CSA sustenta o *status quo* de políticas de mercado neoliberais que operam para proteger a dominante abordagem do *business case* para manter a agenda de geração de riqueza num cenário de necessidade sociais e ambientais. As articulações do estudo de caso manifestaram essas políticas, por exemplo, em relação à corrupção, no qual envolveu superfaturamento de contratos e práticas insustentáveis relacionadas ao uso de combustíveis fósseis os quais demonstraram que há antagonismo entre ação e *disclosure*. O escândalo de corrupção que surgiu após as divulgações de CSA marcou a natureza retórica do *disclosure* em que recursos financeiros subtraídos da empresa para partidos políticos e empreiteiras esconderam fatos através de *disclosures* incompletos. As articulações da CSA deturpam um contexto amplo dos significados associados com a sustentabilidade, que restringiram as construções da CSA para principalmente servir e representar a intenção dos grupos mais poderosos. A significância da CSA é, portanto, limitada para representar interesses particulares. O estudo argumenta por mais estudos críticos já que a limitada literatura brasileira sobre CSA mantém uma 'distância segura' de substantivas críticas das construções de CSA e suas articulações no contexto brasileiro. A revisão da literatura e o caso da Petrobras ilustram a variedade de nomes, instituições e práticas articulatórias que se esforçam para manter a atual hegemonia de desenvolvimento numa economia emergente que permite à Petrobras continuar a exercer significante lucro à custa do social e do meio ambiente. A ideia construída de desenvolvimento nos discursos da Petrobras enfatiza uma retórica ampla de desenvolvimento, mas, na realidade, esses discursos são antíteses de questões políticas, sociais e éticas de desenvolvimento. Essas construções objetivam esconder as lutas entre desigualdades sociais e exploração dos recursos naturais as quais constituem pretextos sobre uma fantasiosa noção de desenvolvimento retórico, hegemônico e neoliberal. Em resumo, esta tese contribui para a antecedente literatura em cinco principais aspectos: (i) a adição da DT para a análise da CSA engrandece a discussão de elementos políticos tais como hegemonia, antagonismo, lógica de equivalência/diferença, ideologia e articulação; (ii) a análise de uma economia emergente como o Brasil incorpora uma nova perspectiva nas discussões dos discursos da CSA e do desenvolvimento; (iii) esta tese também inclui um foco na retórica para discutir a manutenção do *status quo*; (iv) a estrutura holística da abordagem LCE amplia os entendimentos das lógicas sociais, políticas e fantasmáticas dos estudos de CSA e; (v) esta tese combina uma análise da literatura e do caso da Petrobras para caracterizar e criticar o estado da academia brasileira e seus impactos e reflexos na significância da CSA. Esta tese, portanto, argumenta por mais estudos críticos na academia brasileira devido à persistente ideia de desenvolvimento que *taken-for-granted* profundas exclusões e contradições e proporciona pouco espaço para críticas.

Palavras-chave: Contabilidade Social; Contabilidade Ambiental; Sustentabilidade; Teoria do Discurso; Petrobras; Pós-estruturalismo.

ABSTRACT

Voss, B. L. (2016). *Discursive constructions of social and environmental accounting in Brazil: The case of Petrobras.* Doctoral Thesis, Faculdade de Economia, Administração e Contabilidade, University of São Paulo: São Paulo.

In the 29 years following "Our Common Future" by the United Nations, there is considerable debate among governments, civil society, interest groups and business organisations about what constitutes sustainable development, which constitutes evidence for a contested discourse concerning sustainability. The purpose of this study is to understand this debate in the developing economic context of Brazil, and in particular, to understand and critique the social and environmental accounting [SEA] discursive constructions relating to the State-owned, Petrobras as well as to understand the Brazilian literature on SEA. The discourse theory [DT]-based analysis employs rhetorical redescription to analyse twenty-two reports from Petrobras from 2004-2013. I investigate the political notions by employing the methodological framework of the Logics of Critical Explanation [LCE]. LCE engenders five methodological steps: problematisation, retroduction, logics (social, political and fantasmatic), articulation and critique. The empirical discussion suggests that the hegemony of economic development operates to obfuscate, rhetorically, the development of sustainability, so as to maintain the core business of Petrobras conceived as capital accumulation. Equally, these articulations also illustrate how the constructions of SEA operate to serve the company's purpose with few (none) profound changes in integration of sustainability. The Brazilian literature on SEA sustains the *status quo* of neo-liberal market policies that operate to protect the dominant business case approach to maintain an agenda of wealth-creation in relation to social and environmental needs. The articulations of the case manifested in policies regarding, for example, corruption, which involved over-payments for contracts and unsustainable practices relating to the use of fossil fuels and demonstrated that there was antagonism between action and disclosure. The corruption scandal that emerged after SEA disclosures highlighted the rhetorical nature of disclosure when financial resources were subtracted from the company for political parties and engineering contractors hid facts through incomplete disclosures. The articulations of SEA misrepresent a broader context of the meanings associated with sustainability, which restricted the constructions of SEA to principally serve and represent the intention of the most powerful groups. The significance of SEA, then is narrowed to represent particular interests. The study argues for more critical studies as limited Brazilian literature concerning SEA kept a 'safe distance' from substantively critiquing the constructions of SEA and its articulations in the Brazilian context. The literature review and the Petrobras' case illustrate a variety of naming, instituting and articulatory practices that endeavour to maintain the current hegemony of development in an emerging economy, which allows Petrobras to continue to exercise significant profit at the expense of the social and environmental. The constructed idea of development in Petrobras' discourses emphasises a rhetoric of wider development, but, in reality, these discourses were the antithesis of political, social and ethical developmental issues. These constructions aim to hide struggles between social inequalities and exploitation of natural resources and constitute excuses about a fanciful notion of rhetorical and hegemonic neo-liberal development. In summary, this thesis contributes to the prior literature in five ways: (i) the addition of DT to the analysis of SEA enhances the discussion of political elements such as hegemony, antagonism, logic of equivalence/difference, ideology and articulation; (ii) the analysis of an emerging economy such as Brazil incorporates a new perspective of the discussion of the discourses of SEA and development; (iii) this thesis includes a focus on rhetoric to discuss the maintenance of the *status quo*; (iv) the holistic structure of the LCE approach enlarges the understanding of the social, political and fantasmatic logics of SEA studies and; (v) this thesis combines an analysis of the literature and the case of Petrobras to characterise and critique the state of the Brazilian academy and its impacts and reflections on the significance of SEA. This thesis, therefore, argues for more critical studies in the Brazilian academy due to the persistence of idea of SEA and development that takes-for-granted deep exclusions and contradictions and provide little space for critiques.

Keywords: Social and Environmental Accounting; Sustainability; Discourse Theory; Petrobras; Post-Structuralism.

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SUMMARY

1 INTRODUCTION

Social and environmental accounting [SEA] constructions arise in an arena of complexities, diversities and struggles. The unpredictable ways of seeing SEA can promote some agents and exclude others. In sustainability research, SEA is a program that would seek the well-being and the preservation of all species within a context of social and environmental needs (Brundtland, 1987). The existence of delicate areas on the planet denotes the requisite for more critical studies to engage in consciousness (Freire, 2000) for a sustainable world. My thesis, therefore, argues that critical studies need to engage in the consequences of human and corporate activities to overcome issues of unsustainable practices. The principal discussion that this thesis aims to engage in is an understanding of the political economy in Brazil through the logics of capitalism and sustainability in a discursive way. The discursivity of a social interaction would explain the political agenda of the powerful actors (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001). This thesis also seeks to go beyond the generalisations and closed conceptualisations regarding SEA. This viewpoint, therefore, moves past a positivist perspective in accounting and promotes a post-structural thesis. This post-structural perspective supports the proliferation of meanings in social realities and celebrates particularities such as discourses. In this perspective, the social phenomena are uncertain (Derrida, 1992). Additionally, a post-structural thesis based on a political theory (Discourse Theory) aims to understand power and logics of social interactions. Particularly, the principal focus of this thesis is the discussion of the logics of capitalism and sustainability within the interactions of Petrobras' discursive constructions of SEA and the literature of SEA. The importance of SEA studies in developing countries is particularly crucial regarding the integration between economic development and social and environmental progress where critical studies on SEA involves a trade-off between growth and social and environmental issues such as social conditions, pollutions, health, quality of life and environmental protection related to water, air, soil, plants and animals.

Various interpretations of SEA produce an infinitude of related meanings. Gray, Dillard and Spence (2009) argue that the term 'social accounting' is used to express a generic set of concepts that includes: corporate social responsibility [CSR], SEA, “social responsibility accounting; social, sustainability and environmental accounting, reporting, disclosure and audit and so on” (Gray et al., 2009, p. 565). In their work, 'social and environmental

accounting' tries to capture most of these meanings. This thesis, therefore, assumes that SEA and its different interpretations are a combination of a number of definitions, and that personal and political choices relate to power and social relationships. At this point, signifiers for SEA indicate an unbalanced understanding of sustainability's themes.

Critics of unsustainability (Gray, 2010; Sikka, 2010; Archel, Husillos & Spence, 2011; Moneva, Archel & Correa, 2006) create a deep understanding of the consequences of organisations and the actions for a sustainable world. Thus, the impact of this is to illustrate that in the co-option of SEA by corporations, the basic capital goals of the exploitation of social and environmental resource remains unchanged. Friedman (2002, p. 132) presents a counter-argument against a sustainable planet and he assumes that corporations should have the freedom to operate without taxes while governmental policies should protect private activities. This argument supports the presumption that organisations must assume the obligation of profit-making persistently and this endeavour, for Friedman (2002, p. 133) equates to social responsibility. In the discourse of CSR, organisations have employed sustainability to sustain the *status quo* in the continuing exploitation of social and environmental resources. They hide these intentions particularly by the use of speech and reports (Sikka, 2010). Bakan (2004) argues that corporations continue to employ the same fundamental logic developed in the 19th Century as traditional exploitation and capital accumulation. The basic politics of organisations is the social contract within society. Thus, Sikka's (2010) work is an example of the difference between action and discourse. Sikka (2010) illustrates that the discourse of tax avoidance illustrates how organisations act differently than their discourse. The same problem happens with SEA. Some organisations promise to protect and develop human' life and the environment, but mostly they fail in a significant commitment towards the agenda of sustainable development. This thesis debates the politics of SEA and hopes to stimulate a broader view on the corporate articulations of SEA.

A pessimistic interpretation of sustainability outlines that corporations only focus on extraction from the social and environmental, and they do not strategise to reduce their negative devastating impacts on human health, work conditions, forests, clean water, pollution and so forth. Hawken (1993) argues that the continuation of the exploitation of natural resources is unsustainable because there are not enough resources for the

development of economies that will satisfy its freedom. Hawken claims for a constitution of a restorable agenda for damage and destruction. In this context, this illustrates how concepts such as SEA and sustainability are used by organisations in a political way, instead of advancing substantive political change including the reduction of poverty, wealth re-distribution, quality of life, environmental protection and so on (Lohmann, 2009; Brown & Fraser, 2006). Corporations promote agendas by incorporating CSR and SEA as part of their core business activities (Brown & Fraser, 2006, p. 105). Namely, companies incorporate these concepts into their policies, but their actions fail to improve their surrounding environment and society. Sikka (2010), for example, exemplifies the gap between discourse and actions that is an illustration of how corporations mislead societal expectation. As a political thesis, I focus on the practices, disclosures, and reporting of SEA as a representation of the corporate actions and thus, I also discuss the discourse of SEA in a Brazilian case as well as the context of the Brazilian academy.

This research adopts a post-structuralist paradigm which holds that social structures, such as sustainability, are partially constituted and thus contingent. Laclau and Mouffe (2001) illustrate this through deconstructing how language operates in society. The thesis uses Discourse Theory [DT], which understands discourse as a representation of society (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001). Hence, the study contends discursive constructions of SEA are open to contestation (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001), as language is alive for interpretation (Derrida, 1976). From DT, the contestability of any structure in social life creates the possibility to contest, debate and critique structures. Consequently, this thesis aims to respond the following research questions:

1) *What is the impact of the discourse of development in an emerging economy such as Brazil on sustainability and how is this is incorporated in the Brazilian academy of SEA?*

2) *In this context, how does a Brazilian company discursively construct their articulation of SEA?*

It is essential to clarify what I mean by the term 'discourse'. It belongs to the political theory – [DT]. Discourse is a social construction, which combines real and relative characteristics including discursive and non-discursive elements of language (Crotty, 1998; Laclau and Mouffe, 2001; Howarth and Stavrakakis, 2000). All structures are materially and/or intellectually constructed and meaningful to a particular group in

society (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001). As a political thesis, I focus on the discursive constructions of SEA and, though, I apply theoretical elements of DT (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001; Laclau, 2014; Laclau, 2007) to understand the structures of SEA within a Brazilian case and the Brazilian academy.

The relevance of this thesis is to understand the formation of hegemonies and groups that control the dominant meanings of SEA. A rhetorical analytical method is employed to identify political elements present in DT. This thesis is informed by the methodological approach of Howarth and Griggs' (2006) work. They investigate an aviation policy in the United Kingdom by employing a post-Marxist DT about hegemonies, ideologies and rhetoric. The similarities lie in the use of comparable data analysis (rhetorical redescription) and the theoretical foundation of DT. This thesis aims to fill the gap of contestation regarding SEA in Brazil and the necessity to discuss the formation of hegemonies in the Brazilian context through the examination of Petrobras' disclosures.

The term 'rhetoric' is used to perform the analysis and to understand the DT from a political viewpoint. Rhetoric relates to Aristotelian work. Regarding the method, the rhetorical analysis is a type of discourse analysis that principally discusses the tropes metaphor, metonymic and catachresis in a way that those tropes can modify the tone, emphasis and intentions. Equally, the term is also associated with the identification of political practices as a site of the analysis of the DT. Howarth and Griggs (2006, p. 23) refer to "rhetorical strategies and mechanisms" for the rhetorical foundation in DT, which I named as political practices. These practices link to the rhetoric of legitimisation in Suddaby and Greenwood' (2005) work. Suddaby and Greenwood (2005) examine the role of rhetoric in legitimising institutional change of a new organisation emerged between an accounting firm and a law firm in 1997. Their analysis provides an opportunity to demonstrate the rhetorical strategies in the politics of legitimisation. The paper connects with this thesis regarding the similar approach of the use of rhetoric to understand institutional forms such as the Brazilian academy of SEA and the largest oil company in Brazil (Petrobras). Also, Laclau (2014) presents its book *The Rhetorical Foundation of Society* to debate how rhetoric is a useful apparatus for political agents in hegemonic constructions.

There is a paucity of literature examining SEA in Brazil as a political practice of articulation, but, internationally, there are papers investigating the significance of SEA.

Milne, Tregidga and Walton (2009) examine the language and visual representations of sustainable development of NZBCSD, a New Zealand corporation, using an interpretative discourse analysis and Thompson's (1990) notion of ideology. They contribute to ontic forms to represent 'sustainable development', and they conclude that the investigated case was considered "weak and serving relations consistent with dominant economic ends rather than protecting the environment" (Milne et al., 2009, p. 1241). This thesis pays attention for insights on the idea of development within social, political, cultural and environmental constructions in an emerging country (Brazil); this also includes rhetoric to analyse the corporate language and uses DT to investigate hegemonic, antagonistic, contestable and ideological strategies of social and environmental discursive constructions. Regarding the impact on the work environment, Mäkelä (2013) investigates the employee discourse and the discourse of corporations about the employee in twenty-five Finnish companies. She focuses on the ideological concept developed by Eagleton (1991) in a Marxist paradigm, and the findings illustrate the hegemonic supremacy of the "neoliberal and unitarist ideologies within corporate disclosure" (Mäkelä, 2013, p. 372). In this thesis, the concept of ideology adopts a post-Marxist perspective, which challenges the economic determinism in Marxism to expand the configuration of ideologies in all forms of social constructs (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001). Mäkelä and Laine (2011) explore the discursive debate of ideological representation of sustainability within two businesses in Finland, Rautaruukki and Outokumpu, using the concept of ideology of Thompson (1990). Their results demonstrate that neo-liberal ideologies are maintained in the CEO statements, in special, while they prioritise the "financial success and the interests of shareholders" (Mäkelä & Laine, 2011, p. 228). In this thesis, particularly, political elements to discuss the SEA's discursive constructions are expanded with the use of DT. Rhetoric is an element discussed in Higgins and Walker' (2012) work. Higgins and Walker (2012) examine the discourse of responsible and sustainable companies of three New Zealand companies to show strategies of persuasion that sustain the "middle ground" discourse of "reasonable" and "trustworthy" corporations (p. 194). Few Brazilian studies debate the discursive constructions of an organisation's SEA. Cintra and Carter (2012) have examined the internalisation of sustainability and its effects on strategies in Brazilian companies. In summary, this thesis contributes to the prior literature in five ways: (i) the addition of DT to the analysis of SEA enhances the discussion of political elements such as hegemony, antagonism, logic of

equivalence/difference, ideology and articulation; (ii) the analysis of an emerging economy such as Brazil incorporates a new perspective of the discussion of the discourses of SEA and development; (iii) this thesis includes a focus on rhetoric to discuss the maintenance of the *status quo*; (iv) the holistic structure of the LCE approach enlarges the understanding of the social, political and fantasmatic logics of SEA studies and; (v) this thesis combines an analysis of the literature and the case of Petrobras to characterise and critique the state of the Brazilian academy and its impacts and reflections on the significance of SEA.

The previous literature (Milne et al., 2009; Mäkelä, 2013; Mäkelä & Laine, 2011; Higgins & Walker, 2012) used different theoretical foundations. Each study illustrates within their conclusions that the adoption of a different ontic lens (theoretical, contextual and organisational interpretation) resulted in various understandings of SEA. In that context, a DT approach to understand SEA is appropriate due to its specific rhetorical focus on the ontic and ontology of SEA (Chapter 4 presents the difference between ontology and ontic). Additionally, few studies use rhetorical analysis. The most similar approach is in Higgins and Walker's (2012) work, but, they employ a classical rhetorical analysis (ethos, logos and pathos) which is different from this thesis, as this thesis employs a political technique of rhetorical redescription to identify the impact of substituted elements (Skinner, 2002a). Thus, I adopt a political focus in its discussion and examination of discursive constructions of SEA in a Brazilian corporation.

The case study is a State-owned enterprise in Brazil, Petrobras. It is considered one of the largest corporations in Brazil and has a significant role in the oil industry, with activities primarily in Brazil, but it also operates in twenty-five countries (Petrobras, 2014). Regarding financial structure, the financial statements exhibit sales of US$ 143.66bn, total assets of US$ 298.69bn and total a net loss of US$ 7.5bn in 2014 (Petrobras, 2015a, p. 4-5). Petrobras is also listed on the São Paulo Stock Exchange [BM&F Bovespa] – São Paulo, Brazil; Latinoamericanos en Euros [Latibex] – Madrid, Spain; Bolsa de Comercio de Buenos Aires [BCBA] - Buenos Aires, Argentina and New York Stock Exchange [NYSE] – New York, the United States (Petrobras, 2013b, p. 113). This thesis seeks to understand the discursive constructions of SEA by Petrobras and the literature of SEA by examining the political apparatuses in DT.

This thesis justifies the existence of conflicts, interests, politics and hegemonies in the constructions of a particular articulation of SEA by examining organisational attitudes. This work focuses on the context of SEA through the notion of de-contextualisation (a Derridean term) and intends to understand social, political and ideological logics. The rhetorical redescriptions derive from the data analysis to uncover the social, political and fantasmatic logics, and then to identify the articulation of those practices and critiques of the discursive constructions of Petrobras by employing the framework of the LCE of Howarth and Griggs' (2007) book.

The proposed contribution is to examine the SEA discourse constructed by Petrobras, as this provides opportunities to understand SEA, CSR and sustainability as well as what Petrobras mean by SEA. The examination constitutes an investigation using DT (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001) when analysing hegemonies, nodal points, articulation, the ontic and ontological signifiers, ideologies and the logic of equivalence/difference (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001; Laclau, 2014; Lacan, 2005; Althusser, 2012).

The structure of this thesis presents two chapters of literature review, one chapter of theory, one chapter of research design and two chapters of the discussion of the analysis and one of conclusions. Chapter 2 presents the origin of SEA in sustainability, the multidisciplinary application to SEA in diverse fields and some notions constructed in accounting area. Chapter 3 investigates the Brazilian literature of SEA and international studies to demonstrate the status of the academy in sustaining the *status quo* using three main approaches of a previous framework (Brown & Fraser, 2006): business case, stakeholder-accountability approach and post-structuralist and critical theory.

Chapter 4 illustrates the theoretical foundation in DT that includes the post-structuralist ontology and paradigm, the basis of the theory regarding discourse and rhetoric, and then it introduces the elements of DT employed in this thesis: hegemony, the logic of equivalence/difference, articulation and ideology. Chapter 5 exhibits the methodology of the employed framework of LCE, the methods of collection and analysis, the case study, some research using Petrobras and themes of SEA.

Chapter 6 constitutes the discussion of the social, political and fantasmatic logics surrounding the discursive constructions of SEA by Petrobras. Chapter 7 constructs a discussion and critiques of the articulation of SEA regarding four elements of DT. Finally, Chapter 8 presents the conclusions of Petrobras' discursive constructions as well as the

stage of the Brazilian Academy and the challenges for future discussion sustained in the present thesis. Additionally, this thesis has two Appendices to help the readers to understand the difference between the LCE' methodology and Critical Discourse Analysis (Appendix 1) and a brief history of corruption in Petrobras (Appendix 2).

2 LITERATURE REVIEW – PART A: SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL ACCOUNTING

This chapter reviews the literature on the constructed meanings of SEA. First, this chapter discusses the range of meanings associated with sustainability and SEA. Then, this chapter shows there are interdisciplinary uses for the concepts of sustainability. Finally, this chapter concludes with some critiques of the constructions of SEA and its implications in the accounting studies.

Constructed notions of SEA relate to the concepts of sustainability such as accounting for sustainability and the notion of SEA are associated with the theme of sustainable development in the Brundtland Report (1987). It is essential to note that there is more than one meaning for sustainability. Therefore, sustainability and SEA are notions in constant interpretation and construction. Agents construct meanings that relate to its practices, lives and experiences. The constant articulation of meanings belongs to social constructions (Hines, 1988; Morgan, 1988). And, these constructions result in an infinite interpretations and constructions. This thesis focuses on this infinitude constructed by Petrobras.

The principal argumentation of this chapter focuses on interpretations of a post-structuralist DT (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001). From this view, concepts of SEA and sustainability constantly change during interpretations in the social praxis. This conceptualisation means that the notions of sustainability are an interdisciplinary topic that provokes different interpretations. For example, these interpretations are often associated with power, social media, education and personal experiences.

There are multiple meanings of SEA and sustainability as a result of social interactions. However, social relationships are constantly surrounded by powers. These powers indicate that the agents prefer to substitute 'the' meaning of sustainability to fit their expectations. As a result, the constructed meanings of SEA and sustainability have a direction. This direction principally is the intentions of powerful groups. Instead the stimulus of uncountable meanings, the presence of powers in societies guide for the useful meanings for agents. In this thesis, discursive constructions of SEA (as derivative of sustainability's notion) are articulated in Petrobras' disclosures to fit its objectives and the notions of sustainability are discussed from the lenses of DT. The next section introduces the origins of SEA in the sustainability's notions.

2.1 Origin of SEA: sustainability

There is no unanimity surrounding the significance of sustainability and its different interpretations in business field (SEA, corporate social responsibility [CSR], sustainable development [SD], social and environmental responsibility [SER]). The origin of the concept of sustainability does not begin in corporations, but in environmental discussion the main goal is the protection and preservation of lives. Particularly, this thesis addresses how sustainability is perceive in the corporate sphere. At a historical level, the Oxford Dictionary provided various definitions of sustainable since 1965. From a business viewpoint, the term was defined as "capable of being maintained at a certain rate or level" (Simpson & Weiner, 1989, p. 327). The 'sustainable' term is associated with "sustainable growth" in 1965; then, "a sustainable yield" in 1971 (Simpson & Weiner, 1989, p. 327). Then, Thomas Sowell published in Say's Law the term "sustainability" in 1972 to mean a reduction in earnings and "quantity supplied" and the Journal of the Royal Society of Arts defined sustainability is "critical to welfare" in 1980 (Simpson & Weiner, 1989, p. 327). Figure 1 summarises this particular approach to the constructions of sustainability in the business area:

Year	Quotation	Reference
1965	Sustainable growth, a rise in per-capita real income or per capita real long time. A condition of sustainable economic growth means that economic stagnation will not set in.	McGraw-Hill Dictionary of Modern Economics, p. 501
1971	The blue whale could have supplied indefinitely a sustainable yield of 6,000 individuals of a sustainable stationary population.	Nature 9 – July 80/2
1972	An increase beyond limits of sustainability existing at any given time would lead only to reduced earnings and subsequent contraction of the quantity supplied.	Thomas Sowell Say's Law iii, p. 100
1980	Sustainability in the management of both individual wild species and ecosystems . . . is critical to human welfare.	Journal of the Royal Society of Arts July 485/2

Figure 1 – The history of 'sustainable'. Source: Simpson and Weiner (1989, p. 327)

The infinite definition of sustainability creates an impasse of which definition condenses a notion of common sense. According to Blackburn (2007, p. 1), "addressing the confusion about sustainability" offers a 'black hole' of meanings. As a social construct, interpretations are fruitful and endless. In that regard, DT states that objects in society change with power relationships. Then, sustainability is an object for the DT's standpoint because its constructions are surrounded by struggles to define the most important meaning in society. Blackburn (2007, p. 2) asserts the origin of sustainability was conceived in 1972 at the United Nations [UN] Conference in Stockholm.

The origin of sustainability interrelates with the notion of sustainable development. The UN Conference on the human environment held in Stockholm (June 1972) declares that the natural and human-made environment should be protected and to provide quality of life (UN, 1972). This notion of environment and social quality reflects sustainable development first introduced in 1987 by the Brundtland Report. The report of UN (1972) aspires for the "preservation and enhancement" of the environment (UN, 1972, p. 3):

> 1 Man [and woman] is both creature and moulder of his [her] environment, which gives him physical sustenance and affords him the opportunity for intellectual, moral, social and spiritual growth. In the long and tortuous evolution of the human race on this planet a stage has been reached when, through the rapid acceleration of science and technology, man [and woman] has acquired the power to transform his environment in countless ways and on an unprecedented scale. Both aspects of man's environment, the natural and the man-made, are essential to his well-being and to the enjoyment of basic human rights-even the right to life itself. Emphasis added]

Moreover, the UN (1972) continues to describe the history of sustainable development's notion as:

> A point has been reached in history when we must shape our actions throughout the world with a more prudent care for their environmental consequences. Through ignorance or indifference we can do massive and irreversible harm to the earthly environment on which our life and well-being depend. Conversely, through fuller knowledge and wiser action, we can achieve for ourselves and our posterity a better life in an environment more in keeping with human needs and hopes. There are broad vistas for the enhancement of environmental quality and the creation of a good life. What is needed is an enthusiastic but calm state of mind and intense but orderly work. For the purpose of attaining freedom in the world of nature, man must use knowledge to build, in collaboration with nature, a better environment. To defend and improve the human environment for present and future generations has become an imperative goal for mankind – a goal to be pursued together with, and in harmony with, the established and fundamental goals of peace and of worldwide economic and social development (UN, 1972, p. 3).

The premise of the UN's (1972, p. 3) declaration is to stimulate a positive relationship between the environment and conditions of wellbeing "the opportunity for intellectual, moral, social and spiritual growth". A collaborative effort requires respect for the environment to be preserved for "present and future generations" (UN, 1972, p. 3). Likewise, the Brundtland Report (1987) outlines these sentiments when presenting its understandings sustainable development:

> Sustainable development is a familiar concept to people concerned with environment. . . . we define sustainable development in simple terms as paths of progress which meet the needs and aspirations of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs (Brundtland, 1987, p. 4).

The definition of sustainable development [SD] purposed by the Brundtland Report is vague. For example, the definition does not explain what it meant in the terms of "paths of progress", "needs", "aspirations", "present generation", and "future generations". In this vagueness, the roots of those notions are necessary to discuss in order to achieve a substantial social change. An understanding of nature of being 'sustainability' or

'sustainable development' relates to an ontological approach. An ontological understanding of SEA is one of the objectives of this thesis due to the variety of constructions of any object in society (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001). Humans are multifaceted, and this results in multiple understandings of SEA and its interpretations. I believe that 'the reality' is socially constructed. As an example, stakeholders in the accounting field shape reality while they produce the sustainability reports. In a hermeneutic application, the Brundtland Report asserts SD about politics: "the overriding political concept of 'Our Common Future', is the idea of sustainable development" (Brundtland, 1987, p. 4). SD links to social and economic concepts; these concepts propose a new way to understand economic growth (Brundtland, 1987, p. 4). Before the Brundtland Report the concept of sustainability was more individual behaviour, and then, the new concept of SD demonstrates an inclusion of countries, policies and corporations in the achievement of a common future.

The concept of SD primarily focuses on poverty "as the overriding issue" (Brundtland, 1987, p. 6) and the limits of economic growth in the environmental degradation. Consequently, the notion of SD in Brundtland Report incorporates the combination of elimination of poverty and protection of the environment that restricts the corporate and nation development. The notion of growth is necessary to beat poverty. However, this form of growth has to consider the wealth distribution by protecting the natural resources, and, effectively "it must respect limits to environmental resources such as clean air and water, forest and soils" (Brundtland, 1987, p. 5-6). In summary, sustainable development should guarantee the elimination of poverty and defend the destructions of natural resources like water, forests, animals and the quality of air. This concept challenges political decision-making to consider the wider implications of what sustainability is. The challenge of this thesis is to include the Brundtland's notion of SD and to contest the discursive constructions of SEA considering multiple interpretations of sustainability.

In studies, it is a common practice the connection between SEA and sustainability. As such, Milne et al. (2009), Spence (2009a) and Laine (2005) seek to explain the meanings of sustainable development through the analysis of social and environmental reporting and sustainable development discourse. Also, some studies assume an interpretation of sustainability according to a particular approach (see the various approaches to SEA in

Chapter 3). There are various interpretations of sustainability, but the Brundtland Report became the most common interpretation of SD, however, as I noted before, some elements of the concept in Brundtland is obscure and open for different interpretations. The Brundtland Report has become the most influential report on sustainability and sustainable development. This report opens for a more significant participation of broader society in the task to overcome issues of poverty and environmental degradation in a planet with limited resources and wealthy societies. The contradiction between rich societies, poverty, and environmental degradation exist because of the emphasis on economic growth without thinking about the consequences of its development. The Brundtland Report started to rethink the development and provided some useful thoughts to construct societies more sustainable regarding development. The report continues the principal players in the debate of SD in society:

> The roles of NGOs, trade unions, the media and the scientific community must be central in the broad political debate on environment and development issues. This requires access to information and improved co-operation and exchange between the different players. Industry should be at the forefront and be encouraged to move into new eras of resource-efficiency and shared responsibility (Brundtland, 1987, p. 12).

Meanwhile, this report brings to the surface deep questions of how society could achieve sustainability when making decisions on capital-oriented strategies. Moreover, from a SEA perspective, these are questions with isolated answers. For example, how do accountants and business people interpret the terms 'future generations'? If accounting reflects the proven evidence of past events, then how would these future generations be part of these businesses? Some critics assert sustainability is uncertain meaning and "we should expect diversity of opinion and conceptual disagreement" (Jenkins, 2010, p. 381). While there is no consensus, concepts of sustainability have been taken-for-granted. It is evident that the concepts of sustainability enter the political realm. Thus, the meaning of sustainability impacts on politics in societies because the choices available are governed by the definition of influential social groups. The motivations behind these choices lead to dominant social practices.

There are few clear definitions of sustainability showing that this notion invades the field of politics. The Encyclopaedia of Sustainability (Jenkins, 2010, p. xxi) avoids presuming a complete definition of sustainability "rather than impose a master definition of the term 'sustainability,' we invited contributors to explain how their topic matters for making sense of sustainability's ambiguity and multiplicity". A definition is not imposed, and the

choice is a question of us. It is a clear statement of the role of politics in defining a concept. There are different spaces with multiple and vague senses of meanings for this term. These constructions create diversification and various conditions of what meaning might be taken-for-granted. In a literal sense, sustainability is a "capacity to maintain some entity, outcome, or process over time" (Jenkins, 2010, p. 380). However, in the political arena, sustainability is a term used to fit the most persuasive group. Accounting as a system of information has an esoteric language to pose matters relevant for the most powerful stakeholders in this system. In essence, this study advocates for more understandings of the discursive constructions of SEA in Petrobras that underlay the fascinating and persuasive arena of interpretations of sustainability and its interpretations.

Another conference that furthered this discussion occurred in Rio de Janeiro city – Brazil – 1992 (Rio-92). This conference was at the forefront of social media highlighted the goal of stablishing international agreements for global sustainable development. In 2012, the Rio+20 (20 years after Rio-92) concentrated on global warming and climate change by integrating different countries proposals to reduce the social and environmental problems created by developing and developed countries. For instance, the 47th paragraph in the Rio+20 document indicates participatory nations of how accountants and business managers could interpret sustainability reporting. This paragraph is a response to countless attempts to define a concept of sustainability. Accounting has a significant role in this process of defining because accounting is a field surrounded by politics and historical struggles. An example is the "Group of Friends of Paragraph 47" formed in Brazil, Denmark, France and South Africa argued the 47th paragraph of Rio+20. They focus on the sustainability reporting. The final paper deliberated by this group presented the following paragraph:

> We acknowledge the importance of corporate sustainability reporting and encourage companies, where appropriate, especially publicly listed and large companies, to consider integrating sustainability information into their reporting cycle. We encourage industry, interested governments as well as relevant stakeholders with the support of the UN system, as appropriate, to develop models for best practice and facilitate action for the integration of sustainability reporting, taking into account the experiences of already existing frameworks, and paying particular attention to the needs of developing countries, including for capacity building (UN, 2012b).

The UN (2012b) considers that large and listed companies and relevant stakeholders lead the role of CSR. In the business case, Brown and Fraser (2006) reflect shareholders are the key stakeholders. In the public media, corporate sustainability reporting is a mode for

accountants and others to disclose the business' activities. Therefore, the paragraph 47th provides consideration initiate corporate social responsibility through the lenses of the business and/or its supporters. The orientation of reports to shareholders omits the roots of sustainable development presented in the Brundtland Report. This limited view, however, is an issue. If sustainability mainly serves the shareholders agenda, then poverty and no limits on growth as a result of the primarily focus on the economic development will be ignored (see the Brundtland Report). The principal interest of shareholders is the capital invested (Brown & Fraser, 2006). According to the Brundtland (1987), the capital-oriented decision denies the distribution of wealth and decreasing of poverty. In this regard, this study aims to identify the constructions of CSR and the decisions made by Petrobras in the reporting of their sustainability's concepts.

The history of CSR is portrayed in the literature of developed countries as a result of the characterisation of the business responsibility (Carroll, 1999, p. 268). The author traces the history of CSR during the 1950s to 1990s (p. 268). The notion of corporate social responsibility exists within theories and practices; however, the "definitional construct" is the intentions of Carroll's (1999) paper. The constructions of CSR underpin politics because finding 'the definition' engages in language, for example, power and communication. In the 1950s, CSR was conceptualised as embedding 'social responsibility'; the work of Howard R. Bowen (1953) is considered a singular point of CSR; Carroll contends Bowen as the father of corporate social responsibility (p. 270). Bowen bases his research conclusion on the assumption that social responsibility is related to consciousness regarding values and objectives for society (p. 270). In the 1960s, Carroll (1999, p. 271) indicates that the research of CSR begins to include social responsibility in the managerial decision and business power; this new thinking goes beyond the previous economic and legal requirements' thoughts. At the end of the 1960's, voluntarism starts to incorporate the management of CSR (p. 272). In the 1970s, the notion of CSR expands the focus of shareholders' purpose for other stakeholders such as employees, suppliers and communities that became central to the CSR's objectives (p. 273). In particular, there is the inclusion of philanthropy and community organisations in the goals of CSR in the 1970s (p. 273). However, this decade also enters the economic responsibility that means what businesses do for communities, employees and suppliers (p. 284). In the 1980s, there were developments in the constitution of "theories, concepts, models and themes" of CSR (p. 284). This last decade expands CSR' developments to

themes such as "corporate social responsiveness, CSP[1], public policy, business ethics, and stakeholder theory/management" (p. 284). In the 1990s, the CSR literature compels CSP to expand its meaning to include stakeholder theory, corporate citizenship and ethics in business (p. 288). The conclusion Carroll (1999) draws is that the language of CSR is still active, and the CSR definition and constructs allow debate for more research and discussion on the theoretical developments (p. 292). This thesis argues that Carroll's study clearly demonstrates that CSR is a term in transition as well as sustainability and SEA's definitions.

The contradictions embedded in constructs of CSR have been articulated several critiques. As an example, Spence (2009b) argues the role of CSR in society be only based on economic foundations. Spence (2009b, p. 205) demands more independent accounting that "actively expose the contradiction of the current hegemony". Political and powerful elites form SEA, and they champion concepts of SEA which enhance their personal interests, thus, forming a hegemony. This thesis contends that this hegemonic formation is transitory (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001).

The transition of meanings has connected everyday life into its construction. In the business arena, the interests of stakeholders are multiple, and they transform the requirements for disclosure. The language embedded in these disclosures and which businesses use privilege key influential stakeholders. As Brown and Fraser (2006, p. 104) point out, shareholders are the main stakeholders in the business case approach. They have advantages, which other stakeholders do not have. They have social capital investments that require the continuance of gain for the corporation. Constructions of CSR exhibit the narrow focus on the economic aspect even if this is contrary to the literature (see the Brundtland Report and UN, 1972). These decisions based on the financial return arise since business captures societal interest and redefines the notions conveniently. This situation seems to be the politics of CSR, SEA as well as sustainability.

Following on with, sustainability, development and accounting are concepts in the constant transition of meanings. As illustrated by Adams (2009, p. 5) who considers "sustainable development as [sic] panacea" because "sustainable development can be defined in many ways"; this meaning might be associated with political mechanisms, "a

[1] Corporate social performance

convenient rhetorical flag" and "powerful term". From a post-structuralist DT, sustainable development should have several political, historical and cultural aspects. Mainly because individuals assume distinct, contradictory, analogous or diffuse perspectives, there are multiple interpretations about sustainable development. These interpretations, moreover, shape the context. Moreover, a convention of a particular interpretation is the assumption of a perspective preferred between other options; politics organises this preference. To this idea, stakeholders use discourses surrounding the meaning of SEA to mould a priority and to favour their self-absorption. All individuals have a bias, inclination and one-sided belief that is affected by every single aspect of the social relationship. Thus, meanings interact by insights that make more sense within the political space. Certain choices suit a particular agent's preference.

In summary, this section draws upon a short history of the concepts of sustainability in business, the SD notion in the Brundtland Report, the paragraph 47th in the Rio+20, the panacea of sustainability's definition and the history of CSR. The common argument is the fact that politics defines the concept of SEA (and its variation). Therefore, the definition of SEA belongs to the privileges of some groups in forming hegemonic meanings. This section also contends that the notions of SEA are a vague concept, and then, politics highlights the desired meaning to certain groups conveniently. Also, this study debates that meanings are transitory as the formation of hegemonies in society. The next section presents studies of the multiplicity of SEA and its interpretations.

2.2 Interdisciplinary, sustainability and SEA

SEA is a concept embedded in the notions of sustainability. This section reviews the diverse application of sustainability's sentiments, followed by the SEA studies. Research on sustainability illustrates that this concept spreads into diverse fields. The constructions of the notions of sustainability result in a multiplicity of the term. To illustrate, the main research areas represented in Web of Science database[2] were Environmental Sciences Ecology (4,394), Engineering (2,548), Business Economics (2,062), Agriculture (1,285), Public Administration (874), Energy Fuels (649), Water Resources (533), Geography (521), Social Sciences and other topics (487). This short

[2] In 3rd March 2014, the Web of Science database (www.webofknowledge.com) presents 13,706 records with 'sustainability' as title.

sample demonstrates sustainability is interdisciplinary. The definition of 'the' sustainability or 'the' SEA is, of course, fruitful for critical accounting perspective that intends to understand social formations and its powers.

As shown, studies on sustainability make the concept interdisciplinary. In Business and Economics, Dierickx and Cool (1989, p. 1507) assert sustainability as a means the corporation can accumulate and conserve its capital, "sustainability of a firm's privileged asset position hinges on how easily it can be replicated". Another example, Porter (1996, p. 74) connects sustainability with strategy; Porter presents an alternate view of strategy as, "sustainable competitive advantage" which "sustainability comes from the activity system, not the parts". These studies in Business and Economics pursue the positive and economical solution in the bottom-line. When Thomas Sowell in 1972 (Simpson & Weiner, 1989, p. 327) said about sustainability, the prevailing notion was the reduction of earnings and the supplied materials. However, "accumulation" (Dierickx & Cool, 1989, p. 1507) and "activity system" (Porter, 1996, p. 74) do not associate with the limits of a sustainable social and environment. These combinations strengthen the relationship between business and the capitalist system. Likewise, in Technology and Engineering, Chisti (2007, p. 301) applies economic sustainability to address biodiesel and microalgae fuels based. From this perspective, the economic sustainability takes place when there is a lower cost of the production of algae oil and the petroleum diesel (Chisti, 2007). These studies combine the notion of sustainability with the prime focus on the capitalist system.

Environment and protection of the environment are usually associated with the notion of sustainability. In Agronomy, Botany, Biology, Ecology and Environmental Sciences, Munns & Tester (2008) consider environmental sustainability is essential to maintain species of plants. One example is from Tilman, Wedin and Knops (1996) as they analyse the sustainability of ecosystems regarding how diversity interferes in the ecosystems. Furthest, Tilman, Cassman, Matson, Naylor and Polasky (2002, p. 671) comment on agricultural sustainability; they define it as: "practices that meet current and future societal needs for food and fibre, for ecosystem services, and for healthy lives, and that do so by maximizing the net benefit to society when all costs and benefits of the practices are considered". In this context, the concept of sustainability underpins the protection of species, plants and humankind that is a similar discussion in the conference of Stockholm

(UN, 1972) and the above studies while benefits, welfare and protection are integrated throughout a meaning of sustainability.

Behaviours and ideologies regarding sustainable development connect to the notions of sustainability. In Psychology, Greenberg et al. (2003) discuss the grade's impact of students' behaviours in schools; a type of sustainability is conceived by the authors as a mode of achieving some goals, and they suggest schools to follow an assessment in the behaviours to be able to be sustainable educational programs. In Tourism, Saarinen (2006, p. 1122) argues that "sustainability was transferred to tourism from the ideology of sustainable development following the publication of the Brundtland Commission's report *Our Common Future* in 1987". From this, there appears to be the subtle notion that sustainable thought influences behaviours and ideologies. The influence of ideologies leads to the modification of natural behaviour, and this is shaped according to the social circumstance. The theoretical basis states how individuals act (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001) according to acceptable social attitude (see Lacan, 2005; Althusser, 2012). Tourism and accounting field share the origin of sustainability in the Brundtland Report.

The most common term used for sustainability is sustainable development. In Accounting, sustainability is primarily associated with sustainable development, which traces the origin from the Brundtland Report in 1987 (Bebbington & Gray, 2001). Sustainability and SD are normally present through disclosures in sustainability reporting. Gray (2010, p. 47) argues sustainable development be "the complex notion" at the "policy, personal and organisation levels". The challenge to sustainability asks society and organisations significant questions: first, what does sustainability actually mean? (There is a noticeable interrogation derived from the widespread confusion of a definition); secondly, and especially, for organisations, how do organisations construct meanings within contradictions that have a potential harm? Hence, this attitude continues the behaviour for progress with environmental destruction on the part of organisations that prioritise the economic growth regardless of sustainability. In Gray's (2010, p. 48) words, an evaluation of the connection between the organisation and planetary sustainability is impossible, attributable to the complexity of these worlds; the attempts to do sustainability as something palpable are illusionary.

The constructions of SEA and sustainability are terms that humans change depending on the circumstances. Particularly, when the notion of sustainability assumes a peculiar

sense by "the system-based concept". For example, sustainable environment makes sense only in the eco-systems level for plants, animals and natural resources, but this concept cannot be interchangeable for the organisational level (Gray, 2010, p. 48). This thesis holds that understanding the conflicts between sustainability, accounting, organisations and society is challengeable. An understanding of these challenges is the motif of the thesis. This thesis situates in a multiform world of SEA in the discursive field of social constructions of realities. The complexity derives from the human capacity to create and construct meanings. Gray (2010, p. 48) draws our attention to the laws of modernity that humanity becomes more important than God. In light of this claim, humans construct reality (see Chua, 1986a, 1986b; Hines, 1988, Morgan, 1988). Gray (2010, p. 56) comments on sustainability and modern capitalism: "we cannot say what a single state of strong sustainability will look like we can say, unequivocally, that modern financial capitalism is not strong form sustainable". By these comments, there is a conflict of what, how and why sustainability works in the accounting context. In the SEA sector, there are powerful agents from organisations who construct their particular meaning of sustainability. These constructs do not necessarily relate to a sustainable world because the economic level becomes central to the practice under a sustainability strategy. At this level, financial capitalism dominates economic growth as the principal business strategy.

Ideas on sustainability and SEA in business are associated with reporting and performance. From Brazilian business research[3], the focus is on the organisations reporting and measurement of performance. Particularly, in accounting sustainability reporting, measurement of sustainability indicators, the perception of management, and environmental disclosure are examples of the construction of sustainability. In these papers[4], there is an evident subordination for the financial viewpoint and few feedbacks for companies to improve their disclosures instead an engagement for sustainability that would benefit more than companies. There is a need to challenge the corporate agenda for sustainability while the importance of sustainability is enclosed in a particular or corporate objective because the sustainable planet will suffer from strategies that only focus on the economic base. This thesis brings to society a critical standpoint of the

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[3] Source: the database SPELL (www.spell.org.br) – that organises articles from management, accounting, economy, engineering and tourism journals in Brazil.

[4] The next Chapter I discuss in details these papers.

narratives of SEA and its interpretations, especially in sustainability's notions, throughout some conflicts and challenges belonged to the political mechanisms. Also, ideologies are understood by the stakeholders' interpretations that construct multiple concepts of sustainability and its interpretations. The next section draws the notions of SEA in the accounting field.

2.3 Notions of social and environmental accounting

I understand that the notion of SEA needs to be a critical approach to consider a broader perspective of the discursive constructions on social, historical and political practices. More specifically, sustainable development – as a concept used within SEA research – has a connection to accounting in the social and political constructs of reality. Commensurate with Bebbington (2001, p. 151), sustainable development in accounting pays equal attention to "the economic aspects of corporate activity", simultaneously, in the social and environmental foundation. Accordingly, SEA must act in the name of sustainability. The economic function of accounting, however, prioritises organisations' goals. Nevertheless, as Bebbington (2001) mentions, SEA should connect the broader implications of social, culture, environment and politics.

SEA is a concept that links the multiple views of sustainability. Sustainability is a combination of social, environment, politics, economy, culture, policies and laws – this list is not exhaustive or conclusive. As indicated, SEA and sustainability are concepts that are substantial debated with no definitive meaning in the political arena, where competitive meanings use special tools such as language, to persuade audiences. While SEA and sustainability are not fully defined, researchers and theorists have to deal with two major implications: first, the lack of consensus on the definition means that researchers do not know what sustainability constitutes, and secondly, researchers in the field of explorations, experimentation have a range of possibilities (Gray, 2013b, p. 3). In this environmental situation, the various meanings of sustainability and SEA provide space for argumentation, fixation and dislocation that post-structuralist theorists are concerned with (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001). More precisely, this situation produces freedom to define, but equally, political forces determine 'the' meaning that satisfies a moment. This determination emphasizes the rhetorical game in choosing signifiers of SEA. Sustainability as a complex signifier allows players (or stakeholders in accounting) to modify this notion according to their self-interests. A rhetorical device helps agents in

politics achieve their success of agreement in a concept. This research accepts that there is a lack of consensus surrounding sustainability and SEA (see Gray, 2013b). However, this means that when an organisation acts in the name of sustainability, they are actually defining, naming and constructing sustainability to serve their interests (organisations mostly are focusing on the economic elements of sustainability – see Milne et al., 2009; Spence, 2009b).

The diversity of meanings of SEA and sustainability implies understanding the basis of the generational meanings. This entails there is a need to comprehend the context, choices, reasons and power in which those meanings were produced. These meanings are constructed and shape the capitalist ideologies (see Spence, 2007). This thesis discusses these meanings used in a case study, Petrobras, about sustainability and its interpretations (SEA, CSR, SD, and SER). This analysis recognizes that in the accounting context, stakeholders construct those meanings. The stakeholders mentioned before are, for example, accountants, managers, environmentalist, employees, communities, academics, governments, investors, bankers, suppliers, clients, customers, institutions and the public in general. These constructions provide the basis for engagement with the SEA project.

This thesis discusses SEA's notion as a social construction (see Morgan, 1988; Hines, 1988, Mouck, 2004). Constructions mean multiple interpretations of an object. In this thesis, the object is to examine the discursive constructions of SEA. Indeed, these constructions are part of the political agenda. According to DT, stakeholders use discursive formations of an object to benefit their personal interests. Because of that, SEA is primarily associated with business goals using this context 'sustainable development', 'corporate social responsibility' and 'social and environmental reporting' terminologies. These associations place SEA as a toolkit for the business industry that prioritises the maximisation of wealth for the key stakeholder: shareholder (Brown & Fraser, 2006). Nonetheless, SEA should engage in a dialogue with its stakeholders to highlight multidisciplinary issues such as social, justice, politics, environment and human rights (Bebbington, Gray & Owen, 1999; Bebbington, Brown, Frame & Thomson, 2007; O'Dwyer, 2005; Spence, 2009a).

2.4 Conclusion of this chapter

The multifaceted constructions of SEA rise space for political analysis in the hegemonic formations. When a concept becomes central, this means there are politics and powerful group determining the hegemonic meaning (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001). The hegemony in SEA operates in the political space that competes with different concepts. In this regard, Spence (2009b) articulates that social accounting (as well as SEA) should operate to expose the current hegemony, despite, the complexities involved. This means that powerful bodies shape the significative meanings for their purpose and, therefore, guarantee the hegemonic notion in SEA. That is, for example, CSR for corporations as Beyond Petroleum [BP] that illustrates cases of greenwashing. Alternatively, another example of the notion of SEA is the engagement in communities as non-profit organisations. The meaning of SEA might deceive from the original conception (see Brundtland, 1987) or might benefit large corporations as BP. Nonetheless; this can aid communities and social institutions. This thesis contends that SEA position must draw on the field of contestation, debate and dialogue (see Boyce, 2000).

The absence of a consensus definition for SEA provokes a broad field of competing interpretations. Discussion of its meaning causes a significant impact on accounting because constructed meanings can change practices, behaviours, attitudes and realities. In particular, competitive thoughts of SEA and sustainability to constitute 'a meaning' are political. Bebbington and Gray (2001, p. 584) conceived sustainability and sustainable development as frequently operated interchangeably and acted in a range of concepts. Interpretations require recreation of thoughts. Discursive constructions of social and environmental reporting may expose these thoughts by ideologies. Žižek (1994, p. 3) contends the notion of ideology in social relationships that dominant politics redirect beliefs to individuals without perceiving ideologies. Spence (2007) found how ideologies operate in the organisation; the findings exhibit the necessity of the case study to hide and shape ideologies behind discursive constructions.

Argumentation, interpretation, ideologies and discourses are a fertile field for critique. For instance, a critical perspective in accounting relocates financial and economic aspects to the accounting's purpose. More specifically, Deegan (2014, p. 569) who explores this vision and maintains that a critical perspective in accounting is useful for understanding "the means of maintaining the powerful positions of some sectors and interests of those

without wealth". This critique is linked to SEA because of the existence of studies on the logic of capitalism with no integration to the planet problems as scarce natural resource and poverty. The interest of some corporation to engage in sustainability seems an act of a rhetorical apparatus (see the greenwashing of BP). The representation of the SEA's notions in the corporate speeches demonstrates that organisations privately construct its definition of SEA. In these interpretations, stakeholders shape ideologies of sustainability and its variations (SEA, SER, CSR, SD and so forth). Sustainability, as well as SEA, is complex, polysemous, multicultural, multidisciplinary and multifaceted concepts. As evidenced, sustainability and its complexities are immersed in a space of interpretations and debates in which this thesis situates. Nevertheless, the complexity of sustainability's constructions privileges powerful groups that use the suitable concepts to their self-interests (see Spence, 2007; Milne et al., 2009; Spence, 2009b).

The next section debates three perspectives on the SEA's studies by employing the adapted framework from Brown and Fraser (2006). These perspectives show the complexity of political drives in the constructions of the notions of SEA and its different interpretations. I believe these approaches are helpful to situate the reader in the arena of complexity, challenges, conflicts and beliefs.

3 LITERATURE REVIEW – PART B: APPROACHES OF SEA

This chapter outlines three stances for SEA in the international and Brazilian journals. It is essential to highlight that as a post-structuralist research, this thesis would focus on non-structural constructions. However, a classification of the literature of SEA might be helpful for the readers regarding the principal perspectives. This post-structural thesis is contingent and partial; thus, I assume this position by showing a particular perspective to classify the SEA literature.

Each section constitutes broad-based understandings of the indicated approach of SEA and its limitations. By evaluating SEA and its relationship to sustainability, it is noted SEA is critically conceived from different paradigmatic approaches. These insights shed light on sustainability, sustainable development and, subsequently, SEA. These perspectives are an adoption of the framework from Brown and Fraser (2006) that develops in the following approaches: business case, stakeholder-accountability and post-structuralist and critical theory. The first section of this Chapter examines the business case approach, the international and Brazilian papers using this approach and finishes with the weaknesses of business case approach.

3.1 Business Case

Business case approach is a combination of a review of the studies by Chua (1986a; 1986b) and Brown and Fraser (2006). This analysis contributes to the understanding of SEA addressed from a business case perspective. This approach has similarities with positivism. In this paradigm, researchers divorced themselves from the object of the study. It is a separation between the author of the analysis and the analysed object. The literature and the studied cases in this approach will be explained in the international and Brazilian studies sections to show the connection of business case and positivism.

As described by Brown & Fraser (2006), this perspective has an apt description of the benefits of what these studies can promote to organisations and shareholders. Institutions like the World Business Council for Sustainable Development [WBCSD] and the International Integrated Reporting Council [IIRC] emphasises to the beneficial contribution of adopting sustainable development for the business.

IIRC (2014)	WBCSD (2003, p. 15)

✓ Better articulation of strategy for the business and how its business model is responding to changing needs and expectations in the marketplace ✓ Enabling better dialogue between the business and providers of financial capital ✓ More connected departments, breaking down silos. ✓ Improved internal processes ✓ Lower cost of capital ✓ <IR> makes clearer the connections between organization's strategy, governance, performance and prospects ✓ The disclosure of key risks and opportunities as management views them enables investors to assess the short, medium and long-term impact ✓ More effective capital allocation decisions leading to better long-term investment returns.	✓ Maintaining licence to operate ✓ Creating financial value ✓ Attracting long-term capital and favourable financing conditions ✓ Raising awareness, motivating and aligning staff, and attracting talent ✓ Improving management systems ✓ Risk awareness ✓ Encouraging innovation ✓ Continuous improvement ✓ Enhancing reputation ✓ Transparency to stakeholders.

Figure 2 – Benefits of sustainable development reporting. Source: IIRC (2014) and WBCSD (2003)

The approach puts the business's goal at the forefront of any conversation. This approach highlights the benefits for business; business case approach is usually related to financial return that a corporate board claims to achieve when presenting its sustainable development reporting (Brown & Fraser, 2006, p. 104). In Figure 2, IIRC demonstrates what they meant by sustainable development. A summary of the benefits of sustainable development reporting in IIRC (2014) is the business strategy to benefit capital investors such the decrease in capital costs, long-term policy to maximise the capital using indicators of performance and strategy in the governance plans. Alternatively, WBCSD (2003) shows the engagement in risk, reputation, transparency and development of systems that creates economic value. These examples demonstrate how the business case connects to the primary objective of the capitalist system, specifically, the expansion of wealth. In essence, business case employs SEA and CSR as an instrument or a toolkit for managers (Brown & Fraser, 2006). This approach relates to positivism paradigm by ignoring the social, cultural and political characteristic of the object of the analyses. For example, the business case uses terms like 'risk', 'performance' and 'investments' to nominate the materialist feature of those terms with no inclusion of other subjective feature. In this way, positivism and business case separate themselves from the object of the study treating it apart from any subjectivity.

Regarding ontological and epistemological positions, the foundation of positivism is realism and objectivism (see Crotty, 1998). Realism involves "a real world is assumed"; the question is "how things really are" or "how things really work" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 108). Additionally, objectivism is primarily associated with an objective value of reality. Morgan (1988, p. 481) asserts that objectivism in accounting is a myth. Accountants have

a limited view of the world, as well as the interpretation of principles and practices. Thus, these constructions are also "one-sided ways of viewing the world" (Morgan, 1988, p. 482). People construct the reality that they want. Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 108) note if the 'real' exists, then "the posture of the knower must be one of objective detachment or value freedom". Reality is a social construction. In some situations, though, this reality is a construction of a fantasy of the world that only exists in the mind of the constructor. However, subjectivity that follows all objects constructed in societies (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001; Lacan, 2005) is ignored by positivists. Positivism rejects subjectivity in the social constructions because of the assumption that the objective value of objects.

The father of positivism is Auguste Comte (1798-1857). His relevance for Brazil is demonstrated in the national flag with the painted phrase centralised in the 'Brazilian sky' "*Ordem e Progresso"* (Order and Progress) in 1889. Comte claimed for the scientific thinking that is a result of a certain order. This rule posits people in a strict way to think. For Paley (2008, p. 646), the positivism of Comte is an assertion of universal laws. In accounting, Chua (1986a, p. 583) advocates positivism has three key features. Foremost, the reality is objective, and the accounting practice represents the "natural world", therefore, the researcher is independent of their task. Chua (1986a, p. 583) concludes this task needs to be "asocial" and "divorced" from reality in the positivist view. Researchers declare undertaking the science of accounting, which comprises three qualities: "explanation, prediction and control" through a systematic framework that allows "generalised causal relations" (Chua, 1986a, pp. 583-584). Secondly, the theory created is separated from the real experience; numbers speak for themselves; researchers, therefore, are divorced from theory (Chua, 1986a, p. 584). Thirdly, the idealisation of a theory is rational, and this is "isolated from the Real" (Chua, 1986a, p. 584). For instance, the origin of positivism in accounting is illustrated through the works of Ball and Brown (1968), Beaver (1968) and Watts and Zimmerman (1978) who analysed share price and the volatility of the market share; specifically in the US, where the University of Chicago gave them support for this development. To sum up, positivism intends to seek 'the truth' from a realistic point of view, humans are not objective since they construct theories. However, positivism insists that the researcher is 'asocial' and value-free. The reality for positivism is objective because numbers have the power to convince and explain the reality.

Positivism and business case approach assume that reality is objective when researchers present numbers and its importance. The view of the business case tends to deny conflicts between business and society. Capitalism keeps the system working as they dictate the powerful devices like language, governments, policies, and mechanisms that manipulate the public. This silence[5] shows a sign to ignore the conflict in society due to their interests for economic growth. Subsequently, poverty and the inequality of wealth distribution are overlooking. However, the Brundtland Report (1987) describes sustainable development must include and minimise the problems caused by economic growth, for example, poverty and deprivation of natural reserves. The interest of business is placed at the forefront, O'Dwyer (2003, p. 523) affirms, managers are inclined to interpret corporate social responsibility as wealth maximisation for shareholders. Indeed, it does not imply the same criteria for society. In the next section, international papers of SEA present the business case approach.

3.1.1 International research

One of the constants in the business case approach to SEA is measurement. There are, at least, three major central points on this measure: sustainability disclosures (Adams & Frost, 2008; Joseph & Taplin, 2011), social and environmental disclosures (Tilt, 1994;2001; Adams, Coutts, & Harte, 1995; Hackston & Milne, 1996; Patten, 2002; Al-Tuwaijri, Christensen, & Hughes, 2004; Cho & Patten, 2007; Clarkson, Li, Richardson, & Vasvari, 2008; Lu & Abeysekera, 2014) and corporate social responsibility (Roberts, 1992; Mahoney & Roberts, 2007; Delmas & Blass, 2010; Bouten, Everaert, Liedekerke, Moor, & Christiaens, 2011; Mahoney, Thorne, Cecil, & LaGore, 2013; Elliott, Jackson, Peecher, & White, 2014).

Sustainability initiatives show an integration of corporate strategies and performances. Joseph and Taplin (2011) adopt content analysis and construct an index to comprehend the disclosures of these initiatives. Adams & Frost (2002) espouse key performance indicators for measuring sustainability; their findings indicate that sustainability performance is incorporated into strategy, performance measurement and decision-making of organisations from Britain and Australia. Additionally, Tilt (1994) indicates

[5] CSR does not resolve problems, but companies say they do. This thesis debates these arguments of being social responsible and the weak commitments to a sustainable development in a planetary degree.

that social and environmental disclosures can be understood by the influence of external pressure groups. In her method, Tilt uses questionnaires to conduct the analysis of how is the effect of groups of the disclosures of social and environment. Particularly, the interpretation was made by the codification of questions with a 'yes' or 'no' answer, multiple choices and Likert scales answers. Along with Tilt (2001), the corporate environmental policy is studied by the comparison between the internal report of its policies and the external report in the annual reports of Australian companies listed on the Australian Stock Exchange in 1994; Tilt (1994; 2001) uses content analysis to measure the corporate disclosures. In conjunction with Hackston & Milne (1996) who provide a description of the New Zealand corporate social disclosure and its connection to corporate social responsibility using the same method. Content analysis is the method applied to measure the CSR. However, these studies do not discuss what they measured. In other words, these measurements of CSR and SER are an approximation of reality among different companies of many contexts. While there is an unclear form of sustainability, 'the measurable' is placed in the front because these measurements obscure a deep detail of the issues regarding sustainability. The world is too complex to place in a comparable index. Each company has particularities and these studies ignore it by mixing and coding the complexity of social life and environmental issues. In the end, the desired approximation of reality in the studies of sustainability indices becomes complicated because the exclusions of particularities do not fit any company.

Studies of social and environmental disclosure adopt a content analysis to measure the extent of disclosure (Adams, Coutts, & Harte, 1995; Patten, 2002; Al-Tuwaijri, Christensen & Hughes, 2004; Cho & Patten, 2007; Clarkson, Li, Richardson, & Vasvari, 2008; Lu & Abeysekera, 2014). In other studies, corporate social responsibility relates to financial numbers (Roberts, 1992). Mahoney and Roberts (2007), Mahoney Thorne, Cecil and LaGore (2013), and Elliott et al. (2014) assess the CSR performance by a previous index. Further, Delmas & Blass (2010) make a comparison between three indicators to construct a metric for corporate environmental performance. In these papers, positivism is the major paradigm to explain, predict, and measure the reality of social and environment. These studies exemplify the assumption of 'asocial' researchers and 'objective' reality (Chua, 1986a; Crotty, 1998, Guba & Lincoln, 1994). These examples use mechanisms of 'the truth' and 'objectivity' noted in the literature. This means that the exclusion of social interactions in the theme of 'sustainability' establishes a limited view of sustainability that

supports the capitalist system. The measurement of performance and the corporate responsibility indicate that sustainability is a mechanism to achieve economic growth for the business. However, this counters the origin of sustainability (see the Brundtland Report, 1987 and UN Conference in Stockholm in 1972). From this perspective, the applied notion of SEA is a set of social and environmental disclosures and reporting that is an instrument for other purposes than sustainability. This perspective does not allow contestation or challenges to the construction of SEA as a consequence the business case approach is narrow and a servant to the logic of capitalism.

Some papers aim to explain social and environmental disclosures by a positivist view. Business case approach relates to theories that support business, society and SEA. For example, legitimacy theory (Patten, 1992, 2002; Deegan, 2002; Neu, Warsame, & Pedwell, 1998; Aerts & Cormier, 2009), voluntary disclosure theory (Brammer & Pavelin, 2006; Clarkson, Li, Richardson, & Vasvari, 2008), agency theory, institutional theory and stakeholder theory (Deegan & Blomquist, 2006; Roberts, 1992) which all provide reasons for the conflicts of interests between society and business. Deegan (2002, p. 282) argues that legitimacy theory subsidizes social and environmental reporting in accounting research. Consequently, this theory supports organisations to seek the benefits of the reporting of social and environmental aspects. The authors of this theory assert that through disclosures, organisations would present the societal expectation such as wellbeing, employment and environmental protection. This theory assumes organisations have a social contract with a society and that advocates for acceptance of what organisations do. Deegan (2002, pp. 302-303) argues the legitimacy theory concedes an opportunity for organisations disclosing their activity using "corporate social and environmental reporting". Cho and Patten (2013, p. 445) assert that legitimacy theory would explain the amount of disclosure of CSR that is predominately made by companies "with worse environmental performance". Additionally, Cho and Patten (2013) argue that organisations will continue to adopt a financial basis into social and environmental aspects. Legitimacy theory explains why organisations adopt the SEA's idea voluntarily (Brown & Fraser, 2006, p. 105). Hence, organisations presume that they are engaged in the sustainability's principles. Although, businesses construct their concept of SEA, as Brown (2000, p. 67) contends "unitarist models" predominate accounting that capital is the order. The business case connects positivism to objectivity dominated by capital orientation. "Positivism has led to uncritical acceptance of the representational character

of accounting language and helped to reify the *status quo*" (Brown, 2000, p. 67). Organisations and managers establish their idea of SEA as part of their core business; the result is the "business as usual" and the minimisation of social or environmental problems for the benefit of corporations (Brown & Fraser, 2006, p. 105).

From the business case approach, theories try to explain disclosures and performance. Legitimacy theory (Cormier & Gordon, 2001; Deegan, 2002; Cho & Patten, 2007; Tilling & Tilt, 2010; Cho, Freedman & Patten, 2012; Lanis & Richardson, 2013) and voluntary disclosure theory (Cho & Patten, 2007; Cho, Freedman & Patten, 2012) aim to explain the "unresolved questions" (Cho, Freedman & Patten, 2012, p. 486) of what encourages disclosures and performance within an organisational context. The common method used is content analysis where statistical techniques are associated with the result of the analysis with variables, explaining the relationships. Cormier and Gordon (2001) suggest legitimacy theory might explain social and environmental disclosures through the relation of variables and the level of disclosures. These studies, however, do not expose the assumptions of the following theories. For example, these studies describe the variables but do not explain what those variables mean in social life. The dissociation of reality shows theories in the business case approach aim to justify the business' activities. The principal positivist assumptions are (i) researchers are divorced from the objects, (ii) reality is objective, and (iii) numbers have a self-convincing explanation (autonomous meaning) (Chua, 1986a). This paradigm does not allow for conflicts. The world is perfectly constructed to mask the beneficiaries from this illusion. This paradigm is a fiction, constructed only to benefit certain groups. This thesis aims to achieve a reasonable understanding of powers, political devices, hegemonies and ideologies behind this arena. Next section introduces the papers produced by Brazilians or in a Brazilian context of business case approach.

3.1.2 Research in Brazil

The research of the Brazilian literature of SEA is primarily guided by hegemony of financial themes. Since the beginning of SEA research around the world in 1970s and 1980s, Brazilian studies mimic international studies. However, international studies started within public companies contrasting the family enterprises in Brazil (Cintra & Carter, 2012). This characteristic of the international focus differs from the standpoint of the Brazilian literature. Hence, the owners are the principal stakeholders in the Brazilian

studies. Martins (2013, p. 230) asseverates the principal type of research in Brazil is positivist which follows the principal journals in the United States. Particularly, I classify the Brazilian research of business case approach into three main categories: consulting, measuring and descriptive (the list of articles is not exhaustive).

Table 1 - Categories of business case in Brazil

Consulting	Measuring	Descriptive
Abreu, Albuquerque, and Freitas, 2014; Alcaraz and Rodenas, 2013;Beuren, Boff, Horn, and Horn, 2010; Cardoso, Cardoso and Amaral, 2007; Cavalcanti, Almeida, Almeida and Limeira, 2009; Dias, Soekha and Souza, 2008; Kruger, Pfitscher, Uhlmann and Petri, 2013; Lopes and Pacagnan, 2014; Mazzioni, Tinoco and Oliveira, 2007; Medeiros, Medeiros, Denardi and Murini, 2013; Oliveira, Oliveira and Pinto, 2008; Pamplona, Pfitscher, Uhlmann and Limongi, 2011; Parisotto, Zilber and Souza, 2014; Pessoa, Nascimento, Neves and Filho, 2009; Rosa, Ensslin, Ensslin and Lunkes, 2011; Silveira, Borgert, Alberton and Soares, 2011; Sousa-Filho, Wanderley, Gomez and Farache, 2010; Tiscoski and Campos, 2013; Tondolo, Borges, Borges and Limongi, 2013; Zilber, Caruzzo and Campanário, 2011.	Andrade, Bressan, Iquiapaza and Moreira, 2013; Araújo-Júnior, Oliveira, Ponte and Ribeiro, 2014; Bachmann, Carneiro and Espejo, 2013; Borges & Borges, 2014; Colares, Bressan, Lamounier and Borges, 2012; Feldman, Bahamonde and Bellido, 2014; Filho and Moura, 2013; Lameira, NessJr, Quelhas and Pereira, 2013; Lazzarotti, Sehnem, Pavão, Alberton and Marinho, 2014; Macedo, Cruz and Ferreira, 2011; Macêdo, Moura, Dagostini and Hein, 2013; Mazzioni, Diel, Diel, Kruger and Klann, 2013; Nobre and Ribeiro, 2013; Palma Gomes, Kneipp and Rosa, 2014; Ribeiro, Carmo and Carvalho, 2013; Rocha, et al., 2013; Torres, Vasconcelos and Luca, 2013; Voss, Pfitscher, Rosa and Ribeiro, 2013.	Alperstedt, Quintella and Souza, 2010; Burgwal & Vieira, 2014; Calixto, 2013; Coelho, Ott, Pires and Alves, 2013; Ferreira, Silva and Neto, 2012; Filho, 2012; Grecco et al., 2013; Lima, Cabral, Pessoa, Santos and Nascimento, 2011; Machado, Machado and Murcia, 2011; Mariano, Ribeiro and Colauto, 2013; Morisue, Ribeiro and Penteado, 2012; Murcia and Santos, 2012; Oliveira & Souza, 2013; Rodrigues and Duarte, 2011; Rosa, Lunkes, Soler and Feliu, 2013; Rover, Tomazzia, Murcia and Borba, 2012; Sampaio, Gomes, Bruni and Filho, 2012; Voss et al., 2013.
Main characteristics		
Assurance services Consulting models Corporate compliance Mitigation of impacts Risk management	Comparison with financial variables Construction of variables Economic performance Measurement and indexes Performance and strategies	Description of practices Description to predict Details on annual reports Reasons for disclosures Theories for disclosures

The principal focus of Brazilian business case approach is the measurement of SEA and business case is the main perspective applied in the Brazilian academy. These studies perceive a theoretical basis for the sustainability reporting provided by, predominantly, large companies. A main part of the research describes the social and environmental disclosures by index and, employs content analysis method to code these disclosures. The statistical techniques are used to associate variables. The promotion of financial benefits is the key goals of the business case (see Brown & Fraser, 2006).

Brazilian business case studies uphold the relationship between financial performance and strategies. This literature suggests the role of management strategies should consider the interest of the main stakeholders - shareholders (see Brown & Fraser, 2006). Consequently, this view primarily focuses on the economic performance, as this is the major goal of shareholders. The focus is contrary to the objective of the Brundtland Report (1987) and UN (1972).

Other studies compare measurement and participation in a sustainable index. In these studies, social and environmental dimensions are used as tools for the economic growth. Moreover, this idea is the common condition of business case approach, which business is conceived as the traditional neo-economic of wealth (Brown & Fraser, 2006). The lack of deep understanding of the social and environmental level as listed companies in the ISE exemplifies the SEA's constructions as a mechanism to help the increasing of the bottom-line.

In light of this, SEA studies have rhetorical intentions for the sustainable development. The constructed reality of those papers aims to shape a particular goal. Those constructions intend to use sustainability as a 'good idea' for engaging people with their conceptions of sustainability. However, Brown and Fraser (2006, p. 104) affirm organisations use the ideas of 'corporate social responsibility' and 'social and environmental accounting' as fake labels to promote them. Therefore, organisations and the literature of business case utilize SEA as a symbolic mean to the development of its shareholders that suggests a particular sustainability. Organisations take these ideas and play with the common notions of SEA and CSR to persuade audiences and, as a result, to offer better financial return for their creditors.

Constructions of variables in social and environmental disclosures connect financial performance with an artificial notion of SEA (). In these studies, measurement and the self-explanation of numbers aim to clarify the quality of environmental and social disclosures and the level of this information. However, these interpretations of numerical and material reality are a myth (see Morgan, 1988). SEA disclosures are a construct from multiple views that show multiple interpretations of a multifaceted reality. SEA and sustainability have an infinite number of interpretations. In fact, the insistence on the objectivity in accounting serves to avoid problems as a type of anti-dialogue that has the goal to obscure social conflicts (Brown, 2000). Especially, these studies tend to have a

general answer for the companies' disclosures in a way that promotes the shareholders maximisation. Researchers in the Brazilian business case assume those disclosures comparable by simplifying the complex world into variables or indices. The problem with this assumption presumes this social practice is equal or similar to different organisations. To illustrate, the information of recycling industry has different recyclable materials, quantity of the materials and local disposed within the industry, companies and places. However, this information is treated in a simple meaning by employing the answers with 'yes' or 'no' to consider the recycling in a company. The material in the eco-system has a specific way to be disposed of the wastes that depend on the place, as well as quantity and specificity. In this example from recycling, the complexity of environment (materials) and the interaction with people (culture and politics) makes this relationship an exciting mission. To sum up, disclosures are part of these interactions and should be understood as complex and subjective.

Besides an index to measure sustainability, Brazilian research also perceives theories that can provide understanding for the typical environmental and social disclosures (). In overall, these theories explain why these disclosures predominantly highlight the financial aspect as well as the stakeholders' interests. These theories which are commonly embedded within current studies in Brazil are stakeholders theory , legitimacy theory agency theory and institutional theory. In the business case approach, theories of SEA (reporting and disclosures) are incomplete and confined to the financial base of the capitalist system. Thus, these disclosures can be linked to organizational performance, which is a mean to certify and guarantee the return of financial investments with few or none attention to the issues of sustainability. To summary, there is a narrow outlook on 'the reality' in the SEA studies in Brazil regarding theories that would explain social and environmental disclosures. The principal objective is to be objective, but reality and sustainability are constrained according to the gauge of the capitalist system.

About the capitalist logic, researchers focusing on social and environmental disclosures aim to seek a theory that describes and predicts (as a positivist paradigm) the relationship between financial variables and disclosures. In these studies, measurements and theories of SEA aim to explain 'the truth' behind the disclosures; even though, when those disclosures are fragments of the truth. This mechanism of 'the truth' serves to improve the capital invested. As Boyce (2000) asserts, the financial aspect of accounting prevails

in practice. Nevertheless, SEA is a form for "contestability" of discourses and practices (Boyce, 2000, p. 56). These papers omit this aspect of SEA.

The notions of development and growth have employed in literature in three main categories. Development, firstly, is related to social and political areas, namely connected to sustainable development when studies focus on the eradication of poverty. Secondly, there is the use of development growth to mean wealth growth. Usually this links to the fast development of economies such as Brazil. The discourse of this development is present when the country holds the 2016 Olympics and the 2014 World Cup of Football. Thirdly, the development in studies is associated with the traditional form, which is a type of stable growth preferred by the Old World. This thesis does not intend to separate these notions, but it acknowledges that Brazil as an emerging economy tends to follow the second type of idea of development and growth.

Hence, the Brazilian business case approach conceives the notion that SEA is a managerial/strategic toolkit used to improve the economic growth placing social and environment concerns secondly.

3.1.3 Weaknesses of business case

The fundamental critique of the business case approach refers to the limitation of the measurements. In particular, studies ignore the complexity of social relations regarding social phenomena such the social and environmental disclosures. Scerri and James (2010) highlight this problem. Scerri and James (2010) evaluate a measuring scale for sustainability. One of their concerns is the bottom-line approach. Expressly, the problem here is the inattentive quality of each social phenomenon. Moreover, there are no powerful groups, ideologies and politics represented in this approach; these follow unaccomplished and misunderstood theoretical implications that create difficulties for a reasonable critical evaluation. In line with Kelle (2006, p. 296), several methodological problems are surrounding quantitative methods [Kelle refers to positivist approach] that are formed by the absence of knowledge of the local culture, standard and "social phenomena". Namely, there is a "predominance of economic language" which means the measurement focuses on the economic aspect; in other words, the bottom-line is the profit effects of the whole conception of those indices (Scerri & James, 2010, p. 46). Along with Scerri & James (2010), projects that aim to achieve sustainability by measuring the "facts" that are far from the initial goal. Qualitative indicators, as Scerri & James (2010) suggest,

will allow a negotiation between the meanings of what sustainability is according to each community. Indeed, there remains a lack of a practical way to measure sustainability. In essence, sustainability measurements and meanings are political. Especially, this intangible meaning of sustainability creates complex ramifications for the power for elites. Thus, sustainability is played as a convenient signifier, as a rhetorical application. In certain cases, the meaning crosses to a particular goal being the conservation of the capitalist mode.

According to Scerri and James (2010, p. 51) the measurement of sustainability, social and environmental disclosure, as well as corporate social responsibility is "free value" or "scientific facts". However, these avert understanding the norms, rules and values behind social praxis. The self-explanation of numbers is highly criticised by Chua (1986b, p. 617) "accounting numbers are inadequate representations of things and events as experienced by human beings. Because of this, actors will seek to transcend the formality of the numbers and manipulate their symbolic meaning to suit their particular intentions".

Likewise, Chua (1986a) considers researchers using positivism in accounting are divorced from what they analyse. This view suits the business case that is an approach based on positivism. There are few critiques in positivism due to the assumption of objectivity. These little critiques assimilate numbers as objective because numbers in positivist approach have their convincing meaning. Chua (1986a, p. 594) outlines the few discussion of how accounting numbers provide a value for people, machines and time "via an all-pervasive intrumental[sic] rationality" that makes humans "countable". In the positivist conception, a number is comparable, enough and representative without providing a deep explanation of its meaning. There is common sense in the reliability of numbers, which hides in particular interests (Chua, 1986b). Especially, the numerical view that accountants believe has an objective reality, and it does not indicate the partial and limited modes of representation. Morgan (1988, p. 480) affirms numerical representation is used as part of the domination "by the fact that accounting is designed to serve certain interests". From this perspective, accountants reject the political interest embedded in numbers. To illustrate, this point, Morgan reflects: "the accountant must recognize the tension that exists between 'the world as viewed by the accountant', and 'the world in a wider sense'" (Morgan, 1988, p. 484). In accounting, objectivity and

measurement are complex concepts. Accountants are usually interpreting the reality "as is", but this is only a partial representation of social practices (Morgan, 1988).

Contradictions and conflicts tend to underpin opinions within differing social groups. Martinez-Alier (2002) discusses the contradiction and interests regarding how sustainability affects people in communities, governments, companies and normal life. For instance, evaluating the environmental impacts causes a complex conjugation of different interests. As Martinez-Alier (2002, p. 44) argues, where there are "unresolved ecological conflicts", it also implies "incommensurability in valuation". Additionally, the existence of conflicts between agents in society averts a common language. Then, while conflicts exist, society will never stop to construct and create new forms to communicate and signify their practices. By the optic of measurement techniques, a single language for sustainability would benefit the general explanation of the social phenomena but reality explained by a single voice is impossible. People are complex creatures who use multiple ways of communication. Thus, a standard language to represent a social phenomenon is partial because of the uncountable characteristics within social relationships. The business case approach ignores this reality and shines the light on for the company's advantage. As Brown & Fraser (2006, p. 114) point out, SEA and corporate social responsibility seem to redirect the sustainability concepts towards the dominant group who considers SEA, CSR and sustainability merely as an "extension of management's existing toolkit". This position requires more attention to performance measures and techniques, but it, there are problems with this standpoint because this vision considers the objectivity of social and environmental information only after extracting the value-free and hence demonstrating the information as "the only discourse in the town" (Brown & Fraser, 2006, pp. 114-115).

A further limitation of this approach is those theories of legitimacy, agency and institutional focus primarily on the companies' necessities as an agent that will transform the society, but society is not only represented by the view of corporations. These theories put the organisation at the centre of decisions (Parker, 2005). Then, other groups in society are misrepresented, and the decisions are often guided by corporate choices. While the stakeholder theory privileges the economic position of companies, the theory emphasises the most influential stakeholders (shareholders and investors). Similarly, the

theory omits the non-financial stakeholders - primarily the beneficiaries of SEA (Parker, 2005, p. 846).

Furthermore, these theories fail to explain conflicts between companies and society since the corporate goals for CSR, sustainability and SEA oppose society's overall objective. A company's vision (more focused on the economic) is insufficient to understand SEA; and hence, this theory is unable to capture the broader meaning of sustainability and its segments (SEA, CSR, SD, SER). A company's objective is consistent with the main stakeholders' interest that seeks to be sustainable economically in the long-term only if it guarantees profits, repays debts and pays dividends. On the other hand, society and community interests lie in the reduction of poverty, environmental damages and social injustice.

The origins of those theories have started in economic studies in Canada and the US (Parker, 2005). According to Parker (2005, p. 846), economic theories as the agency and utility of decisions began in the US and Canada, and these were inspired by research on social and environmental responsibility. From a neo-liberal economics origin, these theories only support the financial stakeholders, and not the protection of the social and environmental impact (Parker, 2005). The main critique of these theories establishes on the economic basics. These theories seek to show how disclosure of social and environmental information influences share prices. In this regard, theories in the business case approach try to generalise the social practices as disclosures and reporting, but these theories fail to explain why those practices take place in the ambient influenced by politics that continues to favour shareholders. Likewise, these theories create disagreements about the beneficiaries of the disclosures and the limited external information. Principal reason for these disagreements rests in the limited economic view. This view facilitates the growth of the bottom-line, but sustainability is for social justice, environmental protection and welfare. Due to these different perspectives, problems and conflicts remain unsolved. If the goal of sustainability is economic expansion, then sustainability is empty when it tries to persuade the non-financial stakeholders and community towards the organisations' goal. There are different interpretations between seeing the world from an economic sphere and seeing the world through environmental and social lenses. As the conflict suggests, the central vision for a company excludes this broader view of society. Parker considered this limitation and concluded it as an incomplete theory. Also, Parker

(2005, p. 846) discusses further economic theories which focus on financial stakeholders who are not the main beneficiaries of SEA disclosures. Parker (2005, p. 846) states these theories tend to be individualistic, based on economic factors, thus, limited in nature. The major conflict between the economic measure and society's expectation is the focus that the individual is the most important unit of analysis. However, the mutual interest is commonly forgotten by the view of corporations which tend to use the good of society to their self-interests. In light of this, businesses should not take the community goal for granted by undermining its needs. Instead, they should take it as part of its aims.

The most persuasive theory about social and environmental responsibility is legitimacy theory[6]; in the 1970s, these theories started to analyse social and environmental accountability through the writing of Schocker and Sethi (Parker, 2005, p. 846). A critical review of this theory highlights legitimacy in the negotiation process. Thus, the primary concern rests who will lose with and who will win to control this legitimacy. For example, Gray, Kouhy and Lavers (1995, p. 54) claim that CSR is part of the bourgeois political economy, and it intends to conserve the legitimacy and resets or "renegotiates" elements of hegemony (or, at least, the language or symbols). A definition of legitimacy theory is: "this theory is based upon the notion that business operates in society via a social contract that agrees to perform various socially desired actions in return for approval of its objectives, other rewards and its ultimate survival" (Guthrie & Parker, 1989, p. 344). The problem with this theory, however, it that assumes organisations as the agent to control legitimacy and it fails to include a broader view of the social contract. To do this, organisations place their preferences in the centre and ignore the intentions of the community. Unique to SEA research, legitimacy theory tries to exclude sustainability's ideas in the social contract between organisations and society and to include rhetorical intentions for its meaning (see Brown & Fraser, 2006). If society and community are not the principal agents in the social contract for legitimacy in SEA research, then legitimacy follows the intentions of the organisations with a lack of commitment to the notion of sustainability and its different interpretations. These organisational intentions are the problem when permitting organisations to define legitimacy. This theory abandons any

[6] There are more than one definition for legitimacy theory. This depends on the authors. For this purpose, this thesis use 'legitimacy theory' that means legitimacy theories due to the overall idea of legitimacy that occurs in each definition.

engagement with society and chooses only to engage with the main stakeholders in organisations.

The critique of legitimacy theory appears with the magnitude of the disclosure of social and environmental accountability being part of the capitalist strategy (Parker, 2005, p. 846). In practice, these disclosures articulate and assume a role of a bourgeois theory that overlooks any concepts of transparency and accountability (Parker, 2005, p. 846). Spence, Husillos and Correa-Ruiz (2010) discuss theories that support practices in research focusing on social and environmental reporting [accounting]. Spence et al. (2010) critique the role of legitimacy as well as stakeholder and political economy theories in accounting. In brief, Spence et al. (2010) contend those theories are inconsistent with reality, and the theories do not provide a consensus agreement of the disclosures. For that reason, those theories reveal at micro level a position that does not allow a general demand for sustainability at the macro level (Spence et al., 2010). The "realistic political demand" of accountability holds at the macro level of society, but those disclosures belong from micro level; these theories do not obtain the societal needs for accountability wholly; from this perspective, the outcomes of social and environmental disclosures deny the demand for the communal realm (Spence et al., 2010, p. 83). The principal aim of these theories is to demonstrate micro interests (where organisations are) with universal claims (macro level). In this position, however, when organisations claim for a sustainable planet at the micro level, this claim does not benefit the whole society (macro level). When organisations concentrate on the micro level, the policies ignore societal needs (macro level). In summary, this approach has three major limitations: the problem of measurement, the avoidance of contradictions and conflicts and finally, the weakness of these theories consider organisations as the main agents of SEA. The following section ponders the stakeholder-accountability approach in SEA studies.

3.2 Stakeholder-accountability

This section concentrates on understanding SEA via the stakeholder-accountability perspective. First, the section presents the notion of stakeholder-accountability. Then, studies of this approach are discussed in international and Brazilian journals. Finally, this section debates the weaknesses of stakeholder-accountability approach.

The stakeholder-accountability approach considers non-financial stakeholders as beneficiaries of SEA information. The position Brown and Fraser's (2006) about

stakeholder-accountability indicates the concern researchers have represented the voices of other stakeholders other than shareholders because they are predominantly highlighted and exposed by public companies in the annual reports, releases and presidential speeches when organisations present financial aspects. From this approach, stakeholders are viewed through multiple lenses, and they can respond to diverse forms of accountability (Brown & Fraser, 2006, p. 107). The stakeholder-accountability perspective hints at certain interpretations of the attitudes, ethics and social practices of the stakeholders that would explain certain disclosure or measurement. There are similarities between stakeholder-accountability perspective and interpretivism. Interpretations and understandings of a social situation produced by agents are part of the interpretivism paradigm.

The distinction between interpretivism and positivism is the conception of reality. Interpretivism provides a less firm understanding of reality. Whereas, positivism outlines the aims of being value-free, generalizable and demonstrating the robust methods providing objective and neutral results. Crotty (1998, p. 67) notes positivism has its root detached observation plus universal laws which offer a general and predictable explanation of humankind. Contrary to this position, interpretivism has a reflecting reality and respects culture and the history of the participants, this is demonstrated when Crotty (1998, p. 67) states, "culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world". Additionally, Chua (1986b, p. 615) asserts that interpretive science is not involved in controlling social phenomena, but understanding the meanings of people's actions. By doing this, interpretivism and stakeholder-accountability approach enable researchers to comprehend language and life modes. This section presents international papers on stakeholder-accountability approach that mainly discuss the perception and the inclusion of voices from non-financial stakeholders in the theme of SEA.

3.2.1 International research

The international research on SEA focuses on three main aspects. First, there is a claim for more engagement with stakeholders in the process of sustainability and accountability (Adams, 2004; Adams & McNichols, 2007; Cooper, Parkes, & Blewitt, 2014). Secondly, papers are discussing the language employed in reports of corporate social responsibility (Sciulli, 2011; Tregidga, Milne, & Lehman, 2012; Milne et al., 2009; Laine, 2005). Thirdly,

this section includes papers regarding perceptions and disclosures of sustainability (Momin, 2013; Murphy & Schlegelmilch, 2013).

The "stakeholder engagement" viewpoint in organisations creates new ideas of social implications for the role of organisations within society. This approach contrasts the traditional notion of neo-classical economics where wealth maximisation is for shareholders (Brown & Fraser, 2006, p. 107). Shareholders are the major players in traditional neo-classical economic paradigm. As a result, this focus increases the objective of wealth and places shareholders at the centre of decision-making in the traditional accounting. Corporate reporting, however, Adams (2004, p. 749) asserts that lack of inclusiveness of stakeholders causes significant concerns about the ethical, social and environmental impact of business when making full disclosure. Accountability is the "clear statement of values with corresponding objectives" (Adams, 2004, p. 732). The findings of Adams's (2004, p. 731) work shows that the case study (Alpha) can cover up the full disclosure of accountability; however, Alpha failed to provide completeness of the "impacts on the communities and the environment which are material to key stakeholder groups" (Adams, 2004, p. 749). Adams asserts that this level of incompleteness would not be accepted in financial reporting. It is essential to highlight that the quality of disclosure suffers influences from external and internal, but the principal driver is the cost, regulations and positive effects (Dey, 2003; Gray, 2010, Brown & Fraser, 2006).

Similarly, the engagement of stakeholders in the construction of sustainability shows a broader view of what constitute sustainability and accountability in the organisational ground (Adams & McNichols, 2007; Cooper et al., 2014). Adams and McNichols (2007) compare understandings of the process of reporting sustainability with accountability's elements. Meanwhile, agents inside organisations use the observations from corporate meetings to construct the accountability meaning. In keeping with Adams and McNichols (2007, p. 382), the study contributes to change practices within organisations through the incorporation of sustainable values in its decision-making. Likewise, Cooper et al. (2014) investigate the relationship between institutional contradictions and the stakeholder engagement with sustainability issues. Cooper et al. (2014) concluded that the case study (Aston Business School) engages with the policies of accreditation standards on ethics, social responsibility and sustainability in higher education. However, the influence for its accreditation is the principal motif for the changes at Aston Business School that with

different interviews demonstrate varying degrees of the relevant initiative of ethics, social responsibility and sustainability.

In other studies, disclosure, sustainability and reporting incorporate the stakeholders' role as agents that interfere with the quality and the focus on accountability (Sciulli, 2011; Tregidga et al., 2012; Milne et al., 2009; Laine, 2005). Sciulli (2011) examines sustainability disclosures within the Surf Coast Shire – a council located in Victoria (Australia). Sciulli (2011) applies an interpretive approach to SEA to gain an understanding of the new language adopted by senior managers. The findings suggest that the local government organisation is highly influenced by Global Reporting Initiatives [GRI]. In contrast, this entity had not profoundly reflected the significance of sustainability in their business. Thus, external pressures are felt when presenting reports. In the same way, Tregidga, Milne and Lehman (2012) analysed current literature to provide practical examples of how communication and reporting of SEA have been developing from an interpretive and qualitative approach. Tregidga et al. (2012, p. 225) employ a tripartite approach of Thompson (1990)[7] and concluded the most of the literature studied was situated in the second stage which is the construction of the message). Essentially, this second stage provides the message and reporting about sustainability given by organisations; this step also emphasizes the factors of the production of the report; message and reporting are mainly done for the organisational communication that promotes and support sustainability reporting (Tregidga et al., 2012, p. 226). In summary, the principal aim of Sciulli (2011), Tregidga et al. (2012), Milne et al. (2009) and Laine (2005) is to include an interpretivist approach to hint at the role sustainability and SEA have on an organisation, but the authors do not critique those findings. The main idea of stakeholders-accountability approach is to give a voice to voiceless non-financial stakeholders. In the organisational reporting and disclosures, as an example, there are few voices beyond those of the powerful.

Corporate sustainability reporting and the language are topics related to the interpretations of disclosures of SEA. Milne et al. (2009, p. 1211) suggest that the discourse applied in the New Zealand Business Council for Sustainable Development [NZBCSD] was guided by an economic aspect and was treated as instrumental rather as

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[7] Thompson, J. B. (1990). Ideology and modern culture: Critical social theory in the era of mass communication. Cambridge: Polity Press.

an intrinsic part of the organisation. A focus on the broader stakeholders and eco-efficiency increases the powerful position of the NZBCSD within a discourse of sustainable development (Milne et al., 2009, p. 1238). From the stakeholder-accountability approach, stakeholders could be the guardian of ethics, environment and the sustainable development. Moreover, Laine (2005) argues Finnish companies construct sustainable development as a win-win concept that permits society to accept economic growth, environmental protection and social improvements without considering the gaps between the social, economy and environment (Laine, 2005, p. 395). These examples illustrate that non-financial stakeholders have a limited part in the decision-making of reporting and disclosures of SEA. Although, SEA should contribute to the engagement of accountants and stakeholders (see Hines, 1991; Boyce, 2000; Bebbington et al., 2007), but evidences from the stakeholder-accountability approach demonstrate how limited is the participation of non-financial stakeholders in the corporate decisions.

Further, perceptions and disclosures of sustainability are a way to comprehend practical implementation for developing countries. Momin (2013) illustrated this when he explored the perceptions of executives about social disclosures in nine social and environmental NGOs in Bangladesh. The interviews with executives provided historical and social influences accounts in their discourse. The narrative suggests they are concerned about poverty, government infrastructure, and foreign aid and, for some, the lack of awareness in corporate social disclosures. Momin's study retrospectively indicates how executives interpret the meanings of corporate social disclosures. In closing, non-governmental institutions appear to integrate the organisational activities with the conditions of sustainable development preconized by the Brundtland Report (1987).

Lastly, the analysis of sustainability and its focus can indicate that groups perceive corporate social responsibility differently. Murphy and Schlegelmilch (2013) emphasize the corporate social responsibility and irresponsibility in 17 articles by following five steps: consumer perspectives, financial and investment perspectives, marketing perspectives, conceptual and theoretical issues and environmental perspectives. Murphy and Schlegelmilch (2013) address questions about ethics and corporate citizenship by identifying some social developments occurring in CSR debates. Meanwhile, stakeholder-accountability approach addresses aspects of ethics and social responsibility that leads to a broader view than the business case approach. Essentially, stakeholder-accountability

approach creates possibilities for other issues to be analysed rather than just the business interests.

In summary, stakeholder-accountability approach provides a wider view of accounting than business case approach to opening a place for the non-financial stakeholders' voices to be heard. Thus, the research of SEA humanizes the disclosures, reporting and interviews. Academics pursue engagement with sustainability as they adopt a varied interpretation.

The next section identifies SEA studies in Brazil considered in this approach. Firstly, this section presents papers reflecting sustainability and practice (Ipiranga & Aguiar, 2014; Abbade & Mores, 2013; Giesta, 2013; Munck, Bansi, Dias and Cella-de-Oliveira, 2013; Mota, Mazza, & Oliveira, 2013; Igarashi, Oliveira, Silva and Igarashi, 2010). Secondly, there are papers suggesting improvements for governmental policies (Amorim, Araújo, & Cândido, 2014; Cardoso, Souza, Paiva, Momo and Cunha, 2014; Nascimento, Nascimento, & Bellen, 2013). Finally, the Brazilian section of stakeholders-accountability approach also discusses the discourse, perception and strategies of corporate social responsibility (Benedicto, Stieg, Lames and Filho, 2013; Pereira, Melo, Slomski and Weffort, 2013).

3.2.2 Research in Brazil

Papers conducted in Brazil using the stakeholder-accountability approach stays at the level of understanding non-financial stakeholders in the construction of the meanings associated with SEA. This level of agreement is similar to the main idea in the international papers discussed previously. Parker (2005, p. 846) contends non-financial stakeholders are the primary beneficiaries of SEA and its disclosures. For this reason, studies of stakeholders-accountability approach aims to give a voice to other stakeholders than the financial users. There are three categories of research conducted in Brazil:

(1) Reflections and sustainable practices (Ipiranga & Aguiar, 2014; Abbade & Mores, 2013; Giesta, 2013; Munck, Bansi, Dias and Cella-de-Oliveira, 2013; Mota, Mazza, & Oliveira, 2013; Igarashi, Oliveira, Silva and Igarashi, 2010)
(2) Suggestions for improvements in the government policies (Amorim, Araújo, & Cândido, 2014; Cardoso, Souza, Paiva, Momo and Cunha, 2014; Nascimento, Nascimento, & Bellen, 2013)
(3) Explaining the corporate social responsibility and strategies (Benedicto, Stieg, Lames and Filho, 2013; Pereira, Melo, Slomski and Weffort, 2013)

Firstly, Ipiranga and Aguiar (2014) understand the practices of sustainability associated with business goals. Ipiranga and Aguiar (2014) reflect on sustainability when looking at social labour processes and small business networks. They suggest the company is involved in a social network that includes life, work and its activities (Ipiranga & Aguiar,

2014, p. 160). This network originates from employing sustainable practices (Ipiranga & Aguiar, 2014, p. 146). This paper considers the impressions actors have when society seeks to utilise sustainable practices to uphold capital reinvestment, jobs and the environment. This paper reflects the business case approach. However, it intends to interpret the social network from a sustainability perspective. In essence, Ipiranga and Aguiar (2014) offer some interpretations on the practice of sustainability.

Agents from the Brasil Foods S/A [BRF] interpret sustainable development and corporate social responsibility (Abbade & Mores, 2013). Defining sustainability and social responsibility are the objectives in Abbade and Mores (2013). Their results indicate the company engages with the local communities, but BRF primarily focuses on the economic and financial returns. To illustrate this, the development of a sustainable productive chain by BRF aims to gain attention in the social, environmental and economic aspects, but the principal focus is the sustainable economic development and expansion of their activities (Abbade & Mores, 2013, pp. 40-41). The contestation between the practices of SEA begins to appear in this approach. The instrumental approach of the business case seems to fade while researchers give voices to the non-financial stakeholders such as the communities, employees and managers. Additionally, there is a need to develop understandings of the practices of sustainability.

Corporate education is a practical way to explain SEA. Giesta (2013) writes on environmental education focusing on a petrochemical company in Mossoró – the Rio Grande do Norte state. There is an inclusion of academics, employees and managers to construct the conception of sustainable development, environmental management and environmental education (Giesta, 2013). Researchers conduct interviews and use questionnaires to gather data about environmental thinking from employees and managers of the company. The data can be characterised as competitive, antagonistic and complementary to the corporate goals (Giesta, 2013, p. 454) that illustrate the "stakeholder engagement". Specifically, what environmental education, environmental management and sustainable development mean to employees and managers.

Returning to a previously discussed theory, Munck et al. (2013) assume organisations adopt a process of actions and decision-making as an endless circle. Munck et al. (2013) recommend a framework to be able to understand the organisational sustainability that can delineate a pattern to help the management that suits organisations in a broader

perspective. As an example, Munck et al. (2013, p. 460) suggest three new items to be incorporated in the organisational actions and decision-making: eco-efficient products, insertion of the socio-economic platform and social and environmental justice.

Descriptions of and suggestions for improvements in the Brazilian context focus on the conventional wisdom. Incorporating this change, Igarashi et al. (2010) recommend some changes in the sustainability reporting for Itaipu Binacional – one of Brazil's largest companies. The changes include assuming the relations of financial investments and the social and environmental information without questioning in-depth what the numbers represent in society. Using this change, Mota et al. (2013) analyse the reporting of environmental indicators and corporate performance to GRI guidelines. The results suggest a lack of engagement on the part of companies with sustainable development principles; companies declare themselves as strategically sustainable, but they did not say who is the beneficiary (Mota et al., 2013, p. 78). From Mota's paper, stakeholder-accountability approach becomes more critical than the business case approach. At this point, papers start to discuss some reason for the disclosures of sustainable development that means a deeper discussion of the silences and unveiled intentions of corporate strategies.

Public policies relating to sustainable development indicate intentions for a better world. Amorim et al. (2014) analysed the quality of life in Caicó - a city in the Rio Grande do Norte State (Brazil) where sustainable practices would minimize the worst effects of organisational activities. The results inform the city that it has severe problems relating to unsustainability; for example, polluted water. In response, Amorim et al. (2014, p. 189) suggest public policies to improve this devastating scenario. The position of Amorim et al. (2014) seems to be a stewardship for public policies that is a way to engage in the organisational activities and governmental actions to protect societies. The analysed case in Caicó demonstrates that companies prioritise the economic results for a development of its owners and creditors, but sustainability relates to a broader conception, not only wealth maximisation.

Government policies should support the idea of sustainable development as a response to social and economic problems. Cardoso et al. (2014) examine government policies regarding social, culture, environmental, political, institutional and economic aspects in three territories in the Rio Grande do Norte State (Mato Grande, Açu-Mossoró and Sertão

do Apodi). As argued by Cardoso et al. (2014, p. 40), sustainable development is the result of interactions between economic, environmental, socio-cultural and political-institutional arenas. Moreover, their result indicates the policies primarily focus on the economic level due to the incipient and dependent economies from governmental aids (Cardoso et al., 2014, p. 40). The standard of development is critical in the cultural and economic index for the three territories, but Sertão do Apodi is the worse (Cardoso et al., 2014, p. 50). There are problems of poverty, governmental assistance for families, conservations of green areas, contamination of aquifers and rivers and proper waste disposition (Cardoso et al., 2014, p. 51). Additionally, the local economies do not develop a technical capability nor become financially and productively independent (Cardoso et al., 2014, p. 40). Examples of this weakness include the lack of different operating activities in the agricultural production as well as free forms to support families rather than government subsidies (Cardoso et al., 2014, p. 40). The analysis seems to be guided by economic principles and researchers place themselves as gatekeepers of public policies.

Nascimento et al. (2013) suggest changes in the public policies to address the issues of sustainability. More precisely, Nascimento et al. (2013) provide an analysis of how politicians could improve public policies to be consistent with sustainable development. The evidence suggests politicians perceive economic outcomes during public policy debates. The purpose of these public policies is to increase the governmental revenues and less progress to the environmental and social problems (Nascimento et al., 2013, p. 77). Nascimento et al.'s (2013, p. 77) findings indicate two new forms for expanding the government revenue, via royalties from extracting pre-salt oil and the Green GST – a specific policy originated from payments of tax to help cities when they protect the environment. Governmental institutions, as well as private corporations, pursue a singular objective: increasing its profit margins that are capitalism. However, the discourse of sustainability is very audacious and with few actions to help the reduction of poverty or environmental devastation. The report of corporate social responsibility may reveal the intentions to disclosure social and environmental information.

The corporate social responsibility disclosures are a result of corporate strategies, and the discourse of CSR is fully grasped with the thoughts of the key stakeholders. According to Benedicto et al. (2013), the discourse of CSR is framed into the programs and projects

of four financial institutions in Brazil. The discourse promoted by these institutions seems to justify the CSR movement within the spirit of capitalism, but this movement is contradictory to society's goal of sustainable development. What institutions promote is a rhetorical image of capitalism as they construct a positive image demanded by society's ethical and transparent attitudes (Benedicto et al., 2013, p. 86). On the other hand, Pereira et al. (2013) aim to understand the managers' perception relating to the certification process of ISO 14001 in a Brazilian sugarcane industry in Minas Gerais State. The objective of the paper is to harmonize managers' perceptions during the implementation of a system of environmental management (Pereira et al., 2013). Likewise, Pereira et al. (2013, p. 73) consider strategies, goals, and management that contribute to the environmental certification as well as environmental performance.

In summary, papers in Brazil or a Brazilian context using the stakeholder-accountability approach has (i) explored the interaction between agents and sustainability; (ii) it considers interviews as the method to collect data from managers, community and employees; (iii) it comprehends the forces of economic interests of business; (iv) it interacts with government policies; (v) it acts personally towards the concepts of sustainability; and (vi) it expands the role of accounting by reviewing the strategies for sustainability. Following is a discussion of the limitations.

3.2.3 Weaknesses of stakeholder-accountability

In this thesis will discuss five weaknesses of the stakeholder-accountability approach. Namely, narrow analysis of secondary data, overinterpretation, the gap between theory and the analysis, the 'cloud' interpretations and the submission to economic baseline. The foundation for this discussion arises from my readings of Crotty (1998), Chua (1986a, 1986b), Morgan (1988) and some insights from the papers in this approach.

The analysis of secondary data might have a weakness when it is centred in one point of view. Thus, researchers using this type of analysis need to extend their scope to work against a linguistic reduction with few or one document or source. This thesis also employs an analysis of documents reflecting the traditional hermeneutics and I share this limitation. However, all research has limitation. The analysis of secondary documents is a practice of the traditional hermeneutics that concerns to the exploration of readings to extract the social realities (Crotty, 1998). All researchers are surrounded by boundaries of its methods, knowledge, experiences and beliefs. Many researchers conduct this

analysis, by which the researcher imagines, interprets, reflects and constructs the context, intentions, agents and audience for the documents. Also, this limitation might be reduced when data collection includes different sources, a significant range of documents, interviews, direct observations and interactions with agents. Combinations between different designs will significantly reduce the possibilities of misinterpretations.

The second weakness is an overinterpretation that places when interpretations and reinterpretations are excessively biased by a certain view that disregards other opinions. When an object is analysed in depth, there is a sense of satisfaction that gives researcher confidence.

A further weakness of this approach is the gap between theory and practice that underpins the interpretations and reinterpretations. This gap takes place when arguments seem to be theories deprived. In essence, interpretations support by personal experiences. Theories should offer a broader perspective of the motivations of any social expressions. Also, theories can provide new perspectives from researchers who examine and understand their findings. Theories are based on beliefs, observations, elucubrations, worldviews extrapolated from early research. Although, the researcher's experience and theories are valid sources of knowledge, thus it is important to explain the origin of the thoughts as well as how the theories are interpreted because subjects can see the world differently. Theories might fill the gap between common life and object of study. Certain events could provide some explanation for theories; other can just suggest the reasons. The basics of theories should give us broad understandings of reality.

The 'cloud' interpretations are the lack of a paradigm or the explanation of ontology from the researcher's perspective. These beliefs and visions of the world contribute to understanding interpretations or reinterpretations as a social praxis. Some researchers argue that there is an assumption of a perspective when all elements of analysis should be included; but this is not the reality of the most research in the stakeholder-accountability approach, which prevails enigmatic analysis or diverse approaches. Finally, the last critique indicates a submissive attitude of SEA research.

An economic aspect outlines the repeated attitude in SEA research which is the predominance of the Brazilian research. Brazilian research commonly indicates as a servant for the organisation to grow economically. This particular vision underpins much of the research in the stakeholders-accountability approach. The submission for the

economic purpose is a weakness because it limits SEA in a capital-oriented decision-making instead developing ideas and actions for a sustainable planet. This weakness is similar to the business case approach in the papers published by Brazilians. Some papers analysis cases that use the term 'sustainability' to mean 'economic sustainability' (Abbade & Mores, 2013; Ipiranga & Aguiar, 2014; Benedicto et al., 2013). Other papers aim to improve the organisations' system as a consultant (Munck et al., 2013; Pereira et al., 2013). Researchers should participate in social and environmental protection, justice, and communities by discussing the issues surrounding societies and sustainability. The pro-active attitude for a better planet should examine the economic growth in details and should engage in the struggles of poverty and quality of life.

In summary, interpretivism, when applied to SEA, challenges the descriptive papers of the business case by delivering broader interpretations of the SEA's practices.

Some papers situated in next section use interpretative analysis. However, these papers also critique their findings. Then, these studies were considered in the next section of post-structuralist and critical theory approach. In other words, to be considered in the next approach, the paper needs to discuss power or critically evaluate meanings.

3.3 Post-structuralist and critical theory approach

The post-structuralist and critical theory approach contributes to the understanding of SEA in the most critical approach presented in this thesis. Firstly, this section revisits the critical theory and post-structuralism schools. Then, it provides a view of international papers. Further, this section shows a view of research in Brazil. Finally, this thesis presents some weaknesses of post-structuralist and critical theory approach.

Post-structuralism originated from de Saussure's thought on the structure of language. This perspective develops a comprehension of how society works using language. Post-structuralism is a paradigm, approach or perspective that draws upon the notion that symbols (word) and ideas (meaning) are arbitrary (Crotty, 1998, p. 197). Discourse theorists such as Laclau and Mouffe (1985; 2001) follow this thought. According to Howarth and Stavrakakis (2000, p. 5), DT begins with the "Marxist, social constructivist, and interpretative models" to offer a new view of social relationships and political theory; DT believes society is a "symbolic order" underpinned by power and hegemonic relationships. This school is a critique of the "class reductionism and economic determinism" of Marxism to the concept of discourse (Howarth & Stavrakakis, 2000, p. 5).

Discourse is a combination of linguistic and non-linguistic characteristics where political and ideological forces shape discursive formations. This thesis utilises a post-structuralist approach resulted by the readings of Ernesto Laclau, Chantal Mouffe, David Howarth, Yannis Stavrakakis and Slavoj Žižek.

An interpretivist analysis aims to understand an object via "an uncritical form of study" (Crotty, 1998, p. 122) then critical theory/inquiry seeks to change the *status quo* (Crotty, 1998, p. 113). Thus, critical theorists are closer to transformations; although this thought is not new, Karl Marx and the Frankfurt School are the major contributors (Crotty, 1998, p. 115). After Karl Marx's death, other theorists went beyond the *status quo* notion. Examples of these critical theorists include Jürgen Habermas (1929-), Theodor W. Adorno (1903-1969), Paulo Freire (1921-1997), Herbert Marcuse (1989-1979), Rosa Luxemburg (1897-1919), Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) and Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980). A combination of thought constructs the critical theory approach and not just the radical dialectics of Theodor W. Adorno, but also the conscientisation of Paulo Freire:

> Critical inquiry may be as radical as Adorno's negative dialectics or Freire's movement towards conscientisation – or it may not. The spirit of social critique . . . expresses itself in many ways. Through all this diversity, however, critical inquiry remains a form of praxis – a search for knowledge, to be sure, but always emancipatory knowledge, knowledge in the context of action and the search for freedom (Crotty, 1998, p. 159).

Critical theory is considered a thought of emancipation, by recognizing the powers inserted into social relationships. This school follows the freedom of knowledge and its liberation from the chains of repression or restriction sustained in other ideologies about society (Althusser, 2012). The following section introduces research published internationally using post-structuralism and critical inquiry.

3.3.1 International research

This third approach of SEA studies has a common idea, which is power. It is the primary link between post-structuralism and critical theory. The aim of these schools is to reveal power is central to social relationships. Moreover, exposing power, theorists can create space for future research. This section seeks to discuss the papers published outside Brazil using post-structuralism and critical theory.

Papers critique the applied concepts of sustainable development from organisations that fail to include a broader societal needs. Moneva, Archel and Correa (2006) consider the GRI guidelines to comprehend the organisations practices relating to sustainable

development and sustainability concepts. Some organisations from Moneva et al. (2006)'s study omit to address a responsible attitude towards gas emission, social equity or human rights; the study illustrates how companies incorporate the notion of sustainable development and how they do not "behave in a responsible way" (Moneva et al., 2006, p. 121). In conclusion, Moneva et al. (2006) brought out some problems with the concept of SD constituted by the GRI guidelines:

- ✓ It runs the risk of losing sight of the big picture for sustainability (globalization, trade, north-south divergence . . .).
- ✓ It obscures the acquiring of an integrated view of business sustainability removing the development of integrated indicators as the way forward.
- ✓ It contributes to perceive the SD concept from a reductionism approach placing the three dimensions of sustainability at the same level and forgetting constituents interaction and participation.
- ✓ It promotes the construction of a set of indicators instead of instilling business with values to change their mentality so they can subscribe to the assumptions of SD.

Figure 3 – Problems of sustainable development concepts. Source: Moneva et al. (2006, p. 135)

The problems of GRI are principally the "reductionism" of seeing sustainability by three dimensions, framed in the proposed indicators and then, losing "the big picture" (Moneva et al., 2006, p. 135). The GRI guidelines do not suggest a separation from economic pillar instead this guideline shifts the traditional accounting of measurement to a "more sophisticated scheme" that trends to prioritise the economic relationship between companies and stakeholders (Moneva et al., 2006, p. 135).

> What is more important is not the existence of a separate pillar provided with a set of economic indicators, but the fact that this economic information currently suggested in the GRI guidelines emerges from a shifting process using a traditional accounting measures scheme to a more sophisticated scheme which tends to illustrate the economic relationships and impacts – direct and indirect – that the company has with its stakeholders. To some extent, this is evidence of the integration of the different assumptions embedded in SD (Moneva et al., 2006, p. 135).

The discourses of SD understand a mean for the practical implication of sustainability in organisations. In this regard, Tregidga Milne and Kearins (2014) investigate the sustainable development of 365 public reports from New Zealand during the period between 1992 and 2010. Employing particular conceptions of Laclau and Mouffe's DT, Tregidga et al. (2014) analysed and interpreted the conceptualisation of discourse, identity and group formation in the New Zealander context. The paper finds three distinct identities of sustainable development's formation. Firstly, in 1992-1999, companies represented themselves as "environmentally responsible and compliant organizations". Secondly, in 2000-2004, organisations identified themselves as "organizations as leaders in sustainable development" Finally, in 2005-2010, companies signified themselves as "strategically 'good' organizations" (Tregidga et al., 2014, p. 477). Tregidga et al.'s results

show the rhetorical transition of becoming "sustainable actors" that seems to an open engagement, but it is an adaptable identity to shift social demands (Tregidga et al., 2014, p. 491). These accounts of sustainable development do not link truly to meaningful sustainability. The representation of sustainable development in the corporation practice does reveal the contestation rose from its definition. This degree, this thesis aims to examine the politics of discursive constructions embedded in SEA.

Discourses and the relationship to the business strategy may contribute to understanding the role of sustainability in a capitalist system. Spence (2007) also explores the construction of capitalist discourse within social and environmental reporting [SER]. He uses the lens developed by Laclau and Mouffe to examine 25 interviews with representatives of the large commercial organisation in the UK. Spence maintains business case motivations drive the managerial perception of SER. These representatives shape but also constrain the ideologies apparent in the social and environmental reporting. Spence assumes that agents in a managerial position reinforce the ideological processes of the business. The requirement of this post reproduces and constructs the ideology that business aims to "exploit labour and destroy the environment" (Spence, 2007, p. 876). Even these actions are against to the CSR and SER assumptions. Specifically, Spence (2007) contributes to a critical discussion of the 'frames' for corporate hegemonic discourse in accounting context.

Discourses grasp the dominant ideas of society, when this domination exists; discourses capture the link between the ideas in the mind and the intentions of the dominant group. To some extent, Spence et al. (2010) continue to inquire into practices and theories of SEA/SER projects in later of the research to highlight the nature of the dominant discourse. Spence et al. (2010, p. 76) reflect upon SER theories that are primarily focusing on an "isolation form". This critique indicates a failure at the micro level (stakeholder theory and legitimacy theory) and at the macro level (political economy theory) (Spence et al., 2010, p. 85). Stakeholder theory is a popular theory to identify stakeholders' participation in business, but these actors are usually limited to the most powerful (Spence et al., 2010, p. 80). According to Spence et al. (2010, p. 76), stakeholder theory is applied superficially in SEA studies. One reason is the essential presumption stakeholders have which is only for economic growth (Spence et al., 2010, p. 79). Similarly, legitimacy theory reveals analogous conclusions from stakeholder theory. The general idea of the

"constructs of society" and "relevant publics" from legitimacy and stakeholders theories have known as the vaguest concepts in SEA practices (Spence et al., 2010, p. 82). The political economy theory, however, is more related to the legitimacy of the system, while stakeholder and legitimacy theories are conceived within companies (Gray et al., 1995). The different levels of understandings a legitimacy as intra (micro) or inter (macro) indicate the major variance between legitimacy and stakeholder theories and political economy theory. Nevertheless, this distinction between the micro/macro is not identified clearly in the SER studies (Spence et al., 2010, p. 83). Critiques of these theories focus on the micro level and the weakness of a political discussion (Spence et al., 2010, p. 83). Their conclusion suggests that both levels are necessary to engage in the power struggle which is exposed in discursive practice when critiquing hegemony in the discursive practices (Spence et al., 2010, p. 85). Specifically, theories do not overcome the influence of big business nor their power. Theories, as Spence et al. (2010, p. 85) argue:

> For theories that purport to incorporate political dimensions – Stakeholder Theory and Legitimacy Theory – fall silent on the role of the state and the structural influence of large corporations. Any subsequent theorization is as impoverished as it is unconvincing. Curiously, Political Economy Theory as served up by SER researchers also fails to engage with macro issues of power.

The SER literature has been ignored in corporate practice the issues of large corporations and power, preferring to focus on the corporate reporting (Spence et al., 2010, p. 85). "Empirical (and largely quantitative) analyses of corporate reports has demonstrably permitted the rapid production of research, but a focus on reporting alone effectively precludes a characterisation of SER as anything other than ideological production" (Spence et al., 2010, p. 85). Lastly, Spence et al. (2010, p. 86) conclude that SEA/SER studies have incorporated the "one-eyed" social theory in accounting and management. There is a suggestion to use the work of Ernest Laclau to critique the role of accounting discourse. Spence et al. (2010) suggest some ideas of Laclau's in their discussion on the role of ideologies, antagonisms, logic of equivalence/difference and radical democracy that characterises the discursive formation of society. Thus, the SER literature should embrace the accountability in practice than the organisations' disclosure for being engaged in it (Spence et al., 2010, p. 76).

Discourse reveals the hidden ideologies and hegemonies inside social praxis. Higgins and Walker (2012) indicate the persuasive strategies of discourses for responsible and sustainable business. This persuasive strategy allows three of New Zealand's organisations (Westpac, SKYCITY, and The Warehouse) to pursue a "reasonable" and

"trustworthy" position to gain sustainable development. There is evidence that the organisations studied used the "middle ground" discourse (Higgins & Walker, 2012, p. 205). Critical theorists argue that "middle ground" discourse appeals to the superiority of the market, economic growth and the preservation of the capitalist ideology (Higgins & Walker, 2012, p. 195). Company's emphasise words like "stakeholders", "reputation", "value", "efficiency" and "risk" while little mention of "accountability", "inter or intra-generational equity", "social justice" and "human development" is noted (Higgins & Walker, 2012, p. 205). Higgins and Walker's (2012) conclusion highlights the persuasive strategies, which facilitate the continuation of the 'middle ground' language, and it reinforces the empowerment of the *status quo* (Higgins & Walker, 2012, p. 206).

The tendencies in SEA studies incorporate different constructs of the language as illustrated by Lamberton (2005) who examines a framework of sustainability accounting. Also, Burritt and Schaltegger (2010) appraise the development of sustainability accounting using managerial decisions. Moreover, Gaffikin (2009) reflects on the methodologies and approaches used in SEA. Further, Gray (2013a) considers the critiques of SEA in financial accounting where moreover clearly shows trends of SEA.

An academic review of sustainability in accounting may frame some tendencies. Lamberton (2005) reviews the practice of sustainability in accounting from various approaches present in Gray's work from early 1990's and also from the release of World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002 (Lamberton, 2005, p. 7). The final 'framework' of Lamberton (2005, p. 14) indicates a commitment to economic performance since most approaches to sustainability lie in the traditional accounting. These approaches emphasise the traditional financial accounting practices used by organisations so, "much work is required for sustainability accounting" (Lamberton, 2005, p. 24). Qualitative features need to appear in the sustainability practice to demonstrate a commitment to sustainability and accountability. Lamberton (2005, p. 22) draws on attributes in financial accounting, which indicate to transparency, inclusiveness and auditability under the GRI guidelines. Accordingly, these guidelines show the economic orientation enables companies to persist in the ideology of economic growth without encountering the concept of sustainability. In brief, Lamberton (2005, p. 7) asserts the failure of a significant commitment to sustainable practices in business activities, as such; organisations avoid accountability due to their continuing

unsustainability practices (Lamberton, 2005, p. 7). "The future of sustainability accounting research must continue to display the essential quality of diversity" (Lamberton, 2005, p. 24). If organisations have been focusing on economic growth, then, when they strategise a concept of sustainable development this includes their intentions to change the principal object of sustainable development for something financial.

In the sustainability approach, the connection between literature and decision-making discloses the conflict of interests of society and business. On this point, Burritt and Schaltegger (2010) discuss the development of sustainability accounting research using three approaches enabling managers to achieve sustainability accounting and reporting.

The first considers the inside-out approach; it has a relationship to the strategies of business that incorporate the notion of sustainability into their decision-making (Burritt & Schaltegger, 2010, p. 835). The second approach is the 'outside-in' that predominates the external stakeholder angle (Burritt & Schaltegger, 2010, p. 836). The 'multiple cultural stakeholder perspective' poses different challenges for sustainability accounting. This orientation is not easy to adapt to organisational expectations due to the variety of stakeholders that impede on certain interest groups (Burritt & Schaltegger, 2010, p. 838).

> Multiple representations of environmental and social issues also implicate stakeholders as self-interest groups each representing their own brand of political environmental truth for their own purposes. Stakeholders too are fashion conscious and captured by their own expectations, intentions and agendas (Burritt & Schaltegger, 2010, p. 838).

The third approach is a combination of 'inside-out' and 'outside-in' perspectives. The twin-track combines the internal information during the decision-making and the external parties' interests in the corporate sustainability information (Burritt & Schaltegger, 2010, p. 832). On the one side, the desire for changing the accountability practice assumes challenges for the managers during their decision-making. On the reverse side, these actions might be oriented toward strategic decisions and the awareness of external groups' interests. Their conclusion advises conventional accounting does not solve problems of sustainability (Burritt & Schaltegger, 2010, p. 843). "Sustainability accounting can lead to corrections to the conventional accounting systems" (Burritt & Schaltegger, 2010, p. 843). According to Burritt and Schaltegger (2010, p. 829), a way to develop sustainability accounting ought to be oriented toward better management decision-making (Burritt & Schaltegger, 2010, p. 829). In this regard, SEA research must engage in a profound explanation of practices to evaluate critically its results to society.

An Australian researcher offers a deep explanation of the state-of-art of SEA. Gaffikin (2009) revises 20 years of accounting research at the University of Wollongong. The paper reflects on the critical perspectives researchers have been done over that period. Gaffikin (2009, p. 272) argues that ideas provided by post-structuralist scholars are more appropriate when employing qualitative and alternative methodologies. This thesis adopts a post-structuralist approach due its flexible theorisation and its understandings of social realities as formations of society.

Questioning the *status quo* should make the improvement in the accounting research firstly. In this manner, Gray (2013b, p. 459) challenges conventional financial accounting for not being able to comprehend the natural world wholly. If the environmental and social accounting does not seek social justice, environmental protection or accountability, then there is no space for contestation or improvements. The conventional financial accounting does not consider the whole implication of sustainability due to its limitation in economics. The convention accounting gives more attention to risk, liabilities opportunities, cost and benefits from an economic lens, but these issues are related to social and environmental aspects. For example, this risk includes shareholders, investors, managers' interests but this does not deal with the protection of nature or human welfare (Gray, 2013b, p. 464). This environmental concern is consistent with Gray's (2013b, p. 467) research; the exposition of the real world should be the task of social, environmental and sustainability accounting.

> So, once accounting can be imagined as having some task beyond serving the managers of large corporations and their fickle investors then we start to see that accounting might well have an important function in helping individuals and societies navigate the worst excesses of modernity's destructive relationship with nature and, indeed, with people. A world in which the larger organisations disclosed such things as eco-balances and ecological footprints; in which the interactions in all relationships between organisations and stakeholders were exposed, warts and all; when society could know the full extent of an organisation's compliance with law and quasi law; would be unlikely to look a great deal like the world we now inhabit. This, I suggest, is the function of social, environmental and sustainability accounting – or, as I prefer to call it, "accounting" (Gray, 2013b, p. 467).

It is political the dissociation of social and environment from the accounting framework (see IASB, FASB). There is evidence that shows the traditional accounting is mainly associated with a capitalist goal. The preservation of accounting as a mechanism to keep the capitalist system functioning is the result of powerful groups' interests influencing the current practice of accounting. Despite, accounting should incorporate the social and environmental aspects of its functions (Gray, 2013a). Most SEA studies reinforce this mainstream. To illustrate SEA research, Gray (2013a, p. 4) points out seven trends for SEA

research. The first trend involves the SEA as "normal science" which tries to "record, codify" and "explain current practice"; this view aims to predict the environment similarly to the aspects of financial accounting such as risks and liabilities; this trend is not "about the environment at all". It is similar to the business case approach previously discussed. This view suits the traditional conventions of accounting and the accounting profession (Gray, 2013a, p. 4). Subsequently, Gray (2013a, p. 4) supports the second trend which uses the managerial background. However, it does little account for nature and social justice.

> I see here a second trend: namely that researchers and teachers in environmental [and social] accounting are not embracing the literature and debate around nature, justice and the central role of modernity, international financial capitalism and the size and influence of multi-national corporations (Gray, 2013a, p. 4; *[emphasis added]).*

The third trend, Gray reflects upon is the necessity to adopt accountability as the centrality of SEA research. Instead many studies ignore this idea while the researcher assumes a lazy assumption of sustainable development, CSR and integrated reporting (Gray, 2013a, p. 4). The absence of critiques of the 'taken-for-granted' assumptions underpins this trend. SEA research will develop more if accountability and the existing critiques are placed in the middle of the discussion. The fourth trend starts to be less negative and focuses on issues such as "carbon, water, human rights, biodiversity and the supply chain"; the problem with this trend is that there is a deficiency in profound analysis regarding each issue; the narrow focus does not allow a deep analysis (Gray, 2013a, p. 4). Meanwhile, the fifth trend is the celebration of the multiplicity – as 'social audits', the "silent and shadow accounts" – developed by scholars such as Judy Brown, Christine Cooper, Colin Dey, Jesse Dillard and Ian Thomson, and the other researchers from Centre for Social and Environmental Accounting Research [CSEAR] (Gray, 2013a, p. 4). The sixth trend incorporates non-profit entities such as charities, social enterprises, the World Bank, universities, the United Nations and so on; this trend demonstrates the engagement of nature and justice (Gray, 2013a, p. 4). Lastly, the seventh trend combines the third and second trends; this is concerning when using the institutional theory, but this tend does not treat the concept of social and environment thoroughly (Gray, 2013a, p. 4).

Spence et al. (2010) critique SEA studies that employ economic theories (stakeholders, legitimacy and institutional theories) and posit organisations as the key agent because this combination mostly supports the capital holders, financial institutions and investors. What can be extrapolated from this perspective is that the financial stakeholders

champion the SEA position, which is an incomplete view of SEA and its interpretations (SEA, CSR, SD, and SER).

The evidence from unsustainable practice recognizes the influence of lobbying by large corporations in developed countries. The seminal study "Smoke and mirrors: Corporate social responsibility and tax avoidance" exhibits evidence of unsustainable practices through tax avoidance by large corporations in the United States of America and the United Kingdom (Sikka, 2010). Along similar lines, Sikka (2010) discusses the promise made to be corporate social responsible. Large organisations avoid this responsibility and ethical practices through tax avoidance. "Major corporations increasingly produce brochures and reports containing promises of socially responsible conduct, but this has also been accompanied by large-scale tax avoidance and evasion" (Sikka, 2010, p. 154). The avoidance schemes outline the hypocrisy of the transferability of wealth to needy people while the real actions make visible corporations merely exploit the wealth generation by the omission of the ethical conduct (Sikka, 2010, p. 154). The evidence submitted by Sikka's indicates largest companies from the UK and the US have been doing this since the 1980s. Meanwhile, Sikka (2010, p. 165) encourages researchers to analyse the tax avoidance practices of corporations to realise the genuine commitment to socially responsible conduct. This critique exposes serious contradictions between "corporate talk, decision and action" and the "organised hypocrisy" (Sikka, 2010, p. 153).

SEA should expose the contradictions between SEA and society. Bebbington et al. (2007) propose a dialogic engagement for changing the process of accountability, governance and social responsibility inside corporations. They argue SEA studies need to engage in a dialogic theorisation with the literature. Through engagements, Bebbington et al. (2007, p. 373) affirm the social change of the oppressions' situations that occur in social and environmental practices. Factors of the interrelated context can help to understand the oppression of power and by consequence to engage in a fair environment for the developing of sustainability. These factors are "institutional frameworks, epistemology, human agency, the role of experts, language and discourse heterogeneity, community and identity, material context and power dynamics" (Bebbington et al., 2007, p. 373). The foundation for this concern is based on the work of Paulo Freire (Bebbington et al., 2007). Freire argues that the notion of conscientisation reflects the "invisible" and the "silenced" factors of certain situations (Bebbington et al., 2007, p. 373). Finally, Bebbington et al.

(2007, p. 373) ponder SEA studies via transforming the attitudes of engagement of theorist and philosophers which might reduce the impacts and might change the reality within social groups and by consequence the environment.

The changes and engagement of agents might help promote a fair world. In this manner, O'Dwyer (2005) discusses the social accounting as practiced by an Irish overseas aid agency, the Agency for Personal Service Overseas. O'Dwyer examines how social accounting can serve the organisation by employing in-depth interviews and analysing internal memoranda and other documents. These critical examinations expose the contrast between the board's objectives and the published objectives.

> The aforementioned mutual mistrust between many staff members and management was seen to have influenced this poverty of managerial feedback. Several interviewees felt the ''embedded'' communication difficulties within APSO were reflected in the lack of substantive feedback. For the board, publishing the account seemed to have constituted the key 'event' as opposed to responding to its contents on an ongoing basis (O'Dwyer, 2005, pp. 289-290).

Any form to communicate carries subjectivity. In accounting field, this communication includes partial representations of stakeholders; however, some might be excluded. From O'Dwyer's (2005, p. 292) research, the publication of the SEA indicates an attempt to a substantive change, but what was realised was the "little significance" of a represented voice of the empowered stakeholders (O'Dwyer, 2005, p. 292). The "truly accountable process" needs the engagement of all stakeholders, but the feelings of mistrust emerge to disrupt this process (O'Dwyer, 2005, p. 292). The principal driver for this process of accountability was a distinct voice; the board/managerial agents influence the publicised accountability reports and its practices (O'Dwyer, 2005, p. 292). The core of these findings indicates that the silencing of stakeholders' voices to a few prevents substantive organisational changes (O'Dwyer, 2005, p. 291).

Discussion on how stakeholders participate in the engagement process will seek to transform the *status quo*. Essentially, Spence (2009a) explores the UK users of social and environmental reporting [SER]. Interviews with these managers suggest the most relevant audiences for the SER are investors and employees. However, to achieve broader stakeholders, organisations should regard them as essential to their communication. "SER serves as means of engaging in dialogue with stakeholders" (Spence, 2009a, p. 254). Nevertheless, this does not apply to all the stakeholders. Particularly, what SER tries to communicate in practice is a return to the principal stakeholders (Spence, 2009a, p. 254). Spence contends that companies are not interested in engaging with the stakeholders,

only selected. It is the aim of this research to discover whom these stakeholders are when examining the disclosures of Petrobras.

Academia has a function to understand the situation of engagements and to seek some hope to transform societies in re-thinking the SEA studies via critiques of the problems in the actual economic system. Owen (2008) reflects on the state-of-the-art SEA through research compiled during the 1988-2007 period. Owen (2008, p. 251) supports the concern from Lee D. Parker and Rob Gray regarding the "lack of engagement" in the "relative dearth of case/field/interview work". Owen proposes an engagement is addressing "stakeholder group fully" in areas that need more attention and also lie in a less comfortable zone (Owen, 2008, p. 257). The lesson learnt from CSEAR, and similar initiatives promote the potential intervention into the realms of praxis by pursuing a critical reflection on SEA research (Owen, 2008, p. 257). Owen is optimistic about the future of SEA research, but the emancipatory and radical potential remain a challenge for the future (Owen, 2008, p. 258). There is a dearth of true engagement with all stakeholders and societies in the path of elimination of poverty and protection of environments. However, in a political field, political actors frame what matters, and it results in a domination of certain fields that remain what is necessary for its leaders. To transform old practice is possible when the actual system does not work for the most powerful groups or when revolutions take place. As a post-structuralist thesis, transformations arise in social interactions in the discourse. In a place of unsustainable practices, there is a need to engage in the project of a better planet. This engagement is essential to transform realities and to participate in the political, social and environmental debates in a society with more sustainable than unsustainable practices.

The potential emancipation is at the heart of social accounting project; this could happen if social accounting would separate itself from the economic growth strategy (Spence, 2009b, p. 205). Spence (2009b, p. 205), influenced by Gramsci, suggests an emancipatory social accounting should operate to expose the contradictions of the current hegemony actively. The failure to open organisations up to considerable criticism prevents the development or adoption for a social accounting practice. A further critique of the concept of emancipation in social accounting, Spence draws readers' attention to the hegemonic civil society accounting system. This hegemony declares businesses as successful when it can create and maintain wealth for key stakeholders (Spence, 2009b, p. 223). However,

an emancipatory social accounting should engage in broader actions to disseminate a substantial change in societies dominated by the economic interests. Social accounting ought to regard an action to exhibit the social and environmental problems and it also ought to overcome the current hegemony that hides and preserves the social accounting practice (Spence, 2009b, p. 223).

From a critical theory perspective, Lehman (1999, p. 218) argues SEA should engage with the social mechanism within a capitalist system, such as hegemonic and damaging means of production to understand corporations' actions. The SEA literature shows SEA as an instrument and plays a limited role when it contrives to measure, for example, the results of gas emissions, wastes and cultivation of soils; this framed view realises a specific policy without going further from the "external corporate effects" in society (Lehman, 1999, p. 218). SEA studies need to analyse the corporate actions of the natural environment critically because issues of unsustainability as well as economic policies are changing the significance of SEA and prioritising the dominant intentions.

> For example, social accounting has been developed to measure and verify the effects of, among other things, the costs of plant closure, levels of emission, waste and pollution. I argue that we need to go further and interrogate, discuss and debate these external corporate effects and that accounting can escape its narrow and instrumental role, itself a reflection of a utilitarian motive to maximise human needs and wants (Lehman, 1999, p. 218).

The work of Archel, Husillos and Spence (2011) examines critiques of the CSR and concludes it is a microcosm of the common thinking. The institutionalised process in creation meanings for discourses gives the impressions CSR is a democratic dialogue; but this fails to recognise the concept only captures the dominant ideas in these discourses and silences other ideas and debates of social responsibility (Archel et al., 2011, p. 327). The connections between sustainability's variations (SEA, CSR, SD, and SER) and organisations only support the rhetoric of sustainability because most of the organisations have their self-interests (Spence, 2007).

To conclude, the post-structuralist and critical theory approach better understands the reality of the situation when acknowledging and exposing the hidden ideas and ideologies constructed to benefit the elite and powerful groups primarily. The discourses surrounding SEA and its variations allow us to provide means to uncover persuasive practices followed by 'good speech' and 'good intentions' that mask the real intentions of social responsibility in the accounting context (see Milne et al., 2009; Moneva et al., 2006; Higgins & Walker, 2012) as well as Sikka (2010) exposes evidence of the continuing

unsustainable practice. Finally, in SEA literature challenges society to be empowered and be involved in the sustainability/accountability project. The path for an empowered engagement contents the conscientisation of Paulo Freire to discover the corporate strategies and to act against invisible factors (Bebbington et al., 2007). Another example of engagement is the discussion of the silences of some stakeholders' voices in the report of accountability (O'Dwyer, 2005). Additionally, the concept of SER is employed as a toolkit for organisational communication (Spence, 2009a). There is optimism in the SEA research (Owen, 2008). Also, SEA can engage in the process of exposing the current hegemony and its problems (Spence, 2009b). There is a common use of the concepts of SEA as an instrument for corporations (Lehman, 1999). Finally, SEA is used for a rhetorical application of corporate social responsibility (Archel et al., 2011). This thesis agrees with the necessity for dialogic engagement as it is linked to decreasing poverty and limiting economic growth. Following at present from this discussion in Brazilian research is where I associated with SEA using both the post-structuralist and critical approaches.

3.3.2 Research in Brazil

There are few Brazilian SEA studies from these approaches following this approach. This section considers papers published in Brazilian journals or made by a Brazilian researcher in international journals with deeper critiques of SEA practices. In particular, these papers must draw on conclusion regarding power, discourse and practices in the social or political realm. Critical theory claims for freedom by all possible means and goes beyond the *status quo* to discuss the reasons for power and ideologies, which oppress individuals to be free thinkers. From the conscientisation of Paulo Freire to the radical dialectics of Theodor W. Adorno, critical inquiry intends to advance the *status quo* throughout the freedom (Crotty, 1998). On the other hand, post-structuralism as a school of thought has its roots in critical theory and claims there needs to be the upending the revolution of *status quo*, starting with discourse. Discourse for post-structuralists is a combination of linguistic and non-linguistic terms. Powers, hegemonies and ideologies belong to discourse. Understanding discourse allows research to capture both the social and political undercurrent in societies. In summary, both schools of thought recognise powers, hegemonies and ideologies within social practices.

The internalisation of sustainability and its effects reinforce the role of SEA in strategies. Specifically, Cintra and Carter (2012) affirm that sustainability is conceived in action –

"sustainability is defined by practice". Cintra and Carter (2012) conclude the idea of sustainability in a developing country, like Brazil, is complex and directed by the external reporting. Organisations measure and control the ideas of sustainability through the particular interpretations; this means that an internalisation of the "theorisation of sustainability" does not necessarily represent a sustainable practice in society, but it may seem "a potential for change" (Cintra & Carter, 2012).

Guedes (2003) addresses a critical realism approach derived from previous research based on empirical and positivist premises couched in Brazilian environmental discourses and practices used by transnational enterprises. The conclusions suggested by Guedes reflect the transnational entities operating in Brazil are less transparent than other subsidiaries in developed countries. Also, these show more freedom during the decision-making about environmental information in Brazil. Additionally, the conclusions also suggest a rhetorical environmental engagement and different practices from the origin of the control in developing countries. Managers have inadvertently rejected or ignored corporate requirements when decision-making (Guedes, 2003, p. 36). These attitudes extend from American management style are centralised and also managers have declined other styles such as the Scandinavian and German approaches to managing the environmental decisions (Guedes, 2003, p. 36). Managers have rejected environmental policies, and this rejection is directed linked to unknown interaction mechanism between culture, local preferences and corporate principles (Guedes, 2003, p. 37). Corporations know which decisions profit them more.

Transparency in the decision-making process should follow certain disclosures. Even after Brazil implemented a law (Brazilian federal law n. 12.527 on 18th of November 2011) to allow public access to information from governmental companies, this is not clear how companies use and apply the governmental resources. However, a consistent transparency of the Brazilian governmental institutions is still on track. Guedes (2003, p. 37) affirms that transnational corporations have the obligations of transparency from different countries. Most environmental projects are voluntary (Guedes, 2003, p. 37). Consequently, transnational corporations allocate few financial resources to support the public access to information, and then, as a result, there is a limited product of accountability that aims to justify the environmental agencies policies (Guedes, 2003, p. 37). Transparency and accountability are a process of the modern capitalist system. How

much will this information improve economic growth? Arguably, it is a business, not a charity – is the conventional capitalist logic. The transnational cases in Brazil are examples of corporations that use the concepts of transparency and accountability in a particular interest, which results in a meaningless significance for a deeper transparency or accountability. These corporate examples imply pervasive instruments to ensure the public image of these corporations. In light of Guedes' work, corporations aim to facilitate the worldwide operation by a financial logics; to be able to do this, they perceive the controlling of institutional environment, but they provide better information in countries that shareholders and regulators have more power to control the quality of information (Guedes, 2003, p. 37). Much evidence exists surrounding the pressure applied to regulation of practices such as the origin of the control. Normally, this control is from developed countries that have a common pressure for operation in developing countries like Brazil because of the failure of systemic control from governmental departments. For example, the environmental reports demonstrate a difference between disclosure and countries, which are, unbalanced practices (Guedes, 2003, p. 37). The agents for social change in this situation by the applied approach of critical realism are authorities, environmentalists and academics (Guedes, 2003, p. 38). As a result, Guedes asserts that studies of transnational organisations and environmental issues in the Western are tricky because of the simplicity of power and language subjects (Guedes, 2003, p. 38).

There is a discussion in the teaching of the concepts of sustainability for managers. Brunstein, Scartezini and Rodrigues (2012) examine the teaching process of managers regarding the theme of sustainability. Brunstein et al. (2012) investigate the introduction of ideas on sustainability which is promoted by managers in their business education at a financial institution. A reflection made by Brunstein et al. (2012, p. 583) indicates that if sustainability has a promise for better educating managers then applying sustainability practices could also change the business system. The applied sustainability teaching results indicate a good discourse provided by managers after the teaching course of sustainability, but is does not reveal the same development in action; the managers face challenges to combine the sustainability principles to the business's goal (Brunstein et al. 2012, p. 583). The management discourse for managers has essential themes such as impact, interdependence and systemic thought (Brunstein et al., 2012, p. 596). On the other hand, there is a lack of action on what managers consider necessary for

sustainability; for instance, there are no substantive actions that sustain the discourse of sustainability initiatives practised by the managers (Brunstein et al., 2012, p. 597).

Lohmann (2009) presents a local community engaged in the business's decisions. Lohmann discusses in his paper contradictions, conflicts and resistances along with the environmental accounting techniques. While Lohmann advocates for constructing marketable "emissions reductions" projects ~~as~~ exemplified in Korea, India, South Africa, China, Mexico, Nigeria, Guatemala and Brazil. Specifically in Brazil, hydroelectric dams are the means to reduce CO emissions by replacing fossil fuel (Lohmann, 2009, p. 505). However, residents fought to a better decision that supports not only the way to produce fuel but to protect vegetation. Plantar is the local company that changed the operation of pig iron by charcoal that resulted in the destruction of eucalyptus trees in Minas Gerais State (Lohmann, 2009, p. 511). As a conclusion, Lohmann (2009, p. 529) presents the carbon accounting and cost-benefits analysis used in environmental accounting that seems "to reinforce the political power of accounting expertise". There is a 'black box' of measurement that is far from the understanding of local community, for example. This measurement of what is the impact of charcoal considers an 'abstract' idea of computability of both techniques (cost-benefits and carbon accounting) and these practices became "less plausible and contested" as soon as companies turn to a relevant practice in accounting.

Measurements of environmental aspects have to consider similar attributes to be able to compare. Gray (2010) asserts that environmental issues can only be compared with itself because of the complexity of the environments. A standardisation of the process of measurement or similar techniques to calculate environmental impacts is insufficient to deal with subjects in the level of conflicts. The environmental accounting techniques presented by Lohmann (2009) demonstrate this weakness. A different interpretation of environmental issues may fail the entire process of measurement. Morgan (1988) states SEA is an art rather than a hard science that means that different actors will create different results because of interpretations are endless. Nevertheless, in business practices, there is a dream of making holistic terms, as sustainability becomes plausible and measurable items that can reproduce negotiable ideas, goods or services. SEA is embedded with politics, power, hegemony and ideologies, which tend to favour the

powerful groups. The next section presents the weaknesses in this approach for international and Brazilian research.

3.3.3 Weaknesses of post-structuralist and critical theory studies

In the SEA context, studies are in a social and political field where socialisation of certain practices requires interactions, creativity and re-review of what created a particular fact. For example, social facts might be influenced by discourses, speeches, interviews and visual arts. Stakeholders as agents in the SEA practices will interpret, reinterpret, read, write and speak in an esoteric language. In SEA field, researchers are in the middle of flourishing ideas, feelings and power that produce different outcomes as unexpected, repeated, eccentric and contestable.

To critique a position requires a broader understanding of the origin of that moment. By revealing facts and evidence of a moment, researchers when using a critical approach can critique, evaluate and contest the object of analysis. However, any process of critiquing will face some issues.

This section discusses five weaknesses of post-structuralist and critical theory approaches. First, it presents the personal interpretations. Then, it discusses the access to information. Thirdly, there are personal interpretations of facts without the presence of the researcher. Further, there is a limitation of the recontextualisations. Finally, the articulation of theories is personal that arises some limitations of the analysis.

Personal interpretation is a human characteristic that will always face barriers, limitations, partial view, subjectivity, and a set of beliefs. This combination produces a range of diverse perspectives of the world, of speaking, of reflection. Consequently, there are a variety ways to analyse the object of study.

The second weakness of accessing information creates a difficult to researchers because its analysis is limited in scope. Information is vital to reconstructing a fact, but with limitations, the analysis is useful but limited. This limitation also links to the reinterpretation. A researcher will always use its own characteristic and knowledge to re-interpret a fact or an object of study. With limited information and subjective analysis, the result is a personal interpretation that will join the construction of analysis by different researchers, critics or thinkers. It is a weakness, but also an expected results because accounting is an art (Morgan, 1988).

The fourth weakness, recontextualisation, demands appropriate understandings of what generates original context, but this will never be the same context. For this reason, recontextualisation carries a high level of subjectivity that depends on the individual capacity to recognise the first moment with thorough knowledge.

The fifth element of weakness is the choices of certain elements in the theories that are selected over the range of other elements. Again, subjectivity is invoked in this perspective. The complex extent of knowledge of the researchers will force them to analyse fewer data if they want to take in deep understandings of the study.

To conclude, the weaknesses of this approach relate to the subjectivity that is also a quality due to the complex issues that are discussed in the SEA studies.

3.4 Conclusion of this chapter

This thesis evidenced that the SEA studies in Brazil are a monologic engagement that reifies the power of corporations to shape their ideas of SEA and sustainability (see Cintra & Carter, 2012). As Boyce (2000, p. 57) asserts SEA must operate in an arena of "contestability" and "debate and dialogue". The reductionism within economic base restricts the dialogic engagement (Bebbington et al., 2007; Spence, 2009b; O'Dwyer, 2005). SEA studies in Brazil show that developing countries disallow 'contestability', incorporate accounting as a servant of big corporations and control the public image (see Boyce, 2000). Accounting and SEA must engage in a dialogic process. This system incorporates the notions of CSR and SEA as a toolkit for management – business case approach.

The monologic engagement means a narrow and paramount consideration of SEA that gives voices to the most powerful stakeholders in organisations and implies that the Brazilian studies are strongly attached to the cables of the system without critically consider the mechanisms of power that sustains the current hegemony – servant of business. In the business case approach, researchers tend to deny the open debate on sustainability and society among the gap of expectations. In this game, the interests of organisations prevail against the societal expectation because of influential groups. The configuration of developing countries as Brazil favours the continuance of powerful organisations.

On the other hand, studies, and especially those originating from the UK, Australia and New Zealand are nearer to the dialogic engagement. The vast literature on post-structuralist and critical approach exemplifies this standpoint. More specifically, this engagement favours a critical analysis as well as deeper understandings of practices. The dialogic process links critical theory that moves the frontiers of the *status quo* in society to construct new visions of knowledge by liberation from ideological chains (Althusser, 2012). The principal concept is the "emancipatory knowledge" (Crotty, 1998, p. 159). The literature shows that the critical and post-structuralist approach challenges settled structures.

> Accounting is seen to represent a language system furnishing a partial and particular type of (socially created) perspective on everyday life. It is an intersubjectively negotiated "way of seeing" (Hopper, Storey and Willmott, 1987, p. 442).

A variety of perspectives uses differently the notion of SEA. This variety reflects on the types of studies that for the purpose of this thesis I classify into three categories: the studies to help companies continue to focus on financial returns (business case approach), the inclusion of non-financial stakeholders in the stakeholder engagement (stakeholder-accountability) and the studies that critique the *status quo* for a development of society (post-structuralist and critical theory). SEA belongs to the whole system of meanings of accounting which social and environmental aspects are included. Hence, the choice of meanings that suit SEA involves social constructs of interests - certain agents in certain momentary history. As stated by Morgan (1988), accounting is an art instead a hard science like physics or chemistry.

> The accountant represents complex situations, such as the economic vitality of an enterprise, the benefits of a particular investment decision or the operational effectiveness of a production system, in limited and rather one-sided ways. But these representations become part of the fabric through which the situation "accounted for" is then sustained or changed. Accountants interpret reality (Morgan, 1988, p. 482).

Morgan (1988, p. 482) asserts, "accountant interprets reality". Accountants and stakeholders interpret reality and construct the reality in a manner desired. This thesis examines approaches from different interpretations of realities. The business case approach is friendly toward the traditional neo-economic system. The majority of papers in Brazil use the business case approach that intends to provide benefits for companies; these benefits are usually characterised by cost reduction, capital return or improvements in the financial management. On the other hand, the third approach: critical theory and post-structuralist approach critiques this thought to serve companies goals.

The second approach (stakeholders-accountability) is interested in the engagement of non-financial stakeholders. This approach places SEA in an arena that includes multiple stakeholders' voices. It results a broader interest is taken place when discussing the social praxis and environments. Stakeholder-accountability approach includes external stakeholders from organisations to debate the impacts of communities and universities. However, the critical and post-structuralist approach has a root in politics, which understands in deep power, hegemonies, ideologies and contradictions between social relationships.

Karl Marx argued the ideas of the ruling class were those that dominated and spread throughout society. However, one approach disallows to discuss the problems of power in society. Business case approach is the narrower approach that avoids the contestation of conflicts between agents and societies. The sophisticated statistical techniques in the business case hide power, hegemony and social relations. The business case approach ignores those characteristics by focusing on the economic or financial impact on the company. To analyse SEA is not possible just by applying statistics in any case. There are specific moments that the subjectivity of interpretations is necessary to assimilate with the social episode. Some researchers in the business case approach assume a presumed reality to be able to measure through a statistical technique, however, in some instances, the results do not represent reality. The predictions or presuppositions of reality are not simple or easy to do; for instance, social relations are not stable, persistent or constant throughout time and space. Thus, to use techniques to measure social events as environmental disclosures inside companies is difficult. These measurement techniques are hard to reflect the reality (see Lohmann, 2009 discussing the cost-benefit analysis and carbon accounting).

If social practices are hard to predict, then the measurement should not be a precise representation of those events. These measurements show there are gaps between the definition of SEA (sustainability for business, corporate social responsibility, engagement for accountability, obfuscated illusion of sustainability) and measurement. For this reason, sustainability and its interpretations (SEA, CSR, SD, and SER) are difficult to define, and equally complicated to calculate. Indices typically are used in the measurement techniques. This index presumes as a portraying form of environmental and social disclosures. As the company's perspective is inserted into business strategies

social injustice and environmental degradation are sometimes results of the organisations' activities. Then, these strategies and the results should be understood by the choices of sustainability's meanings and the actions resulted by selections. Accordingly, the purpose of my research is to understand the constructed meanings used by Petrobras. Also, this research indicates Brazilian organisations, the choices of the terms, the constructions of powers, hegemony and ideologies.

The range of meaning for sustainability and SEA is an avenue for contestability. A strong word in this field is sustainable development. This term is usually practised in corporate language. Sustainable development [SD] is a rhetorical word by the exaggerate use of statements of sustainable practices to protect the environment, but in reality, corporations aim to support its strategies for economic growth (see Sikka, 2010 regarding tax avoidance). Sustainable development is overused to signify meaninglessly, a significant weakness (Lélé, 1991, p. 607). There are broad concepts that imply that there is no consensus "the concept of sustainable development indicates . . . a lack of consistency in its interpretation"; the discourse of sustainable development is commonly used in a persuasive way by international aid agencies, activist and leaders (Lélé, 1991, p. 607). One of the weaknesses attributed to sustainable development is the relation between poverty and environmental degradation; the traditional (or mainstream of this thinking) is that development means destroying the environment to decrease the poverty, "there is the implicit belief that economic growth is necessary (if not sufficient) for the removal of poverty" (Lélé, 1991, p. 614). Where is sustainability in this thought? Most thoughts of SD focus on economic growth that does not necessarily relate to sustainable development. Agents use discourses to join the meanings of sustainability, economic growth and development together. This combination is joined by the articulation of plausible reasoning to persuade societies. Agents use politics to combine widely different meanings for their interests.

In summary, discourses of sustainable development and sustainability may have the intention of managing ideas. Language carries intentions of what has significance for the audience. Discourse is the tool of powerful agents to construct their reality. In society, individuals sometimes have few spaces to contest produced meanings that are assimilated by social interactions and powerful messages. This combination results in strong messages – ideologies. Ideologies constrain individuals to think freely (Althusser,

2012). In societies, discourses are mostly shown as a mechanism of power. Discourses conduct certain ideas to support the most influential agents. The language of powerful agents is enthusiastic to persuade their audience. Thus, discourses are an important mechanism of power in the political field.

Accounting is also a construct and a language, which supports the agents in the discourses. These discourses are embedded in politics. This thesis believes that accounting has been used as a tool for the dominant system situated on the economic basis. Practitioners, accountants and researchers have at least three choices debated in this thesis. One is to follow the domination without contestation (business case approach). Secondly, they include less dominant agents to construct the meanings of SEA. Thirdly, they contest the political formation of the representations of SEA, for example, the corporate language of social responsibility. This thesis situates in this last view in a post-structuralist approach that aims to contest and debate power, decision-making and SEA as a support for the capitalist system.

> The privileged status and phenomena of accounting and accountants are related to their position within control systems in capitalism, rather than any specific professional expertise or impartial service to society... Rather than being a source of clarification, accounting information is revealed as a fount of uncertainty, giving rise to yet more regulation (Hopper et al., 1987, p. 449).

To sum up, in papers published by Brazilians, the business case is predominately a submission of developing countries. On the contrary, developed countries offer more space for a critical analysis of the current hegemony (Spence, 2009b). In this case, international SEA studies focus on the post-structuralist approach and critical theory. In summary, SEA studies in Brazil is a monologic engagement that serves business's purpose, and international studies challenge the academic state-of-art and organisational practices by a dialogic engagement preconised by Paulo Freire's studies. This is ironic because Paulo Freire was born in Brazil but his work became famous outside of Brazil. This example reinforces difficulties of deep 'conscientisation' in developing nations.

Studies made by Brazilian have largely ignored questioning what is meant by sustainability and its interpretations (SEA, CSR, SD, and SER). In this thesis, SEA studies in Brazil maintain the *status quo* without contestation. As an example, in the business case approach, the applied measurements ignore the sustainability agenda by trying to measure intangibles such as recycling materials and its impacts, transparency, accountability, engagement and reputation. What these disclosures legitimate is the unsustainable corporate actions (Sikka, 2010). From this position, the agenda of economic

growth with SEA and sustainability intentions is guided by corporate intentions in pursuing making profit and less sustainable practices. This economic intention links the current approach to capitalism. The techniques that measure SEA and CSR put in place economic aspects as the fundamental measurement process. Accordingly, these techniques neglect social and environmental principles. Publications on critical accounting increase this debate surrounding the critical analysis of the role of SEA in society (Gray, Owen & Maunders, 1988; Gray et al., 1995; Bebbington et al., 1999; Arrington and Watkins, 2002; Lohmann, 2009; Milne et al., 2009; Spence, 2009a; Gray, 2010; Spence et al., 2010; Spence et al., 2010; Dillard and Brown, 2012; Brown and Dillard, 2013). On the other hand, there are comparatively few studies in Brazil on the politics of sustainability (Cintra & Carter, 2012). This thesis contends that the lack of substantive engagement with the politics of SEA and sustainability supports the actions of political actors of existing hegemonies. Analogously, this thesis aims to provoke the actual state-of-art of Brazilian research and to contribute to the international standpoint of a dialogic engagement.

4 THEORY: DISCOURSE THEORY

In this chapter, I use a post-structuralist approach to the analysis of Laclau and Mouffe's Discourse Theory [DT] to address how to understand the SEA's discursive constructions within an organisation, and specifically, Petrobras, its stakeholders and society. Particularly, each construction is viewed through political theory, which constitutes a broader understanding of how society runs. This thesis attempts to understand and critically discuss the constructions of SEA by analysing the case study of the oil company, Petrobras, which is based in Brazil. This following section is divided into three parts. The first section explains a post-structuralist ontology that underpins the thesis. While the second section addresses a post-structuralist paradigm, regarding its effects on social, political and discursive relations. The third section discusses in more depth the DT's elements that are elected to analysis the social and environmental discursive constructions of Petrobras.

4.1 Post-structuralist Ontology

The foundation of this thesis is assumed in post-structuralist ontology within DT. 'Ontology' is a word derived from the Greek vocabulary, 'onto' meaning *being* and 'logos' *science*. Thus, ontology is the study of being (Crotty, 1998, p. 10). Ontology responds to "what is" or, in other words, ontology is the science or study of being; it is associated with the worldview by embodying a specific "way of understanding what is" (Crotty, 1998, p. 10). The 'study of being' is found in Heidegger's work. Heidegger (1962, p. 33) asserts that 'being' is the most universal concept. Ontology is the theory of 'being' or theory of meaning, and then it establishes the ontological discussion of what 'being' a person or object can assume. There is no final answer to this universal question. An assumption of being is a choice within multiple interpretations, there are endless ways to achieve a universal meaning; thus by simply understanding 'being' (meaning) assists in properly formulating a question (Heidegger, 1962, p. 21-22).

> Being is always the Being of an entity. The totality of entities can, in accordance with its various domains, become a field for laying bare and delimiting certain definite areas of subject-matter. These areas, on their part (for instance, history, Nature, space, life, Dasein, language, and the like), can serve _ as objects which corresponding scientific investigations may take as their respective themes (Heidegger, 1962, p. 29).

The concept of 'being' relates to social and individual subjectivity. Heidegger (1962, p. 29) affirms 'being' carries subjectivity about which area will carry its limits, such as history, space, life, language, preferences, style and moment. There are different types of ontology,

using Crotty's (1998) terminology; a characterisation of ontology is intrinsically considering epistemology. Its concept arises from "what it means to know" (p. 10) that implies knowledge from "a certain understanding" (Crotty, 1998, p. 8). Post-structuralist ontology involves a combination of ontology and epistemology in which ontology is considered the guide.

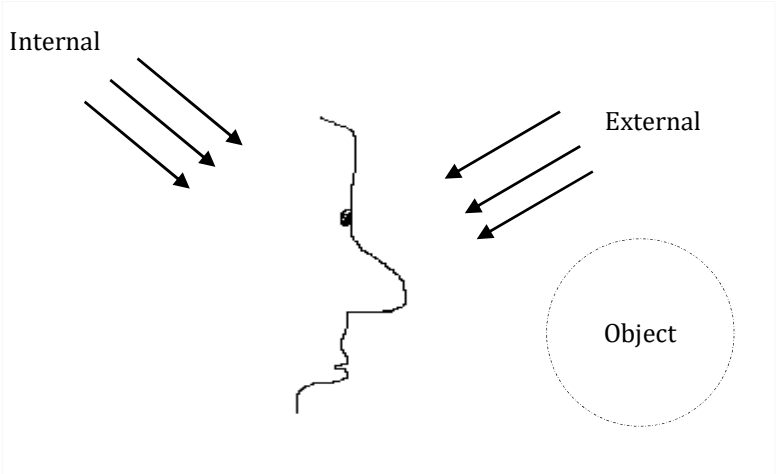

Figure 4 – Inter-subjective objective of interpretation

Post-structuralist ontology conceives the inter-subjectivity objective (Lacan, 2005; Laclau & Mouffe, 2001). This means that every object carries objectivity and subjectivity simultaneously. Objects exist and have two dimensions, the internal consciousness/subconsciousness and the external social reality Lacan, 2005; Laclau & Mouffe, 2001). From a post-structuralist perspective, objects exist; however, they are relative. These ontological assumptions perceive social relationships rely on the existence relativity between individuals. The unconsciousness of the Lacanian theory performs as a constant act to avoid a complete objectivity (Lacan, 2005). Similarly, social relationships shape individual identities because of powers and hegemonies are constituted in discourses (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001).

Regarding the differing worldviews, post-structuralist ontology is a combination of relativism and realism. Realist ontology combines with objectivist epistemology. This entails that realism assumes there are realities beyond the limits of the mind and objectivism asserts objects come apart from consciousness (Crotty, 1998, p. 10). Alternatively, Taylor (1978, p. 41) asserts that relativism situates on dialectics spaces, where relativity derives from pulverized implications of identities and differences: "unity and plurality, oneness and manyness". Post-structuralist ontology means social

constructions of reality - relativism and realism. To illustrate, 'flood' is an event that implies different experiences and interpretations. Flood is real, but people will explain this event from their experience. This object causes multiple versions because people will interact differently (see Figure 5).

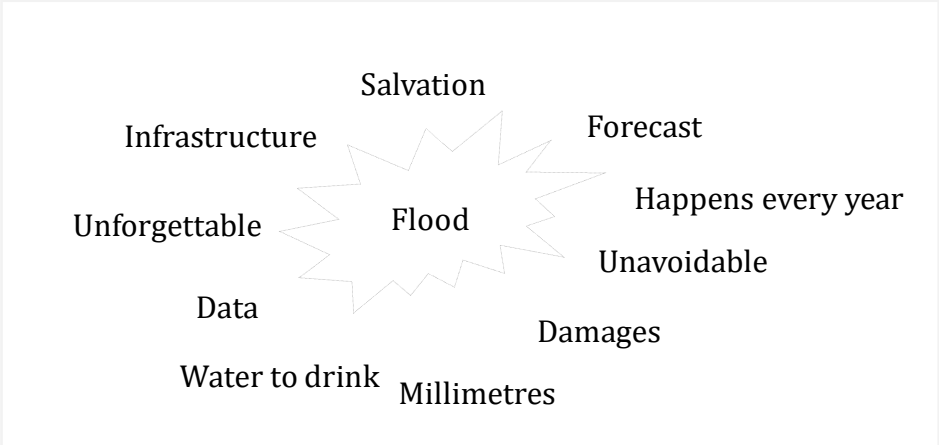

Figure 5 – The meanings for 'flood' is relative and real

Relativism in social constructions means that time and space will change the constructs about the varying contexts. Note, the example of 'flood' that shows a range of meanings. Some people assert that 'flood' is a 'tragedy'; others could say it is measured in millimetres. This is endless of the chain of signification (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001). According to Crotty (1998, p. 63), "to say that meaningful reality is socially constructed is not to say that it is not real". Interpretations of cultural, historical and cross-cultural produce different meanings for the same phenomenon (Crotty, 1998, p. 64). Social constructions demonstrate that objects are inter-subjectivity objectivity on account of personal identity and culture, for example, interfere with the form of each object assumes in societies or individuals.

The difference between ontology and the ontic sense of DT are important in understanding this thesis. The ontological level of DT is the formulation of ideas, the conceptualization of main perspectives. For example, discourse is contingent, relational, and fragmented. In this, the Heidegger's spirit of 'being' connects to the universal concept 'being' of DT in the ontological sense. The ontic level is one of the applications of this theory. Discourse is a range of discursive formations. Discursive formations are the ontic level of discourse. The ontic is a representation of DT.

In the next section, I debate the roles of post-structuralism in constituting objects in not only a physical reality but also in relative forms. Post-structuralism focuses primarily on the social and political implication of objects in society.

4.2 Post-structuralist paradigm

The celebration of the differences through discourse takes place in post-structuralism. In Laclau and Mouffe's work discourse becomes an essential explanation of society (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985; 2001). Post-structuralist assumes discourses as an essential form to understand societies. The post-structuralist approach begins with a development of structuralism, specifically from De Saussure's work. One of the improvements of a ´post´ structuralism is the system of ideas. Post-structuralists explain that the principal idea of a system of signification is a signifier can be associated with many as possible signifiers in an endless chain. This structure of language is what defines the modern democracies. For example, Devenney (2004, p. 148) asserts that contemporary political science believes that democratic nations are organised in different structural matrices, and the models of its structures could be employed to predict the political system. However, this situation is taken for granted that the unit of political analysis is stable. From a post-structuralist view, this assertion is an illusion by a consideration of stability in politics. Every structure in post-structuralist paradigm is ephemeral because of the existence of powers and ideologies.

Post-structuralism is an evolutionary work of Ferdinand De Saussure's work on structuralism of (1857-1913). The structuralism of De Saussure outlines the notion that the signifier (form or symbol) and the signified (idea) are a closed structure (Crotty, 1998, p. 197). As stated by De Saussure (1959, p. 66) the sign is a combination of concept (signified) and acoustic image (signifier). For example, 'house' exists but the symbol h-o-u-s-e is arbitrary. How did they conceive the word 'house'? Why did they choose that term? It could have been called 'water'. It is a socially constructed symbol. This relationship is arbitrary, the choice of symbols, images or representations depend on that initial group that constructed the combination, and these forms have persisted for an extended period, at least, until the combination suffers a rupture; and ideas associated with the symbol are also arbitrary.

> The linguistic sign is then a two-sided psychological entity . . . I propose to retain the word sign [*signe*] to designate the whole and to replace concept and sound-image respectively by signified [*signifié*] and signifier [*signifiant*]; the last two terms have the advantage of indicating the

> opposition that separates them from each other and from the whole of which they are parts . . . The bond between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary (De Saussure, 1959, p. 66-67).

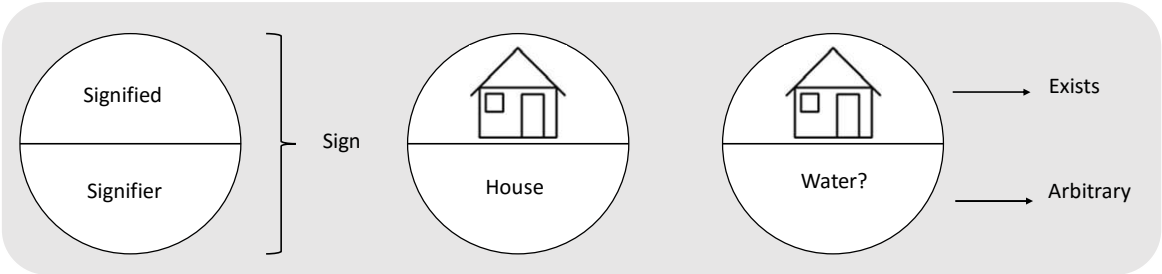

Figure 6 – The linguistic origin of post-structuralism in the definition of signs

The construction of signifiers/signified creates a system of signs. The argument put forward by De Saussure is that the structure of signals is the subject of linguistics and complements that language is structured; network signs give meanings to each other, it is stable and immutable (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 10). "The formal structure found in language thus becomes the source of meaning for the structuralist" (Crotty, 1998, p. 199). Jorgensen and Phillips (2002) confirm post-structuralism takes structuralism's idea on the formation of meanings via the network of meanings; however, post-structuralism rejects the structuralist view that language is a stable, immutable and complete structure. Derrida comments on structuralist language employed by De Saussure:

> These two limitations are all the more reassuring because they are just what we need at a specific point to fulfill the most legitimate of exigencies; in fact, the condition for the scientificity of linguistics is that the field of linguistics have hard and fast frontiers, that it be a system regulated by an internal necessity, and that in a certain way its structure be closed (Derrida, 1976, p. 33).

The Structuralism of De Saussure intends to discover a universal language. Milner (1994) argues that the purpose of structuralist is to generalize language, to understand it as a structured system. Besides this feature, structuralism as Milner (1994) further tells us is characterised as anti-historicism, anti-empiricism, anti-humanism, positivism and theoretical abstract. Anti-historicism is the rejection of the past, the matter is the present; the biggest concern of structuralists is maintaining updated research from formal and theoretical models, in opposition to empiricism; these thinkers aspire to the highest theoretical study without the complicated presence of humans (anti-humanism), people are not essential, because they are irrelevant in the structural properties of the systems (Milner, 1994, p. 82).

Post-structuralism is, however, a framework, which rejects generalised theories to explain social phenomena. Meanings are constructed together, with infinite possibilities,

influenced by culture, politics and social life. Hence, unification of meaning is impossible; post-structuralists do not aspire to the scientific sense because meaning cannot be prisoned in a box (Milner, 1994, p. 87). Structuralists claim to have a closed system of meanings, which could be possible to create a general theory, but it is not the reality of social relationships. Lacanian theory of 'the other' creates this totality of system impossible for the reason that the symbolic unity[8] of 'the other' assumes contingent constructions of identities. Humans are incomplete due to their limited conception of capturing and processing knowledge.

> Post-structuralism retains structuralism's commitment to de Saussure's view that the meaning of words derives from their relationship to one another and not from any postulated relationship to non-linguistic reality. However, it places a much more intense focus on the origins of language. As one would expect, there is no unified voice to be heard here. We find language being situated within societal relationships of power (Foucault) and within the unconscious (Lacan) (Crotty, 1998, p. 203-204).

The attempt to close the system of significance is always temporary due to the hegemonic formation in societies; meaning, therefore, is constructed socially (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001). Political negotiation guides a certain significance. It is not the end, but the beginning of debate. The relationship between signifieds (concepts) and signifiers (acoustic images) is arbitrary, and this could be explained by institutionalised signifiers, Derrida (1976, p. 44) affirms:

> Only these relationships between specific signifiers and signifieds would be regulated by arbitrariness. Within the "natural" relationship between phonic signifiers and their signifieds in general, the relationship between each determined signifier and its determined signified would be "arbitrary." Now from the moment that one considers the totality of determined signs, spoken, and a fortiori written, as unmotivated institutions, one must exclude any relationship of natural subordination, any natural hierarchy among signifiers or orders of signifiers. . . . The very idea of institution-hence of the arbitrariness of the sign-is unthinkable before the possibility of writing and outside of its horizon.

The existence of meaning implies no less than signs (Derrida, 1976, p. 50). The signs are constructed from the impossibility, "the absence of the transcendental signified as limitlessness of play" (Derrida, 1976, p. 50). Experiences and knowledge of individuals are part of these constructions. Derrida does not exclude the external world of language from meaning; Derrida states there is a problem: "the problem of meaning outside of their researchers, certain American linguists constantly refer to the model of a game. Here one must think of writing as a game within language" (Derrida, 1976, p. 50). In DT, Laclau and Mouffe (2001, p. 112) explain that "the transcendental signified in its multiple forms:

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[8] Laclau and Mouffe (2001, p. 11).

eidos, arche, telos, energeia, ousia, aletheia – is abandoned, and with it the possibility of fixing a meaning which underlies the flow of differences". The expansion of meanings and the "flow of differences" show that constructions of meanings arise from social and individual identity.

Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault and Jacques Lacan (Milner, 1994, p. 87) compose the current French post-structuralism – which massively influences post-structuralist discourse. Derrida contributes to the notion of deconstruction. It refers to a particular text which is constructed (Macintosh, 2002, p. 41). The text includes an essay, book, poem, story, body expressions, and speeches. Understanding how core meanings of a text are constructed facilitates the approach of deconstruction that Macintosh (2002, p. 41) separate it into two steps: the first, is how the central meaning was constructed and the second is about how meaning cannot be sustained. Foucault advocates the relation of knowledge and power, while Lacan, through a post-structuralist paradigm, develops his work along the lines of psychoanalysis (Milner, 1994, p. 87).

In the Laclau and Mouffe's *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (2001), there is an advance from the post-structuralist French perspective while incorporating Derrida's deconstruction and Lacanian theory of explaining hegemonies. From deconstruction of Derrida, Laclau and Mouffe (2001, p. xi) integrate "the notion of undecidability" from a deconstruction perspective – and, as such "undecidables permeate the field which had previously been seen as governed by structural determination. One can see the hegemony as a theory of the decision taken in an undecidable terrain". More willingly, Lacan contributes to the "formulation of a theory of hegemony"; especially the notion of *point of capiton* that, in DT terms, it means nodal points (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. xi). In the section of hegemony presents these elements in more details.

Main idea: The aims of post-structuralists are to debate and contest the production of meanings in political spaces. This is the objective of this thesis. The principal purpose of this thesis is to debate understand and critique the formation of meanings of discursive constructions of SEA in Brazil. In this thesis, post-structuralism includes to debate social constructions in its endless signification set and it is used to discuss the political formation of discursive practices such as the SEA in Brazil. This thesis assumes the post-structuralist position for the comprehension of SEA by stakeholders in Brazil that is limited, partial and contestable. It means that as the researcher and the multiple stakeholders involved in the case study construct contingent discourses that could be partially understood, but it is part of the formation of discourse in DT.

The next section introduces DT as a post-structuralist approach that ought to elucidate some notions of discourse in political debate, where individuals are constantly seized by power in societies. Laclau and Mouffe's post-structuralist DT supports how society works, and consequently, how agents construct their meanings at the political level. The understanding of society by presenting key assumptions of DT explains how society works and clarifies the political basis of the discursive constructions in practice.

4.3 Discourse Theory and Social and Environmental Accounting

This section addresses the link between Laclau and Mouffe's (2001) DT of and that of subsequent studies on social constructions of SEA and its variations. First, there is a discussion on the foundations of this thesis: discourse and rhetoric. Secondly, there are applied considerations of discourse and hegemony, the logic of equivalence/difference and SEA academe, ontic gap and articulation, and ideology within the design of SEA literature.

4.3.1 Foundations of Discourse Theory

The main issue addressed in this section is the constituents of DT. Here, there is an interpretation of discourse from Laclau and Mouffe (2001) and Laclau (2014) that links rhetoric and discourse. Both are forms of understandings social constructions of SEA and its variations. This thesis develops ideas from Laclau and Mouffe in a post-structuralist perspective. Then, it begins with discourse and its conceptualisation.

4.3.1.1 Discourse

This thesis addresses discursive constructions of SEA in Brazil. In particular, I am interested in how and why stakeholders represent and understand organisational practices as discourse. Then, I adopt the idea that discourse is a social construction, where each discursive construction is unique to social situations. Discursive constructions consist of an analytical perspective that includes social, cultural and political construction of meaning. Torfing (2005, p. 1) argues that DT opens up space for interpretation of the theoretical and "undogmatic framework" which supports post-structuralist thinkers. Laclau and Mouffe (1985; 2001) are the major theoretical contributors to DT. In the 1960s to 1970s, research in politics and accounting was primarily positivistic, essentialist and behaviourist (Howarth & Stavrakakis, 2000, p. 1). However, that mainstream approach to research was the target of substantial critique, and DT recognises the problem of the

universal truth. It presupposes a singular viewpoint that powerful groups are interested in, primarily: making their interests predominate and truth in society. By following the truth, it also creates a constraining system or structure that people in this system have to adapt. DT challenges these systems of truths by exposing hegemony practices present in articulatory discursive constructions of realities. Any structure is temporal and provisory in which DT is aware, especially of the contingent social realities and, subsequent, discursive constructions that are changeable and dependent on powers, politics and social relationships.

DT has critics surrounding the structuralism of a systematic creation of meanings and the extremism of critical theory on focusing in a unique way to change the capitalist system. For post-structuralists, the structure of meanings is not fixed. The structure of language and discourses changes amidst varying political, cultural or social circumstances. Additionally, the combination of these factors is mutable and transitory. Post-structuralism apprehends the structure from De Saussure (sign is a set of signifier and signified) and develops De Saussure's ideas of a stable meaning represented by a sign. The central point is that any structure is temporal as well as its meaning. There is no stable structure, which could apply in every context. The fixation and dislocation, as Laclau and Mouffe (2001) assert, are part of the partial and incomplete meanings. These depend on context, cultural and historical movements. There is a moment that a meaning is fixed, but in another, it does not happen (fixation and dislocation of the meanings) (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001).

The second critique of the critical theory relates to a single way to change the *status quo*. Critical theory is commonly conceived as a critique of capitalism system due to its root in the Marxism school. Marxism believes that by radical means are possible to change the system. The changes happen in different ways, for example, Paulo Freire asserts that democracy is a way to change, and Karl Marx is socialism (Crotty, 1998). Critical theorists are usually concerned with the unique way the system changes (for example, these changes can take place in the economy, education and hegemonic domination). A critique of critical theory is that it focuses only on one problem where the dilemma situates. For example, the significant structures (Marxists named these structures as superstructures) are debates by critical theorists such as governments, corporations, parliament, ministry and a national congress. However, by a post-structuralist point of view, the problems start

in everyday life like conversations at homes, schools and streets. Post-structuralists believe that the way to change begins in small places, small details in the discursive constructions because power is everywhere. Social relationships are immersed in power, and hegemonic groups tend to spread its messages in a range of social interactions in society. Post-structuralists assert the problems are not single or situated in a singular "superstructure", but discourses carry many forms of power and hegemonies (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001). Power is essentially the major focusing of the post-structuralist and critical theorists. Moreover, these schools differ in the way how to change the *status quo*, critical theorists, through big structures and post-structuralists in small means such as discourses. 'Small power' means, in a sense, where post-structuralist theorists advocate for change, in the little space is where discursive constructions offer a practical manner of understanding and critiquing the power within the political structure (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001). 'Big Power' happens in institutions such as corporations, countries, blocks and banks that imposed their interests (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001).

Main idea: DT is a development, but not a rejection, of Marxism and structuralism, as it is post-Marxist, post-structuralist and post-analytical philosophy (Howarth & Stavrakakis, 2000, p. 1). Laclau and Mouffe (2001) describe society through discourse, especially, within the practice of hegemonies. Discourse represents objects. Discourse is material and not only a mental process (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001). In discursive signification, discourse is impossible to be stable in a singular meaning (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001).

Laclau and Mouffe (2001) argues discourse includes three elements:

(1) Each object is represented in discourse. However, it is important to recognise that objects exist outside of discourse, but they acquire meaning within discourse.

> The fact that every object is constituted as an object of discourse has nothing to do with whether there is a world external to thought, or with the realism/idealism opposition. An earthquake or the falling of a brick is an event that certainly exists, in the sense that it occurs here and now, independently of my will. But whether their specificity as objects is constructed in terms of 'natural phenomena' or 'expressions of the wrath of God,, depends upon the structuring of a discursive field. What is denied is not that such objects exist externally to thought, but the rather different assertion that they could constitute themselves as objects outside any discursive condition of emergence (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. 108).

In my study, organisations exist and interact with society, but different stakeholders will interpret and choose meanings for their actions based on their differing perspectives. The following example regarding the construction of a hydroelectric dam might please consumers as electricity prices decrease, but some environmentalists might be upset by the impact on the river's eco-system while fisherman downstream will be concerned at the loss of their fishing territory. The object is the same, and it is material, exists, but

different stakeholders articulate different meanings to the object.[9] Thus, this approach to discursive objects means that objects operate both in a realist and relativist manner: first, the object exists, it has form, and it impacts upon subjects; thus, it is 'real'; second, different stakeholders and individuals understand and articulate the meaning of the same object in different ways. Subjectivity of how any situation affects differently specific social agent is part of the relativism that discursive constructions are considered from a post-structuralist paradigm.

(2) Discourse is material; it is not only a mental position.

> We will affirm the material character of every discursive structure. To argue the opposite is to accept the very classical dichotomy between an objective field constituted outside of any discursive intervention, and a discourse consisting of the pure expression of thought. . . . It is evident that the very material properties of objects are part of what Wittgenstein calls language game, which is an example of what we have called discourse. . . . The linguistic and non-linguistic elements are not merely juxtaposed, but constitute a differential and structured system of positions - that is, a discourse (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. 108).

Hence, Laclau and Mouffe (2001, p. 109) pose the central idea that every discourse is material and has both linguistic and non-linguistic formation. The structure of the language is not the only reason of discourse constitution; some ideologies and articulations make discourse a complex space for "fixation/dislocation" (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001).

> The recognition of this complexity and of its discursive character began to beat an obscure path in the terrain of Marxist theorization. Its characteristic form was the progressive affirmation, from Gramsci to Althusser, of the material character of ideologies, inasmuch as these are not simple systems of ideas but are embodied in institutions, rituals and so forth. What did, however, become an obstacle for the full theoretical unfolding of this intuition was that, in all cases, it was referred to the field of ideologies (Laclau, & Mouffe, 2001, p. 109).

Logics of fixation and dislocation establish a perversive power game. Discursive articulation is the way that ideas are fixed or dislocated; it constitutes an "obscure path" (see, for example, Marx, Gramsci and Althusser for more information about ideologies configurations which this thesis addresses the Althusserian position in the section of ideology).

(3) In the discursive sphere, the productivity and meaning are the key discussions in the construction of significance in society. This whole signification is impossible to be fully determined because opposing ideas in the political arena shape which meaning is most

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[9] My paradigm is post-structuralism which combines the position of every object exists and it is relative for each person, inter-subjectivity objective (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001).

useful for the purpose of the dominant group. In the same way, every meaning is possible and impossible. It means that a discursive formation is a place of articulation and contestation, where one of these meanings is chosen over other possibilities in social life. Any attempt at fixing a meaning is impossible and transitory; there is the structure of discourse or discourses, and however, there is no concept that resists power, domination or politics. For Laclau and Mouffe (2001, p. 111) society is a good explanation of how all discourse of fixation is impossible.

> Society is not a valid object of discourse. There is no single underlying principle fixing – and hence constituting – the whole field of differences. The irresoluble interiority/exteriority tension is the condition of any social practice: necessity only exists as a partial limitation of the field of contingency. It is in this terrain, where neither a total interiority nor a total exteriority is possible, that the social is constituted. For the same reason that the social cannot be reduced to the interiority of a fixed system of differences, pure exteriority is also impossible (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. 111).

Society is socially constructed in which individuals internalise their selection of meaning. It implies choosing a range of possibilities and competitive ideas. Stavrakakis (2007, p. 67) discusses the political part of DT. More specially, the influence of Lacan in how the exterior avoids society to be fully represented as a complete meaning, in terms of individual and collective, "impossibility of society, or the notion of an outside that is constitutive of the inside (roughly corresponding to the Lacanian concepts of the *points de capiton*, the master signifier, the *objet petit a*, the lack in the Other, and *extimité*)" (Stavrakakis, 2007, p. 67). The presence of 'the other' causes the closure of society impossible; the outside interferes in the fulfilment of society, by consequence, discourses.

DT has three components: every object is an object of discourse, discourse is material, and the discursive totality never exists. In fact, DT assumes actions and objects are meaningful (Howarth & Stavrakakis, 2000, p. 2), contestable, incomplete and fragmented, where "a discursive totality never exists" (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. 110). Objects have a duality about realism and relativism; both elements are competitive and transform objects in a range of unlimited interpretations.

> This conclusion can impose itself, however, only if we allow that the relational logic of discourse be carried through to its ultimate consequences, without limitation by any exterior. If we accept, on the contrary, that a discursive totality never exists in the form of a simply given and delimited positivity, the relational logic will be incomplete and pierced by contingency. The transition from the 'elements' to the 'moments' is never entirely fulfilled (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. 110).

The linguistic characters are not the only constituents of discourse; additionally, non-linguistics items play an important part, notably by how the practice of articulation prioritizes some meanings instead of others. Ideologies are not simple ideas in the

practice of articulation. These ideologies compete on a spectrum of linguistics and non-linguistic features. The fixation and dislocation of a meaning are political. To illustrate, society exists but has influences of internal and external factors that constitute social formation. Any attempt at making a meaning possible is likewise impossible (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001).

Application of the notion of discourse: The discursive constructions of SEA apply to the notion of discourse. It means that each construction is an object, material and produces meanings. These meanings are the debate of this thesis by the existence of hegemonic practices. Discourse is the main concept of social constructions. Discursive constructions are transitory, incomplete, contradictory and partial (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001). This complexity contributes to the discussion of transitory and fixation of a specific meaning in politics.

Having outlined an initial explanation of discourse and DT, the following section addresses the rhetoric and its components in social constructions.

4.3.1.2 Rhetoric

> Rhetoric describes the construction of meanings through language, often by drawing upon ideological associations to define that meaning in selective ways and discursively constructing the subjects who are to act through it. But these are achieved through concrete modes of address and argumentation, which are typically the concern of rhetorical enquiry (Martin, 2013, p. 12).

Rhetoric is a form of a discursive regime which is introduced into an argument; it also consents to analysts achieve the aspiration of capturing dominant discourses in the name of persuasions used by strong social agents (Martin, 2013, p. 11-12). Rhetoric is an old term, which joins the diverse contemporary discursive formations. In this study, rhetoric belongs to the origins of politics, where social constructions of SEA use rhetorical devices, as figures of speech to persuade their audience. The objective of this section is to link the notion of discourse to complete the idea of society is a construction of partial viewer that construct the system of signification (Laclau, 2014, p. 65). In doing this, the elements of DT are applied as the theoretical foundation of this thesis. Additionally, the notion of discourse and rhetoric are derived from Laclau and Mouffe (1985, 2011), Laclau (2005) and Laclau (2014). The classical rhetoric comes from the famous philosopher Aristotle and his followers: Cicero, Quintilian, Skinner and others.

Classical rhetoric is the art of persuasion. If we succeed in mastering the art of *rhetorica,* we will be able to speak and write with persuasion (Skinner, 1996, p. 111). Aristotle (2010, p. 8) describes persuasion as a mode that includes three elements. The first is the aptness of having the ability to speak with credibility; “this kind of persuasion . . . should

be achieved by what the speaker says, not by what people think of his character before he begins to speak". The second depends on the position of the audience and "when the speech stirs their emotions"; the third element is the speech itself, when we choose the best words to make a truth or an apparent truth acceptable to the audience, "the persuasive arguments suitable to the case in question" (Aristotle, 2010, p. 9). According to Aristotle (2010, p. 6):

> The true and the approximately true are apprehended by the same faculty; it may also be noted that men have a sufficient natural instinct for what is true, and usually do arrive at the truth. Hence the man who makes a good guess at truth is likely to make a good guess at probabilities.

The proof of the truth is an ethical matter that interests political science. Rhetoric is an essential subject in DT because persuasion involves power in social relations. Power, ethics, and persuasion are immersed in the social constitution. This thesis assumes the rhetorical approach of Aristotelian vocabulary. The persuasion of Aristotle is more generous than the philosophical logic posed by Plato.

> Aristotle rejects the sophistic view of rhetoric as simply about achieving persuasion, regardless of any other consideration. Instead, he limits persuasion to the worth of the resources at hand. Rhetoric entails an enquiry into how the best case can be put given the argument, the evidence, the audience and so on. This limitation was intended to prevent anyone overstating the possibilities of rhetoric and, in making it, Aristotle emphasized his intention to explore the ways in which rhetorical techniques could help in the pursuit of truth (Martin, 2013, p. 22).

The rejection of the sophistic logic in the practices of persuasion is consistent with DT. It follows the inherent capability of humans to be fully objective. Discourses in societies are contradictory, contestable, contingent, and negotiable as any social practice.

Powerful discourses avoid any complete signification of reality. As Althusserian discourse contributes, reality is always overdetermined because "society and social agents lack any essence, and their regularities merely consist of the relative and precarious forms of fixation which accompany the establishment of a certain order" (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. 98). The overdetermination of society and social practices is the impossibility of fully representing reality (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001). The understandings of individuals are limited by their experiences, knowledge and context. Therefore, individuals in society have a worldview which is from an overdetermined perspective. Thus, society is constructed by powers that frame the boundaries of social relationships (Hines, 1988). In social relationships, the context is always overdeterminated because of the powerful members of society (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001).

The classical rhetoric taught in Greek Ancient where the orator used emotions as persuasive techniques to convince and mobilize the audience. There are five accepted criteria applied in rhetorical learning (Martin, 2013, p. 52): discovery (*inventio*), arrangement (*dispositio*), style (*elocutio*), delivery (*pronuntiato*) and memory (*memoria*). As stated by Cicero and Quintilian there are five elements of the "*ars rhetorica* itself", which were found in *Ad Herennium* (Skinner, 1996, p. 45). The first is *inventio*, which is the capacity to make things probable with plausible considerations (Skinner, 1996, p. 45). The second *dispositio*, it is the best way of ordering or distributing ideas in space of discursive argumentations; the third is *elocutio* or the use of appropriated words; the fourth is *pronuntiatio* and is connected with tone of voice; the temperate and elegant style; and the fifth is *memoria* which is the ability to keep in mind the things that have discovered to construct the better order with the arguments (Skinner, 1996, p. 46). Roman rhetoricians did not mention the two latter elements because they recognised rhetoric as written texts; hence, these are also related to spoken words (Skinner, 1996, p. 46).

Application of the notion of rhetoric: Previously, the classical definition of rhetoric poses in the interpretation of the Aristotle's work. However, in this study, I understand rhetoric in the political theory arguably by Ernesto Laclau – one of the theorists of DT. This intends to interpret the relation of rhetoric, discourse and society. Specifically, this thesis analyses discursive formations of SEA employed in a case study in Brazil. By doing so, this study purposes of discussing the connection of discourse (as a representation of social relations) and rhetoric in line with DT. The rhetoric is an essential term in the political context. Political agents use rhetorical techniques to persuade their audience. In this case, SEA's constructions are results of practices of rhetoric that emerges in the political field. I argue rhetoric is still alive in society while politics exists.

Rhetoric and discourse are part of the signifying system; both elements implicate to "the social production of meaning" (Laclau, 2014, p. 65). Laclau pinpoints a particular term for the rhetorical device of language: 'rhetoricity'. Laclau terms, this particular concept and links it to the set of signifiers in a way of constructed meanings that suggest a "structure of objectivity" (Laclau, 2014, p. 65).

> Rhetoricity, as a dimension of signification, has no limits in its field of operation. It is coterminous with the very structure of objectivity. This is, first of all, connected with the notion of 'discourse' that I have used in my work, which is not exclusively or primarily linked to speech or writing, but to any signifying practice. This entails that it is equivalent to the social production of meaning – that is, to the very fabric of social life. There is no possibility of any strict separation between signification and action. Even most purely constative of assertions has a performative dimension, and, conversely, there is no action that is not embedded in signification. (Laclau, 2014:65).

'Rhetoricity' of language is inherent with the "subversion of combinational locations" and 'rhetoricity' is part of the "dimensions of significations" (Laclau, 2014, p. 64). The signification is a process endless that involves "successive institutions and subversions of different locations" (Laclau, 2014, p. 64).

Rhetoric condenses figures of speech. Accordingly, Martin (2013, p. 75) divides the figures of speech into two categories: schemes and tropes. "Rhetorical schemes" organise words to highlight specific effects that make phrases, words and sentences or omit parts (Martin, 2013, p. 75). The second category is tropes. Tropes connect with a form of argument, in particular, the "premises and conclusions" (Martin, 2013, p. 77).

SCHEMES		TROPES	
Anaphora	Anastrophe	Metaphor	Hyperbole
Epistrophe	Antithesis	Metonymy	Irony
Antimetabole	Parallelism	Synecdoche	Paradiastole
Epanalepsis	Asyndeton	Analogy	Catachresis
Anadiplosis	Tricolon		

Figure 7 – Figures of speech. Source: Martin (2013, p. 75-83)

The figures of speech linked to DT necessitate the strongest persuasive technique in rhetoric: forms of argumentation. These forms address the political articulation of social constructs in discourse. Laclau (2005, p. 1) concentrates on the discussion of populism movement in the "political and ideological realities". Rhetoric is essential to the political field, especially, the techniques of argumentation understood in the tropes. The devices of rhetoric underpinned in these political movements and articulated in the work of Laclau are metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche and catachresis (Laclau, 2005, p. 12). In conclusion, the tropic figures as forms of argument perform a fundamental role in politics.

Main idea: Specifically, rhetoric means an alternative feature in the system of signification preconised by Laclau (2005; 2014). In this study, rhetoric is a form of discursive formations underpinned in the political space to shape, modify and construct meanings associated with the interest of stakeholders in SEA. There are figures of speech interlinked to DT to identify this feature. In particular, the figures are like metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche and catachresis. These tropes of rhetoric intimately link to DT. As Laclau (2014) defends, 'rhetoricity' of language is a portion of the scope of signification. The system of signification engages to the complex directions of associations, comparisons and substitutions to configure powers in society.

An essential tropic figure is metaphor (Martin, 2013, p. 77). Martin (2013, p. 77) affirms that metaphor involves and invokes comparison. Metaphor establishes the substitution of terms by analogy (Laclau, 2005, p. 19). Analogy, according to Martin (2013, p. 78), connects a particular case to another metaphorically, by assuming it corresponds and

encourages the audience to conjecture a meaning. The analogical device permits the audience to make certain assumptions from the argument from an "unexplained premise or conclusion" (Martin, 2013, p. 79). In the political space, the analogy links to the poles of the "dichotomic structure" that privilege "a set of particular" interests (Laclau, 2005:19). "So far from these devices being *mere* rhetoric, they are inherent in the logics presiding over the constitution and dissolution of *any* political space" (Laclau, 2005, p. 19). The next figure of the trope is metonymy. However, Martin (2013) and Laclau (2014) conceptualise this device as connected to metaphor.

> If the semantic relations underlying both metaphor and metonymy transcend their rhetorical form, are not those relations anchored in signification as such, beyond classical rhetorical limits, or, alternatively, could not signification be seen as a generalized rhetoric? In other words, could that 'rhetoricity' be seen not as an abuse but as constitutive (in the transcendental sense) of signification? (Laclau, 2014, p. 58).

The main perception of metonymy is 'substitution'; metonymy involves "substitution of a word or concept" with "close associations" (Martin, 2013, p. 79). The tensions detected in metaphor and metonymy continues to identify the structure of "political space" (Laclau, 2014, p. 67). The distinction between metaphor and metonymy builds a matrix that identifies the other tropes as "two poles of continuum" (Laclau, 2014, p. 63). The first pole consists of 'contiguity' in which relates to metonymy as "the transgression of the structural locations that define the relations of combination" that is "fully visible" (Laclau, 2014, p. 62). The second pole is "analogy", in metaphor, "analogy entirely ignores those structural differentiations" (Laclau, 2014, p. 62). These two tropes merge into each other, "the differential logic associates to the syntagmatic axis of the signifying system" (Laclau, 2014, p. 62). "Metaphor is the *telos* of metonymy" (Laclau, 2014, p. 62). Metaphor and metonymy as a constituent of the system of signification expose the formation of hegemonies. In relation to the Brazilian context, these devices identify how a particular element in the SEA becomes hegemonic.

The difference between metonymy and metaphor arises to shadow the common root: the logic of association in the system of signification (Laclau, 2014, p. 62). Metonymy merges into metaphor, the movement from these tropes is named hegemony by "contingent articulation to essential belonging" (Laclau, 2014, p. 63). The indication of "a social movement", "an ideology", "a political institution" constitutes "the metaphorical crystallization" of an arguably analogical connection originating from the "contingent

contiguity of their metonymical origins" (Laclau, 2014, p. 63). The third trope underpinned in Laclau's work is synecdoche.

Synecdoche associates an "element of an object" to the whole object (Martin, 2013, p. 79). Martin (2013, p. 79) suggests that synecdoche is a type of metonymy. However, Laclau (2005, p. 72) also argues that this device is "simply to be taxonomically added to other figures" that are predominantly metaphor and metonymy. According to Laclau (2005, p. 72), synecdoche means a part that represents the whole.

Rhetoric is an apparatus to replace the unreachable literal meaning. For example, catachresis is a rhetorical device that substitutes a literal term for a figural one because of the limitation of the language to express certain objects (i.e., "the 'leg' of a chair") (Laclau, 2005, p. 71).

Reasons for using discourse and rhetoric as the foundation of this thesis: The connection between discourse and rhetoric is evident in Laclau (2014)'s book. The 'rhetoricity' is a "dimension of signification" that links to discourse (Laclau, 2014, p. 65). In this thesis, discourse and rhetoric demonstrate the process of how meanings of SEA have constructed in variation figural devices.

Discourse is partial and rhetoric fills the gap within a range of situations that are unable to explain literally. As an example, the catachrestical technique substitutes a momentary meaning of an object that would not reach by figural meaning. The following sections describe some elements of DT that this thesis employs to capture the constructions of SEA.

4.3.2 Some elements of Discourse Theory

This section examines the formation of hegemony in social and political space, the concept of empty signifiers and relations of hegemony to discourse and rhetoric in SEA field. In the DT, the political foundations of elements constructed in societies are essential to understand the discursive construction of SEA in an owned state company. Figure 8 presents the discussed elements of DT employed in this thesis.

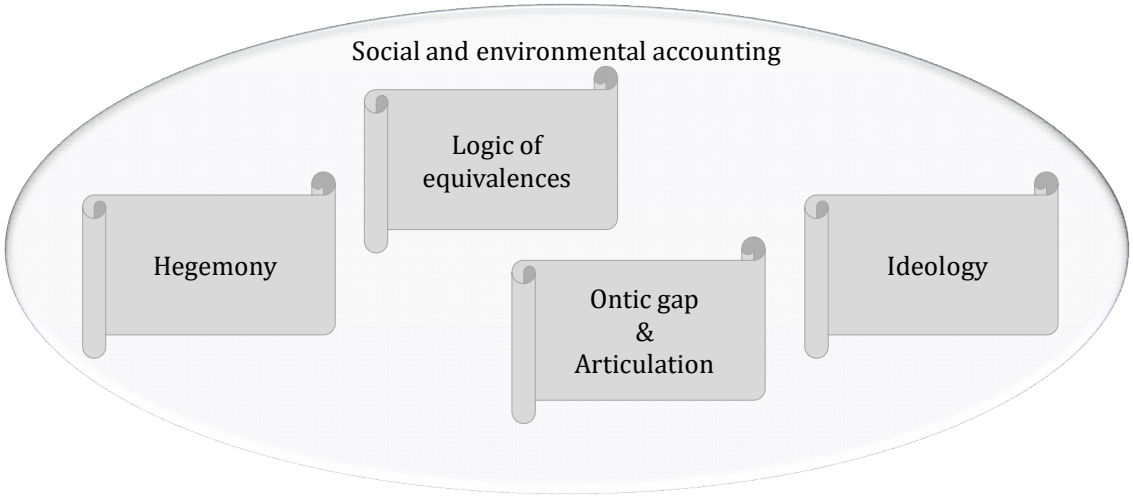

Figure 8 – Elements of DT employed in this thesis

The next fragment shows the discourse of hegemony and its significance for the SEA field.

4.3.2.1 Discourse of Hegemony

Laclau and Mouffe's DT (1985; 2001) explains the hegemonic process as inherent within formulating meanings of objects. As an example of hegemonies, political agents articulate concepts to dominate and control the identities of objects in a certain group. Objects are represented in discourse, and they acquire meanings within that discourse (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001). Hegemony arises while "a particular social force assumes the representation of a totality" (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. x). In other words, Laclau (2014, p. 69) describes hegemony "when a particularity becomes the name of an absent universality". However, the requirement of 'hegemony' is a central characteristic of political theories and its analysis (Laclau, 2014, p. 80). There are three ways to constitute hegemonies. First, while the system of meanings is not "closed or representable totality", hegemony establishes forms of heterogeneity of social system or structure (Laclau, 2014, p. 80-81). The second is the constitution of hegemony has to join in a "re-totalizing effect" without the possibility to close the system of meanings; and, thirdly, this re-totalisation must not be the first moment of articulation; Laclau refers to this as "a dialectical integration" (Laclau, 2014, p. 80-81). Political agents construct hegemonies in a contradictory way because hegemonies come from a heterogeneous character, with the imaginary idea of 're-totalisation' without this possibility, of course, and cleaning the path of its constitution (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001).

In this case, the thesis examines the constitution of hegemonies in a political space as the case of Petrobras, which is the largest government-controlled corporation in Brazil. In relation to sustainability, corporations represent their actions and objectives in interviews, speeches, reports, social media releases and other forms of communication. In this communication, the organisation engages with and promotes sustainability in a rhetorical mean (see Cintra & Carter, 2012; Milne et al., 2009). Large corporations influence public opinion and to be able to guarantee their voice, they utilise mechanisms of domination as the constitution/dissolution of hegemonies. This is possible because language is too complex to fix or close.

The impossibility to close the system of language occurs because of the presence of antagonisms that prevent a complete totalisation of the system. Hegemony is based on antagonisms; first, it begins with the negative of the situation at which point where subordinated groups are disregarded and marginalised. Secondly, this "is only consolidated to the extent that it succeeds in constituting the positivity of the social" (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. 189). These antagonisms in social logics exist and are conceivable within societies. The strategy of constitution uses plural spaces where diversity is possible; politics arranges itself in the position of impossibilities in the account of the contingency of discourse. Thus, hegemonies emerge within contradictions. This is a tactic of persuasion where diversity is subverted to constitute a hegemony in a contradictory form:

> . . . Society constructs the image and the management of its own impossibility. The compromise, the precarious character of every arrangement, the antagonism, are the primary facts, and it is only within this instability that the moment of positivity and its management take place (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. 191).

Antagonisms mean 'the other' that is not only contradictions but any forms that avoid a complete fixation of the system of signification. Antagonisms undermine the system of signification by obstructing to close the spectrum of language and its network (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001). The subversion of the language of the hegemonic process crosses the mechanisms of rhetoric. Any political space is a useful level of the constitution or dissolution of powers, and it is possible within hegemonic constructions which rhetoric is a fundamental instrument to sustain a moment of stabilisation.

> If hegemony is a type of political relation and not a topographical concept, it is clear that it cannot either be conceived as an irradiation of effects from a privileged point. In this sense, we could say that hegemony is basically metonymical: its effects always emerge from a surplus of meaning which results from an operation of displacement (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. 141).

By using figures of speech is possible to understand hegemonic formations. However, figures of speech diminish into the other (Laclau, 2014. p. 88). This means that hegemonic discourse can be more or less metaphorical – the comparison is strong enough to resist a totalisation fixation of any one dominant meaning that happens through metonymic transitions (Laclau, 2014. p. 88). Alternatively, the catachrestical transition to relating a mistaken comparison that links to displacements, and then, metonymic. "So if the only defining feature of a catachresis is its being based on a figural name that has no counterpart in a proper one" (Laclau, 2014, p. 90). Hegemony is fundamentally established by displacements – a dislocation of situations (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001). For example, a dislocation of a meaning that works in an economic status, but by articulatory practice, it was used in a political situation.

Hegemonies are established inside a political space in which powers shape and modify the hegemonic process of its constitution/dissolution that spreads through the conception of knowledge. There is no law or knowledge "which are separate from power" (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. 187). Hegemonic practice reveals that there is no centre, law, knowledge or power that fixes those elements without unification of hegemonic articulations (p. 187). Political logics ascribe to "an authoritarian fixing of the social order in hierarchies" (p. 187-8). Any attempt to negate a meaning is impossible, despite the fact that powerful groups try to do this through articulatory discourse the hegemony. "The logic of democracy is not a logic of the positivity of the social, and it is, therefore, incapable of founding a nodal point of any kind around which the social fabric can be reconstituted" (p. 188). Any "possible form of unity" can exist within a "result of a process of articulation" (p.189). Hegemony can only achieve domination when it is not following by democratic logic. Democracy is a process of articulation, and it occurs due to the failure of composing a fundamental standpoint.

The centrality of discursive practice is called 'nodal points' which happens when a partition stability becomes the central point (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. 112). Inside discourse, there is an articulatory practice filled up representations, performativity and ideologies which external dimension of language acts in the significant transformation of the meaning and its related signified. In this regard, discourse is more than what is spoken or written: other possibilities can perform a vital relationship that builds a sense of a successive and simultaneous meaning. Laclau (2005, p. 69) suggests this position is about

discourse, arguing that elements are understood without privilege, without any background and that there is nothing beyond the interplay of differences, as whatever centrality is assumed by an element will be explained through differences. What Lacanian theory brings to DT, is the notion of 'point of caption' in which Laclau and Mouffe (2001) use as 'nodal point'.

> The word is not a sign, but a nodal point [noeud] of signification. When I say the word "curtain" [rideau] for example, it is not merely to designate by convention an object whose use can be varied in a thousand ways depending on the intentions of the artisan, shopkeeper, painter, or Gestalt psychologist— whether as labor, exchange value, colorful physiognomy, or spatial structure. Metaphorically, it is a curtain of rain [rideau d'arbres]; forging plays on words, it is when I am being curt and sweet or can curr tangentially with the best of them [les rides et les ris de l'eau] and my friend Curt Ans off *[Leiris dominant]* these glossological games better than I do. By decree, it is the limit of my domain or, on occasion, a screen for my meditation in a room I share with someone else. Miraculously, it is the space that opens onto infinity, the unknown at the threshold, or the solitary walker's morning departure. Apprehensively, it is the flutter that betrays Agrippina's presence at the Roman Empire's Council, or Madame de Chasteller's gaze out the window as Lucien Leuwen passes by. Mistakenly, it is Polonius that I stab, shouting, "How now! a rat?" As an interjection, during the tragedy's intermission, it is my cry of impatience or the sign of my boredom: "Curtain!" It is, finally, an image of meaning *qua* meaning, which must be unveiled if it is to reveal itself (Lacan, 2005, p. 136).

A nodal point is a matter of importance to the "artisan, shopkeeper, painter" could understand in a "thousand ways" (Lacan, 2005, p. 136). Nodal point implies elements of discursive practice as universal function. It helps conceive the identification of what is central to a political debate, but it elaborates outside political field because the articulatory practice of hegemonic political practice will admit what is significant in conformity with their plans.

> According to Žižek, the quilting point (the *point de capiton*) whose name brings about the unity of a discursive formation — Lacan's *objet petit* a - has no positive identity of its own: 'we search in vain for it in positive reality because it has no positive consistency — because it is just an objectification of a void, of a discontinuity open in reality by the emergency of the signifier'. It is not through a wealth of signifieds but, on the contrary, through the presence of a pure signifier that this quilting function is fulfilled (Laclau, 2005, p. 103).

In Žižek's words, this *point of capiton* is "a pure signifier" more than a richest meaning (Laclau, 2005, p. 103). An example of this point is the idea that Brazil is the country of football. In the period of World Cup in Brazil, 2014, the advertisement was the 'point of caption' for the publicity in Brazil and around the world. The ideology of Brazil as football country becomes strong when Brazilians identify themselves as from 'The Football Country'. In a moment of publicity, when seconds imply money, the publicity looks for meanings that capture more audience possible. Therefore, in terms of 'nodal points' or 'point of caption', 'Brazil the country of football' constitutes a meaning that reaches the universal state.

> If we maintain that the *point de capiton* is a 'nodal point', a kind of knot of meanings, this does not imply that it is simply the 'richest' word, the word in which is condensed all the richness of meaning of the field it 'quilts': the *point de capiton* is rather the word which, as a word, on the level of the signifier itself, unifies a given field, constitutes its identity: it is, so to speak, the word to which 'things' themselves refer to recognize themselves in their unity (Žižek, 2008, p. 105).

The contrast between nodal point and hegemony brings together two opposing poles of constructs. Hegemony needs to change its negativity to achieve the result of a hegemonic project. On the other hand, nodal point is a natural social process that constructs without political forces, but as a result of them.

> Subordinated group are presented purely as negative demands subversive of a certain order, without being linked to any viable project for the reconstruction of specific areas of society, their capacity to act hegemonically will be excluded from the outset. . . . This element of negativity is not accompanied by any real attempt to establish different nodal points from which a process of different and positive reconstruction of the social fabric could be instituted - and as a result the strategy is condemned to marginality (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. 189).

Hegemony demands political forces to indicate or consolidate a signifier for a certain group or society. On the contrary, an empty signifier is the absence of a signifier. The 'empty signifier' term can only exist theoretical due to social practices constitute its significance. Moreover, only forces of power can change/stop an empty signifier. The opposite of 'empty signifier' is hegemony where articulation and performativity are necessary to stand the powerful signifier.

> This is what Laclau terms the empty signifier, the mechanism whereby particular elements assume the function of representing the closure of the system, but whose necessary failure allows for the rearticulation of different points of closure. Occupancy of the place of the empty signifier is impossible, for it is radically outside and yet ineradicably inside the system (Devenney, 2004, p. 63).

"The closure of the system" links to empty signifiers because both are impossible, one due to the nature of language, and the other, for the articulatory process that refuses a complete emptiness. 'Empty' is a transition, not a full stop ending. This leads to the idea of the empty signifier suggested by Spence (2009) and Cintra and Carter (2012) in relation to SEA and CSR. For Laclau (2007, p. 36), the empty signifier is a signifier without a signified:

> An empty signifier would be a sequence of sounds, and if the latter are deprived of any signifying function the term 'signifier' itself would become excessive. The only possibility for a stream of sounds being detached from any particular signified while still remaining a signifier is if, through the subversion of the sign which the possibility of an empty signifier involves, something is achieved which is internal to significations as such (Laclau, 2007, p. 36).

An empty signifier can only exist if there is a structural impossibility in such a meaning, which occurs when there is an interruption by subvention, distortion and others of the signal structure (Laclau, 2007, p. 36). An example of an empty signifier is 'love'. Different

cultures conceptualise 'love' in varied ways. Any attempt to close the system of signification regarding 'love' will fail because of the spread and diverse formation of signifiers related to 'love' – that it is an object, which is socially constructed by discursive, and non-discursive formations. Ontologically, empty signifiers are perfect for politics, as it enables all actors to choose their meanings. In relation to hegemony, if there is a concept that cannot be fixed because of antagonisms, contradictions and dislocations, then this is the perfect combination for political agents to articulate meaning for their benefits.

The limits of the system of signification prevail in the political arena. Laclau (2007, p. 36) suggests: "[W]e do not have to deal with an excess or deficiency of signification, but with the precise theoretical possibility of something which points, from within the process of signification, to the discursive presence of its own limits". Hence, these limits can affect the possibilities of meanings and can create new meanings. The 'context' plays a significant role in the system of signification. Also, politics uses this impossibility to construct their limits, even though it is a rhetorical meaning, but it is how politics articulate that impossibility to be possible. Any tentative fixation on meaning is impossible, so "any discourse is constituted as an attempt to dominate the field of discursivity, to arrest the flow of differences, to construct a centre" (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. 112). Laclau (2005, p. 69) describes the importance of empty signifiers to politics:

> If we have a purely differential ensemble, its totality has to be present in each individual act of signification. Conceptually grasping that totality is the condition of signification as such. Secondly, however, to grasp that totality conceptually, we have to grasp its limits - that is to say, we have to differentiate it from something other than itself (Laclau, 2005, p. 69).

The hegemonic formation will be the imposition of some principles emerging in the political space; in this imposition, hegemony operation is the fulfilment of a meaning, and empty signifier is the lack of meaning (Laclau, 2007, p. 44). Hegemony operates by the necessity of 'fixing' a meaning. The opposite of hegemony is empty signifier. Moreover, all attempts to unify an identity of an object play in the field of antagonisms where agents have to traverse the limits of lack to 'fix' through an imposed meaning. "To hegemonize something is precisely to carry out this filling function" (Laclau, 2007, p. 44). Politics counts in SEA studies and its practices because the constitution and dissolution of a signifier raise from an act of politics. "Politics is possible because the constitutive impossibility of society can only represent itself through the production of empty signifier" (Laclau, 2007, p. 44). This is necessary for SEA studies due to the impossibility to represent sustainability, SEA and CSR in a single signifier. The constitution of meanings

does matter for politics, and this thesis discusses the constructs of meanings in a political space.

The unreachable attempt to unify 'sustainability': In SEA studies, multiple significances for sustainability attempt to unify this notion, but sustainability is a broader signified that politically change depending on the social reality. Theoretically, sustainability is an empty signifier. In fact, sustainability is articulated to maintain a certain order, a certain hegemonic order. As well as SEA, CSR and SER's notion, sustainability – the main word invoked in the SEA studies – has a variety of associated meanings/signifiers. This means that 'sustainability' and its variation are a fertile arena of politics that are hegemonically and rhetorically articulated in a *certain* significance. This articulatory process crosses the frontier of what is particular and what is universal. About the hegemonic project in SEA studies, the effort is to touch the universal which individuals rapidly absorb the powers, and this operation promotes a powerful group. The universal challenge reaches for nodal points that hegemonic process desires to dominate a group discursively.

The articulation of hegemonic process operates in discursive practices. This happens because discourse represents society; through language, people express their intentionality:

> If we accept the non-complete character of all discursive fixation and, at the same time, affirm the relational character of every identity, the ambiguous character of the signifier, its non-fixation to any signified, can only exist insofar as there is a proliferation of signified (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. 113)

Representations of social life are contingent and incomplete. Discourse represents society in partial and incomplete modes. Society and language are complex objects. However, DT explains that any object is possible to understand within discourse. Discursive and non-discursive qualities shape discourse. The figures of speech comprehend forms of discursive characteristics, and they also utilise non-discursive formation in which the 'context' is an essential source of configuration.

In this thesis, SEA's notions are discussed in discursive forms and understood by the theoretical foundation in DT. This entails that SEA constructions have different meanings and political agents which use rhetorical devices, discursive features, contexts and other forms to represent its intentions and to persuade stakeholders by a hegemonic subornation in a way that predominate the most powerful agents. The political discourse of SEA reveals a form of inclusions and exclusions. In which, inclusions mean what is important and exclusions what is not to the political agents. The next section discusses the logic of equivalence/difference in DT foundation.

4.3.2.2 Logic of equivalence/difference and SEA Brazilian academe

This section contends the logic of equivalence/difference in a political ground. In the previous section debated the formation of hegemonies and the impossibility of closing the system of signification. The production of antagonisms in the system signifies this impossibility is owing to the external presence of any social relationship. The complex world brings to discourse diversity. Thus, the signification will be immersed in levels, dimensions, and density of identities. Laclau and Mouffe (2001, p. 125) proffer that antagonism "is a relation wherein the limits of every objectivity are shown". Social realities exist but partially; this means that antagonism interrupts the "final suture" (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. 125). This expands the sense of limits of discourse. Laclau and Mouffe (2001, p. 125) develop the boundaries of discourse while employing a post-structuralist view that "antagonisms are not internal, but external to society". This idea constitutes an enlargement of the structuralism of De Saussure and enhancing a new version for the formation of discourse and its system of signification.

The notion of antagonisms and the logic of equivalence/difference pass through the constitution of meanings and its signs. For instance, "the company is green" is an example of how dimensions of identities are interrupted by antagonisms. When there is a comparison between "company" and "green", it constructs another antagonism. What this phrase implies is that there are companies that are not green. This shows that possibilities are endless to relate entirely all the signified and signifiers between a company and their attributes.

Language is a system of differences and antagonisms are "the failure of difference" (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. 125). In this sense, antagonisms exist to disrupt this system (p. 125). Language exists to create a sense of objectivity, a manner to communicate. However, antagonisms subvert the language (p. 125). Laclau and Mouffe (2001, p. 125) show an example, which in the historical narratives there are "hiatuses" and interruptions that are fulfilled by "experiences" (p. 125). Language, therefore, is limited and partial for each identity. Moreover, the interruption of language stands in external forces as antagonisms that subvert the total objectivity of language.

Language is partial and incomplete to be completely meaningful. To illustrate, 'green' is a colour but it also represents political parties and environmental thoughts as well. However, in some historical moment, there would be moments of intensification

regarding meanings for ´green' such as 'green products', 'green protection', 'environmentally friendly' and organisations 'should' present plans for a sustainable world. This implies that the first thought of 'green' for companies relates to the environment. Language has restrictions of comprehension, and this means that we need to invoke concepts to be able to understand the meaning. Language is a representation, a projection of reality that reflects partial and limited view (see Morgan, 1988). Regarding 'non-green', which is 'the other' or the antagonistic meaning, this reflects the exterior because antagonism redirects and transforms the language. It indicates the subversion of space, "the company is green" acquires the condition of the differential moment that expresses the "identical something" (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. 127).

A differential moment takes place in comparison with something negative, which exists to the other part of 'green'. This requires the 'non-green' is similar to 'green' in opposed conditions. The 'non-green' represents what the 'green' is not. From this comparison, the negative aspect is similar to positive. This is the logic of equivalence/difference. "[A]ll the differential determination of a pole have dissolved through their negative-equivalential reference" (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. 128). Thus, discourse is contingent; ambiguity incorporates some forms of equivalence, but to be equivalent, this has to be different and subverting the character of the object (p. 128). The relation of equivalences demonstrates that language is unfixed and precarious due to the existence of antagonisms. Exploring our example, the 'green' is a positive affirmation of 'the company' that is also a metaphorical explanation of the limits of language that metaphors and antagonisms are examples of its disruption (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. 125). In this sense, discourse cannot be fixed; antagonisms and the logic of equivalence/difference obstruct the totality of objectivity as well as the closing of language.

> The logic of equivalence is a logic of the simplification of political space, while the logic of difference is a logic of its expansion and increasing complexity. Taking a comparative example from linguistics, we could say that the logic of difference tends to expand the syntagmatic pole of language, the number of positions that can enter in to a relation of combination and hence of continuity with one another; while the logic of equivalence expands the paradigmatic pole - that is, the elements that can be substituted for one another - thereby reducing the number of positions which can possibly be combined (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. 130).

The logic of equivalence/difference has similarity the logic of simplification (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. 130). This signifies equivalences join all the objects that could have similar signifiers. Alternatively, in the political space, equivalences make 'clean' being equivalent to 'dirty'. By equivalences, everything becomes possible, and the significance

of an identity of an object explode in a vast proportion. The fruitiness of meanings is a perfect match for political purpose. On the other hand, the logic of difference means expansion of poles and its complexity (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. 130).

The logic of inclusion and exclusion – equivalence for a political purpose: Regarding SEA, the logic of equivalence/difference leads the inclusion and exclusion in this system. The impossibility to close and the unlimited scope for equivalences construct a counterpart for political agents who reduce the effect of negative meanings through "their negative-equivalential reference". This is the dream of politicians and powerful agents. There is nothing 'bad', but similar to 'bad' that could be 'less bad', 'not bad', 'good' and so forth. The affirmation that something is 'bad' also implies this something is 'less bad' or in extreme, 'good'. It matters for SEA studies due to politics plays an important role in the constitution, and dissolution of hegemonies and the logic of equivalence/difference are the artefacts for this pervasive game.

The academy in Brazil or the Brazilian context of SEA reinforces the capitalist system. In essence, the researchers in Brazil prefer to set the actual economic foundation instead of challenging it. To illustrate, SEA studies in Brazil establish measurements of disclosures and investigate the relationship between financial variables. These studies stand for an economic reason to connect with social changes and environmental protection. The Brazilian studies exclude deep discussion of the representation of these measurements, disclosures and association to variables in the political ground.

The inclusion of social and environmental aspects is rhetorically modified to suit the economic growth of corporations. As an alternative, a political engaged Brazilian researcher should recognise this intention and avoid consolidating the game of illusions of discourses and actions (see, for example, Sikka, 2010). The next section presents the ontic gap and articulation about SEA studies.

4.3.2.3 Ontic gap and articulation

In the previous section, we debated the logic of equivalence/difference permit agents to choose strategically the more positive meaning to enhance the political intention. Regarding SEA studies in Brazil, the equivalent inclusion is what suits the powerful sense of economic growth even that is contrary to sustainable principles. This, then, links to the exclusion of social and environmental aspects that are put aside the SEA studies in Brazil. They are mere examples with deep engagement with the sustainability agenda. Additionally, we discussed hegemony in the process of domination that powerful agents try to reach the common point (nodal point) to consolidate and control their aims pervasively. SEA, sustainability, CSR and other variations are interchangeable terms in the

range of signifiers, which means that sometimes they are empty signifiers in the process of hegemonies. If all the elements linked to SEA and its interpretations are placed in the game, there is no other choice than to classify them as 'empty'. However, the articulatory process of hegemony will try to fix a meaning, a special one for the political purpose.

> The practice of articulation, therefore, consists in the construction of nodal points which partially fix meaning; and the partial character of this fixation proceeds from the openness of the social, a result, in its turn, of the constant overflowing of every discourse by the infinitude of the field of discursivity (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. 113).

Articulation is a practice to fill the breach of the constantly changing discursive practices. In the political field, articulation plays in a way to fulfil the momentary hegemonic meaning – the totality of differences (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001). This unstable situation permits articulation – "a system of differential position" (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. 102). The unfulfilled identities provide the perfect condition for articulation that fills the gaps between totality and empty within overdeterminated identity that accomplish every individual in a politicised society (Althusser, 2005). The overdetermination and incomplete identity create space for negotiation. Practices attempt to fix a meaning of an object – in this thesis, the object is each social construction of SEA. Thus, objects appear articulated because the presence of 'the other' avoids the totality of signification. Articulation also permits a suture of different positions of those constituents within discursive formations.

The necessity of articulatory practice: In relation to SEA, sustainability is a frequent label used from organisations to justify their colocation in the agenda of a sustainable planet. However, SEA and sustainability are empty signifiers due to the unlimited associated meanings. This creates a situation in politics. If there is an object that cannot be fixed, then, this object is strategically fixed to benefit the hegemonic formation.

The existence of empty signifiers conceives a double ontic gap for SEA, sustainability, and its variations. The first gap is the presence of an object that cannot be universal. This is the ontological gap of itself, of being. If there is something that cannot be total something then what do actors represent? As an example, whether sustainability is or not, there is not a universal representation. This entails that sustainability and its interpretations are tactically symbolised to suit a certain interest, but is partial as discourse. The second gap is the result of its emptiness representation. Sustainability and its derivatives are applied in social context. These notions are a particular understanding of what they meant. This signifies that political actors use sustainability, SEA, CSR and its variations in a political way that socially constructs a moment of stabilisation in a terrain of undecidability. This

is the main component of hegemonies in societies. While there is undecidability (in Derridean terms), hegemonic formations capture the meanings that engaged in a moment of domination. DT explains that totalisation is impossible as discourse, so, hegemony is a transitory process that can only exist due the combination of articulation, logic of equivalence/difference and empty signifiers.

The presence of double ontic gap: SEA and sustainability are terms in constant transition that means that they are empty concepts. Because of that, there is a double ontic gap. The first gap appears in the question: What is sustainability, SEA, or CSR? There is an attempt to seek a universal signifier for them, but they have a lack of being themselves. The second gap is the application of empty concepts. If the concept cannot be fixed then what are political actors articulating? While sustainability and its interpretations are not a single concept, then the articulation of them are purposely sustained to enhance a specific objective.

The formation of discourse in DT is always contingent and fragmented (Laclau, 2014, p. 169). The principle is that articulation does not obey any underlying logic; "articulations are . . . the primary terrain of constitution of social objectivity" (Laclau, 2014, p. 169). The direction of stability recomposes the hegemonic process by heterogeneous elements, but the homogeneity of a high level of hegemony is always achieved never given (Laclau, 2014, p. 169). In brief, hegemony is articulated to achieve the universal, a temporary period of homogeneity and objectivity that permeates politics. However, it is contingent and strongly maintained by political actors.

Discursive constructions are infinite and just by articulation that meanings are fixed (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001). A post-structuralist idea of language conceives the infinitude of signification, which supports the instability, and precarious formation of discourse – a representation of society. This undefined structure of meanings recognises that society is unstable. Transformation happens in everyday life. The point of suture can only be temporary for the entire system of signification, where a brief nodal point becomes possible, as Devenney explains:

> Within a system of signification then one element of the system assumes the position of representing its point of suture or closure, guaranteeing meaning. However this can only be a temporary nodal point, a fixation which is made possible precisely because the system struggles to ensure its stability. The necessity of the system remarking itself also points beyond the system to its failure. That which ensures its systematicity constitutes it as impossible (Devenney, 2004, p. 63).

A single element becomes central because articulatory practice. However, this is "a temporary" fixation, a moment of transition until another fixation emerges. Hegemony formation aims to seek a universal point, but the precariousness of any discursive

formation carries a momentary fixation belong to the impossibility to close the system of signification and the systematic substitutions for less negative elements (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001). The next section demonstrates that ideology connects to the contingent identity of objects and individuals.

4.3.2.4 Ideology

The previous section concerned about articulation and the double ontic gap of sustainability and its variations that lead to the presence of ideologies. In this sense, DT develops the Althusserian position to explain that ideologies grasp every discursive form.

The notion of ideology here discusses the Althusser's notion and the DT development. Althusser (2012) shows that "The State Ideological Apparatuses" recognises that ideologies spread out of any form of social relationships. Ideologies are inside practices that ideological apparatus inscribes within material existence (Althusser, 2012, p. 127). Marxist theory concerns with a perspective of the ideological struggle, this apparatus relies on the private and public with no distinction of each domain (Althusser, 2012). That takes place in religious, education, family, political arena and legal parts (p. 108). Then, secondly, DT of Laclau and Mouffe's (1985, 2001) work improves this notion for all objects in which ideologies prevail in every little part as well as politics in a non-structural way that allows the articulation to temporary fix a hegemonic meaning in a particular direction.

Ideologies encompass forms of conservation of the current hegemony. It performs in the language used to sustain the powerful groups by ideological weapons. This sometimes blinds subjects to be themselves, because identity is immersed in the representation of ideologies. For example, if a group decided that 'tradition' has to be protected, then they would use ideologies to maintain their principal purpose. To illustrate, "the tradition is our culture, let's keep it" is an example of a slogan phrase that groups can put in diverse ways of communication which discursively sustain the idea of powerful agents. Similar idea regards to the determinism of Marxism.

> This is the point where the disarticulation of Althusser's rationalism will begin. It is important to note that the inconsistent dualism of the starting-point will be transmitted to those very theoretical forms which will preside over the disaggregation of the original schema. In effect, two possibilities arose: the first was to develop all the implications of the concept of overdetermination, showing the impossibility of a concept such as 'determination in the last instance by the economy' and affirming the precarious and relational character of every identity. The second possibility was to demonstrate the logical inconsistency of the necessary links postulated among the elements of the social totality,

> and thus to show, by a different path, the impossibility of the object 'society' as a rationally unified totality (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. 99).

The determinism of Marxist theory deprives the perspective that every attempt to unify a signifier is temporary. DT, as a post-Marxism development, relies on every discursive formation is contingent and overdeterminated. These formations signifier that social constructions prevail in a necessity of stabilisation, structure or, in some cases, totalisation, but fixation is impossible. The structure of discourse, as well as society, is an illusion, a transition to the next intentionally or ideologically constructed idea. The existence of "the precarious" of "every identity" implies in the overdetermination of any identity (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. 99). This entails that ideologies are inherent in any social relations from family to politics and by consequence the identity is always overdeterminated due to the contingent formation of identities in the discursive field.

The assumed concept of ideology is the Althusserian position. "Ideology is the system of ideas and representations which dominate the mind of a man or a social group" (Althusser, 2012, p. 120). In the particular way of social influences for subjects, ideology connects to overdetermination and its inherent presence in every social opportunity. Both systems are illusions/representations of infinitive ways of objects in the real life.

> Ideologies is a 'representation' of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence (Althusser, 2012, p. 123).

DT is a development of Marxism owing to the expansion of forms of repression not only by capitalist forces but also by a variety of hegemonic powers. Laclau and Mouffe (2001, p. 97) defend that discourse and society are contingent, and all character is overdeterminated that creates the possibility to articulation to fix a signifier partially to benefit a powerful group. Overdetermination is a concept combined with linguistics and psychoanalysis (p. 97). Overdetermination considers the fusion of "a symbolic dimension and a plurality of meanings" (p. 97). The symbolic means the Lacanian concept of 'the other' and the plurality, the logic of equivalence/difference in the hegemonic formation that occurs in the political space.

> Society and social agents lack any essence, and their regularities merely consist of the relative and precarious forms of fixation which accompany the establishment of a certain order. This analysis seemed to open up the possibility of elaborating a new concept of articulation, which would start from the overdetermined character of social relations (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. 98).

Society is impossible to condensate in a discursive form because of the complexity and flexible ways of its representation. This is human and relates to the characteristic of

discourse and society in DT. Discursive formation characterises as a socially contingent individually performed.

The impossible hegemonic consolidation of SEA breaks through articulatory practice: SEA and its interpretations constitute acts of politics because its emptiness and double ontic gap. There are ways to change or consolidate changes in a particular view that occurs by the articulatory process. The hegemony of an object that cannot be fixed or determinate can only happen through articulation, which is a form to grasp ideologies in an overdeterminated identity. Sustainability and its variations are impossible to define, so they are empty signifiers. They are constructed and articulated to fix a meaning that sometimes are ideological and repeatedly overdeterminated (Althusser's notion). A particular position of ideologies takes place in all objects. All objects are identifiable within discourse (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001). The overdetermination creates a link to the constitution of identities in a psychoanalytic perspective.

The notion of 'the other' assumes a psychological part of individuals in the formation of contingent discourses. Laclau and Mouffe (2001) assert that 'the other' is inherent in the speech of psychoanalysis of Lacan that provides the incomplete/unfulfilled discourse of the objects.

The presence of 'the other' in a dialogic conversation avoids attempting a full speech. This thought is from Lacan when he describes that 'the other' habits the desired place. "The other holds the keys of the desired object" (Lacan, 2005, p. 222). It recognises the transferability of meanings and desires among communication. Subjects have their feelings, desires, goals that are combined of what others can appeal to them, others who give more thought; others have the keys for the desires that exist in every identity formation of objects. To exemplify, sustainability is an object that constantly changes within the precarious formation of identity. Ideologies influence identities, therefore, individuals perform their contingent object because of the unlimited desired credited to 'the other' that never closes the system of meanings for an object and explodes within the infinitive possibility of discursive formations.

Subjects live embedded in illusionary representations. Lacan provides a psychoanalytic position of the mind in individuals who are surrounded by imaginary and symbolic representations (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. 88). The desires of whom and what are sustained are dominated by the most prestige desire (social acceptance is considered in the desire publically exposed). A desire is chosen between "symbolic conflicts and imaginary fixations" according to the "intersubjective experience" which accomplishes all individuals (Lacan, 2005, p. 231). Thus, experiences, illusions, fantasies and intentions

produce conflicts and struggles on what topics will grip in their discourses. This is a field of multiple interpretations within same subjects, in which and depending on what and how 'the other' interferes or changes the choices of meanings in a discourse that individual's process intersubjectively.

DT assumes that society is a contingent discourse formation. Thus, 'the other' follows the individual interpretation of desires, which politically expect the intentions of the dominant group. 'The other' in DT must explain why discourse is not complete; the "concept of suture" is an attempt at closing the language structure (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001). "This original lack is precisely what the hegemonic practices try to fill in" (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. 88). The impossible of a final language or society is, however, intangible.

The "symbolic order" that arises in society and discourse is always fragmented, and it reveals a temporary transition for the next point of fixation through dislocation (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001). Consequently, 'the other' and hegemonic practice allow us to convince ourselves that outside of discourse is systematically dislocated by agents through political forces. The moment of overdetermination is a symbolic assumption of social relations in a countless formation of meanings. As well, the presence of 'the other' inserts conflict of multiple interpretations, representation and formation of an object.

Society and social agents represent illusory meanings. Althusser declares that social relations are overdeterminated; as an effect, the fixation of a meaning is impossible because of its symbolic function. The result of this opens two implications of society. Firstly, discourse, as well as society, becomes impossible to be completely rationalized; and secondly, a particular identity in society is frequently overdetermined or symbolically represented (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. 99). The unification of a rationalized assumption of social relations presents identity as precarious, contingent and fragmented suture of fixation.

Language is a formation of contingent objects, shaped for the hegemonic agenda: The presence of ideologies, as well as the Althusserian notion of overdetermination and the Lacanian term of 'the other' mean that the precarious formation of SEA and its interpretations cannot be fixed or politically determinate but can be articulated and hegemonically sustained. The impossibility to close the system of signification, the logic of equivalence/difference and ideologies restrict the boundaries, but they create complex forms of representing hegemonies.

The politics conform to a kind of totalisation that shapes societies according to the human desire to dominate social groups. In a post-structuralist perspective, an objective structure in society will never happen. The structure is an unstable form. From the social arena, totalisation, structure and determinism will be constantly broken by ideologies, 'the other' and overdetermination within the contingency and fragmentation of every object performed discursively in societies. Laclau and Mouffe (2001, p. 104) assert that totality in the Althusserian formulation is, “an affirmation of the incomplete”. Hence, every identity is overdetermined because of the incomplete openness and arbitrariness identity in the hegemonic space.

5 METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH METHODS

This chapter presents a specific methodological approach, data collection and data analysis methods, a case study and its literature. There is a need for a thesis with the focus on SEA and this particular methodological approach to deeply understand the political constructions about sustainability, sustainable development and corporate social responsibility to name some in an emerging economy. This methodological approach combines a discursive discussion of the meanings associated with SEA in Brazil using a type of rhetorical analysis, a political theory and a case study of an oil and energy company in 2004-2013. Previously, Milne et al. (2009) investigate the language and other visual representations of sustainable development of one company (NZBCSD) in 1999-2008 using an interpretive discourse analysis. Likewise, Mäkelä and Laine (2011) look into the discursive debate of sustainability in two Finnish companies (Rautaruukki and Outokumpu) reports. Also, Mäkelä (2013) examines employee reporting and the corporate talk of employees in 25 Finnish companies. In this thesis, the analysis of public documents is analogous to these papers. Concerning with the methods of analysis, interpretative, narrative and discourse analysis are a comparable tactic to the present rhetorical analysis method. The rhetorical redescription (the method used in this thesis) aims to shed light on the logics of the articulatory practices within discursive constructions from one corporation. The present analysis of Petrobras reviews ten years of its reports. One company and ten years of analysis are similar to the Milne et al.'s (2009) work. By comparison, Mäkelä and Laine (2011) investigate the ten years and two companies with regard to CEO statements on sustainability subject. More specifically, Mäkelä (2013) analyses the narrative employee reporting and problematised the corporate talk regarding employees of the twenty-five largest Finnish corporations. Thus, this thesis discusses the discourse of SEA of a company through ten years of reporting.

This thesis differs from prior literature when it discusses the problematisation of SEA in a developing country and this thesis uses a rhetorical analysis to address the political aspects of sustainability. Consequently, there is space for discussion regarding the politics of sustainability in an emerging economy. Milne et al. (2009) examine an organisation in New Zealand; Mäkelä and Laine (2011) and Mäkelä (2013) assess in Finnish companies. Additionally, the methods to analyse the data of these papers were based on interpretivism (see the discussion of interpretivism in Chapter 3). Therefore, this thesis

situates in a crucial step of understandings the SEA constructions in Brazil by employing a post-structural paradigm. As a result of this methodological approach, this study facilitates future works in a critical perspective. Subsequently, the first section shows the engaged methodology in which the discussion of the analysis is supported. The chosen methodology also links to the foundation in DT.

5.1 METHODOLOGY

The aim of this section is to explain the Logics of Critical Explanation [LCE]. LCE are the methodology that delineates how I use the DT's elements to understand and critique the discursive formations of SEA in Petrobras. In the prior section, Chapter 4 explained the philosophical position (a post-structuralist paradigm)[10] and the applied elements of DT. Therefore, the current chapter discusses the methodological position of this thesis. This methodology associates with DT, which provides a theory capable of understanding reasons for the constructions of discursive practices. The discursivity occupies a significant role in the construction of multi-voices in societies. The first section of this chapter overviews the LCE as the methodological approach for this research. Then, this thesis shows some interpreted implications of LCE in a practical way and its links to the theoretical basis. Subsequently, this study demonstrates a useful application of LCE regarding understand and critique the manner of how discourses are understood by stakeholders in a political organisational space. Thus, different discourses emerge incompletely, contradictorily and controversially according to DT. Some reasons for this situation are associated with the fact that societies are constructed during different contexts and historical moments. In Appendix 1, I explain why LCE is an appropriate methodology for the approach, paradigm and data in a political context.

5.1.1 Introduction

The argumentative foundation is based on DT and it also is the foundation of the employed methodology. The chosen paradigm is post-structuralism. It is an interpretation of the work of Laclau and Mouffe (2001). By this paradigm, the ontology of meanings governs the focus of this thesis. In other words, ontology creates the state of being rather than the

[10] The language is the major focus on a post-structuralist paradigm; structure and outside are influenced by social practice. Moreover, context, power relations, ideologies and identities are concerned by this position. Through discourses, post-structuralists capture the historical struggle (power and hegemony).

way of the application of being. Ontology begins with the discussion of being, for example, what is a corporate social responsibility? However, to do this, it is necessary to use a methodology that answers the second question: how does a corporate social responsibility operate? The operation of the question of 'how' occurs according to the perception of the researcher. I have particular point view (knowledge and experiences). The second question is an epistemological question that seeks to respond through an existing knowledge how the ontological question could be achieved. The ontology of Laclau and Mouffe (2001, p. x) focus on hegemony which "our approach is grounded in privileging the moment of political articulation, and the central category of political analysis is, in our view, hegemony". Similarly, there also is an ontological question in this thesis: *What does social and environmental accounting represent for agents?* A manner of conducting this ontology puts forward a methodology, but it is contingent and a partial mode of being.

> In doing discourse analytical research, it is important to adhere to the social constructionist premise that the research object itself does not determine the theoretical and methodological choices *[particular, subjective, personal choices]* made. Research does not reflect reality in this way. Rather, the philosophical and theoretical framework contributes to constructing the field of study in a certain way *[as post-structuralist this is how any construction works*], and the different approaches will therefore conceive the 'same' field of study differently, emphasising some aspects and ignoring others. The discourse analytical framework, then, ought to be based on dialogue with the field of study, whereby the analyst recognises and accounts for how the framework has created the object and vice versa and makes clear the contingent nature of the knowledge produced (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 154-5). *[Emphasis added]*

Researchers construct subjective methods to do a manuscript, and then this subjectivity adds to the world creativity and uniqueness. Post-structuralists aim to be more open as possible, but it is limited by the experiences, knowledge, context and circumstances in which design the border of all research. These limitations also relate to the choices of methodologies and methods. One of the weaknesses of DT is the absence of methodologies or methods. DT does not provide a method to apply its theory. Accordingly, Laclau (1991), one of the theorist of DT, asserts: "… these are tools that the researcher can decide *ad hoc* to use in each case for pragmatic reasons … [T]hey are not unified in an established and orderly system of procedures called 'methodology'". Thus, the lack of a methodology is a considerable advance for political analyses and the choice of a methodology is pragmatic. Additionally, I use the methodology called "Logics of Critical Explanation" of Glynos and Howarth (2007) that agrees with DT and my perspective on post-structuralism.

A theory that does not have a specific method creates more space for a variety of means of doing research. Hence, this political and post-structural thesis has an ample potential to analyse the political elements in DT because as a researcher using DT I have the freedom to decide what best suits my analysis. As post-structuralist, the manner how researchers do their inquiry is particular, specific and no generalised. The application of the theory of methodologies and methods is particular. In the academic world, there is a necessity to explain the methods and methodologies to be able to other actors recreate or readapt the thoughts in a particular inquiry. This is the way in which academy develops. Accordingly, this thesis uses a methodology to help the development of researchers and business schools.

The methodology used in this thesis fits the particular objectives that are to understand the discursive constructions of Petrobras and then, to critique based on the elements of DT. This thesis seeks to understand and critique the discursive constructions of SEA. Glynos and Howarth (2007, p. 3) developed the LCE that are the methodology in this thesis. In their work, LCE are viewed as an "ontological framework" to offer an alternative to a critique of the lack of scientism in text analysis – LCE contribute to an organised approach in which to do discourse analysis. DT situates itself in the political realm; it highlights discursive practices that are surrounded by powers. DT also explains that political forces use articulation to support the discursive domination. In this terrain, LCE pursue a political fundament offered in DT. By showing this connection between DT and LCE, this study provides details of LCE and the particular application.

5.1.2 Logics of Critical Explanation

LCE recognise the logics – social, political and fantasmatic – of social relations, and they seek to engage the discursive practice as a way of understanding and critiquing the discursive construction in the political field. The basic elements of this methodology are problematisation, retroductive explanation, logics, articulation and critique (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 11).

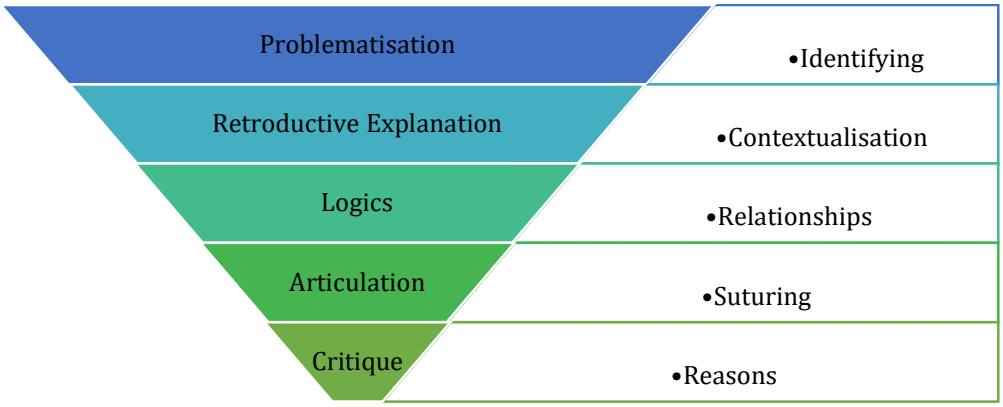

Figure 9 – Logics of Critical Explanation in an interpretation

Figure 9 particularly shows a way of this thesis understands the LCE. Problematisation is the phase of identifying problems and its constructions and negotiations in a political space. The second phase, retroductive explanation contextualises social, political, historical and cultural practices and from where problems originate. Logics understand the interactions between agents and society, agents and politics, agents and its internalised ideologies. Articulation is a moment of externalisation the manners of certain meanings that are sutured to fulfil the specific purpose of agents. Lastly, critique provides detailed explanations of how agents construct their particular meanings.

> Discourse theorists working within the poststructuralist tradition of thought – and this book is firmly situated within this subset of poststructuralist theory – focus their attention on the reproduction and transformation of hegemonic orders and practices. They develop the theoretical means to account for the ways in which subjects are gripped by certain ideologies or discourses (even if the latter are not necessarily in their interests, or indeed consistent with their beliefs), while also seeking to account for the different ways in which dominant orders are contested by counter-hegemonic or other resistance projects, where the latter involve the construction of new identities. Of central importance in this regard is an insistence on 'the primacy of politics' to explain and critically engage with a range of social phenomena. In short, discourse theorists have developed – and are continuing to develop and refine – the conceptual grammars with which to account for the way certain political projects or social practices remain or become hegemonic (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 5).

Main idea: LCE, as presented in Figure 9, permit identifying, contextualising and understanding relationships of social and political space. As well as, LCE support a comprehension of how individuals grasp ideologies. This methodology uses the articulatory practice and allows researchers to critique social objects as the discursive constructions of SEA of Petrobras.

Continuing debates within the political context, LCE engage with the so-called Laclau and Mouffe's post-structuralist DT (1985; 2001). This methodology originates from political debates; it involves detailing issues of critique, explanation and interpretation about discursive practice, which has a theoretical and political debate (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 1). Given this structure, LCE are more than a mere critique of social relations. In fact, LCE provoke the rethinking of how social researchers have produced their findings. The

major contribution of these authors is to connect critiques with explanations and interpretations.

> Working within the field of poststructuralism, our central aim in this regard is to construct an explanatory logic, together with the grammar of concepts and assumptions that serve as its conditions of possibility, and to articulate a typology of basic logics – social, political and fantasmatic – which can serve to characterize, explain and criticize social phenomena (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 8).

Additionally, Glynos and Howarth (2007, p. 7) support DT, regarding how ideologies are gripped in individual's discourses; ideologies force subjects to think and act in a particular mode. Also, powerful agents have a significant role in the way of hegemonic practices interfere in social life, by reducing meanings that represent interests of these powerful groups. Glynos and Howarth's (2007) work addresses post-structuralist DT from "normative and ethical critique". In general, LCE have a theoretical background in DT that supports criticism in a field of political signification of discursive constructions. Agents of power outline a variety of meanings that underpin their self-interest goals.

The next subsection puts forward problematisation step and the benefits for this thesis.

5.1.2.1 Problematisation

> It seemed to me there was one element that was capable of describing the history of thought – this was what one could call the element of problems or, more exactly, problematizations (Foucault, 1997, p. 117).

Main idea: Problematisation is introduced by problems when they get out of the mind[11]. From this to the other moment, problems should be more visible in the political space because of power's games. These problems became visible by exposing regimes and practices of discursive constructions of SEA. The problematisation stage situates an identification of the surface of social, politics, culture and history originated by problems, contradictions, fights and disputes of a certain point, meaning or signification.

The phase of problematisation involves an exhaustive process of mapping ideas and finding a situation that bothers researchers in society. The constitution of a problem is the active process of problematisation (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 34). This process occurs when an object of study is understood by a range of empirical phenomena that lead to an abstraction called problem (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 12). This phase is also a part of retroduction that is "the practices of problematisation, characterisation and explanation"

[11] "Thought is freedom in relation to what one does, the motion by which one detaches oneself from it, establishes it as an object, and reflects on it as a problem" (Foucault, 1997, p. 117).

(Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 12). To problematise is part of the domain of politics, just as Foucault (1997, p. 168) explains, a problem is formed within practices and regimes.

> 'Problematization'- which is to say, the development of a domain of acts, practices, and thoughts that seem to me to pose problems for politics (Foucault, 1997, p. 114).

Politics and problems are closely related to everyday life. Foucault (1997, p. 115) proclaims problems are conceived as a political matter, but it does not mean that solely problems are the subject of politics; however there are "plurality of questions posed to politics". Politics is an area to debate and to achieve a consensus at a certain moment. This consensus involves social relationships, communication, argumentation, a game of powers, adjustments of culture, and so forth. Elements of life are immersed in political components because the interaction between humans requires attitudes, words, and expressions of others. Moreover, this problematisation involves politics. Foucault (1997, p. 117) resumes problems into three major points that relate experiences to politics: "a game of truth, relations of power, and forms of relation to oneself and to others".

Application: This thesis concerns with to identify the problems of discursive constructions of SEA in a practical way. For example, what are the problems that stakeholders want to answer for their audience? Problematisation is not merely linked to politics, but politics has a meaningful participation in experiences about social phenomena. In this, a problematisation step describes social, cultural and political dimensions of discursive constructions of SEA.

In Glynos and Howarth's words, problematisation is "an *explanandum* to use more traditional terms – which invariably results in the transformation of our initial perceptions and understandings" (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 34). The definition of problematisation affects politics because it situates an arena of discussions which arguments are used to convince or persuade agents and audiences. And, the problem has its origins in the identification of social issues. These issues occur because the different point of view and interests try to win the struggle in the political arena.

Reason: Problematisation as an ontological perspective of events and practices has a balanced combination of this particular chosen paradigm and theory; both are in the post-structuralist approach that consents to understand social formations of problems which mainly originate from politics.

Inevitably, problematisation links to retroduction which is a type of inference (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 26). Discovery, justification, testing and acceptance are the main ideas about retroduction and explanation. The discovery of a meaning or a situation that fits a particular context, justification, testing and acceptance arise from the context that these

factors are part of the retroduction. The applied methodology comprehends the problematisation within discursive practices that connects the problem and logics in a circular way, not through deductive or inductive, but by a retroductive explanation. The next subsection describes the retroductive explanation in this thesis.

5.1.2.2 Retroductive Explanation

Retroductive explanation or retroductive reasoning is a movement debated in 1950s and 1960s with philosophers like N. R. Hanson and C. S. Pierce against the arbitrary process in science through deductive and inductive modes. The problem of these modes is the certainty concerning social praxis that ignores the problematic integration between social realities and political, social, cultural and historical pressures. The retroductive reasoning supports a critical understanding of social process, avoiding narrow conceptions produced in deductive and inductive methods such as "universal laws, causal generalisations, or robust empirical correlations" (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 19). This thesis examines retroduction considering an in-depth understanding of the logics of discursive constructions of SEA in Brazil regarding Petrobras and the Brazilian literature. The inquiry examines the social, political and fantasmatic logics of how Petrobras articulates certain meanings of SEA. Also, I link this retroduction to the impact on the discourse of development in an emerging economy.

Retroduction is a development of induction and deduction in regard to its limitation when explaining social events; “retroduction entails the idea of going back from, below, or behind observed patterns or regularities to discover what produces them” (Blaikie, 2004).

Main idea: Retroduction explanation is a particular mode of thinking of how researchers can conduct an analysis of social phenomena; the social process has logics and the retroduction aims to explain how the social, political and fantasmatic logics socially construct realities. The limitations of deductive and inductive modes are the reasons why retroductive explanation is an adequate mode of thinking for social phenomena.

Philosophers as Pierce discuss deduction, induction and retroduction.

First, deduction starts from observations to construct a theory (Peirce, 1998, p. 170).

> Deduction is the only necessary reasoning. It is the reasoning of mathematics. It starts from a hypothesis, the truth or falsity of which has nothing to do with the reasoning; and of course its conclusions are equally ideal. The ordinary use of the doctrine of chances is necessary reasoning, although it is reasoning concerning probabilities (Peirce, 1998, p. 145).

Hanson (1958) explains the problem of deduction:

1. Some surprising phenomena p1, p2, p3 … are encountered.

2. But p1, p2, p3 … would not be surprising were a hypothesis of H's type to obtain. They would follow as a matter of course from something like H and would be explained by it.
3. Therefore there is good reason for elaborating a hypothesis of the type H; for proposing it as a possible hypothesis from whose assumption p1, p2, p3 … might be explained (Hanson, 1958, pp. 86-87).

The problem with this method is the ontological position because of the limitation to the prediction. The prediction of reality is a limited view of the predictor. Whether reality is objective, plausible and measurable, it has a form, and then the prediction should be tangible. However, it is not always true. Prediction is connected with subjective choices that are on the ontological view of realism that deduction method is based. Researchers always assume a certain view, a limitation of themselves to understand real situations. Thus, deduction has its limitation on the type of prediction without biases.

The deductive method adopts that explanation and prediction of a certain reality that occurs together; the researcher explains and predicts a fact by proving a hypothesis that is corroborated or falsified - this does not occur in qualitative research (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 21-2). Other characteristics of deduction link mathematical demonstration and statistic to probabilities (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 219).

Deduction is unable to understand social phenomena because its prediction characteristic that establishes in the construction of hypothesis without considering specific contexts. Certain phenomena are not easy to predict and understand probabilities because social relationships may change.

Meanwhile, induction "consists in starting from a theory" (Peirce, 1998, p. 170).

> The experimental testing of a theory. The justification of it is that, although the conclusion at any stage of the investigation may be more or less erroneous, yet the further application of the same method must correct the error. The only thing that induction accomplishes is to determine the value of a quantity. It sets out with a theory and it measures the degree of concordance of that theory with fact. It never can originate any idea whatever (Peirce, 1998, p. 145).

Induction has a non-arbitrary proposition about the content; it begins from theory to general observation; induction is usually performed with large samples to prove propositions (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 220). The problem with induction is to seek regularities during observation of social life in which diversity and complexities underpin events and discourses. Now, it is the moment of understanding retroduction as a development of deduction and induction.

Peirce wrote the word abduction to mean retroduction. As Wiggins (2006, p. 104) asserts, they are interchangeable meanings of "mode of thinking". Consequently, Glynos and

Howarth (2007, p. 24) interpret the philosophical background concerning retroduction or abduction to mean a reasoning form. Retroductive reasoning outlines the manner of how hypotheses or premises could be plausible in the social science; it is a "backward-looking modal" of explanations by inference (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 24).

> Abduction consists in studying facts and devising a theory to explain them. Its only justification is that if we are ever to understand things at all, it must be in that way (Peirce, 1998, p. 145).

Retroduction is a type of inference, which originated from Aristotle (Peirce, 1998, p. 145). Retroduction "is the process of forming an explanatory hypothesis" (Peirce, 1998, p. 171). In other words, retroduction will not state things that "must be" in deduction or things that "actually is" in induction, but how things "may be" (Peirce, 1998, p. 171). The suggestions that cause retroduction are determinate by the intellectual capability of interpretations of facts, realities, moments, and practices. Retroductive explanation is an idea set about how social practices are interpreted in the world.

> Retroduction is linked to the context of discovery – the generation or positing of hypotheses – explanation is usually tied to the context of justification, that is, the testing and acceptance of hypotheses by means of deduction, prediction, and experiment. As we are interested in connecting retroductive reasoning to questions of explanation, and thus the domain of justification, we need to show how we can extend the scope of retroduction's relevance to the context of justification"(Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 27).

Application: In this thesis, retroductive explanation comprehends broader logics of social, political, historical and cultural practices of SEA represented by agents more than deduction and induction methods due to its limitations. Retroduction explanation relates to multiple means of viewing an object as discourse. The retroductive explanation aims to answer the question: what is the context of social, politics and culture within discursive practices of SEA that become known in the organisational space?

This concept involves more than addressing deduction or induction to social relations. Retroduction is a way to give and take feedback from the object of analysis. Simultaneously, retroduction performs a circular process, not top-down or bottom-up, but in an integrated process. The place of beginning and end link together to broadly understanding a social context fragment sentence.

Reasons: Retroductive explanation is suitable to analyse logics of social and political phenomena, as constructions of meanings of SEA in the space of sustainability that this thesis is established. There are three major reasons that retroductive explanation recognises discursive constructions of SEA. First, social phenomena are not always predictable by theory (weakness of deduction). Secondly, social phenomena do not hold repetition acts as induction aspires those to be. Thirdly, retroductive explanation is linked to contingent formations of realities in which DT addresses a characterisation of objects in societies.

In brief, a retroductive explanation within the social should have a widely capacity of understanding social phenomena. Next subsection details logics with three principal questions: what, how and why these logics are valuable for this thesis.

5.1.2.3 Logics

Social, political and fantasmatic logics are the three components of 'Logics' within LCE approach. The relation of a specific social domain, such as government, institution, family and other groups are examples of how each space has social logics that operate in a particular standpoint.

Main idea: The logics of social, political and fantasmatic understand how powers, relationships and ideologies interrelate with practices as discursive constructions of SEA. Social logics consist in a logical comprehension of regimes and practices; these are connected with political logics in the way of demonstrating hegemonic practices that shape social relations. Fantasmatic logics assume the psychological idea of individuals that are seized with ideologies. All these logics understand discursive practices as constructions of sustainability.

These logics explore "how social practices are instituted, contested, and defended" (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 133). The fantasmatic logic connects ideologies with discourses. As Glynos & Howarth (2007, p. 15) note, Lacan shows this concept when he argues the logic of fantasy is a category of enjoyment (*jouissance*); the authors words assert that this logic "shows how subjects are rendered complicit in concealing or covering over the radical contingency of social relations".

The social logic represents particular regimes or practices (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 137). DT illustrates that social logics are a contradictory space between freedom and contestation because conflicted interests restrict individual identities.

> Social logics, which intervene to different degrees in the constitution of every social identity, and which partially limit their mutual effects. From this we can deduce a basic precondition for a radically libertarian conception of politics: the refusal to dominate - intellectually or politically - every presumed 'ultimate foundation' of the social. Every conception which seeks to base itself on a knowledge of this foundation finds itself faced, sooner or later, with the Rousseauian paradox according to which men should be obliged to be free (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. 183).

It seems that politics appears in all social practice. Essentially, political acts connected with social relations because conflicts, contestation and domination arise within social space.

> While social logics consist in rule-following, political logics are related to the institution of the social. Such an institution, however, as we already know, is not an arbitrary fiat but proceeds out of social demands and is, in that sense, inherent to any process of social change. This change, as we

> also know, takes place through the variable articulation of equivalence and difference, and the equivalential moment presupposes the constitution of a global (Laclau, 2005, p. 117).

Social logics are a vindication of what elements are exposed and what elements are hidden; this consideration then makes social logics more than understanding regularities, choices, regimes, practices, but a certain struggle of competing ideas, practices and domination. As Laclau (2005, p. 117) affirms social logics involve a system of statements – "a system of rules drawing the horizon within which some objects are representable while others are excluded".

Application of social logics: A social logics application explains social interactions between institutions. As an example, in 2012 BM&F Bovespa asked public companies to publish or explain the reasons to not present sustainability reports (BM&F Bovespa, 2011). As well as, communities and organisations interrelate with employment activities, and, universities with events about sustainability. There are particular interests in these interactions. Thus, what are the regimes and practices behind the objectives of the agents about SEA during interaction with other institutions, or their audience?

The next logics identify connexions between agents and politics. Political logics are associated with the logic of equivalence/difference in DT.

> The logic of equivalence is a logic of the simplification of political space . . . the logic of equivalence expands the paradigmatic pole – that is, the elements that can be substituted for one another – thereby reducing the number of positions which can possibly be combined (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. 130).

The substitution of meanings is to fit a particular purpose. An example of how politics support social practices is through the varying meanings applied to various situations, or with changes or events are contested.

> Political logics can be said to focus more on the diachronic aspects of a practice or regime, whether in terms of how they have emerged, or in terms of how they are being contested and/or transformed. Political logics aim to capture those processes of collective mobilization precipitated by the emergence of the political dimension of social relations, such as the construction, defence, and naturalization of new frontiers. But they also include processes which seek to interrupt or break up this process of drawing frontiers (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 141).

Application of political logics: The second political logics realise that meanings such as the associated discursive constructions of SEA. These logics operate unlimited due to the theoretical assumption that social formations are open to discussing, contesting and debating within constructed meaning and its array of possibilities. Thus, an application may consider the elected meanings with the range of potentials. Therefore, a question for this, what are the prominent meanings constructed by agents? In brief, political logics seek to respond: what are the hegemonic relations among discursive constructions of SEA?

The next logics of LCE are the fantasmatic logics. These logics explore "how social practices are instituted, contested, and defended" (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 133). Previously discussed, the political logics explain how the social practices have been

emerged, and these fantasmatic logics aim to explain why certain practices or regimes grasp subjects (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 145). Particularly, I use these logics to explain the reasons why Petrobras constitutes the ideologies that support the social and political logics. For the reason that thesis uses a traditional hermeneutics employing a document analysis, I interpret Petrobras as a subject seeing its history of ten years of reporting as the corpus of analysis. Accordingly, Petrobras is interpreted as a subject and its multiples voices as a manifestation of different identities of each individual because Petrobras is a legal person.

Application of fantasmatic logics: The fantasmatic logics of this thesis examine the ideologies in the subject to understand why the social and political logics were sustained. The subject is Petrobras via its history of reporting of 2004-2013 that is a hermeneutical approach.

Fantasmatic logics consider the role of fantasies that sustain the social relationships. These fantasies are ideologies. Ideologies are social constructions. Ideologies constrain people to be themselves. As Althusser (2012, p. 128) asseverates, ideology is made to the subject and for subjects; this means that subjects construct what ideology might be in each situation. In the political situation, ideologies are a useful toolkit to manipulate ideas and, by consequence, societies. Ideologies have power to sustain situations of domination such as the formation of hegemonies in societies. As hegemonies, ideologies emerge in a field of contradictions because there are identities that compete with each other in order to sustain a prior idea. In other words, this conflict exists because of 'the other'. The presence of ‘the other’ (Lacanian term) dislocates the identity formations. Individuals look for an idea from ‘the other’ who has the key of desires (Lacan, 2005). As a Lacanian theory perspective preconises, ‘the other’ avoids competitive ideas and personalities to fulfil an entire personality in societies because perceptions of what individuals can be are limited by desires that belong to ‘the other’. For instance, individuals perform particular identities to provide an acceptance for a certain group or situation. Fantasmatic logics perform within identity formation, ideologies and constructions of personalities to understand why certain ideologies become more significant than another. In Lacanian terms, identity and fantasmatic logics create the groundwork. Fantasmatic involves “a symbolic construction” of certain regimes and practices that “grip” subjects (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 145).

The hermeneutical approach is not new in accounting. Hines (1988) contends the ideological impact of communication in accounting which constructs reality. Ferguson et al. (2005) investigate the accounting textbooks to analyse hegemonies and ideologies grasped by accounting students. These papers indicate that hermeneutics is an approach that places the language to understand human practices, regimes and logics. I contend hermeneutics is interesting due the reflection of the humans behind the words. It is impossible to fully understand a subject, similarly, language is incomplete as well. This vision also represents the political theoretical foundation of this thesis.

Reason: Logics provide an understanding of social, political and ideological position among constructions of meanings of SEA. Regimes, practices, hegemonies, and ideologies of agents related to SEA and they are perceived by social, political and fantasmatic logics. These logics are notably achieved by seeing through the lenses of particular theories (Laclau, 2005; Laclau & Mouffe, 2001).

Next, this subsection discusses the articulation phase in 'how, what and why' it is important for this thesis.

5.1.2.4 Articulation

The articulation step aims to explain the connection between theories and practices. "[A]rticulation serves as a means to conceptualize the way we conduct research in the social sciences, while also contributing to our overall understanding of the logic of critical explanation" (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 165).

Main idea: In this specific thesis, the phase of articulation means to understand the practices and theories by reviewing the LCE in its problematisation, retroductive explanation and logics steps connecting them in a plausible way to be able to critique the discursive constructions of SEA. Thus, articulation is a practice that shows means how certain meaning of SEA turns to be hegemonic. For these means, a specific element places can be placed in universal point (nodal point).

The fourth element of LCE is articulation, which is not an isolated concept, but one, which merges into hegemony. As Laclau & Mouffe (2001, p. xi) point out, articulation means a moment of reactivation in the political field. Articulation sutures a meaning that enables a particular element to be comprehended as the hegemonic meaning, but it does not imply a consolidated hegemony. On the contrary, articulation improvises a stabilisation of a meaning in a temporary moment of identification.

> The notion of the subject before subjectivation establishes the centrality of the category of 'identification' and makes it possible, in that sense, to think of hegemonic transitions which are fully dependent on political articulations (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. xi).

The individual characteristic of inter-subjectivity permits construction of articulatory practice in which individuals are influenced by a terrain of the transitory suture of a meaning. Articulation in its core sense means to recognise a particular meaning that assimilates in a specific context.

Application of articulation: The way of how meanings are sutured in the SEA constructions is an articulatory practice. This takes place among discourse, nodal point and hegemony. An application of articulation might show the discursive constructions of SEA have points of suturing (named nodal points). The main objective here is to understand these points from the analysis of discursive constructions of SEA. Distinct stakeholders construct the net of meanings. The challenge is to uncover the political, social and fantasmatic logics of this articulatory practice to clarify for the academies the interests of those constructions.

Articulation is a reasonable connection between hegemony and nodal point (or point of caption - in the Lacanian terms). Hegemony as a transitory moment of fixation works through articulatory practices to stabilize a meaning. To understand articulation is necessary highlighting the nodal point:

> Master-signifier involves the notion of a particular element assuming a 'universal' structuring function within a certain discursive field - actually, whatever organization that field has is only the result of that function - without the particularity of the element per se predetermining such a function (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. xi).

The primary purpose of the articulation phase is to identify the nodal points of discursive constructions of SEA. Also, this work aims to discover the reasons why agents seize upon certain meanings of SEA. This situation plays an essential part of articulation. Constructions and explanations of SEA's articulatory practice may elucidate contexts of ideologies, social, politics and the role of accounting in this aspect. Objectivity cannot be fully addressed because articulatory practice evolves by the impossibility of a complete realisation.

> The logic of difference never manages to constitute a fully sutured space, neither does the logic of equivalence ever achieve this. The dissolution of the differential character of the social agent's positions through the equivalential condensation, is never complete. If society is not totally possible, neither is it totally impossible. This allows us to formulate the following conclusion: if society is never transparent to itself because it is unable to constitute itself as an objective field, neither is antagonism entirely transparent, as it does not manage totally to dissolve the objectivity of the social (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. 129).

The construction of discursive formations depends on the system of differential and equivalential articulations (Laclau, 2005, p. 87). In the DT, the logic of equivalence/difference will never be totally closed because the contingent and incomplete formation of social practices. 'The other' plays a psychological position for the fulfilment of any discursive constructions. This psychological pressure avoids the

complete social practice, as well as empty achievement. Social constructions perform in the middle of certain meanings. Hence, agents construct these meanings among social and political decisions that they specify the principal point for articulations or rearticulations. The main meaning is the nodal point that any articulatory practice intends to reach.

Reason: Articulation is a political concept that permits researchers to understand moments of (re) activation of certain meanings. Notions of nodal point, hegemonic articulations, and systems of differential and equivalential are part of the theoretical formations of articulations. These are the keys to comprehending the articulatory creation of SEA constructions. As well as, articulation is a useful toolkit to seek to uncover the logics of those creations.

Consequently, to understand the contextualisation, the explanation, the logics and the articulations is the moment to critique the discursive constructions of SEA. The critique phase of LCE is discussed in the next subsection.

5.1.2.5 Critique

Main idea: Critique is a step of visualizing the experience of dislocation in where social relations should expose the connections between discursive practices and hegemonic constitution.

The fifth element of LCE is critique. Glynos and Howarth (2007, p. 192) avoid a positivist conclusion of what is 'right' by proposing a critique based on the dislocation that Laclau and Mouffe (2001, p. 49-50) describe:

> The European forms of dislocation could be conceptualized purely through reference to negative categories - transience and contingency - which had to be overcome; but in the Russian case, since the dislocations expressed themselves as positive conjunctures permitting the advance of the working class - a certain way of infiltrating itself in to history - it became necessary to characterize the new type of relationship between the working class and the alien tasks it had to assume at a given moment. This anomalous relation was called 'hegemony'.

When a dislocation chances, this allows agents to connect the problematisation, logics, explanation and articulation by means of the inherent contingency. In this, Laclau and Mouffe (2001, p. 49-50) argue "the experience of dislocation, in which the inherent contingency of social relations becomes visible, is an important condition for the possibility of political practices". This presupposes that the contingency creates space for contestation and deconstruction of existent chains of social practices.

Application of critique: The moment of critique step takes place afterwards the previous four stages. In this critical substance, contestation and deconstruction of why certain meanings are preferred between its scopes frame an inherent portion of evaluations of discursive constructions of SEA.

Before critique, the logics are addressed in an overall context to understand the discursive constructions. Powerful agents among organisations articulate these constructions. Then, the methodology crucially concerns with how and why certain discursive constructions are preferred. In a particular context, the choices are discussed, and this thesis assesses the constructions made by different stakeholders among (re) interpretations of discourses.

Within the five elements of LCE, a greater discussion of discourse analysis is possible. This review aims to achieve understandings, explanations and critiques of discursive constructions among corporate realities.

Reason: Critique phase permits to comprehend reasons of discursive constructions of SEA. A critique of social practices would achieve by deconstruction and dislocation of meanings. These techniques aim to unmask the elected meanings and the nodal points as belonging to hegemonic practices of social agents in societies.

Finally, the next subsection summarises the participation of LCE in this thesis.

5.1.3 Conclusion

This methodology seeks to apply a post-structuralist discourse analysis with the main thoughts from an interpretation of Laclau and Mouffe's work. The problematisation; retroduction; social, political and fantasmatic logics; articulation and critique are the organisation of employed methodology of LCE as guidance to understand, explain and critique discursive constructions of SEA from stakeholders involved in organisations and society.

LCE's elements	Questions	Points to analyse
Problematisation	What are the problems that stakeholders want to answer for their audience?	Aims Audience Agents (actor)
Retroductive Explanation	What is the context of social, politics and culture within discursive practices of SEA that become known in organisational space?	Context Background
Logics	Social: what are the regimes and practices behind the objectives of the agents in relation to SEA during interactions of other institutions, or their audience? Political: what are the prominent meanings constructed by agents? What are the hegemonic relations among discursive constructions of SEA? Fantasmatic: what are the impact of grasped ideologies in the discursive constructions of SEA?	Regimes Interactions Repetitive meanings Ideologies

Articulation	What are principal nodal points of discursive constructions of SEA?	Nodal points Hegemonies
Critique	Why are certain meanings preferred between its scopes?	Dislocation Deconstruction

Figure 10 – LCE's analysis, questions and points to analyse

The next part of this chapter presents the methods to analyse the data. The methods intend to clarify how these points of analysis (aims, audience, agents, context, regimes and practices, interactions, repetitive meanings, ideologies, nodal points, dislocation and deconstruction) are addressed in this thesis.

5.2 METHODS

This section introduces the employed methods to collect and analyse the case study. The first subsection describes the data collection and the second subsection presents the data analysis. Finally, there is an explanation of the case study, a review of the literature of Petrobras (the case study) and SEA themes and an exploration of similar papers in respect of SEA, methods and approaches.

This thesis informs a practical aspect of methods, case study, a period of analysis and the data. Fundamentally, the philosophical perspective of post-structuralism supports the entire thesis. Also, the informed DT constitutes in the political field, and this theory provides a base for the analysis. In Brazil, a few studies use the DT to support their ideas and findings, and then, there is an area to explore in SEA field. For instance, SEA themes have the principal feature that is to discuss the political, cultural, social and environmental aspects related to social relationships, which are surrounded by politics. Hence, this thesis aims to contribute to an understanding of the discursive formations in a field prevailed by powerful groups and political interest which are the case of Petrobras, the largest corporation in Brazil.

The data collection is based on document analysis. The present data analysis is a specific discourse analysis called rhetorical redescription. Respectively, this method is distinct from content analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis [CDA]. There are limitations of both methods, which is incompatible with the elements of DT. In general, content analysis is a method for codification and quantification of regularities. On the contrary, the assumed theoretical foundation in DT recognises that discursive constructions are contingent, incomplete, contradictory and dependable of hegemonic practices. Thus, a general idea of discourses is impossible by DT. In consequence, a measurement of the discursive

constructions of Petrobras might be far from reality because the object of analysis is not measurable or defined in a pattern; content analysis fails to be a proper method in this thesis. One of the problems with regularities is the pursuit for generalisations. The process of generalisation is narrow according to DT. Understanding and critiquing consider generalisation as a limited measurement. This means that social and political practices pursue a random structure rather than a regular movement. Circumstances of discursive practices are surrounded by political, social, cultural and economic characteristics that cannot be generalised. In the same way, CDA possesses weakness according to DT. For instance, the 'critical' and the outside of discourse are problematic questions to understand and critique discursive constructions within a political theory (DT). Appendix 1 demonstrates differences of discourse analysis using LCE as methodology and the limitations of CDA to combine its features with the literature of DT.

Further, the study addresses the data collection and its application.

5.2.1 Data collection

The data collection primarily focuses on public documents such as annual, sustainability and social and environmental reports and the forms 20-F presented in United States Securities and Exchange Commission.

Document analysis is the method of data collection. It essentially aims to investigate objects by documents; by this method, the researcher can understand human behaviour, their actions, organisational culture and communication (Hope & LeCoure, 2010, p. 435).

The reports of Petrobras have changed names during 2005-2013. This change occurs from 'Annual Report' in 2005-2008, to 'Social and Environmental Report' in 2006-2008 and 'Sustainability Report' in 2009-2013. Petrobras named and presented reports in different structures and contents. In a broader review, the reports respect a general idea of the structure with more or less information on each topic. The basic format of Petrobras's reports is the economic/financial and production performances, a guideline of Global Report Initiative [GRI] or United Nations Global Compact, sustainability indices, sponsorships, human rights, labour, environment, glossary, content index and sometimes, annual social balance and the management or staff members.

For the purpose of this thesis, the analysis covers the reports of ten years (2004 to 2013), totalling twenty-two reports. Petrobras did not publish an annual report in 2004;

however, some of its data relates to 2004 and earlier. Additionally, there are ten reports on the New York Exchange, named form 20-F (2004 to 2013). Form 20-F displays the requirement for share negotiation in the New York Stock Exchange [NYSE]. This thesis acknowledges Petrobras presented amendments for the form 20-F reports in 2006 (consented to audit firms in financial statements), 2009 (reserves audit of crude oil, condensate and natural gas from the third-party engineering enterprise DeGolyer and MacNaugton) and 2011 (change in the audit firm, from KPMG to PwC). These reports are not, however, considered because the special attention to the financial information, which is not, the principal focus of this thesis. As a result, there are twenty-two reports analysed in this thesis. For a systematic style, this study organises the list of the reports. If there is more than one report per year, the report is named 'Petrobras (year 'a')', then, 'Petrobras (year 'b')', and so on. Figure 11 presents this catalogue:

	ANNUAL REPORT	SUSTAINABILITY REPORT SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT	FORM 20-F
2004			one report
2005	a		b
2006	a	b	c
2007	a	b	c
2008	a	b	c
2009		a	b
2010		a	b
2011		a	b
2012		a	b
2013		a	b

Figure 11 – The list of analysed reports of Petrobras (2004-2013)

Main idea: The aim of this method is to assimilate what agents perform the constructions of SEA within organisations by analysing multiple spectrums of public documents.

Public documents are a way to understand actors in the social life of any social phenomena that affects their lives. (Bryman (2012, p. 550) offers how public documents produced by companies derived from private sources but they are available on the internet, which makes them public documents. Examples of company materials are "annual reports, mission statements, press releases, advertisements, and public relations material" (Bryman, 2012, p. 550). The availability of these documents helps facilitate research.

There is a large body of literature is available on contemporary society. Thus, immense data may present different views of the same phenomena, and it is open to interpretations. In this thesis, I utilise business files as my source of data analysis focusing on the written, transcript or visual arts. As Wharton (2006, p. 79) declares "all documents" have a multiplicity of "social functions", for example, in social media, propaganda holds "styles, ideas, attitudes, values, persuasion and ideologies" (Wharton, 2006, p. 80). By assuming Wharton's point, document analysis presents a variety of interpretations and reinterpretations of several functions. The premise of this method is documents are meaningful, and its meanings have consequences in the audience and context.

Application: The analysis of public documents as annual reports enables researchers to capture political and social values as ideologies and hegemonies. Availability and multiplicity of information are essential components to conduct an analysis of political context. Actors can constantly change beliefs and information to benefit their interests. This thesis assumes that agents construct their discourses with particularities and subjectivities.

There is a similar work (Milne et al., 2009) in SEA field that analyses practices and discourses by using document analysis. Milne et al. (2009) analyse documents from a New Zealand business to identify and examine how the company represents the meanings of sustainable development. In fact, the researchers used a manual coding which they organised into themes of how the company understood sustainable development. The documents analysed by Milne et al. (2009, p. 1221-1222) included, triple bottom line reports, pronouncements, annual reviews, business plans, guides for industry reports, media releases, transcripts and slides presentations. My research aims to understand the discursive constructions, so it is possible to understand the context, logics and articulation by analysing public documents such as annual reports, sustainability reports, and form 20-F.

Reason: Document analysis enables researchers to examine different constructions throughout multiple sources of documents. The main objective is to understand multiple voices from a range of documents and to reconstruct, identify and critique the formation of SEA within public documents.

The period I analyse documents from is ten years (2004-2013). This period is marked by the 2012 BM&F Bovespa announcement to present sustainability report (BM&F Bovespa, 2011). During the same year, Rio+20, promoted by the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development held in Rio de Janeiro – Brazil of which both supported the necessity for sustainability and companies reports.

The next subsection describes the data analysis of this thesis.

5.2.2 Data Analysis

This section presents a narrow and particular way to analyse the discursive constructions of SEA through a discourse analysis. However, the concept of discourse varies in different fields. It is also important to mention that DT is not a type of analysis. DT is a theory to understand the political issues such as the "examination of populist and nationalist ideologies, the discourses of new social movements, the political constructions of social identities, the forms of hegemonic struggle, different logics of collective action" and others (Howarth & Stavrakakis, 2000, p. 1). And, discourse analysis is a mean to analyse technically speeches and texts. Therefore, the concept of discourse in this thesis is narrowly in a particular perspective.

From a post-structuralist approach in Laclau and Mouffe (2001)'s work, discourse is "all the practices and meanings shaping a particular community of social actors" (Howarth, 2000, p. 5). More concisely, discourses constitute "symbolic systems and social orders" in which the task of discourse analysis is to investigate "their historical and political construction and functioning" (Howarth, 2000, p. 5). The principal idea of discourse is the constitution of every object is part of the discourse. "The fact that every object is constituted as an object of discourse has nothing to do with whether there is a world external to thought, or with the realism/idealism opposition" (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. 108). This conception is not reductionism, but a constitution of discourse representing societies in the social and political domains.

Secondly, a notion of text is essential to highlight. "[T]he text is a written work of discourse" (Czarniawska, 2004, p. 69). This thesis focuses on this unit of text and includes a post-structuralist perspective to understand that discourse is social constructed, partial and fragmented (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001). A manner to perform an analysis is particular.

The choice of a data analysis concerns the mixture of individual experiences, theories and methodologies. My choice regarding the data analysis relates to the informed DT, the LCE's methodology and the employed post-structuralist paradigm. However, there are diverse kinds of discourse analysis (for instance, conversation analysis, textual analysis, narrative analysis, rhetorical analysis, critical discourse analysis, deconstruction analysis, thematic analysis, Foucauldian discourse analysis and so forth). I do not intend to

summarise all type of discourse analysis, but I selected four kinds, which I understand to be important for this thesis. In the end, I present why rhetorical redescription is the best choice for the design of this thesis.

Table 2 – Kinds of discourse analysis

	Level (a)	Subjectivity (b)	Approach (c)	Main Theme	Notable Author
Rhetorical Redescription	Macro	Inter-Subjectivity	Post-Structural(d)	Argumentation	Skinner (2002a)
Foucauldian Discourse Analysis	Macro	Inter-Subjectivity	Post-Structural	Power/Knowledge	Foucault (1972)
Critical Discourse Analysis	Micro	Cognitive	Positivist	Power/Relation	Fairclough (2003)
Narrative Analysis	Micro	Inter-Subjectivity	Interpretive	Reflections	Czarniawska (2004)

(a) I interpreted the level concerning the primarily focus of analysis, whether the analysis uses more often linguistic level (micro) or extra-linguistic level (macro).
(b) The subjectivity is how the object of study is grasped. If the object is more related to social constructions, then I classified as inter-subjectivity, and cognitive subjectivity relates to the rationalism in an objectivist viewpoint.
(c) Approach links to the paradigm, which is a form to view the world.
(d) It is necessary to place that the rhetorical redescription has origins in the Aristotelian times in which the conceptualisation of post-structuralism was not developed. However, in this thesis, I employ a post-structuralist approach, but rhetorical redescription may also suit interpretivism and postmodernism.

The data analysis is a type of discourse analysis which is the rhetorical redescription. Regarding other kinds of discourse analysis, the rhetorical redescription can analyse discourses with a political lens which can also focus on the discussion of hegemonies, ideologies and contradictions surrounding in a DT foundation. The need for rhetoric is evident in DT. Laclau (2005, p. 109) asserts "Rhetoric. There is a rhetorical displacement whenever a literal term is substituted by a figural one. Let me just point out one aspect of rhetoric which is highly relevant to the discussion above". More detailed information of the importance of rhetorical redescription is shown through the critics of the Foucauldian Discourse Analysis [FDA], Critical Discourse Analysis [CDA] and Narrative Analysis [NA].[12]

Narrative analysis is inadequate to address a political analysis because its principal focus on the micro analysis of narratives. Parker (2013, p. 227) categorises NA in a less critical space due to the reflections of life stories. Interpreting stories and reflecting narratives are insufficient for criticism of political struggles that have external influences. More focusing on the social and political worlds of SEA, NA is an incomplete method to

[12] The Appendix 1 concentrates on the discussion why the LCE's methodology is more appropriate than other methodologies which also includes CDA and FDA.

understand the "rhetorical devices" that most actors in the political field employ. The choice of a post-structuralist paradigm forces me to do not include NA as its limitation in the reflections of stories. An NA intends to reflect a story, and a rhetorical redescription has a purpose of putting lights in what is uncovered, substituted or missed. Founding a political theory on a post-structuralist approach, the research design of this thesis needs a method of analysis that emphasises a more politically progress.

The use of Critical Discourse Analysis also has a paradigmatic obstruction. This means that a positivist approach does not permit an analysis surrounding by political, social and cultural struggles in a way that subjectivity can determine the actions. Additionally, CDA does few critiques (Parker, 2013). Its position in cognition mostly relates to objectivism, which this thesis rejects. Objectivity is impossible; it is one dimension of the multiple dimensions of social practices. More information of the critiques of CDA is presented in Appendix 1.

The Foucauldian discourse analysis is the most similar method to rhetorical redescription. The rejection of this discourse analysis situates in the theoretical foundation. Foucault is a post-structuralist who theorises the genealogical and archaeological methods. The genealogist diagnosis aims to "offer cure" for the issues in societies by examining the historical formation (Howarth, 2000, p. 72). The Foucauldian genealogy contributes to the idea of power in DT (Carter, 2008). "For Foucault's genealogy, power is unavoidable and always present, based on domination, as opposed to liberal conceptions of power" (Carter, 2008, p. 181). However, the Foucault's archives fail to account for discourses outside the rule-governed practices (Carter, 2008, p. 167). Also, there is no clear distinction between power and knowledge that seems a little complicated when there is a dependency between them. "[K]knowledge is linked to power" and "power is intertwined with resistance" (Parker, 2013, p. 231). For these reasons, rhetorical redescription provides a better understanding of social practices because it places in a scenario of argumentation of the rules, practices and regimes that are a fruitful basis for an analysis founded in DT. The next paragraphs describe this technique its concept, application and more reasons to use in this thesis.

The purpose of this research is to understand and critique the discursive constructions of SEA from a leading Brazilian oil corporation - Petrobras. This thesis adopts the concept that the discourses of are a representation of its principal owner. There is more than one

voice in any corporation reporting, but statements can represent the main inspiration of the company because to produce a report involves many people within the corporation. Thus, the Petrobras' voice is a combination of multiple agents that in a structured and organised institution condenses the principal corporate aims and objectives. I use the rhetorical redescription method to analyse the discursive constructions of Petrobras of SEA.

Rhetorical redescription is a type of rhetorical analysis. Rhetorical analysis examines language in which it aims to understand persuasive discursive constructions that belong to the practice of argumentation (Martin, 2013, p. 9). It is important to define rhetoric and its relationship to rhetorical redescription.

A redescription means a re-view, a re-configuration of the order of the words, a re-analysis of a statement or a re-connection of the origins. Carter (2008, p. 220) asserts redescription involves to change a concept including "reconceptualisation (a revision of meaning), renaming (a change of the name), re-weighting (a shift in significance) and re-evaluation (an alteration of the normative implication)". Quintilian describes the method of redescription relates in how facts are restated, reordered and then assigned "different causes, a different state of mind and a different motive for what was done" (Quintilian cited in Skinner, 2002a, p. 183). The aim of this technique is to persuade an audience to accept the new description, and as consequence "to adopt a new attitude towards the action concerned" (Skinner, 2002a, p. 183).

> [T]he essence of the technique may thus be said to consist of replacing a given evaluative description with a rival term that serves to picture the action no less plausibly, but serves at the same time to place it in a contrasting moral light (Quintilian cited in Skinner, 2002a, p. 183).

From a post-structuralist perspective, the choices of meanings constitute amid personal experiences, culture, politics and other influences. Thus, a rhetorical redescription technique is useful to re-describe Petrobras' discursive constructions of SEA using arguments of plausibility and reconnection to its neighbours. Skinner (2002a, p. 184) reiterates this technique uses "neighbourly relations" to substitute virtues and vices showing plausibility. "There is a certain neighbourly quality between a number of the virtues and vices" (Quintilian cited in Skinner, 2002b, p. 275). The objective of a post-structuralist thesis is to re-view, re-interpret and re-construct the object of study through the lenses of a rhetorical redescription technique that aims to show the plausibility of the

substitution and comparison between inter-relational attributes inserted in the discursive constructions of SEA.

Main idea: Rhetoric is highly relevant to the discussion of elements from DT; rhetorical redescription is a technique that helps to explain modes of persuasion throughout the restating of facts showing plausibility in the substitution of attributes (Skinner, 2002a). The objective of a post-structuralist thesis is to re-view, re-interpret and re-construct the object of study through the lenses of a rhetorical redescription technique that aims to show the plausibility of the substitution and comparison between inter-relational attributes inserted in the discursive constructions of SEA.

From a post-structuralist paradigm, rhetorical redescription combines to the idea the object is contingent and surrounding by power. This method allows researchers to understand relative clauses of interpretations and reinterpretations of human facts. Boje (2001) asserts that post-structuralist's, such as Jacques Derrida to apply deconstruction as a method. Deconstruction combines with antenarratives analysis to create a wider interpretation for multi-voices. An antenarrative of deconstruction seeks to understand the inconstancy and fragmented stories in which discursive constructions are surrounded in interpersonal and business relations.

> It is antenarrative in action, in ongoing acts of narrative self-deconstruction. The narrative is not fixed, but moves and flows with networks of embedded meaning. The analyst joins in the antenarrative by becoming part of the ongoing textual deconstruction of interpenetrating processes and weaves of reconstructing, unravelling and constructing stories (Boje, 2001, p. 10).

Antenarratives and deconstruction link to rhetorical redescription. To redescribe means an (re) interpretation of a (re) contextualised fact. There is the assumption that texts and its interpretations are established in linguistics and rhetorical theory. In other words, the world shapes the discourse to produce relevance (Eisenhart & Johnstone, 2008, p. 12). The world exists outside the discourse, there are "the worlds of the creators and the interpreters of texts"; rhetoricians are interested in style and arrangement of texts which are shaped by conventional (structural) forms.

> The claim that discourse is shaped by interpersonal relations among participants and helps shape interpersonal relations should bring to mind traditional ways of thinking about audience and rhetorical ethos, as well as newer ways of thinking about how speaking positions and roles are mutually shaped and enabled, in the context of larger structures of power. The interpersonal relations connected with discourse include the relations among the speakers and writers, audiences, and overhearers who are represented in texts, as well as the relations among speakers and writers, audiences, and overhearers who are involved in producing and interpreting texts (Eisenhart & Johnstone, 2008, p. 12).

The analysis of text is a task that involves profound considerations of which part of the text is meaningful in that context. This considers other groups might be interested in certain meanings. Rhetorical redescription is a kind of discourse analysis. An explanation

of narrative analysis will show a better understanding of the employed data analysis method. Czarniawska (2000, p. iii) supports three stages of narratives analysis and she suggests a thoughtful way of how post-structuralist researchers in the business could conduct text analysis. Initially, the triad steps are fundamentally situated in hermeneutics: explication, explanation and exploration. In the first stage, interpretation and overinterpretation appear in the middle of explication, through pragmatist to traditional hermeneutics.

The second explanation uses techniques from structuralism to deconstruction's post-structuralist. And, the third stage of this analysis, exploration offers a reflection of constructed narratives. While this thesis aims to understand discursive constructions, it is necessary to understand and interpret meanings used by organisations. This interpretation is another interpretation of reality that has already happened in a context. The voices of interpreters and the voices of what are interpreted produced multifaceted voices, multiple voices during interpretation and reinterpretation. Primarily, as Czarniawska points out, the practitioners decontextualise texts, subsequently, recontextualise it. Hence, this means a reinterpretation of what has already been interpreted. The excess of interpretation is overinterpretation. This thesis aims to understand the equilibrium of interpretations, reinterpretations, decontextualisations; however, the balance of these ought to put in the centre.

> One has to point out, however, that polyphony in a text is but a textual strategy . . . "The voices of the field" do not speak for themselves; it is the author who makes them communicate on his or her conditions . . . this textual strategy is not as drastically different from one authoritative story as it may seem. Even pasting together fragments of authentic narratives, taken straight from an interview protocol, decontextualizes them but, in return, it also re-contextualizes them (Rorty, 1991). It is never a question of "authenticity"; it is always a question of creating an impression of authenticity, of recontextualization that is interesting ("novel"), credible and respectful (Czarniawska, 2000, p. 19).

In the phase of problematisation, there is the process of identification of the aims, audience and the agents in which discursive constructions of SEA are situated in a field of politics. And, rhetorical redescription plans to interpret and reinterpret human facts and actions generated by social interactions. To do this, the retroductive explanation is the phase of understandings the context, giving hypothesis of the background of SEA's practice. More specifically, this thesis aims to answer: What is the context of discursive constructions of SEA in the case study?

The link between rhetorical redescription and the methodology is shown in Figure 12:

LCE's elements	Problematisation	Retroductive Explanation	Logics	Articulation	Critique
General ideas	Aims Audience Agents (actors)	Context Background Hypothesis	Regimes and practices Interactions Repetitive meanings Ideologies	Nodal points Hegemonies	Dislocation Deconstruction
Process of analysis	Identification	Understandings	Interactions	Explanations	Reasons

Figure 12 – LCE and the process of this particular analysis

The following process of analysis is from the list of regimes and practices, interactions, repetitive meanings and ideologies. This performs in the phase of logics – social, political and fantasmatic. The articulation is the explanation's phase of the nodal points or the master of signifiers – elements that turn universal meanings into the constructive formation of SEA. Finally, the critique's phase explains the reason why agents use certain discourses. Dislocation links to the critique´s phase when agents prefer the use of nom-common meaning to please their self- interest. Subsequently, deconstruction originated in Derrida's work reveals how the main meanings (as nodal points) are constructed as the central meaning; and secondly, the reasons why this centrality that cannot be sustained for a long time (Macintosh, 2002, p. 41). The use of dislocation is a political process, and deconstruction aims to reveal the momentary dislocation as well as the fixation of a nodal point. Deconstruction connects to rhetorical redescription because one re-constructs and other re-describes a political situation and they seek to expose the political factors in, for example, the discursive constructions produced within a corporate context. In particular, the rhetorical redescription is able to understand and critique the discursive construction of SEA. This technique has origins in the classic rhetoric.

The classical rhetoric has five elements: (*inventio*), arrangement (*dispositio*), style (*elocutio*), delivery (*pronuntiato*) and memory (*memoria*). The last, memory, will be ignored in this thesis because it is difficult to understand what individuals' thoughts are in organisations without psychological theories and/or methods which are beyond the limits this thesis. In the fourth element of rhetoric, this thesis joins the four elements of classic rhetoric, as well as the redescription, reinterpretations and iterability of multiple voices.

Through rhetorical redescription it is possible to (re)think the liberality that was shown by Aristotle. "Redescribing (and hence commending) an extravagant action as an instance

of liberality" (Skinner, 1996, p. 281). The technique of rhetorical redescription can be dangerous due to the choice of names referring to the virtues and vices named by Hobbes, which are "imposed to *signifie*", as everyone applies these virtues and vices as "their own passion and interests" (Hobbes cited in Skinner, 1996, p. 341). Virtues are good qualities that assist in constructing a convincing discourse while vices, are the contrary of virtues. Hence, vices do not contribute to creating a convincing discourse. Good orators make the listeners feel interested and pleased with whom or what through carefully chosen words.

Rhetorical redescription is a way to grasp mentally which words have been repeated in contexts or places, but with different meanings. Derrida calls to this as an iterable. According to Derrida (1988, p. 7), the iterable refers to communication and repetition - "communication must be repeatable" and "such iterability (everything that follows can be read as the working out of the logic that ties repetition to alterity) structures the mark of writing itself". It is impossible to contain communication to a precise mode; there is no context able to enclose it entirely; therefore, writing is "essential iterability (repetition/alterity)" (Derrida, 1988, p. 9).

The redescription is another means to interpret an object, but it aims to review the context of the interpreter. It also requires recontextualisation, which is produced in discursive practices. This production is linked to the constructions of the meaning of an object – the object here is Petrobras' discursive constructions of SEA. For instance, a fact is re-interpreted and re-contextualised from a past fact according to the experiences and knowledge of the interpreter. More than re-interpretation and re-contextualisation, redescription encloses iterability that is the endless interpretation of a fact. However, iterability is subjective and relative that realises in a certain context, culture, politics, economics and social reality.

The four elements of classical rhetoric combine with the redescription by reinterpretations, recontextualisations and iterability of the same object of the analysis: discursive constructions of SEA. The *inventio* is plausibility; *dispositio* – distribution; *elocutio* – selected words; and *pronuntiato* – style and figures of speech. See Figure 13:

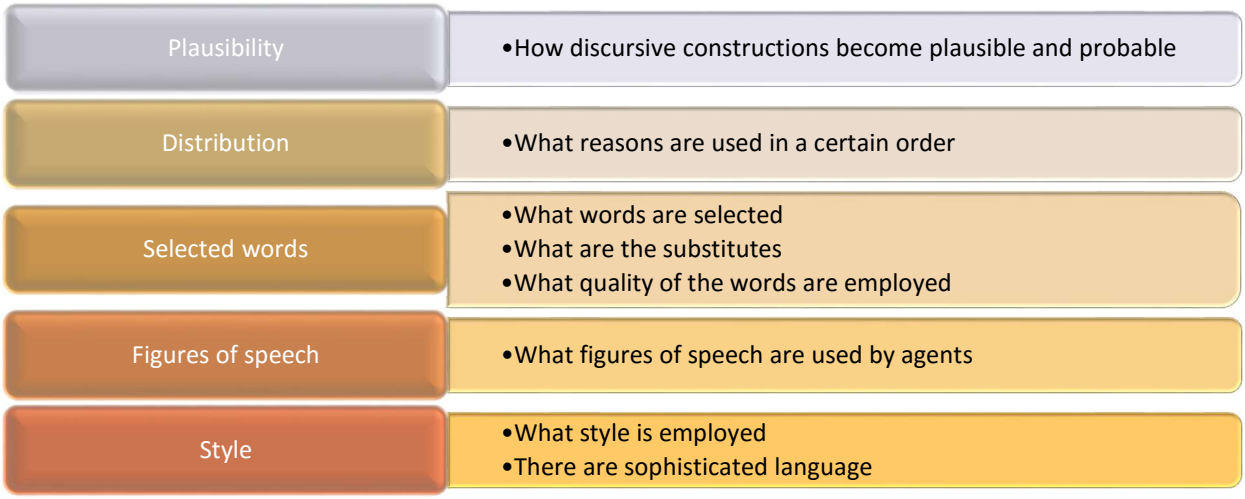

Figure 13 – Rhetorical redescription, classical rhetoric and social practice

As a data analysis, discourse analysis is the method that most closely links to DT. More specifically, this thesis uses a singular type of discourse analysis: rhetorical analysis called rhetorical redescription. This type of discourse analysis is generally described in Skinner's works. Skinner (2002c, p. 96) uses Seneca's work as a technique that offers redescriptions rather than proposes new meanings for the terms - virtue and vice. In the rhetorical analysis, the term starts with 'Rhetorica' from the Greek philosopher, Aristotle. "Let rhetoric be the power to observe the persuasiveness of which any particular matter admits" (Aristotle, 1991, p. 74). As an example of its application to accounting and laws studies, Carter (2008, p. 176) recognises rhetorical analysis is viewed as comprehension of the role of figures of speech as metaphors that is comprehended by documents and interviews.

> Text of documents and interviews [which] are subject to rhetorical analysis where the role of metonyms and metaphors operate at the ontical level, focusing on the employment of cost in telecommunications regulation. The focus is on how the ontological dimension informs the employment and use of tropes in the analysis of discourse, examining the substitution of metaphors, as a means of understanding the logic by which interested parties struggled to 'create' and 'operationalise' a workable framework, given the incentives of the various players to 'use' the system for their own advantage (Carter, 2008, p. 176).

Application: Rhetorical redescription is a way to know the context, figures of speech and discursive constructions of SEA produced by agents. This technique connects social agents to political theories. An application of rhetorical redescription describes the path of how actors construct discursive constructions of SEA and the theoretical foundation of political and social context such as the formations of hegemonies and ideologies.

The technique of redescription is a type of rhetorical analysis that enables actors to "redescribe actions or states of affairs in such a way as to lend additional force to whatever interpretation we may wish to put upon them" (Skinner, 1996, p. 139). The redescription is a way to "excite the emotions of our listeners" (Skinner, 1996, p. 139). This technique

uses figures of speech to show a "neighbouring virtue" (Skinner, 1996, p. 152). The essential task of persuasion is moving the audience emotionally, not merely convince them, but put them on the side of the orator (Skinner, 1996, p. 124). The most argumentative way can be achieved by figures of speech in order to make the *ornatus* more powerful. The figures of speech such as a metaphor, catachresis or zeugma help to provide more emotions for the use of appropriate words that *elocutio* requires.

Multiple voices, multiple discourses, multi-ways of saying sustainability and SEA are what this thesis intends to understand. As Czarniawska puts forward the "polyphony" of text is designed, as a strategy that has the goal of being "authentic narratives". This takes place in accordance with the process of decontextualisation and recontextualisation. Derrida is the major theorist of decontextualisation, as Boje (2001, p. 10) affirms it interlaces reconstruction, disentangling and constructing narratives.

> The movements of deconstruction do not destroy structures from the outside. They are not possible and effective, nor can they take accurate aim, except by inhabiting those structures. Inhabiting them *in a certain way*, because one always inhabits, and all the more when one does not suspect it. Operating necessarily from the inside, borrowing all the strategic and economic resources of subversion from the old structure, borrowing them structurally, that is to say without being able to isolate their elements and atoms, the enterprise of deconstruction always in a certain way falls prey to its own work. This is what the person who has begun the same work in another area of the same habitation does not fail to point out with zeal. No exercise is more widespread today and one should be able to formalize its rules (Derrida, 1976, p. 24).

Rhetorical redescription differs from Critical Discourse Analysis and content analysis. CDA of Fairclough (2003, p. 2) is an analysis oriented by the text. This contradicts the theoretical background in DT: the outside of text provokes an essential part of DT because hegemony practices are realized within contextualised social, economic, political and cultural practices (for more information see Appendix 1). Content analysis is a type of data analysis that seeks to quantify "content in terms of predetermined categories and in a systematic and replicable manner" (Bryman, 2012, p. 290). In contrast, DT assumes the context is essential to understand hegemonic practices in the political field and CDA does not agree with this principal aim (see Appendix 1 for limitations). Also, content analysis is not able to critique political and social situations because of the immeasurability of its essences. Thus, rhetorical redescription is a suitable technique for the political and social purpose of this thesis.

In a practical manner, rhetorical redescription aims to elucidate the intentions of the actors through speeches or texts. Howarth and Griggs (2006, p. 30) examine the technique of rhetorical redescription to capture substitution of metaphor in an aviation policy in the

UK. In this view, redescribing this policy makes the discussion of the environment and social welfare less central than the aviation performance (Howarth & Griggs, 2006, p. 44). Another example is the articulation of more freedom for aviation policy to create facilities to the capitalist industry operate by using the general metaphor of sustainable development, which means a "sustainable aviation growth" (Howarth & Griggs, 2006, p. 44). Rhetorical redescription is a suitable instrument for a political drive that explains the deviation of certain meanings to a specific goal.

Reason: Rhetorical redescription allows researchers to understand the social constructions of meanings of SEA in which agents interchange its meanings (as the iterability of text in Derrida, 1988's work). Discourses are contingent and incomplete formation of societies, so, this thesis intends to use rhetorical redescription to reinterpret and uncover power formations in the discursive practices.

According to the theoretical background, rhetorical redescription is more appropriate to understand and critique the social, political, economic and cultural part of discursive constructions of SEA by analysing articulatory practices. The next section introduces the case study.

5.2.3 Case study

The analysis of a business case aims to understand, interpret, re-interpret and re-contextualise the object of this thesis: discursive constructions of SEA in Brazil.

The case study employed in this thesis concentrates on a set of reports and news from different sources and personal interpretations during a period of analysis of ten years. The reports are the ones published by Petrobras in its website and as well as the forms 20-F available in the New York Stock Exchange website related to 2004 and 2013. The news were personally selected to help to understand Petrobras' disclosures. My personal interpretation was used as mechanism of interconnection between the several sources of information. The Figure 14 shows the case study in this thesis.

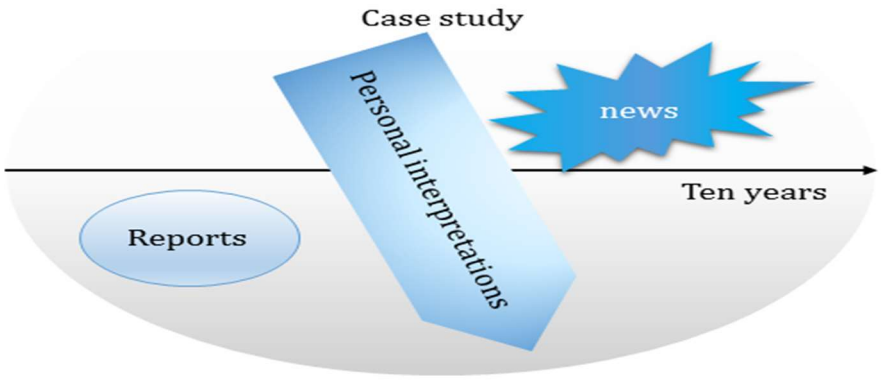

Figure 14 – The case study of this thesis

This dense case study using multiple data, sources and a longitudinal period contributes to an in-depth analysis which indicates a traditional hermeneutics. This term came from 17th century regarding biblical studies and centralises the language as a pivotal focus to read human practices, events and situations because language represents, reproduces or reflects reality (Crotty, 1998, p. 87-88).

> As the medieval philosophers would have it, the way things are (*ordo essendi*) shapes the way we perceive things (*ordo cogitandi*) and this gets expressed in the way we speak (*ordo loquendi*). . . It is now language, the way we speak, that is considered to shape what things we see and how we see them, and it is these things shaped for us by language that constitute reality for us. . . Looked at in this light, the realities we have referred to above - our situations, events, practices and meanings - are constituted by language (Crotty, 1998, p. 88).

This thesis aims to re-describe the discourses from a particular interpretation of a single case study that includes multiple effects of texts, discourses and narratives. A definition of a case study may regard several interpretations. Particularly, this thesis does not have a focus on replication, generalisations or objectivity of theories. Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007, p. 25) have its focus on the strategy of building theories from case studies. However, the authors also recognise the research strategy can change the interpretation of a case study. To illustrate, Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007, p. 26) assert "naturalistic inquiry" may concentrate on "thick narrative description" and less in generalisations of theories. It is the case of this thesis. Previous studies in accounting have used case study as a strategy of research in a qualitative approach that aims to understand an object of study through a real example (Frezatti et al., 2014; O'Dwyer, 2005; Spence, 2009a; Milne et al., 2009; Cooper, 1995, Kakkuri-Knuuttila et al., 2008). The challenge of a case study is to address the authenticity by using a "credible and respectful" novel (Czarniawska, 2000,

p. 19). The principal interest of this thesis is to present clearly a case study with re-descriptions based on re-interpretations and re-contextualisations.

> One has to point out, however, that polyphony in a text is but a textual strategy . . . "The voices of the field" do not speak for themselves; it is the author who makes them communicate on his or her conditions . . . this textual strategy is not as drastically different from one authoritative story as it may seem. Even pasting together fragments of authentic narratives, taken straight from an interview protocol, decontextualizes them but, in return, it also re-contextualizes them (Rorty, 1991). It is never a question of "authenticity"; it is always a question of creating an impression of authenticity, of recontextualization that is interesting ("novel"), credible and respectful (Czarniawska, 2000, p. 19).

A case study condenses multiple voices through different modes of communication. The multiple voices of this case study constitutes the voices of Petrobras in different reports, the external voices in the Petrobras's reports and news, my voice in my interpretations and the multiplicity of voices immersed in each individual which construct a complex network of voices. Also, Petrobras is a legal person, thus, the analysis of the voice of Petrobras is similar to interpret a person within its multiple voices. A case study regards the "effects and causes" but also in terms of the use of rhetoric (Czarniawska, 2000; Howarth & Griggs, 2006). In the role of rhetoric, Glynos and Howarth (2007, p. 75) argue it is interpreted as "an instrument of communication" and for researchers, the use of rhetoric can identify "relevant beliefs and preferences".

On a post-structuralist perspective, the case study is a construction of multiple actors that links to the idea of incomplete and fragmented discourses (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001).

> Structures could no longer be 'found', as they were obviously put into the text – by those who read the text, including the author (after all, reading is writing anew).This meant abandoning the idea of the universal structure of language, or of mind, and accepting the idea of a common repertoire of textual strategies, which are recognizable to both the writer and the reader. Such relaxation of basic assumptions also led to the relaxation of the technique: as there is no one true deep structure to be discovered, various techniques can be applied to structure a text and therefore permit its novel reading (Czarniawska, 2004, p. 88).

A case study is a novel read from the researchers' view. The most important that a novel needs to represent varying interpretations of the multiple voices in a plausible way. And in supporting the need for multiple views, narratives and discourses, the case study is a "novel" characterised by re-contextualisations and re-interpretations (Czarniawska, 2000) of the discursive constructions of SEA. Thus, it also means I am part of the interpretation that cannot be a complete story, but a partial representation of a case study. There is a need for voices of what concerns SEA. This thesis acts to include voices in the whole idea of the system of meanings associated with SEA and acknowledges this system has a spectrum involving culture, politics and social praxis.

The case study is Petrobras, the State-owned oil company in Brazil. There are reasons to select Petrobras generally concerning availability, accessibility and influences. First, it is a public company, which permits researchers to seek public documents like annual reports, releases and others in an easier mode. Secondly, Petrobras belongs to a list of sensitive industries companies as defined under Brazilian law No. 10,165 (Brasil, 2000) and Manual of registration of the Brazilian Institute of Environment and Renewable Natural Resources (IBAMA, 2004). The list of the Brazilian bodies is a compilation of companies from oil and gas sector. This segment is known as environmental high impact. The accessibility to documents and belonging to sensitive industries may show a company in a better level of transparency and accountability due to their activities and risks for the environments. Thirdly, Petrobras has elevated visibility in Brazil and around. The World's Largest Listed Energy Firms (IHS, 2014, p. 2) asserts that the company was the ninth energy company in the world in 2013. In short, Petrobras is the case study, which retains enough features to understand the political and social backstage of SEA's constructions.

Figure 15 – The logo of Petrobras

Petrobras presents itself as "driven by the challenge of supplying the energy that provides development and ensures the future of the society with competency, about ethics, cordiality, and respect for diversity" (Petrobras, 2014).

In 1953, the Brazilian Federal Government created Petrobras. Petrobras is, and now, it is the largest organisation in Brazil. Its main activities include "exploration, production, refining, gas processing, oil product distribution, marketing and transportation over pipelines, petrochemicals, electric power, and biofuels" (Petrobras, 2014).

The company has a dominant presence in Latin America, special Venezuela, Colombia, Peru, Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay, Argentina and Mexico, and the USA. In Africa, the company participates in seven countries: Libya, Benin, Nigeria, Gabon, Angola, Namibia and Tanzania. They also are involved in Portugal, the UK, Netherlands, Turkey, Singapore, China and Japan.

The oil company is the largest public oil and gas company in Brazil and one of the largest in Latin America. The Brazilian federal government is its main shareholder. According to Brazilian legislation, the government is required to be the principal owner of Petrobras. Brazilian federal government owns 50.26% of the common shares that allows them to elect the majority of the board of directors, 9.87% belongs to BNDES and others 39.87%; the preferred shares belong to others 66.84%, BNDES Participações 23.95%, BNDES 2.89% and PREVI 6.31% (Petrobras, 2013b, p. 111). Petrobras operates in 17 countries and across six business segments: exploration and production, refining, transportation and marketing, distribution, gas and power, biofuel and international (Petrobras, 2013b, p. 23).

Petrobras incorporates several companies, and thereby, operating both Brazil and abroad. In Brazil, Petrobras' trading name is Petrobras Distribuidora S.A., Petrobras Gás S.A. - Gaspetro, Petrobras Transporte S.A. - Transpetro, Petrobras Logística de Exploração e Produção S.A. - PB-LOG, Companhia Integrada Têxtil de Pernambuco S.A. - Citepe, Petrobras Biocombustivel S.A. - PBIO, Companhia Locadora de Equipamentos Petrolíferos S.A. - CLEP, Companhia Petroquímica de Pernambuco S.A. - PetroquímicaSuape, Liquigás Distribuidora S.A., Araucária Nitrogenados S.A., Termomacaé Ltda., Termoaçu S.A., INNOVA S.A., 5283 Participações Ltda., Breitener Energética S.A., Termobahia S.A., Termoceará Ltda., Arembepe Energia S.A., Petrobras Comercializadora de Energia Ltda. - PBEN, Baixada Santista Energia S.A., Fundo de Investimento Imobiliário RB Logística - FII, Energética Camaçari Muricy I Ltda., Termomacaé Comercializadora de Energia Ltda., Petrobras Negócios Eletrônicos S.A. - E-Petro, Downstream Participações Ltda., Fábrica Carioca de Catalizadores S.A. - FCC, Ibiritermo S.A., and, internationally Petrobras in the Netherlands trades under B.V. - PNBV, Petrobras International Braspetro - PIB BV, Petrobras International Finance Company - PifCo, Braspetro Oil Services Company - Brasoil, Cordoba Financial Services GmbH (Petrobras, 2013b, p. 57).

The company is part of the oil and gas sector. Petrobras dominates the exploration and accumulation of crude oil and natural gas in the Brazilian subsoil. In 2013, Petrobras produced 90.9% of the total oil in Brazil and an average of domestic daily oil production of 1,931.4 mbbl/d (Petrobras, 2013b, p. 22). The company has expertise in deep-water exploration and production (Petrobras, 2013b, p. 22). Under concession contracts and laws, Petrobras has the right to explore oil crude in their producing fields because of the

Brazilian government requires a proved financial capacity to develop those activities and Petrobras has proved this capacity which permits its domination (Petrobras, 2013b, p. 58). Regarding the pre-salt area in Campos and Santos Basins, Petrobras is the principal company to explore those fields and demands to pay royalties to the Brazilian government.

Petrobras has shares listed in São Paulo Stock Exchange [BM&F Bovespa] – Sao Paulo, Brazil; Latinoamericanos en Euros [Latibex] – Madrid , Spain; Bolsa de Comercio de Buenos Aires [BCBA] - Buenos Aires, Argentina and New York Stock Exchange [NYSE] – New York, the US (Petrobras, 2013b, p. 113). As a result, those markets require audit firms to review the financial information of Petrobras. Ernst & Young audited in 2004 and 2005 and KPMG in 2006 to 2008 (Petrobras, 2008c, p. 8). KPMG audited between 2009 and 2011 and PwC in 2012 and 2013 (Petrobras, 2013b, p. 11). PwC continues to audit the 2014's statements (Petrobras, 2015a).

In terms of financial data, in 2014, Petrobras published the audited financial statement with US$ 299 bn of total assets and US$ 182 bn of total liabilities, sales revenues of US$ 143 bn and a net loss of US$ 7 bn. Additionally, Petrobras presented the proved reserves of oil and natural gas which summarises the set of the consolidated data of Petrobras:

Table 3 – Consolidated data of Petrobras

CONSOLIDATED DATA	**2014**	**2013**	**2012**	**2011**	**2010**
Sales revenues (in millions of US Dollars)	143,657	141,462	144,103	145,915	120,052
Net income (loss) (in millions of US Dollars)	(7,503)	10,832	10,931	20,121	19,184
Proved reserves of oil (in millions of barrels)		10,956	10,937	10,783	10,731
Proved reserves of natural gas (in billions of cubic feet)		12,495	11,555	12,381	11,894
2009	**2008**	**2007**	**2006**	**2005**	**2004**
91,869	118,257	87,735	93,893	74,065	51,954
15,504	18,879	13,138	12,826	10,344	6,190
10,269	9,105.	9,553	9,418	9,716	9,945
10,988	12,139	12,4780	11,766	12,352	11,247

Source: Petrobras (2015a, p. 4-5; 2013b, pp. 12, F-96-7; 2010b, pp. 16, F-135-6; 2006c, pp. 9, 38)

The consolidated data in Table 3 shows a constant growth of the sales revenues since 2004, profits between 2004 and 2013 and the loss of US$ 7.5 billon related to corruption in 2014. During the period of analysis, the proved reserves of oil and natural gas were maintained slightly constant. In fact, in 2008 when Petrobras confirmed the reserve of oil in the pre-salt layer in the Santos Basin arose expectations of production, however the technology for that operation is still new. The exploration of the pre-salt creates challenges for the company, energy industry, environments and social impacts.

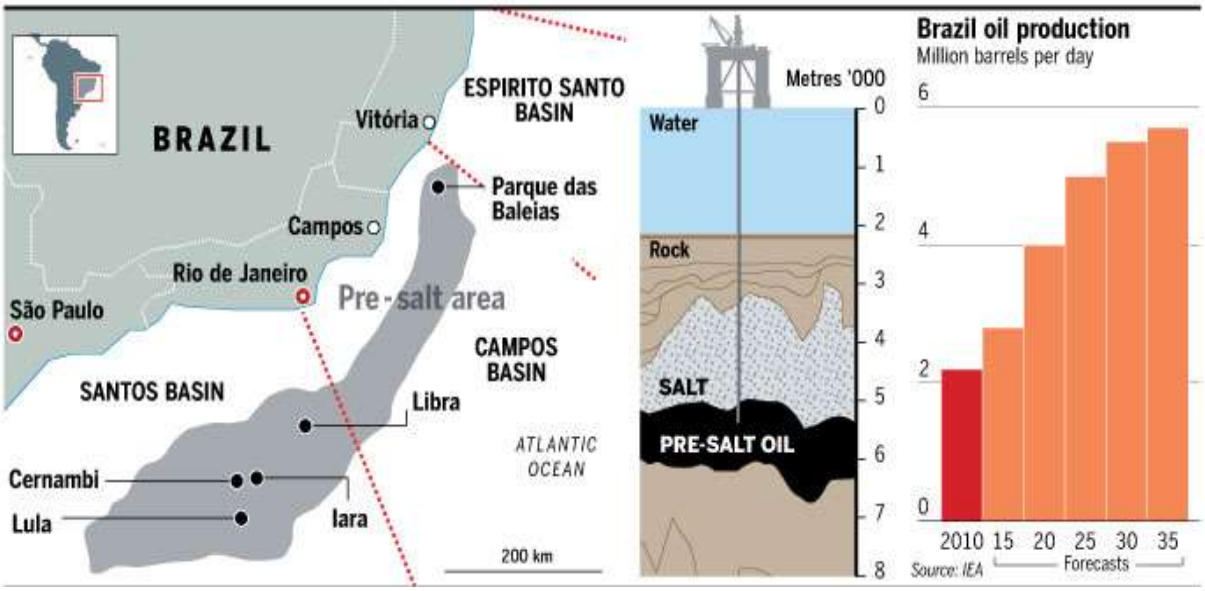

Figure 16 – Pre-salt oil discoveries. Source: Financial Times online (23 May 2016) retrieved from www.ft.com

In 2016, the challenges of Petrobras is to overcome the corruption scandal, the amount of debts and the societal pressure for a company that represents Brazil. The announcement on 22nd April 2015 of the results in 2014 was an expected moment for Brazil and the investors of Petrobras. The involvement in a scandal of a system of corruption during 2004 to 2012, but only discovered in 2014 was an important fact of the delay of the Petrobras' report and its loss.

5.2.4 Conclusion

In summary, this section described the data collection, data analysis and the case study as a particular mean to apply the theoretical foundation in DT and also the discussion of the social and environmental discursive constructions in Brazil - an emerging economy that has discussed sustainability in two important events, the Rio92 and Rio+20. In a post-structuralist paradigm and the informed DT, this chapter discusses discursive constructions of SEA by the LCE methodology. The data collected by document analysis and the analysis by rhetorical redescription as a combination helps to understand and examine the social, political and fantasmatic logics as well as the articulatory practice to be able to critique the discursive formations of SEA made by Petrobras during 2004-2013. Figure 17 shows a summary of the methods in this thesis:

Data collection	Document analysis
Data Analysis	Rhetorical redescription – a type of discourse analysis
Case study	1 (Petrobras)

Period of analysis	10 years (2004-2013)
Data application	Public documents: Annual reports, sustainability reports, forms 20-F, financial reports, press releases and website

Figure 17 – Summary of the employed methods

The literature of Petrobras and the SEA theme are presented in the next section.

5.3 LITERATURE OF PETROBRAS

Business literature including accounting addresses the thematic of SEA and Petrobras. Most of this literature primarily uses reports and interviews to perform the analysis. Particularly, an investigation of the literature shows a predominance of the business case approach. These selected papers are principally situated in the business case approach, and just one paper in the stakeholder-accountability approach discussed in Chapter 3.

Most of the literature support the concept of continual business growth. This literature supports the guidelines of the Global Report Initiative [GRI] and the level of sustainability disclosure (Pereira & Silva, 2008; Filho, Prates & Guimarães, 2009; Corrêa, Ribeiro & Souza, 2014). By comparison, Petrobras has the better reports at the G3 level of the GRI than companies like Natura and Bradesco in 2006-2007 (Pereira & Silva, 2008, p. 76). In contrast, Filho et al. (2009) disagree with Pereira and Silva's (2008) work and demonstrates companies at the A+ level of the GRI do not have an ideal level of social and environmental information in 2007. This analysis refers to Petrobras, Natura, Bunge, Banco do Brasil, Bradesco and Itaú (Filho et al., 2009, p. 43). In 2010, and focusing on greenhouse gas emission, Corrêa et al. (2014) evaluate twenty-one Brazilian companies at the A level of the GRI. These results show that Petrobras and other five companies are considered effective in the mandatory reporting on greenhouse gas emission (Corrêa et al., 2014, p. 2). Similarly, Moreira, Brinckmann, Nilson and Pfitscher (2013) examine social and environmental dimensions of Petrobras regarding its conformity to Ibase Social Balance making it a successful sustainable company based on Corporate Knights rankings. Again, compliance with principles, guidelines or rules is the primary objective of papers in Brazil. One paper (Filho & Abadía, 2013) examines the relationship between economic performance and corporate social responsibility from Repsol (Spain) and Petrobras (Brazil). A critique of this literature of SEA field and Petrobras is the principal focus on measurements such as discussed in Chapter 3. To add, there is a complicated integration of subjective measures and the conclusions of more or less sustainable companies.

These papers (Pereira & Silva, 2008; Filho et al., 2009; Corrêa et al., 2014; Moreira et al., 2013; Filho & Abadía, 2013) exemplify that business case approach is the prominent approach throughout the Brazilian literature. Effectively these articles support, upholding the development of businesses without contesting its effective actions. The general idea is with regulation will need to expose more data. In this regard, Bremenkamp, Almeida and Pereira (2011) has difficulties to reach the objectives to assess the environmental accidents of Petrobras. In the paper, there is an examination from multiple sources like news, websites, environmental institutions to compare the Petrobras' annual, sustainability and financial reports, however, the media reveals Petrobras has not reported its environmental accidents satisfactorily. Nor do sustainability reports have satisfactory information of the affected areas or the cost involved (Bremenkamp et al., 2011, p. 67). The authors claimed further regulation, but in my view, it is not the only solution. In summary, Bremenkamp et al. (2011) provided me useful thoughts of how Petrobras uses the disclosures in its reports as clever apparatuses to escape from the neglected information of environmental accidents reported in newspapers. In my opinion, powerful groups like Petrobras prefer to hide the negative impact of its operations to maintain the public image of 'good company'.

On the other hand, one paper discusses the environmental education and environmental management of a unit of Petrobras by the perceptions of employees (Giesta, 2013). This article comes under the umbrella of stakeholder-accountability approach due the inclusion of non-financial stakeholder's point of view.

This short review of the Brazilian literature demonstrates that there is a space for critical research in respect to Petrobras, and its SEA practice. The next section presents the similar papers in terms of objectives and methodologies compared with this thesis.

6 DISCUSSION: The Logics

Chapter 5 introduced the research design, which shows the LCE as the methodology for this thesis. This research approach aids in understanding the literature review surrounding SEA. In Brazil, there is a lack of critical studies to understand the systematic inquiries in measurements and its implications to finance. Chapter 3 contested the limited studies in the business case approach to show that critical research of the literature of SEA in the principal journals in Brazil needs to engage in a larger perspective of SEA theme. The incontestability of measurements of SEA fascinated me as a researcher to understand and critique the functions of the meanings associated with sustainability. As a result, these functions tend to benefit the dominant political groups. The political interpretations of SEA and its variations would reduce the whole range of possible interpretation for the interest of elitist groups.

The environment of the interpretations is the partiality of any view. As well as political agents, humans are individuals with limited knowledge and experiences. This research is situated in the (re)interpretations and (re)contextualisation's of the discursive constructions of SEA. This means that my personal experiences, readings, knowledge and physical conditions will determine the analysis of the data. It is singular, partial and limited. As well as language, which means that this thesis employs a particular standpoint.

A review of *Hegemony and socialist strategy* of Laclau and Mouffe's book presents that discourse is a form to represent objects in a particular and partial point of view. In other words, the DT of Laclau and Mouffe (2001) supports the post-structuralist paradigm that all objects are partial and limited because of the human conditions. Furthermore, this is the tone of this chapter of presenting the analysis and also assuming that all interpretations are incomplete, but important part of the social constructions. In this chapter, the objective is to answer the research question which is:

What are the discursive constructions of social and environmental accounting in Brazil?

This chapter delineates an application of the five stages of LCE's methodology and the design to respond to the research objective. In the phase of problematisation, the goal is to identify problems within social relationships. As a result, the problems are:

(i) What are the meanings associated with SEA in the case study?
(ii) What are the purpose of the discursive constructions of SEA by a Brazilian company?
(iii) What are the benefits of those constructions?

To approach these problems, this thesis employs a methodology divided into five phases: problematisation, retroductive explanation, logics (social, political and fantasmatic), articulation and critiques. Chapter 5 explained the methodology in details. A review of the methodology shows an elucidation of how this methodology could help the object of this study. The first phase is the problematisation demonstrated in the previous problems that will be answered in this chapter and in the following discussions. The second phase is a retroductive explanation.

The bottom-up and the top-down approaches of doing research are a simple way to clarify the phase of retroductive explanation that is a circular understanding of social realities. This stage requests an initiative or a justification for the studied context by discovering the hypothesis that would explain the contextualised reality. The next stage constitutes the logics. Social logics consists of a plan to understand the practices and the structures of societies. These practices and structures like regimes, routines and specific languages link to political logics that aim to expose elected meanings in social interactions. Also, fantasmatic logics discuss the impact of ideologies on groups. The articulation phase shows elements of DT as hegemonies, nodal points, logic of equivalence/difference. To conclude this brief review of LCE's methodology, the critique phase presents the reasons by dislocations and contradictions of the associated meanings of SEA of an organisation in Brazil. In terms of methods, an object of analysis is identified by a rhetorical analysis.

The rhetorical analysis appears to understand the formations of hegemonies, which belongs to the logics, articulation and critique phases of LCE's methodology. The analysis implies an understanding of the elements of plausibility, distribution, selected words, figures of speech and style. This rhetorical analysis also includes the act to redescribe. A redescription means to revisit the previous interpretation in a clearer perspective. It is to (re) describe an earlier interpretation and, at this point, I argue to include a political view of that interpretation. The rhetorical redescription analysis connects the methodology, literature review and data analysis by explaining the process of the constitution, naming and representation of the discursive construction of SEA in Petrobras.

The case study is Petrobras. Petrobras is a State-owned enterprise in Brazil. The principal activity is oil extraction from deep areas in the Atlantic Ocean belonging to the Brazilian littoral. Particularly, this study examines the sustainability reports of Petrobras. The Petrobras' reports of sustainability are a voluntary practice; however, they are expected

because of the magnitude of the company in the Brazilian context and in the world. The results of its activities affect the Brazilian society and around the world. I expect to understand and critique the disclosures of SEA and its multidimensional ways to represent SEA. These reports are the corporate disclosure of its definitions of sustainability and sustainable practices. An interpretation of the Petrobras' reports helps to illustrate that there are relevant elements to discuss the political and social consequences for the constructions of SEA in Brazil. An overall analysis of the Petrobras' reports would involve an explanation of the background of the context, the logics associated with the practices and disclosures of SEA, understandings of the discursive constructions surrounding social, political and ideological standpoint.

In interpreting certain problems of practices such as the actions, the purposes and the benefits with the context of this study – reports from Petrobras, an explanation of the context of the discursive constructions of SEA would enhance the studies in discourses, Brazilian companies and the discussion of politics in developing countries. In essence, this study brings to the surface two problems: the limited literature in the Brazilian journals on the debates of the function of sustainability in corporations and the self-purpose corporate reporting.

In Brazil, there is a monologic engagement of SEA literature. This serves corporate objectives but it fails to encourage the development of the Brazilian academy in a broader perspective that would include not only corporate benefits but also the societal necessity such as welfare, human rights, environmental protection and addressing poverty. In extensive ways, studies ought to interpret the complex and multiple facets of SEA. Barely sufficient for the companies, business case approach in Brazil discussed in Chapter 3 does not permit an increase in new initiatives for sustainable development. This business case approach concentrates on organisations as the main agent to protect people and environment. As a result, in developing countries such as Brazil, the corporate organisational position protects capital expansion with little consideration for the problematic interaction between economies, politics, culture, societies and environment.

As indicated in Chapter 3, there are critiques of this approach in the SEA literature, principally, the monologic engagement that attempts to demonstrate the limited corporate perspective to reduce social problems when pursuing a business model that includes their self-interests and excludes other societal needs. According to Brown and

Fraser (2006) who argue the business case approach promotes the normal business practice. As an example, IIRC (2014) shows the benefits of sustainable developing reports that highlight some concepts of cost reduction, long-term investments and supporting financial providers, which are all a capitalist language.

A combination of the Brazilian research of SEA concentrated on the business case and the corporate desires on their self-improvements draws attention to the purpose of SEA constructions in developing countries. In one hand, there is research that assists to improve companies and, on the other hand, the corporations would rather produce reports that will increase its image, profits or credits in the market. This is a win-win situation. The win-win layout increases the monological logics of capital accumulation, natural resource extraction, labour exploitation and deregulated markets. The above issues are central to my upcoming discussion of the constructions of SEA used by Petrobras and will be presented in three parts. Firstly, with an aim to understand discursive constructions of SEA, the problematisation of those constructions tries to seek the issues related to the constitution and characterisation of the object of the study in the context by starting with the social logics of the constituted practice. Then, the retroductive explanation steps which the LCE's methodology highlights a need for a political and fantasmatic analysis as well. The second part presents the political logics of the discursive constructions of SEA assuming that these interpretations are partial representation of the context and is important to fulfil the entire picture of sustainability in the Brazilian context. Lastly, this chapter shows the impact of ideologies on stakeholders.

6.1 Social logics

The social logics upcoming section is a mixture of Derridean deconstruction from the works of Laclau and Mouffe (2001, p. 183), and a particular technique of redescription to uncover the relevant constructions of SEA used by Petrobras. Petrobras uses discursive constructions, which involve complexities such as the activities that would generate profit but also would protect the environment, for example, the wind and solar energy. These constructions are a symbolic representation of the company' activities, the objectives of sustainability reports, sustainable practices and social and environmental responsibility. The discursive constructions of SEA are a product of multiple stakeholders in the interaction of social practices and policies. These practices and policies are interrelated to the environment of Petrobras like the Brazilian government and society and

international institutions that produce a certain interpretation of social logics. Particularly, this thesis identified that the research of SEA in the Brazilian journals concentrates on the business case approach designed in Brown and Fraser' (2006) work. This situation reinforces the corporate report of SEA in decision-making based on profitable results and ignores the social and environmental issues. Essentially, I aim to demonstrate these points through my discussion on Petrobras' practices addressing a narrow definition of SEA, the role of regulators, the measurable, the exclusion of the social and 'best practice'.

The analysis of social logics concentrates on the practices and rules governed by the constructed meanings of CSR, SER and sustainability by Petrobras. This analysis firstly discusses the narrowness of the conceptions of social and environmental accountability [SEA] and employed variations like social and environmental responsibility [SER], sustainability and corporate social responsibility [CSR]. In a narrow conception, Petrobras articulates a short and suitable view of SEA and its variations. Secondly, this analysis shows the role of regulators to restrict and constrain the type of disclosures of SEA. For many narratives, Petrobras utilises measurable data to detail a specific type of disclosure. Petrobras clearly regards its social and environmental discursive constructions as constituting an asocial argument of the conception of SEA. Finally, Petrobras also employs a more detailed specification of the relationship between its best practices and ideology. There is a tension between the social logics of Petrobras' disclosures. Also, in reality, the results produce conflicts and contradictions as part of the whole system of practices and rules within the Brazilian context.

6.1.1 A narrow definition of SEA

The constant practice of Petrobras' narratives about SEA is the narrow definition of social and environmental responsibility, sustainability or corporate social responsibility. In 2007, Petrobras excluded the SER term from its vision. Moreover, Petrobras clearly avoided defining SER other than stating it in their statement of vision that assume themselves as socially and environmentally responsible. An interpretation of the Petrobras' vision shows a redescription of the importance order. The term 'SER' is placed at the end of the narratives of Petrobras' vision (Petrobras, 2005a, p. 3, 2006a, p. 3). The order of the presentation illustrates the principal goal of the company is to develop internationally in the energy sector, which Petrobras conceives as features of profitability

and SER. Profit and growth are the language of capitalist corporations as well as the business case approach discussed in Chapter 3. In the Brazilian articles, SEA is principally placed in terms of financial results and variables (Lazzarotti et al., 2014; Palma et al., 2014; Andrade et al., 2013; Bachmann et al., 2013; Lameira et al., 2013; Mazzioni et al., 2013; Nobre & Ribeiro, 2013; Rocha et al., 2013; Colares et al., 2012; Macedo et al., 2011). Likewise, Petrobras is at this moment to present an illustration of business case approach. However, there are limitations for the business case, especially, the omission of voices such as local communities, labour conditions, health care and the protection of the environment. Brown and Fraser (2006) argue that the principal goal of the business case is to guarantee the business to grow its economic capital. The narrow definition for SEA emphasises the importance made for investors and marketing. Petrobras using a language of business aims to attract and maintain investors and to present a company prepared to absorb the marketing needs by showing the best products and social responsibility. This is a shift of significance of SEA which is rhetorically driven for profit results. Thus, the narrower conception of SEA aids Petrobras to obfuscate social and environmental practices and dislocates the public attention for an economic importance ("top five integrated energy companies in the world", "the five largest integrated energy companies ", "the preferred choice", "leading force in Latin America") that satisfies the corporate strategies.

> VISION 2015
>
> Petrobras will be an integrated energy company with a strong international presence and the leader in Latin America, operating with its focus on profitability and *social and environmental responsibility* (Petrobras, 2005a, p. 3).
>
> Vision
>
> Petrobras will be an integrated energy company with a strong presence in the international market and as a leading force in Latin America, focusing on profitability and *social and environmental responsibility* (Petrobras, 2006a, p. 3).
>
> VISION FOR 2020
>
> Petrobras will be one of the five largest integrated energy companies in the world and the preferred choice among our stakeholders (Petrobras, 2007a, p. cover page).
>
> 2020 Vision
>
> We will be one of the five largest integrated energy companies in the world and the preferred choice among our stakeholders (Petrobras, 2008a, p. 3).
>
> Vision for 2020
>
> We will be one of the top five integrated energy companies in the world, and the preferred choice among our stakeholders (Petrobras, 2009a, p. 2).
>
> Vision for 2020

> We will be one of the five largest integrated energy companies in the world and the preferred choice among our stakeholders. (Petrobras, 2010a, p. cover page).
>
> VISION FOR 2020
>
> We will be one of the top five integrated energy companies in the world, and the preferred choice among our stakeholders (Petrobras, 2011a, p. cover page).
>
> 2020 Vision
>
> We will be one of the world's top five integrated energy companies and the company of choice for our stakeholders (Petrobras, 2012a, p. cover page).
>
> OUR VISION FOR 2030
>
> Be one of the world's top five integrated energy companies* and the company of choice for our preferred on by its stakeholders.
>
> (*) Metric: One of the five largest oil producers, among all companies, whether or not publicly traded (Petrobras, 2013a, p. 2).

The narrow definition of SER creates an opportunity for corporations to evade future inquiries and problems. The vision of Petrobras represents the business case approach of consulting and measuring categories (Chapter 3) that show a company concerned with management and economic performance. SEA in this corporate language supports the promotion of the company image (Brown & Fraser, 2006). Petrobras' constructions of SER links to the arguments that business uses strategies to appeal to the superiority of markets and the capitalist ideology (Higgins & Walker, 2012, p. 195). This superior ideology such as "a strong presence", "the preferred choice" and "the top" means a support for the argument that more capital equates to less poverty. However, in Brazil, there are substantial issues of poverty, wealth distribution and cheap wages. In 2013, the Human Development Index [HDI] of Brazil was 0.744 that is lower than Argentina, Chile and Portugal (UN, 2014, p. 161). Hence, Petrobras' discourse of SER hides the Brazilian problems and reinforces the installation of corporations in developing countries.

> That same year when the Company's social responsibility policy was established, the topic was added to the corporate functions in the revision of the 2020 Strategic Plan. The Petrobras challenge is now to become an international benchmark in social responsibility for business management, contributing to sustainable development.
>
> JOSÉ SERGIO GABRIELLI DE AZEVEDO, Petrobras CEO

Figure 18 – The 'social responsibility' for business. Source: Petrobras (2007b, p. 1)

This quote shows how the use of business case language in the category of consulting when Petrobras asserts adequacy and corporate compliance ("international benchmark"). In Chapter 3, I present the business case approach, which connects to the quote of Petrobras CEO who accentuates the 'win-win' discourse for SEA. Brown and Fraser (2006, p. 105) poses CSR activity in a positively light in the business case. In essence, the positive language of SEA contributes to the managerial policies, but it tightens the whole picture of social and environmental practices. Another example of the narrow scope of SEA employing the business case approach is the Petrobras' mission:

> Mission
>
> To operate safely and profitably in the oil, gas and energy domestic and international markets in a socially and environmentally responsible manner, supplying products and services to meet the needs of its customers and contributing to the development of Brazil and the countries in which it operates (Petrobras, 2005a, p. 3).
>
> MISSION
>
> To operate in a safe and profitable manner in the energy sector in Brazil and abroad, showing social and environmental responsibility and providing products and services that meet clients' needs and that contribute to the development of Brazil and the other countries in which the company operates (Petrobras, 2007a, p. cover page).
>
> Mission
>
> Operate in a safe and profitable manner in Brazil and abroad, with social and environmental responsibility, providing products and services that meet clients' needs and that contribute to the development of Brazil and the countries in which it operates (Petrobras, 2008a, p. cover page).

> Mission
>
> Operate in a safe, profitable manner, with social and environmental responsibility, in Brazil and abroad, providing products and services that meet the client's needs and contribute to the development of Brazil and of the countries in which the company operates (Petrobras, 2009a, p. 2).
>
> Mission
>
> Operate in a safe, profitable manner, with social and environmental responsibility, in Brazil and abroad, providing products and services that meet clients' needs and that contribute to the development of Brazil and of the countries in which it operates (Petrobras, 2010a, p. cover page).
>
> MISSION
>
> Operate in a safe, profitable manner, with social and environmental responsibility, in Brazil and abroad, providing products and services that meet customer needs and contribute to the development of Brazil and of the countries in which it operates (Petrobras, 2011a, p. cover page).
>
> Mission
>
> Working safely and profitably, showing social and environmental responsibility, in the Brazilian and international markets, providing the right products and services for customer needs and contributing to development in Brazil and countries in which it operates (Petrobras, 2012a, p. cover page).
>
> OUR MISSION
>
> Work ethically, safely and profitably in the oil and natural gas industry, with social and environmental responsibility, providing the right products for costumers needs and contributing for [sic] the development of Brazil and the countries in which we operate (Petrobras, 2013a, p. 2).

Similar to the vision's quotes, the mission of Petrobras is a discourse of the business case using two categories (consulting and measuring) by incorporating words such as "profitable manner" and compliance with "customers' needs". The harm of this discourse is the persuasion that encapsulates the negativities and controversies. The mission of Petrobras predominates the expressions "safety" and "profitability" that is a way to reduce the interpretations of social and environmental responsibility. Additionally, in 2013, Petrobras uses "work ethically" for the first time in its narratives. Ethics became an important behaviour that is a prelude for the later massive exposition of corruption inside Petrobras and articulated groups. This prelude is also clear evidence that Petrobras knows the context of its operation from inside out and outside in. The Petrobras' narratives of SER relate to the behaviour of being responsible that is a metaphor for the management. Thus, Petrobras emphasises that its management is socially responsible in a specific way. This specification associates with the business case language. Chapter 3 introduced the business case approach, which represents studies that help organisations to continue the capitalist culture using rhetorical language to persuade academics and society to an importance of the business in reducing risks and improving development (Laine, 2005; Brown & Fraser, 2006; Lehman, 1999). Organisations as IIRC (2014) and WBCSD (2003) reinforce the business strategies using, for examples, the expressions "dialogue", "enhancing reputation" and "long-term capital", but in a deconstructed

analysis those expressions mean a self-interest result for corporations and less for the environment and social domain. In the SEA studies in Brazil there is a need for contestation (Martinez-Alier, 2002; Boyce, 2000), dialogic engagement (Bebbington et al., 2007; O'Dwyer, 2005) and emancipation (Spence, 2009b) from ideological discourses (Spence, 2007; Higgins & Walker, 2012). As well as the Brazilian academy, Petrobras contributes to a self-improvement concerning economic platform and fewer to multidisciplinary approach of sustainability.

An outcome of this narrow definition alludes to the silent report that is a strategic mechanism to hide information. Petrobras stays clear from contestation and fair dialogue while using the definition of SER with reference to "safe and profitable manner" and "right products". Indeed, Petrobras places SER in the economic language and the respect for legislation and regulation. The discursive constructions of SER by Petrobras seem to provide a basis for the reification of "business as usual" (Brown & Fraser, 2006, p. 107). There are challenges in the process of sustainable development, but Petrobras chooses to ignore the challenges and uses the reports for a self-interest purpose. Additionally, the reports also include a simplistic view of the corporate management to ensure the continuance of the economic strategies. To illustrate, Petrobras assumes its corporate strategy is a summary of "integrated growth", "profitability" and "social and environmental responsibility" (Petrobras, 2013a, p. 2). There is an intention for this simplification of business strategy into growth, profitability and social responsibility that protects the company and reinforces the traditional form of business (wealth accumulation). However, these elements have different ways to operate. Of course, extending the scope of SER would increase the need for some kind of underlying plans of the accounts.

Integrated growth ↑↓↔↕ ∞	Profitability ↑↓↔↕ ∞	Social and environmental responsibility ↑↓↔↕ ∞

Figure 19 – The complicated logic of the corporate strategy

For a large corporation as Petrobras, the simplification of business strategy will restrict itself to the lowest disclosures. Particularly, Petrobras presents a limited disclosure of SER term through a very neo-classical economic management that is a "vehicle for shareholder wealth maximisation" (Brown & Fraser, 2006, p. 107). As a result, this simplification implies a similar or comparable logic for growth, profitability and SER. This particular way to represent the constructions of SEA appears as a type of silent social account. Dey

(2003, p. 7) argues the scope and practicalities of silent social account represent "the cheapest, simplest and quickest possible approach". However, corporations prefer the short definition to avoid complications and to minimise the costs. However, the Petrobras' simplification includes conflicts (Figure 19). For example, the increasing of growth would not necessarily imply the increase of profitability or even social responsibility, as well as the reduction of social and environmental responsibility, does not necessarily mean less profit. These three signifiers operate distinctly. Spence (2007) argues that business uses ideologies of exploitation and destruction of the environment to construct and constrain societies for their self-interests. Another example of a narrow definition of SER is how Petrobras includes sustainability into its business.

The challenges of integrating sustainability into business are largely debated. The Brundtland Report (1987) invites organisations to participate in the process of developing with responsibility. Lehman (1999, p. 218) goes further and critiques the SEA studies do not clearly show the "external corporate effects". Archel et al. (2011) assert the CSR in organisations fails to approach effectively the social responsibility and acts to serve dominant groups. Yet, Petrobras present a narrow construction of sustainability and the challenges in its business.

> CHALLENGES OF THE CORPORATE SEGMENTS
>
> Human Resources (HR)
>
> To have an innovative and flexible human resource program, taking as a base the appreciation of the employees and their contribution to the sustainability of Petrobras.
>
> Social Responsibility (SR)
>
> To ensure the alignment and integration of social responsibility in the decision-making processes and in the management of the business.
>
> Health, Safety, Environment and Energy Efficiency (HSEE)
>
> To consolidate HSEE issues as key a principle of the Company's operations and permanent commitment from the workforce.
>
> Technology
>
> To keep the technological system recognized for providing technologies for the sustainable growth of the Company (Petrobras, 2013a, p. 2).

This is the discourse of the business case approach using the consulting category, which aligns the corporate strategies to the process of avoiding risks. This mechanism undermines the private logic of corporate social responsibility (Brown & Fraser, 2006). The discursive constructions of sustainability made by Petrobras are partial, limited and particular. The partiality is the understanding of human resources as physical assets that can be "innovative and flexible" to the business strategies which represents a

minimisation of humans as objects to business to create value in financial terms. This view is the principal characteristic of the business case. Chua (1986a, p. 583) uses "asocial" and "divorced" from reality to describe positivism as a representative paradigm for the business case. The dehumanisation is a good characteristic for the business case because less subjectivity helps business to operate without contestation. The subjectivity of humans is a natural characteristic, but organisations prefer to be in a place that they can dominate which is the language of expanding and improving economies, but it is not communicated that the principal beneficiaries of this development are corporations with the cost of people and environments. The limited constructions of Petrobras concern the type of contribution to "the sustainability of Petrobras" (Petrobras, 2013a, p. 2). This contribution seems to help the company to grow with the use of workforce and the maximisation of wealth for the key shareholder (Brown & Fraser, 2006). On account of "the decision making" is not shared with other stakeholders rather than the principal owner of the company, the Brazilian government controls Petrobras and makes decisions based on their interests. "The workforce" is assumed to be responsible for the issues of "Health, Safety, Environment and Energy Efficiency", but the workforce represents people who work for Petrobras. The use of "workforce" for employees and the separation of our company (shareholders) from "the workforce" demonstrate the "asocial" in the discourse of sustainability that is a limited representation. Lastly, the particular aspect of the "challenges of the corporate segments" suggests a connection between sustainable development and "sustainable growth". Milne et al. (2009) debate the discourse of sustainable development in a New Zealander company and found that the principal idea is the promotion of an economic aspect. Similarly, Petrobras emphasises a 'growth' responsible for sustainability in long-term of technologies that links to the simplification of "integrated growth", "profitability" and "social and environmental responsibility". Indeed, "growth", "sustainable growth" and "social and environmental responsibility" do not have equal meaning, but Petrobras constructs these signifiers in a particular view that respects its efforts to grow economically in a sustainable manner. However, it is rhetoric because the meaning of sustainability is narrowed to suit the corporate interests.

Petrobras demonstrates satisfaction in the specific "social and environmental standards". Mr. José Sergio Gabrielli de Azevedo was the Petrobras President and CEO in 2006. He emphasises the "standards" of the admission in Dow Jones Sustainability Index [DJSI] and Corporate Sustainability Index [ISE] that are a necessity to participate in the stock

exchange markets to negotiate shares from their definition of what is a sustainable company. This definition preferably assigns a superiority of those markets to overcome issues of sustainability. Of course, this superiority is an ideology that helps companies to achieve economic growth even in situations of unsustainable practices. For example, Petrobras is an energy company, and its principal products are diesel and gasoline fuels, which are considered the main contributors to the increase of global warming.

> Message from the CEO
>
> Two other achievements, the results of dedication to be aligned with international social and environmental responsibility standards, made the Company even prouder: the admission to the Dow Jones Sustainability Index (DJSI) and to São Paulo Stock Exchange (Bovespa) Corporate Sustainability Index (ISE). These indices are a parameter for investors to be able to analyze the economic, social and environmental issues. With them Petrobras is now recognized as one of the world's 13 oil and gas majors and one of the most sustainable Brazilian companies (Petrobras, 2006b, p. 3).

In his comments, Mr. Azevedo outlines the DJSI and ISE are "a parameter for investors" and considers Petrobras "one of the most sustainable Brazilian companies". A combination of the category of measuring and consulting is the type of discourse of Petrobras CEO. The business case approach is a classification for studies, but corporations use the same logic to present their discourse. This consulting business case has the discourse of win-win because it keeps the rhetorical practices of corporations. If sustainability for Petrobras is economic sustainability, than the social, environmental, cultural, political factors of a sustainable company are hidden to support company´s intentions. The Azevedo´s words represent Petrobras as a monologic discourse. The discourse of a company that aims to sustain its economic growth. ISE and DJSI are indexes of performance measurement that focuses on the best share negotiated in financial returns and questionaries to quantify and qualify commitments. To illustrate, BM&F Bovespa (2015) presents the questionnaire, which questions are to assure particular conditions about the commitment to environmental, economic, corporate governance, climate changes, the nature of the product and social dimensions. However, these dimensions are linked to GRI guidelines that are a narrow perspective to define the sustainable companies. Moneva et al. (2006, p. 135) argue there are problems in defining sustainable development by the lenses of GRI because this guideline reduces sustainability in dimensions and loses the "the big picture". Additionally, Moneva et al. (2006, p. 135) contend the GRI's model shifts the traditional accounting regarding measurements to a "more sophisticated scheme" which prioritises the economic relationship between companies and stakeholders. Similarly, the DJSI index intends to

give a better financial return for shareholders when companies adhere to this in the New York Stock Exchange market. The language employed in both indices (DJSI and ISE) is the long-term return and the sustainable investment (see IIRC, 2014 and WBCSD, 2003 discussed in Chapter 3). The participation in both indices is an investment. This investment is a classic example of the wealth maximisation for shareholders (Brown & Fraser, 2006). It is the traditional business masked with voices of sustainability.

> Message from the CEO
>
> In its commitment to development of society, its investment in cultural, environmental, social and sports projects was significant, totaling(sic) more than R$ 591 million. This figure includes the transfer to the Fund for Childhood and Adolescence, in which around R$ 48 million will be invested during 2007 in projects to protect the child and adolescent in a social or personal risk situation (Petrobras, 2006b, p. 3).

This disclosure is the narrow language of measurement within the business case approach that tries to measure social, cultural and environmental phenomena. Mr. Azevedo presents the company's definition of the development of society and treats it as an investment. This single excerpt demonstrates the narrow view of its commitment and society seeing as investments. The cultural investment includes the Petrobras brand into people's mind when presenting a movie sponsored by Petrobras. The investments of Petrobras are the "enhancing reputation" illustrated in the list of benefits of sustainable development (WBCSD, 2003). Unfortunately, Mr. Azevedo considers culture, social and environment as means to conduct the attractiveness for Petrobras in paybacks. Brown and Fraser (2006, p. 104) discuss "significant financial payback" is a response to the interests of business consultants such as the WBCSD. In other words, social responsibility in the "development of society" restricts a narrow perspective of sustainability demonstrated in the "investment in cultural, environmental, social and sports projects". These projects are a reinforcement of the capital accumulation by using elements from society and environment to benefit the company.

Petrobras narrows the definition of social and environmental responsibility in different forms. The vision and mission include SER to signify particular interests for its strategies that simply reduces the language of the complex world of sustainability into a positive, uncomplicated and consulting discourse permeated through the prevalent business case approach. The company reinforces the wealth maximisation by, for example, placing profitability and integrated growth in the same degree, however, SER, profitability and growth have different logics. Petrobras assumes there are challenges to integrating social responsibility into the decision-making process. However, this integration minimises the

human characteristics to support the creation of value for the company that produces a maximisation of the voice of exploitation and a minimisation of the voice of the workforce, which benefits the business goal. In summary, Petrobras utilises strong meanings such as sustainability and social and environmental responsibility to mean a narrow signification of those meanings to fit a particular strategy, for example, expansion of its brand, economic growth and profitability. The next section presents the role of regulators in constructing Petrobras' disclosures.

6.1.2 Role of regulators

This section addresses the role of regulators to shape the disclosures of Petrobras. A constant in Petrobras' report is the emphasis on financial performance. It is a result of the participation in share markets. For instance, Petrobras highlights its negotiated shares on the São Paulo Stock Exchange [BM&F Bovespa] and the New York Stock Exchange [NYSE]. Petrobras (2009a, p. 33) affirms the investors are an important public that can influence "company's activities, business, and reputation". Then, Petrobras describes the importance to be listed on the DJSI:

> We have also been listed on the Dow Jones Sustainability Index (DJSI), the world's most important sustainability index and used as an analysis parameter by socially and environmentally responsible investors, since 2006. With the renewal, in 2009, we consolidated ourselves as one of the 19 most sustainable global oil and gas companies and as one of the seven most sustainable Brazilian companies (Petrobras, 2009a, p. 34).

The particular interest of economic growth is the core in the business case approach that gives emphasis to measurement of SEA disclosures assuming them as a countable or comparable disclosure. However, social and environmental phenomena have certain complexities impossible to condense into numbers. The principal goal of Petrobras (2009a, p. 34) is "a better global economic growth perspective":

> In 2009, it was observed a continuous increase in stock market liquidity and a better global economic growth perspective, resulting in higher prices, and also by the return of foreign investments to developing countries such as Brazil. All of this [sic]allowed for a strong appreciation of the Stock Exchange and Mercantile & Futures Exchange (BM&F Bovespa). The market received well Petrobras´ proposal to increase its investments in [sic] the beginning of the year, ratifying the high potential of its project portfolio (Petrobras, 2009a, p. 34).

These sentences contain the constant theme of growth, investors and sustainable indices in Petrobras' discourse. The measuring category of business case (Chapter 3) supports the "global economic growth perspective" of Petrobras' disclosures, but the necessity of sustainable practices are silenced in an emerging economy such as Brazil. In this, the role of regulators makes Petrobras's disclosures a supplier to best serve of economic effects.

> At Bovespa, our shares are included in the Bovespa (IBovespa), Brazil (IBrX), and Brazil 50 (IBrX50) indexes. In the New York Stock Exchange, our American Depositary Receipts (ADR's) are included in NYSE International 100 Index and of the NYSE World Leaders Index. Petrobras, via Petrobras Energía Participaciones SA , is also listed on the NYSE Energy Index (Petrobras, 2009a, p. 34).

The incentive for indices and investments share the approach of business case because the corporate main goal links to measure sustainability disclosures that legitimises the participation of stock markets in the constructs of SEA of Petrobras. In 2006, the CEO seemed very proud to classify themselves as a sustainable company:

> Two other achievements, the results of dedication to be aligned with international social and environmental responsibility standards, made the Company even prouder: the admission to the Dow Jones Sustainability Index (DJSI) and to São Paulo Stock Exchange (Bovespa) Corporate Sustainability Index (ISE). These indices are a parameter for investors to be able to analyze the economic, social and environmental issues. With them Petrobras is now recognized as one of the world's 13 oil and gas majors and one of the most sustainable Brazilian companies (Petrobras, 2006b, p. 3).

The sustainability and annual reports that present the mission "showing social and environmental responsibility" (Petrobras, 2007a; 2012a) are likely to fall a meaningless concept of the social responsibility in societies. This means that the goal of Petrobras is to be a leader in share negotiation, being a sustainable company, and increasing its investments (Petrobras, 2009a; 2006b). Yet, the social and environmental responsibility and sustainability' definitions put aside the central point to replace a construction of economic performance. Discussed previously, the narrow definition of SER aims to benefit Petrobras in its goals, including being a leader in the oil industry. Thus, the principal goal of the Petrobras' policy in being involved in the NYSE and BM&F Bovespa's indices is to undertake a constant development of its investments, capital and growth. Brown and Fraser (2006, p. 114) contend "the dominance of capital-oriented values" (as the Petrobras 'goals) use SEA as "victim" of their particular intentions. A business case approach is the model of Petrobras' disclosures. The future of sustainability in the disclosures of Petrobras is the expansion of its investments, the average return of varying indexes. A measurable performance would show the company's intentions. "Ladies and gentlemen, our 2013 net income of R$ 23.6 billion was up 11% on 2012" (Petrobras, 2013a, p. 5). Brown and Fraser (2006, p. 114) argue the future of SEA in the business case approach is "the focus on 'technical activities", for example, "performance measures". These measurements are highlighted in Petrobras' report:

> The environmental, social, and economic performances of more than 317 companies in 58 sectors the world over were assessed. We received the highest score in the "Transparency", "Management System and Environmental Policy," and "Human Resource Development" criteria, and stood out in issues concerning "Renewable Energy," "Social Impact on Communities," and "Biodiversity," among others (Petrobras, 2009a, p. 34).

However, there are technical issues concerning the risks of the company's activities:

> We are subject to numerous environmental, health and safety regulations and industry standards that are becoming more stringent and may result in increased capital and operating expenditures and decreased production.
>
> Our activities are subject to a wide variety of federal, state and local laws, regulations and permit requirements relating to the protection of human health, safety and the environment, both in Brazil and in other jurisdictions in which we operate, as well as to evolving industry standards and best practices. Particularly in Brazil, our oil and gas business is subject to extensive regulation by several governmental agencies, including the ANP, ANEEL, Agência Nacional de Transportes Aquaviários (Brazilian Water Transportation Agency), or ANTAQ and Agência Nacional de Transportes Terrestres (Brazilian Land Transportation Agency), or ANTT. Failure to observe or comply with these laws and regulations could result in penalties that could adversely affect our operations. In Brazil, for example, we could be exposed to administrative and criminal sanctions, including warnings, fines and closure orders for non-compliance with these environmental, health and safety regulations, which, among other things, limit or prohibit emissions or spills of toxic substances produced in connection with our operations. Waste disposal and emissions regulations may also require us to clean up or retrofit our facilities at substantial cost and could result in substantial liabilities. The Instituto Brasileiro do Meio Ambiente e dos Recursos Naturais Renováveis (Brazilian Institute of the Environment and Renewable Natural Resources, or IBAMA) and the ANP routinely inspect our facilities, and may impose fines, restrictions on operations, or other sanctions in connection with its inspections, including unexpected, temporary shutdowns and delays resulting in decreased production. In addition, we are subject to environmental laws that require us to incur significant costs to cover damage that a project may cause to the environment. These additional costs may have a negative impact on the profitability of the projects we intend to implement or may make such projects economically unfeasible (Petrobras, 2013b, p. 16).

The regulation of SEA of Petrobras is primarily voluntary when Petrobras participates in several indices. It is clear the positive language when Petrobras aims a financial payback. Brown and Fraser (2006, p. 114) assert the regulation in the business case supports a "voluntarist approach" because of the eventual need of imposed cost from regulators. However, SEA needs to go further the utilitarian aspects of engaging, for example, the external impact of the 'biodiversity' and 'transparency' (Lehman, 1999). The business study, for example, demonstrates its principal objectives in regulation are to hide the negative effects such as the expressions "shutdowns", "fines", "criminal sanctions" that may result in financial losses.

> As environmental, health and safety regulations become more stringent with evolving industry standards, and as new laws and regulations relating to climate change, including carbon controls, become applicable to us, it is probable that our capital expenditures and investments for compliance with such laws and regulations and industry standards will increase substantially in the future. In addition, if compliance with such laws, regulations and industry standards results in significant unplanned shutdowns, this may have a material adverse effect on our production. We also cannot guarantee that we will be able to maintain or renew our licenses and permits if they are revoked or if the applicable environmental authorities oppose or delay their issuance or renewal. Increased expenditures to comply with environmental, health and safety regulations to mitigate the environmental impact of our operations or to restore the biological and geological characteristics of the areas in which we operate may result in reductions in other strategic investments. Any substantial increase in expenditures for compliance with environmental, health or safety regulations or reduction in strategic investments and significant decreases in our production from unplanned shutdowns may have a material adverse effect on our results of operations or financial condition (Petrobras, 2013b, p. 16).

The environmental, health and safety regulators are deemed as unnecessary and Petrobras as a 'victim'. The company relies on the limits of regulators to demonstrate a defensive language "we also cannot guarantee", "this may have a material adverse", "the areas in which we operate may result in reductions". Petrobras avoids exposing negative information in regulation. To illustrate, the labour claims are hidden in the Petrobras' reports "labor claims include a large number of individuals claim and, therefore, are not presented" (Petrobras, 2013b, p. F-75). Lehman (1999, p. 218) suggests that SEA would debate the external corporate effects. However, Petrobras using the business case approach prefers to hide behind rhetorical discourse when the impact does not favour the corporate strategies.

Another regulator for Petrobras reporting is the Global Reporting Initiative [GRI]. The guidelines provide an evaluation of the principles of sustainable development.

> PARAMETERS
>
> We have prepared the 2013 Sustainability Report in accordance with guidelines issued by Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), which is world leader for these types of parameters. We have used the latest version of these guidelines (GRI-G4), with its comprehensive option for defining content. We have also responded to the GRI's oil and gas sector supplement (OGSS) indicators (Petrobras, 2013a, p. 6).
>
> Moreover, the GRI awarded Petrobras' 2006 Social and Environmental Report an A+ seal, the highest quality rating for reports evaluated by that institution. The report was also classified as "outstanding", for the second year running, by the UN Global Compact (Petrobras, 2007a, p. 77).

However, a standard procedure to measure sustainable development/SEA is a fallacy. Moneva et al. (2006, p. 127) assert the first problem of GRI is the dearth of a clear definition of sustainable development. The reports using GRI might fail to support a meaning of SD that relies on wellbeing, the reduction of poverty and the environmental protection presented in the Brundtland Report (1987) and might culminate in the corporate wealth maximisation. Moneva et al. (2006, p. 133) explain GRI is an appropriation and simplification of SD, and these reports have "no external verification". Business and GRI are a perfect counterpart for a capital-oriented goal that measures its performances but gives little space for contestation (Boyce, 2000).

The commitment to the UN Global Compact [UNGC] rests in the disclosures of Petrobras. The UNGC has ten principles divided into human rights, labour, environment and anti-corruption (UN, 2015a).

> A signatory of the United Nations Global Compact, the Company is involved in the dissemination of the document's ten principles, which involves topics such as human rights, workplace conditions, the environment and combat of corruption. In 2005, Petrobras joined the UN task force and the

> European Foundation for Management Development, which develop the bases [sic] for the formation of business leaders committed to the vision that social and environmental responsibility is an integral part of business. It was the first oil and energy company and the only Latin American participant among the 21 members of the group (Petrobras, 2005a, p. 66).
>
> Petrobras has broadened its commitment to the reduction of social inequality, environmental conservation and ecological efficiency. The first Latin American company to join the UN Global Compact, in 2003, Petrobras made further advances in its alignment with the ten principles of the compact — which address issues such as human rights, working conditions, the environment and fighting corruption — when in 2006 it joined the Council of the Global Compact and assumed the vice-presidency of the Brazilian arm (Petrobras, 2006a, p. 57).
>
> Seeking always to align its activities and initiatives with the ten principles of the UN Global Compact, Petrobras has developed numerous projects that clearly demonstrate its commitment to reducing social inequality and minimizing the environmental impact of its activities (Petrobras, 2007a, p. 76).

Petrobras fails to meet the four areas of the UNGC when issues are not completely addressed which is the case of Petrobras. The company does not engage in human rights and labour, for example, when Petrobras prefers to not disclosure the issues of labour claims (Petrobras, 2013b, p. F-75) or when it dehumanises the fatalities by providing numerical/statistical information (Petrobras, 2005a, p. 77; 2006a, p. 66; 2007a, p. 80; 2012a, p. page cover). The presentation of fatalities by Petrobras demonstrates the measuring and consulting business case approach discussed in Chapter 3 that aims to hide information of deaths and to support the economic results. Brown and Fraser (2006) contend the business case focuses on positive image of corporations that undermines cynical behaviours.

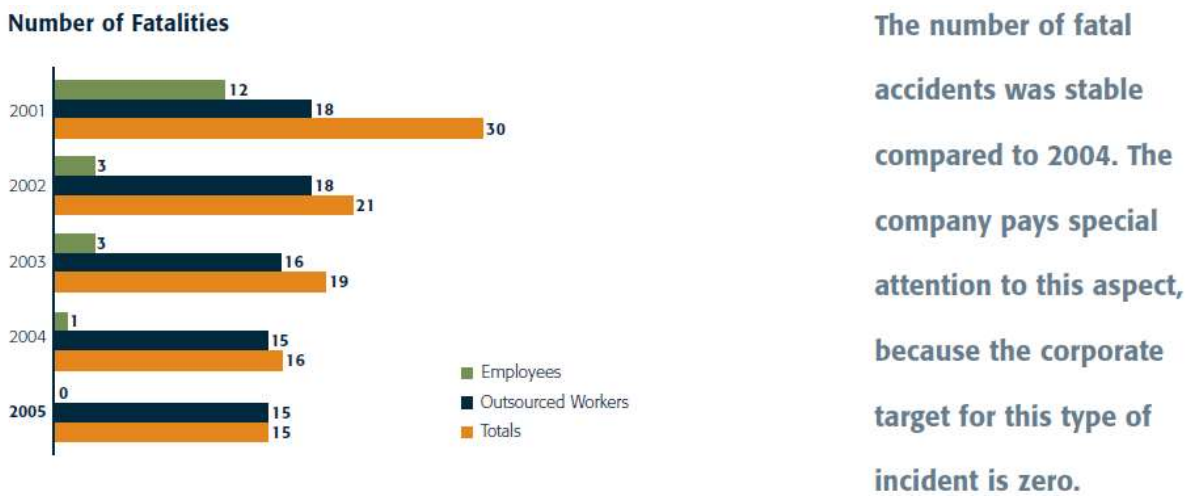

Figure 20 – Fatalities in 2005. Petrobras (2005a, p. 77)

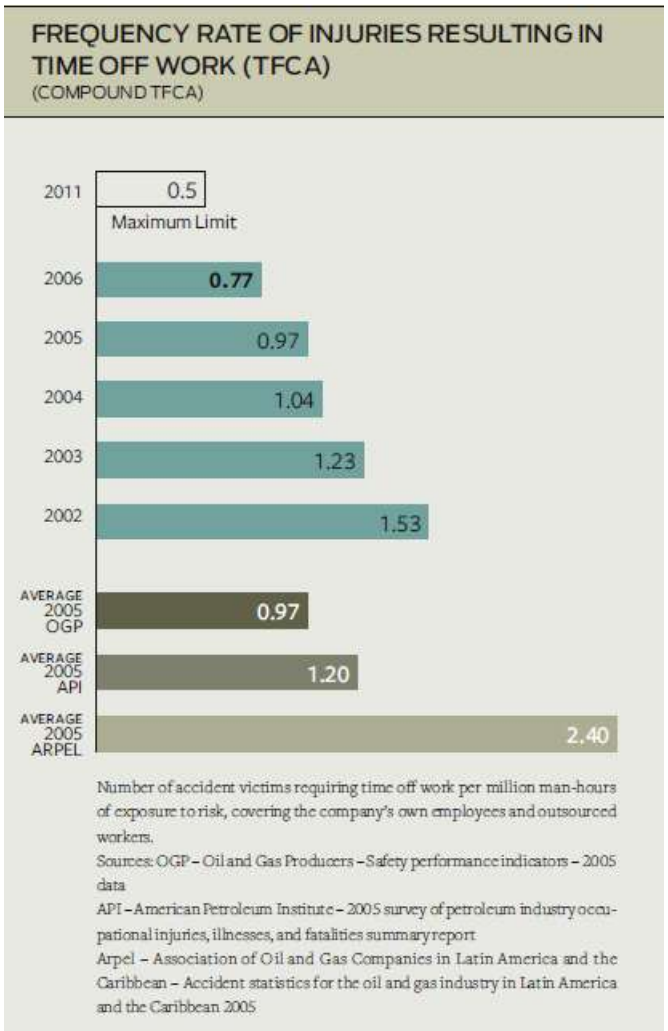

Figure 21 – Fatalities in 2006. Petrobras (2006a, p. 66)

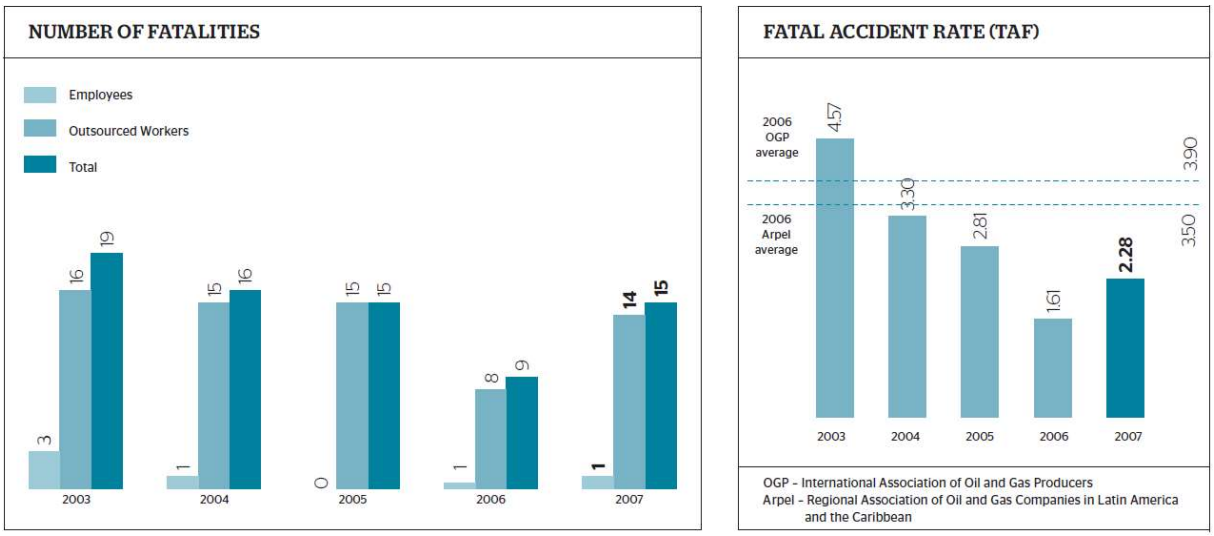

Figure 22 – Fatalities in 2007. Petrobras (2007a, p. 80)

STATISTICS					
INDICATOR	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY					
Fatalities (employees and outsourcers)	18	7	10	16	13
Fatal Accident Rate (fatalities per 100 million man-hours of risk exposure – employees and outsources)	2.4	0.81	1.08	1.66	1.31
Percentage time lost (employees only)	2.31	2.36	2.38	2.33	2.23

Figure 23 – Fatalities in 2008-2012. Petrobras (2012a, p. page cover)

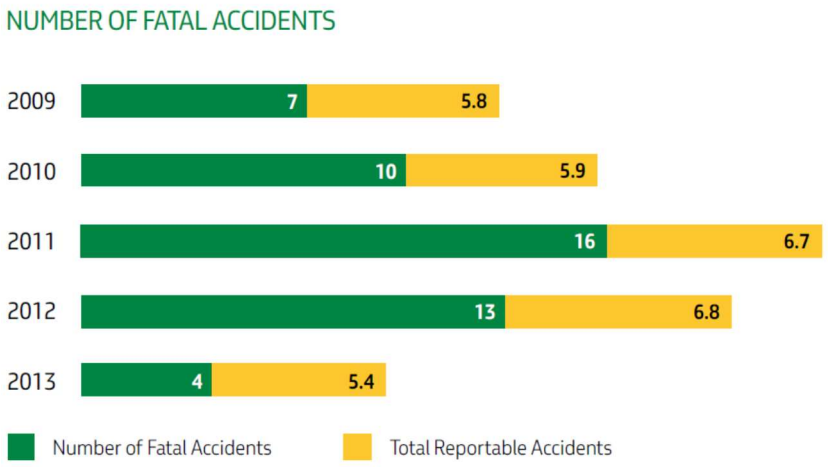

Figure 24 – Fatalities in 2009-2013. Source (Petrobras, 2013a, p. 44)

The environment is not the priority of Petrobras when their principal products cause damage to the air, biodiversity and the human health. Further, the Petrobras' scandal of corruption (the Operation Car Wash) gradually disappears the veracity of the statements of an anti-corruption policy (MPF, 2015). Petrobras reifies the positivist perspective of SEA while assuming its actions "asocial" (Chua, 1986a, p. 583), a "utilitarian mode" (Lehman, 1999, p. 218) and a "vehicle" for wealth expansion (Brown & Fraser, 2006a, p. 107).

There are silences of labour and environmental government bodies. Petrobras respects the regulation of the workforce and the environment but prefers to hide the negative information. Petrobras listed the principal regulators, including ANP, ANEEL, ANTAQ, ANTT and IBAMA (Petrobras, 2013b, p. 16). However, Cetesb (the São Paulo State environmental regulator), the trades union and ministries of labour are excluded from this list. Furthermore, Cetesb blamed Petrobras for the "operational failure" in huge oil spills in the coastal area of São Paulo State in 2012 (Dow Jones Global News, 2013). Petrobras was suspended to restart the operation on the platform P-65 until worker safety, and health risks were resolved (Reuters, 2011).

When the subject affects negatively the financial targets, the disclosures of Petrobras are reduced. "We are subject to environmental laws . . . may have a negative impact on the profitability" (Petrobras, 2013b, p. 16). However, there is little information of the environmental fines and labour claims. Brown and Fraser (2006, p. 110) assert business case leads to a mystification of the SEA issues rather than a liberation. Particularly, Petrobras accentuates the environmental actions when the result is beneficial economically.

> Message from the CEO
>
> Environmental actions were also taken in a cascade effect. The vast list starts with the development of cleaner fuels, namely Podium diesel, which demonstrates the Company's commitment to invest in preserving the environment The International Seminar on Carbon Capture and Climate Change in the Company's head office was a major event that attracted companies and the scientific community from 17 countries in search of solutions to reduce to a minimum the atmospheric greenhouse gas emissions, such as geological carbon sequestration, for example (Petrobras, 2006b, p. 4-5).

What Petrobras aims is to stress its efforts in a commitment to global warming, but, the production of "podium diesel" continues to pollute the atmosphere. It is an example of unsustainable practices (UN, 1992). Since the Rio92, Brazilians have discussed the problem of fossil fuels. However, most corporations are still using non-renewable energies such as diesel, gasoline and other petroleum-derived products because the objective of the majority of corporations in Brazil is to maximise the profit. Spence (2007, p. 876) outlines the "ideological consent" of organisations to "exploit labour and destroy the environment" is hardly considered a success.

In conclusion, the role of stock markets, especially, BM&F Bovespa and NYSE constitutes the type of mostly disclosures that are predominantly a capital language of the business. When Petrobras employs economic performance, measurements, guidelines, principles, investment and numerical aspects to explain the social and environmental disclosures, the company places the definition of SEA in an importance of a materialist function. In this degree, this function encourages the capitalist system and draws a discourse of wealth maximisation (Brown, 2000; Brown & Fraser, 2006; Spence, 2007; O'Dwyer, 2003). The next section presents the measurable attributes of the Petrobras' constructions.

6.1.3 The measurable

This section discusses the social logics of measurement in the corporate language. Essentially, the employed social logics of Glynos and Howarth (2007) is an understanding of the regimes and practices articulated by Petrobras, particularly, the practices of

measurement of SEA disclosures. The measurement in accounting is based primarily on communicating the "economic events" which bear on internal and external events of an entity that affect the economic activities (Ijiri, 1967, p. 3). The intrinsic philosophical assumption of this measurement focuses on phenomena that affect the economic *status* of an organization which relies on an objective reality. Although, social, environmental and political practices are difficult phenomena to define. Accounting measurement aims to represent reality by means of "numbers and relations among numbers" (Ijiri, 1967, p. 19). However, this conceived reality can only represent phenomena possible to quantify. To do this is necessary to reckon an objectivity in accounting measurement.

Objectivity in accounting is a myth (Morgan, 1988). However, accounting measurement defines a certain artificial objectivity. "Objectivity refers to external reality independent of the persons who perceive it" (Ijiri, 1967, p. 134). The mystification of objectivity in accounting depends on beliefs and judgments. To exemplify this Ijiri (1967, p. 134) affirms "the precise nature of the separate existence of external reality is not clear, especially as it relates to accounting". In other words, the objectivity in accounting is a matter of persuasive language and actors that construct convenient assumptions to shape partial ways of seeing measurement in corporate practices.

To define a phenomenon that would be an object of the system of measurement in accounting is necessary to clearly understand it. "We cannot represent by number phenomena which we do not know" (Ijiri, 1967, p. 29). In my point of view, a fully comprehension of a phenomenon by a single person is impossible because of the limitation of human nature. Related to this limitation is the theoretical foundation of this thesis on partial, incomplete and fragmented representations of societies through discourses. In this way, measurement in accounting has the inadequacy of a broader interpretation of reality because of its restricted focus on economic events and objective practices. To propose a reflection of this, I suggest the measurable social logics of SEA disclosures hold this inadequacy, particularly, the boundaries of measurement that confines social, environmental, cultural, ethical and political aspects of Petrobras' disclosures into an ideological and hegemonic logic.

Petrobras insists in limiting its definition of SEA/SER/sustainability in terms of what is measurable such as, not limited to, the financial, environmental and social indicators (the contested TBL reporting – Moneva et al., 2006). Also, the speech of the CEO emphasises

the economics. "We posted R$ 21.2 billion net profit in 2012. This result was 36% lower than 2011" (Petrobras, 2012a, p. 2). Petrobras reduces the sponsorships into a type of investments on culture, social, environment and sports. Also, the employee satisfaction and the number of fatalities, the "tolerable" limit of oil spills and the anti-corruption measures are examples of the measurable attributes of SEA.

The contested triple bottom line [TBL] reporting relies on the simplification of the complexities of the environment, social and economics (Moneva et al., 2006). Petrobras divides its indicators into three levels "environment", "occupational health and safety" and "contributions to society" (Petrobras, 2012a, p. cover page). In the environmental level, Petrobras persists for a reductionism of the environment portraying environmental aspects into numbers. The "big picture" is lost when using the TBL approach (Moneva et al., 2006).

STATISTICS					
INDICATOR	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
ENVIRONMENT					
Oil and oil product spillages (m^3)	436	254	668	234	387
Energy consumption (terajoules – TJ)	604,333	604,070	716,673	682,827	936,199
Greenhouse gas emissions (millions of tons of CO_2 equivalent)	57.6	57.8	61.1	56.2	67.4
Carbon dioxide emissions – CO_2 (millions of tons)	54	52	57	52	63
Methane emissions – CH_4 (thousands of tons)	188	235	196	161	174
Nitrous oxide emissions – N_2O (tons)	1,215	1,241	1,360	1,753	1,945
Atmospheric emissions – NOx (thousands of tons)	244.50	222.04	227.75	222.21	251.5
Atmospheric emissions – SOx (thousands of tons)	141.79	135.39	133.73	120.64	116.3
Other atmospheric emissions – particulate matter (thousands of tons)	16.71	19.30	17.51	17.48	18.2
Freshwater withdrawal (millions of m^3)	195.2	176.0	187.3	190.9	193.4
Effluent discharge (millions of m^3)	181	197	173	188	218
OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY					
Fatalities (employees and outsourcers)	18	7	10	16	13
Fatal Accident Rate (fatalities per 100 million man-hours of risk exposure – employees and outsources)	2.4	0.81	1.08	1.66	1.31
Percentage time lost (employees only)	2.31	2.36	2.38	2.33	2.23
CONTRIBUTIONS TO SOCIETY					
Investments in social projects (R$ million)	225	174	199	207	201
Investment in cultural projects (R$ million)	207	155	170	182	189
Investments in environmental projects (R$ million)	54	94	258	172	101
Investments in sports projects (R$ million)	69	42	81	80	61

CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL DATA	2010	2011	2012
Sales revenues (R$ million)	211,842	244,176	281,379
Profit before financial result, equity earnings and taxes (R$ million)	46,394	45,403	32,397
Earnings per share (R$)	3.57	2.55	1.62
Net Income (R$ million)	35,189	33,110	20,959
EBITDA (R$ million)	59,391	61,968	53,242
Net indebtedness (R$ million)	61,007	103,022	147,817
Investments (R$ million)	76,411	72,546	84,137
Gross Margin	36%	32%	25%
Operating margin	22%	19%	12%
Net margin	17%	14%	8%

Figure 25 – The measure of the Performance Schedule. Source: Petrobras (2012a, p. cover page)

The prior Figure 25 aims to simplify the social responsibility indicators. This is the business case approach employing the measuring category that narrows the SEA disclosures into a complicated measurement. The attempt to measure SEA disclosures suggests suppression of contradictions through small representations for seeing sustainability. The reporting of the environmental, social and economic dimensions (named TBL) is a limited view of the SEA disclosures that focuses on the impact in the bottom-line. To add this, Moneva et al. (2006, p. 133) argue the principal problem of the TBL reporting is the reductionism of "an integrated view" of sustainable development. To illustrate the losing picture, Petrobras uses a measurable language to explain environmental indicators:

Sulfur Oxide - SOx Emissions

(in tons)

Emissions consolidated by Sigea; methodological improvements led to a review of the previously published values for the 2002-2004 period
As of 2003, the data includes the emissions from the Gas and energy area, of the assets of Petrobras Energia S.A. located in Brazil, Argentina, Bolivia, Peru and Venezuela and the ships from Petrobras'own fleet and vessels chartered for international trips

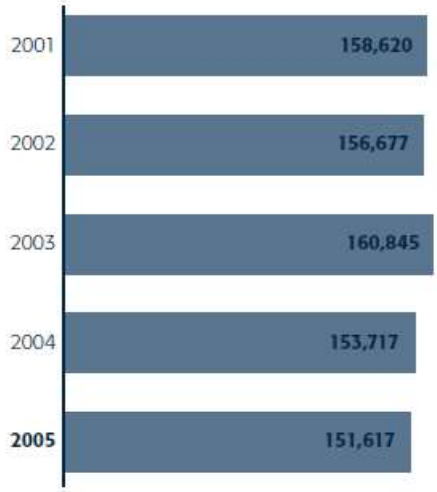

Figure 26 – Sulphur Oxide (Petrobras, 2005a, p. 78)

The methodology to measure sulphur oxide concentrates on measurable aspects but not on the relevance, impacts or consequences of the SOx in health and the environment. Consequently, the minimisation of the environmental indicators into measurable or numerical explanation help the company to avoid contestation (Boyce, 2000) of, for example, the polluted activity of oil companies (UN, 1992).

In the occupational health and safety, Petrobras has an indifferent speech to deal with deaths. The company presents the number of fatalities (Figure 24) and fatal accident rates (Figure 22) in particular attention that does few to explain the deaths.

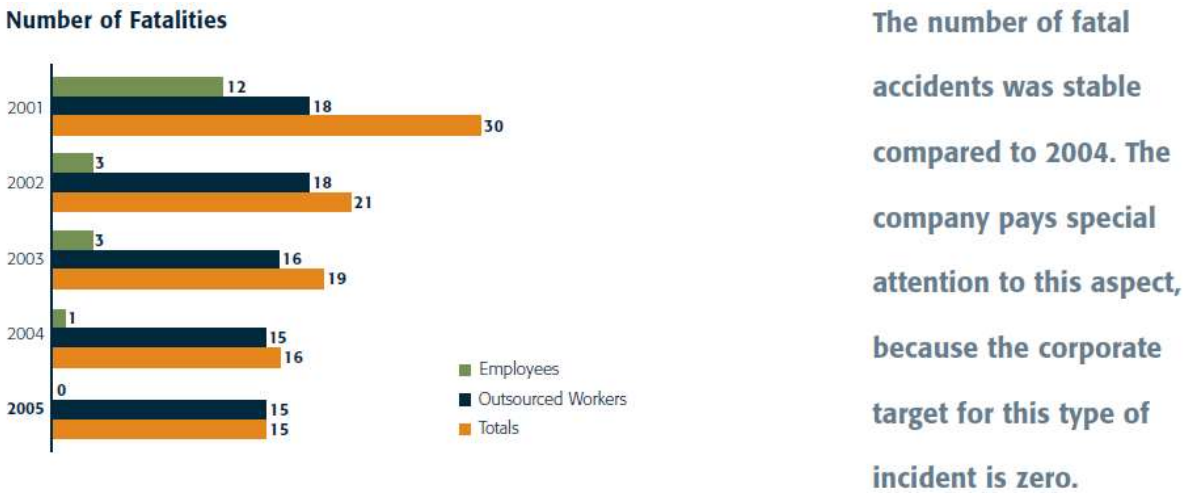

Figure 27 – Number of fatalities (Petrobras, 2005a, p. 77)

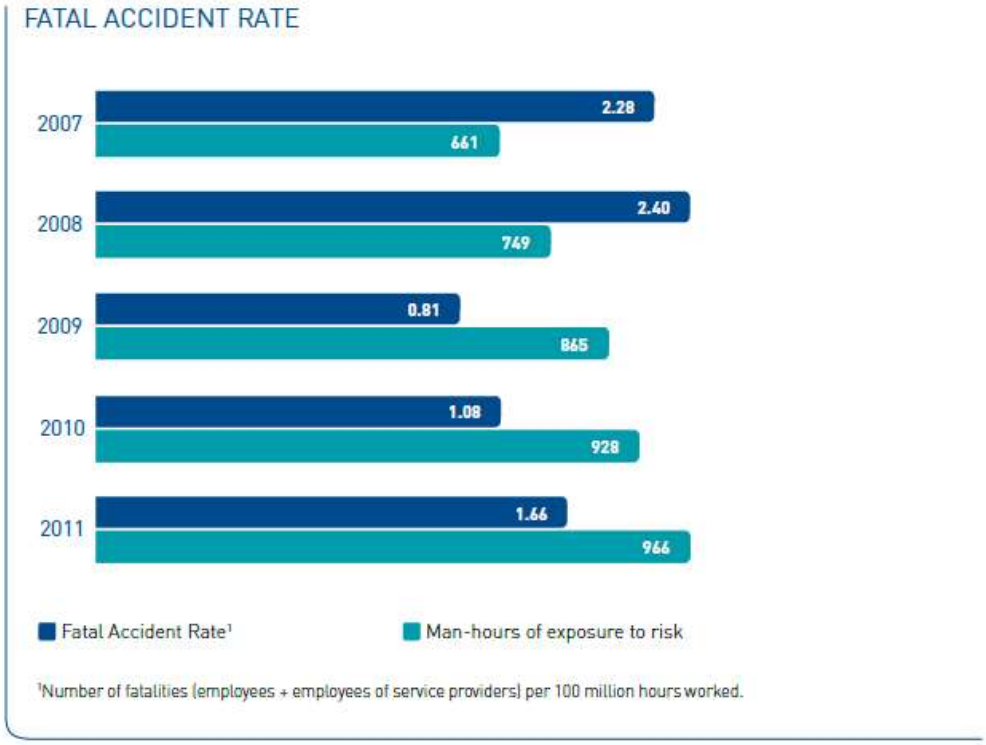

Figure 28 – Fatal accident rate. Source: Petrobras (2011a, p. 73)

The "fatal accident rate" and "man-hours of exposure" support a less confrontational way and more technical about the tragedies behind. Brown and Fraser (2006, p. 114) outline the business case aims to develop the technical measurements. Fatalities are reduced to fit the purpose of the Petrobras' goals. There is a lack of contestability in the discourse of Petrobras (Boyce, 2000).

Thirdly, the indicators of contributions to society minimise the societal needs to the company´s goals for investments. Sponsorships are a useful managerial tool to conduct a

pervasive discourse of engagements, but this discourse hides the picture of a company using sponsorships to increase investment and to promote its brand.

Petrobras uses sponsorships to increase its portfolio investment and employs a description of its investments regarding a financial prospection. The numerical description hides the complexities of the world and, as this result; Petrobras demonstrates its narrow view of sponsorships in financial terms.

> Message from the CEO
>
> In its commitment to development of society, its investment in cultural, environmental, social and sports projects was significant, totaling more than R$ 591 million. This figure includes the transfer to the Fund for Childhood and Adolescence, in which around R$ 48 million will be invested during 2007 in projects to protect the child and adolescent in a social or personal risk situation. In 2006 alone, 742 projects were sponsored through the Petrobras Zero Hunger Program, with investments of more than R$ 176 million. Since 2003, when the program was created, 2,058 projects and 18,035 partnerships were based on multi-institutional aspects and the leading social role of citizens, always along the lines of education and professional eligibility of the young and adults, job and income generation, and guarantee of the rights of the child and adolescent (Petrobras, 2006b, p. 3).
>
> Environmental Projects
>
> A number of projects accepted as part of the first public selection of the Petrobras Environmental Program in 2003 are being developed in biomes such as the Amazon region, the Caatinga and Cerrado areas, the Atlantic Forest and the Pantanal. Being run in partnership with NGOs, universities and labor organizations, the projects are involved in the preservation of hydrographic basins, ecosystems and landscapes, encompassing approximately 5 thousand species of Brazilian fauna and flora. In the more than 250 municipalities that were benefited, taken together the projects influence over 900 thousand hectares. About 3 million people were directly helped while another 20 million received indirect assistance. The first selection of Petrobras Environmental Program projects involved an investment of some R$ 40 million over the first two years they were being run, with approximately 5 thousand people working to conserve water resources (Petrobras, 2005a, p. 68).

Furthermore, Petrobras reduces the extent of employee satisfaction:

> Corporate Environment
>
> In 2008, the survey registered a three percentage point decline in the ISE (Index of Employee Satisfaction) at the parent company, from 69% to 66%. Meanwhile, the NCE (Employee Commitment Level) registered a four percentage point drop, from 77% to 73%. The survey was carried out over the period December 2008 to January 2009, in a scenario of world economic uncertainty and, at Petrobras, in a context of stricter capital discipline (Petrobras, 2008a, p. 36).

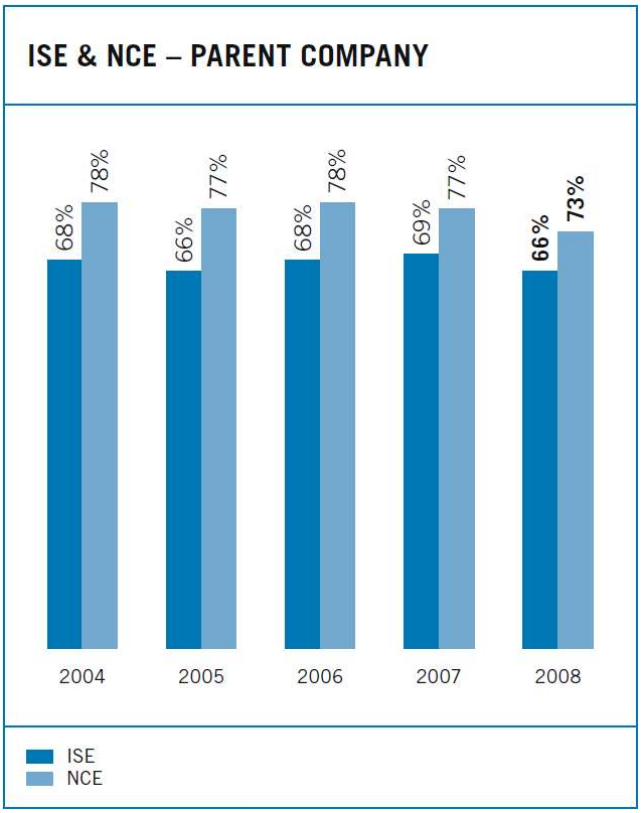

Figure 29 – The measure of employee satisfaction. Source: Petrobras (2008a, p. 36)

It is hard to believe that this survey measures employee satisfaction when Petrobras considers the reduction of the index in 2007-2008 for only the financial factor. The status of claims barely explains the entire context of those demands.

> In 2011, Petrobras General Ombudsman's Office recorded 31 cases relating to human rights. Thirteen cases were investigated and wrapped up. The others were dropped on account of insufficient evidence to start the due handling. Cross-cutting issues related to human rights are addressed in training courses Petrobras University offers to the employees.
>
> In 2011, lectures were held for managers, supervisors and new hires in order to reinforce the topics and curb practices that hinder the company. Human rights have been addressed as a crosscutting topic in Social Responsibility courses - 1,623 participations and 25,774 man hours of training (MHT) – and in the courses on Diversity and Inclusion of African Descents (19 participations and 34 MHTs) (Petrobras, 2011a, p. 19).

STATUS OF THE CLAIMS	
Concluded	8,062
Pending	949
Total	**9,011**

MEANS OF CONTACT	
Form on the Ombudsman's Office website	3,585
E-mail	3,012
Toll-free hotline (0800)	862
Phone	682
In person	590
Denunciation Channel	186
Boxes	54
Letter/fax	40
Total	**9,011**

Figure 30 – Claims. Source: (Petrobras, 2011a, p. 18)

Petrobras presents the human rights topics in a countable data that represents a less comprehensive mean to engage in the problems related to, for example, diversity and racism.

Likewise, Petrobras has plans to develop renewable energies, but its motivations are financial:

> Renewable energy
>
> The main projects under development for the utilization of renewable energy sources are aimed at production of biodiesel and the generation of electric energy through wind power. To this end, the Strategic Plan established targets of 481 thousand m3/year of biodiesel and 169 MW of electric energy through renewable sources to be available by 2010.
>
> Investments of some US$ 335 million are foreseen over this period for the development of renewable energy businesses. An experimental plant with capacity to produce 4,000 tons/year, to provide technological support for the production of biodiesel, was built in Guamaré (RN); the biodiesel it produces makes use of vegetable oil deriving mainly from castor beans (Petrobras, 2005a, p. 46).

The Rio92 and Rio+20 (hosted by Brazil) incentive the developing of renewable energies. Societies need to re-think the use of renewable energies to decrease pollutions and unhealthy conditions. In this way, organisations would incorporate these thoughts. However, what Petrobras does is to subvert societal needs of clean fuels to support its particular interests. To illustrate, Petrobras disregards the health impact of castor beans (Queensland, 2014).

Another example of the simplification and the business case (Brown & Fraser, 2006) of Petrobras is the measurable limits of oil spills:

> Petrobras maintains its commitment to excellence in Social and Environmental Responsibility. Despite the significant expansion of its operations in recent years, the volume of oil and oil product spillages into the environment, at 436 m^3 in 2008, was only slightly greater than that recorded in 2007 (386 m^3). This volume is well below the company's tolerable limit, of 694 m^3. Meanwhile, the Frequency Rate of Injuries Involving Time Off Work, covering the company's own employees and those of its contractors, declined from 0.76, in 2007, to 0.59, in 2008 " (Petrobras, 2008a, p. 16).

There are many questions surrounding the "tolerable limit". The extraction of the measurable aspects of oil spills hides, for example, overall damage, affected areas, fauna and flora and population impact. Instead of that, Petrobras merely presents that the limit of oil spillage was above 7.9% without following explanation of the actual consequences of those numbers represented. In 2010, Petrobras faced most spillage in its history (2005-2013). However, disclosures, descriptions and numbers are not in keeping with reality because the presentation of numbers is confusing, incomplete and dominated by a logic that will benefit Petrobras but not society. Questions on the oil spillage need to concentrate on facts and consequences. From this, in 2009 Petrobras only presents an accident of oil spillage and ignores the consequences of the accident:

> In 2009, we had an oil spill at the Landulpho Alves Refinery (Rlam) which reached some mangrove swamp areas near the refinery. The use of oil contention dikes prevented other mangrove areas from being reached, but to assess the extent of the impact, the site will be monitored for a year. In spite of the efforts made to capture and recover birds that were contaminated by oil, it was not possible to rescue 114 animals. Intense work was done on cleaning beaches, supervised by the environmental agency, and compensation was offered to affected fishermen (Petrobras, 2009a, p. 135).

The analysis along ten years of the Petrobras' reports demonstrates that the consequences of the accident of oil spill in Landulpho Alves Refinery that affected mangrove areas, birds and animals were simply ignored in the following years. This excerpt is atypical and partial as the rest of the disclosures of accidents in the Petrobras' reports. A year after this accident, still there is no supporting information. "[B]ut to assess the extent of the impact, the site will be monitored for a year" (Petrobras, 2009a, p. 135). It is an example that Petrobras does not aspire to expose the consequences of Rlam's accident. Environmentally, the restoration of the "mangrove[s]" may take more time than a year, yet Petrobras either ignored or avoided providing additional information. Also, this exposes the brutal activity of oil exploitation of the environment and local community. In fact, the exposed picture of the destruction of oil activities does not help the main objectives of international expansion and the assistance from the Brazilian government.

Therefore, a measurable information is insufficient and convenient. One more example of the measurable aspect of SEA in the anti-corruption policy:

> ANTI-CORRUPTION MEASURES
>
> The Petrobras System refuses any practice that involves corruption and bribery, and uses management instruments such as the Competition Behavior and Good Practice codes, in addition to following the Code of Conduct of the High Federal Administration, the application of which is inspected by the Presidency of the Republic's Ethics Commission. Corporate Security areas manage and coordinate the application of a risk assessment methodology to evaluate security risks at the various business units. This practice helps identify vulnerabilities that may allow acts of corruption to take place, although no specific assessments are made concerning this topic (Petrobras, 2011a, p. 19).

To measure corruption sounds a hard task due to the difficult of knowing exactly how corruption affects societies. Therefore, corruption is a phenomenon with multiple impacts, but Petrobras insists to measure. Hence, this measurement fails to provide an in-depth understanding. The corruption measures were not enough to avoid the corruption in Petrobras. In 2014, the Brazilian Federal Prosecution Service [MPF] exposed the Operation Car Wash (*Lava Jato*) that is the most recent corruption scandal in Brazil. The operation revealed the scheme of laundering money through a chain of petrol stations since 2004 (MPF, 2015). Then, management with anti-corruption policies in Petrobras is a fallacy because ex-directors were involved in the scandal.

One of the main criticism I can expose at the reflection of the measurable aspect in Petrobras' disclosures is the simplification of the context due to the minimisation of its controversies. Moneva et al. (2006, p. 134) affirm the approach of the GRI perspective – a form of the use of measurable techniques regarding the social, environmental and economic performances – "obscure the acquiring of a long-term integrated business view of sustainability". However, obviously, a critical view can demonstrate that Petrobras aims to hide the negativity of its operation and maintains the strategy of economic growth. This thesis contends the need for contestation and dialogue in SEA (Boyce, 2000; Bebbington et al., 2007). This design of SEA might step in the development of more consistent reporting and more critical studies in the Brazilian context. The next section presents the social logics of the exclusion of the social.

6.1.4 The exclusion of the social

The exclusion of the social is evident in the discursive constructions of Petrobras. Basically, the business case approach prevails in the social logics of the exclusion of the social in Petrobras' disclosures. To illustrate, the labour complaints were described

briefly to avoid contestation. The constructions of SER in labour claims include a single description of why Petrobras prefers to not disclosure the information. "Labour claims include a large number of individual claims and, therefore, are not presented" (Petrobras, 2013b, p. F-75). It is evident a tendency to hide the 'social' of social and environment accounting. Additionally, Petrobras emphasises the investments on social and the Brazilian market to include the particular view of the 'social' in the section of human rights.

> Local development
>
> The Petrobras Business Plan for the period 2007-2011 shows that investments of US$ 49.9 billion for projects in Brazil, namely, 66% of the total value in the country, will attend the Brazilian supplier market. The outcome should generate an annual average of approximately 840,000 jobs, 225,000 of which are direct. More than 970,000 jobs – direct, indirect and income-effect – are expected in 2007 (Petrobras, 2006b, p. 33-34).

The particular view of "labour claim" and "local development" is a clear response from Petrobras of what constitute the 'social'. This is a minimisation of the broad impact of the company. Lack of information of labour claim is a clear message that there are problems. However, Petrobras prefers to overlook these issues because of the probable negative impact. Rather than pursue the development of social responsibility, Petrobras understands the 'social' is a result of the jobs generation (Petrobras, 2006b, p. 33-34). Yet, as an energy company, there are many other problems to address, for example, the wellbeing, distribution of wealth and quality of life.

In 2006, Petrobras called "investments" the financial support for social projects that are a mean to make Petrobras a tool for the Brazilian Government. The Zero Hunger Program is the flag of the leading the Workers Party of Brazil during the Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's government in 2003-2010 and the sub sequential election of Dilma Rousseff in 2011. Petrobras invested in social by the Brazilian government project of '*Fome Zero'* (Hunger Zero). The social investments of Petrobras confine a specific result for the company. Those investments are a need of the Brazilian government that uses the Petrobras' structure. However, the number of applications for the Petrobras' support are bigger than the projects selected.

Table 4 – Petrobras Zero Hunger Program (2004-2006)

	2004	*2005*	*2006*
Number of applications	5,884	3,232	4,517
Projects selected	73	74	76

Source: Petrobras (2006b, p. 39)

There is a convenient choice of the projects, and the results are the following distribution of the projects:

Table 5 – Projects accepted in 2006 of the Petrobras Program Zero Hunger [PPFZ]

PROJECTS ACCEPTED BY THE 2006 PPFZ PUBLIC SELECTION ACCORDING TO PUBLIC INVOLVED		
Afro-descendants	2	2.60%
Recyclable material collectors	5	6.60%
Fishing communities	1	1.30%
Cooperative members	5	6.60%
Children and adolescents	9	11.80%
Households	2	2.60%
Youth	8	10.50%
Women	7	9.20%
Disable	4	5.30%
HIV/AIDS	1	1.30%
Settlement population	6	7.90%
Indigenous population	3	3.90%
Rural population / family agriculture	22	28.90%
Workers in a situation analogous to slavery	1	1.30%
Total	76	100%

Source: Petrobras (2006b, p. 39)

It is important to highlight Petrobras' disclosures of the social project are a managerial decision. Petrobras (2006b, p. 39) points out their choices "The portfolio, defined by the deliberative council of the PPFZ public selection, seeks to encourage actions with corporate partners, customers and suppliers". Thus, the decisions help the corporate strategy. This is the business case discussed in Chapter 3. Business case is a perspective to promote organisations and maximise the wealth generation (Brown & Fraser, 2006). The Petrobras language is the emphasis on creating economic value, expanding the suppliers and decisions leading to more investors and clients. The selected projects are a typical example of the business case approach because of the fewer projects in the principal problems of the company activities in the communities such as the fishing communities (only 1.3%), indigenous population (3.9%) and recyclable material collectors (6.6%). In fact, the distribution of investments supports a sustainable company in the long-term investment presented by WBCSD (2003) and IIRC (2014). The rural population (28.9%) produces biodiesel like the sugarcane plantation. Additionally, the projects on children and adolescents (11.8%) and youth (10.5%) create the basis for future direct or indirect clients by the use of transportation to work or study. Then,

Petrobras sustains the social investments that will support the corporate strategy. This is a model of economic value for investments and the exclusion of actions with high costs and less improvement for the vision of being "one of the five largest integrated energy companies in the world and the preferred choice among our stakeholders" (Petrobras, 2010a, p. cover page). This discourse is far from the dialogic engagement (Bebbington et al., 2007). Petrobras reinforces the business case and avoids contestation as part of the dialogue between organisations and society.

> Message from the CEO
>
> In its commitment to development of society, its investment in cultural, environmental, social and sports projects was significant, totaling(sic) more than R$ 591 million. This figure includes the transfer to the Fund for Childhood and Adolescence, in which around R$ 48 million will be invested during 2007 in projects to protect the child and adolescent in a social or personal risk situation (Petrobras, 2006b, p. 3).

Sponsorships are investments rather than a commitment to social exclusions or environmental degradation. In 2006, the CEO asserted the company´s understanding of sponsorships is a commitment to development (Petrobras, 2006, p. 3). The 'sponsorship' label is the most objective investment to contribute to the Petrobras' plans and its definition of corporate social responsibility. The discussed narrow definition of social and environmental responsibility in Petrobras' disclosures support the best ways to help Petrobras to continue its expansion in markets. Nevertheless, the corporate plan does little support for its impact on social and environments such as the protection of health in the oil spills or the disclosure of the work condition in the labour claims. Thus, sponsorship is the marketing to develop Petrobras' brand.

> Formula 1 motor racing, the Petrobras Lubrax Team and the Flamengo soccer club, the Company sought to consolidate the presence of its brand in the worlds of surfing, tennis and handball. The latter, which is the most practiced sport in public schools in the country, was chosen as the focus of its support of the Olympic ideals (Petrobras, 2005a, p. 70).

Indeed, the sponsorship is a corporate investment for the economic purpose. The Formula 1 is a sport of machines and marketing. In my opinion, the entire event purposes to sustain the ideological need for the newest models of cars as well as to give publicity for car and energy industries. Then, the principal aim of the Petrobras' investment in the Formula 1 may consist to promote its brand. Petrobras (2005a, p. 70) affirms it is to "consolidate the presence of its brand in the worlds". Principally, the investment in motor racing is testing for its products, "the development of products" (Petrobras, 2006a, p. 75).

> In motor racing, Petrobras continues to support the Williams Formula 1 team, the Petrobras Lubrax team in rallying, the Action Power team in stock car racing, Team Scud Petrobras in motorcycle racing, the Petrobras "Seletiva de Kart", "Formula Truck" and the SAE competitions "Baja" and

> "Fórmula". The development of products for motor racing is part of the company's strategy to use the race tracks as laboratories (Petrobras, 2006a, p. 75).
>
> Under the Motor Sport Program, the company's activities are focused on technological cooperation, using the race track for the rigorous testing and development of its products. A prime example was its technical partnership with the Williams Formula 1 racing team, concluded at the end of 2008, which led to the development of Podium Gasoline, which is considered to be the best fuel in the Brazilian market and represents Petrobras' seriousness and strong commitment to the sector (Petrobras, 2008a, p. 113).

The Brazilian ideals of sports are captured in Petrobras' disclosure to promote its brand. The choice of Flamengo football club is evidence of the intention to expand the brand massively because Flamengo is one of the most popular teams in Brazil and one of the richest clubs (Gonçalves, 2013). This investment is the essence of capital financing rather than a promotion for the diversity of sports in Brazil.

It is evident the link between Petrobras' increasing international participation and growth. Thus, this notion of investment on SER is a way to achieve the company's goals. The brand of Petrobras emphasises a powerful label in Brazil. The constructed SER activates social and environmental petitions from different groups. Spence (2009b, p. 223) argues that business addresses a hegemonic practice of wealth for the principal stakeholders. This is the practice of Petrobras' disclosures that include a financial feature of accounting representing 'the truth' of capital invested, and also these disclosures fail to include contestability in the social practices (Boyce, 2000). Similarly, in the analysed case of Petrobras' disclosure, the investments in sports seem to look after the company's strategies, not the engagement for reduction of poverty or environmental protection. There is no debate on the pollution in the motorsports, but there is the emphasis on the development of the 'best' fuel and the "presence of its brand". Petrobras aims to achieve a success of the business by expanding venues to expose its brand like in sports, cinemas and cultural events. The lack of contestability is also presented in the cultural sponsorships.

> Sponsorship is structured under the Petrobras Cultural program, which earmarks 75% of its resources for projects by public selection and 25% for those chosen directly. In 2006, of the 4,700 projects registered in the public selection process, just 230, in the fields of the cinema, the scenic and visual arts, cultural heritage, artistic legacy and music, received a total of R$ 46 million in sponsorship. The support to another hundred projects, chosen directly, amounted to R$ 15 million (Petrobras, 2006a, p. 75).

The cinema, visual arts, cultural heritage and music have to mention Petrobras' name in order to receive the company's support. In other words, Petrobras uses culture to promote its brand.

> The company stimulates the registration of projects from all over the country, through the Petrobras Cultural Caravan, which visits the state capitals between September and January. In 2005, a project workshop was added to the caravan, to help the producers of cultural activities in the development of their proposals. In this way, Petrobras has managed to extend the reach of its sponsorship to all parts of the country (Petrobras, 2006a, p. 75).
>
> In the 2006-2007 selection process, 254 proposals in the cultural field were chosen, involving a total investment of R$ 60 million. This total includes the 23 projects chosen in the first public selection for Film Festivals, a fast-growing segment in Brazil. The Petrobras Cultural Caravan visited 38 cities in all regions of the country, with 6,500 producers participating in its workshops and lectures, developed to assist in the preparation of their proposals (Petrobras, 2007a, p. 84).
>
> In 2008, the company launched its fifth edition of the Petrobras Cultural Program (PPC) . . . The activities of the PPC are focused on three areas: "Production and Dissemination", "Preservation and Legacy", and "Education and Training" in the arts. Within these three areas, sponsorship is provided to projects in the fields of the cinema, literature, scenic arts, digital culture, music, visual arts and the non-physical cultural legacy. Projects relating to historical buildings are sponsored in response to invitations (Petrobras, 2008a, p. 112).

A "caravan" is an iconic example that Petrobras uses Brazilian culture to include themselves into the media by supporting culture with large visibility. Although, it is limited to the business strategy. Petrobras created programs to organise the sponsorships in a way that incentives the "value of the Company" (Petrobras, 2007a, p. 68).

> Message from the CEO
>
> Additionally, the company supports cultural, sports, social and environmental projects, in which it invested about R$ 464.5 million in 2009. These initiatives are embedded in Petrobras' corporate programs, such as the Petrobras Development & Citizenship Program, the Petrobras Environmental Program, and the Petrobras Cultural Program, as well as in resource allocation to the Fund for Children and Adolescents (FIA), with a focus on guaranteeing the rights of children and adolescents (Petrobras, 2009a, p. 7).

Petrobras affirms to manage the expansion of the caravan to "all parts of the country" (Petrobras, 2006a, p. 75). However, in 2006-2007, the caravan "visited 38 cities" (Petrobras, 2007a, p. 84). Thus, the company emphasises the places or cities that will account more visibility as "cinema, the scenic and visual arts, cultural heritage, artistic legacy and music" (Petrobras, 2006a, p. 75). Petrobras considers the cultural and sports sponsorship as "vehicle for shareholder wealth maximisation" (Brown & Fraser, 2006, p. 107).

> Petrobras' programs of cultural and sports sponsorship and its social and environmental projects also helped to raise the profile and value of the Company (Petrobras, 2007a, p. 68).

Sponsorships mean "values" and the raising of company's profile. The company acts in its best interest and excludes the social aspects of the corporate impact in the Brazilian and other countries.

> Corporate Communication Policies – States the principles that guide our communication practices and relations with our stakeholders at all levels. Deals with issues such as preservation and defense of our brand and corporate identity; integration and unity in communication; transparency and dialogue in communication and relations with stakeholders; structured knowledge of the needs and

expectations of stakeholders; open and comprehensive communication with our internal public and respect for human and cultural diversity (Petrobras, 2012a, p. 22).

EXAMPLES OF CLAIMS RAISED BY THE COMMUNITIES

CLAIMS RAISED BY THE COMMUNITY	ACTION IN RESPONSE
Transparency in the company's sponsorship procedures	Explanatory notices for the public selection process through printed and audiovisual (sic) materials, and special websites. Social, cultural, and environmental caravans to answer questions and provide guidance on how to prepare projects.

Figure 31 – Examples of claims raised by the communities. Source: Petrobras (2010a, p. 59)

The limited view of social impacts reifies the company development in economic level, but little or none in the social and environmental levels. Essentially, Petrobras reproduces the business case language of pursuing its strategies and using CSR, SER, SEA and sustainability to reduce the managerial risk, to enhance the company's image and to include into investments.

Message from the CEO

Environmental actions were also taken in a cascade effect. The vast list starts with the development of cleaner fuels, namely Podium diesel, which demonstrates the Company's commitment to invest in preserving the environment (Petrobras, 2006b, p. 4).

The corporate policies show that the "transparency and dialogue" in relation to the choices of cultural and social projects happen very close to the invitations of the restoration of historic buildings that is a matter of decisions and influences of whom group or stakeholder would have the privilege to choose projects or buildings. The clear transparent action of Petrobras about sponsorships' decisions needs to clarify the word "transparency" typed in the report. Depending on the type of result, Petrobras would make choices concerning its strategy that is related to the business case approach. The studies in Brazil of SEA primarily focus on the financial performance (Lazzarotti et al., 2014; Palma et al., 2014; Rocha et al., 2013) that supports the non-critical judgment of the capital-oriented decisions in SEA. However, as stated earlier, the sponsorships' investments help the company to grow economically with few commitments to the social conditions of its activities like the pollution of oil burning and the claims of the workforce. Thus, the meaning of 'transparency" mainly shifts the significance of what is transparent for what is convenient.

Petrobras uses local communities' voice to reduce the business disclosures. However, the narratives of Petrobras tend to be short and measurable in the matter of the social reported.

> "We believe the climate is very important, because drought ruins the plantation. By making biodiesel, Petrobras is helping to take care of the environment and improve our region. I hope that Coopaf continues" – Ana Maria Alves de Souza: Farm worker in castor bean and bean crops in the Family Agriculture Production and Marketing Cooperative of Bahia (Coopaf) — Morro do Chapéu, Bahia State
>
> Outlook: A better future for me and my children (Petrobras, 2006b, p. cover page).

As Ms. Souza argues, the climate is essential for the castor-oil plant's plantation, and she believes biodiesel helps the environment and improve her community and family. Indirectly, this quote improves the image of Petrobras by using a local farm worker to explain the activity of Petrobras in the climate change and its support to the generation of income for local communities. However, there are missing statements of Petrobras about the impact of air pollution on the climate change as we known that the fossil fuels are the principal responsible for the pollutant gases in the atmosphere (UN, 1992). There is an important fact of Petrobras' operation; Petrobras is a pollutant company because of the extensive use of fossil fuels to create the revenues. To add this comment, in 2013, only 2% of the Petrobras' overall production was renewable energies (Petrobras, 2013a, p. 9). Additionally, the seeds of the castor-oil plant contain ricin that is a poison extremely toxic for humans and animals (Queensland, 2014). Yet, Petrobras prefers to limit its engagement in a deep conversation about the issues germane to the minor production of biodiesel and impact of it in the climate change as well as the pest plant's damages in a community. Bahia is a Brazilian state with needs of resources and jobs. This need seems to incorporate local communities' voices due to the lack of the basics. In 2014, the Bahia's state had the per capita income of BRL 697 (less than US$ 200) (IBGE, 2014). It is important to note that the Brazilian government defines a minimum wage that was BRL 724 in 2014.

A conclusion of the social practice that principally excludes the social supports the company's strategies. This section demonstrated examples of how Petrobras chooses to restrict, mask and conceal the social problems of its practices such as the fewer discussion of labour claims, the managerial plan to select social projects and the shifting of definition relating sponsorships. In short, the disclosures of Petrobras seek to cover the corporate activities by undermining and hiding the social issues. The next section debates the social logics of 'best practice'.

6.1.5 'Best practice'

This section discusses the company's 'best practice' policy. Petrobras adopts the best practices already established in the oil industry. To some extent, this analysis discusses the company' explanation of a "sustainable way" as well as their understandings of respect for communities and environment. The tone of the discourse of Petrobras regarding 'best practices' is the consulting category of business case, especially the risk management and mitigation of impacts that have the role to protect their operation from external risks. However, the activity of the oil company has safety and environmental issues surrounding the rhetorical discourse of what they portray as a best company.

> 'Best Practices in the Crude Oil Industry' means the practices and procedures generally used in the Crude Oil industry all over the world, by prudent and diligent operators under conditions and circumstances similar to the ones experienced in relation to only relevant aspects of the Operations, with the main purpose of guaranteeing the: (a) conservation of oil and gas resources, what implies the use of adequate methods and procedures to maximize the recovery of hydrocarbons in a technical and economically sustainable way, with the corresponding control over the decline of reserves, and to minimize the losses in the surface; (b) operational safety, what imposes the use of methods and procedures that ensure occupational safety and the prevention of operational accidents; (c) preservation of the environment and the respect to the populations, what determines the adoption of technologies and procedures associated with prevention and mitigation of environmental damages, as well as the control and environmental monitoring of the exploration and production operations of Crude Oil, Natural Gas and other Fluid Hydrocarbons. (Petrobras, 2010b, pp.20-21 of Exhibit 2.47).
>
> Best Practices in Petroleum Industry: practices and procedures generally employed in the Petroleum Industry worldwide by prudent and diligent Companies under conditions and circumstances similar to those experienced regarding relevant aspects of the Operations, specially aiming at ensuring: (a) the application of the best techniques currently used in the world regarding Exploration and Production activities; (b) conservation of oil and gas resources, which implies in the use of proper methods and processes for the maximization of the recovery of hydrocarbons in a technical, economic and environmentally sustainable manner, with control of the reduction of deposits and minimization of the losses at the surface; (c) operational safety, which demands the use of methods and processes that ensure the safety of operations, contributing to the prevention of incidents: (d) preservation of the environment and respect to local populations, which demands the use of technologies and procedures associated with the prevention and mitigation of environmental damages, as well as with the control and environmental monitoring of the Oil and Natural Gas Exploration and Production Operations (Petrobras, 2013b, p. 9-13 of Exhibit 2.78)

The Petrobras' quotation leads to the company's constitution of the best practice that combines "best techniques currently used in the world", "technical, economic and environmentally sustainable manner" to reduce exterior deposits, "operational safety" and "preservation of the environment and respect to local populations" (Petrobras, 2010b, pp.20-21 of Exhibit 2.47; 2013b, p. 9-13 of Exhibit 2.78). The sector imposes rules and practices that require Petrobras to adhere to them. Petrobras though practically rejects what other groups in society claim it should do. For example, when Petrobras affirms that the oil spill was lower than the limit in the oil sector, it also means that the

pollution is acceptable in the energy group, and it is part of the business. However, this action neglects the negative consequences for environment, communities, economies and biodiversity. The company also measure how much they can pollute and face the law requirements of its actions. On the other hand, the definition of best practice involves technical, economic and environmental sustainability. The techniques of the oil sector result "adequate methods and procedures" and "operational safety". Then, the economics of oil sector appears in the vision/mission of Petrobras, "profitability". Environmental sustainability relies on "preservation of the environment and respect to local populations". It also includes "prevention and mitigation of environmental damages, as well as with the control and environmental monitoring". The problem here is the "prevention" and "mitigation" which means an assumption that the oil activities only operate with environmental damages.

These logics relate to the preservation of oil reserves, mitigation of the risks and controlling the damages. Petrobras disregards renewable energy like biofuels, solar and wind power, for example, in 2013, Petrobras' renewable energy production equated to only 2% of its overall production (Petrobras, 2013a, p. 9). Petrobras invested BRL $ 90,251 million in renewable energy research (Petrobras, 2013a, p. 17). Non-fossil fuels will reduce pollution and damages in environments and lives. However, the focus of Petrobras is a pathway to achieving an international position that supports an idea of "mitigation" and "prevention" of the inevitable destructions in the oil exploitation activity. A redescription of the logics of best practices may explain that conservation and preservation of environments and population are secondary to the "conservation of oil and gas resources" in an "economically sustainable way". To mitigate, to prevent and to reduce mean a prior impact and these actions intend to make less severe, diminish or impede something that has happened. More specifically, those constructions seem to avoid a broader conversation about the problems resulting to mitigation, prevention and reduction of the oil extraction activity.

The social logics of best practices make three main claims. First, there is a group protection for oil exploitation. Secondly, technical language is used to convince people of the oil industry's best practices. Thirdly, the cruellest reality, the oil sector's activities and operations cause by unavoidable damages and destructions. Constructions of best practices also define what Petrobras means by sustainability.

The construction of sustainability encompasses best practices established by the petroleum industry. Petrobras defines "our sustainability" as:

> A new "Climate Change" strategic program, which aims to implement the highest standards in the energy industry regarding greenhouse gas management. By reducing the environmental impact of our operations, we will contribute to our sustainability and mitigate global climate change (Petrobras, 2007c, p. 60; similar in 2008c, p. 63; 2009b, p. 72; 2010b, p. 67).

The company's attributes of "our sustainability" camouflage the firm's definition of sustainability. At first glance, the company incorporates the needs to offset climate change, but the company's constructions predominate the "highest standards in the energy industry". A deconstruction of Petrobras' opinions shows an indication of placing the management for "highest standards" of its industry in order to focus on the climate change issues. Petrobras defines the policies and management to deal with this subject. In this matter, Petrobras adheres to the requisites of its industry, which affects mitigation and reduction of the predictable pollution of greenhouse gas.

In terms of the definition of sustainability, Petrobras involves sustainable development and social responsibility into its strategy. Petrobras (2007a; 2008a; 2010a; 2011a; 2012a; 2013a) commits to a sustainable development that results from integrated growth, profitability and social responsibility. Additionally, the company is a signatory of the UN Global Compact to support sustainable development and the UN policies (Petrobras, 2009a, p. 21). The company's values begin with "sustainable development" (Petrobras, 2009a; 2010a; 2011a; 2012a; 2013a). The corporate governance comprises decision with social responsibility (Petrobras, 2013a, p. 2). Thus, a review of the constructions sustainability has two poles, a value of sustainable development and corporate social responsibility. These poles embrace its strategies of social and environmental responsibility into the concept of sustainable development that conveys development in an emerging economy country context.

The last of the three goals for development activities ensures "environmentally sustainable" in two ways, "improve our water and CO_2 management and energy efficiency capabilities throughout the entire value chain" (Petrobras, 2009b, p. 106). Water management is improved with the features for reduction of water consumption and volume and the toxicities of the wastewater discharges, the energy efficiency is reinforced and there is an inclusion of reduction of air pollution especially for CO_2, pollutants and greenhouse gases (Petrobras, 2010b, p. 112; 2011b, p. 110; 2012b, p. 96; 2013b, p. 97). In brief, Petrobras uses a logic of its neighbours that aims to do what regulation requires

fulfilling. A specific instrument arises; technical language conducts acceptable practices according to their best practices. Mitigation, reduction and preservation cover the company's construction of sustainable development.

> A HSE management system based on principles of sustainable development which seeks to minimize the impacts of operations and products on health, safety and the environment, reduce the use of natural resources and pollution, and prevent accidents (Petrobras, 2009b, p. 72; 2010b, p. 66; 2011b, p. 65; 2012b, p. 60).

The "new strategy" seeks to maximise the energy efficiency and to reduce the emission of greenhouse contributing to a sustainable business. "This strategy aims both at improving business sustainability and mitigating the effects of climate change" (Petrobras, 2010b, p. 67; 2011b, p. 65; 2012b, p. 60). The strategic projects of efficient energy and climate change stand in the market pattern parameters of energy and gas emission to respond to the eco-friendly effects; the company expects that it would contribute to the environmental impacts and mitigate the worldwide climate change (Petrobras, 2010b, p. 67; 2011b, p. 65; 2012b, p. 60; 2013b, p. 62). In both "environmentally sustainable" of water management and energy efficiency do not include less pollution, but "reduction" of discharges. However, the main effort of "our sustainability" matches with capital-oriented purposes, rendering the group goals and pollution according to the company's competitors. That is pollution with responsibility. It is a free excuse to pollute less than others do.

In 2004, sustainability was referred to sustainable development in the company's terms of policy on human health and environment that relates to the "compliance with legislation" and "environmental performance indicators" (Petrobras, 2004, p. 79). In 2005, the notion of sustainability is incorporated the "renewable energy alternative" in the possibility of the gains in the carbon credits market, and then, the sustainable development is defined:

> Our actions relating to sustainable energy development in 2005 aimed to evaluate the implementation of eligible projects to obtain carbon credit certificates according to the Clean Development Mechanism (MDL), as well as to propose sales policies regarding these certificates. We have studied the technical viability and necessary baseline methodologies in order to obtain approval for the projects (Petrobras, 2005b, p. 64).

The renewable energy, in 2006, moves towards ethanol business. This biodiesel development decreases the emission of greenhouse gas (Petrobras, 2006c, p. 61). As a result, the sustainable development includes a mechanism to create more profit for the implementation of regulated carbon emissions:

> Our actions relating to the sustainable development of power in 2006 aimed to evaluate the implementation of projects to avoid emissions of greenhouse gases (GHG), throughout the entire Petrobras system to obtain Certified Emission Reductions (CER) according to the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) and rules of the Kyoto Protocol, as well as to propose sales policies regarding these CERs. We have studied the technical viability and baseline methodologies in order to obtain approval and registration of those projects with the Executive Board of the CDM. We registered the first Petrobras CDM Project in March of 2007. This project represents the use of wind power as a substitute for the generation of power with fossil fuels in the platforms of Aratum, in Rio Grande do Norte. Other projects underway, mainly linked to the downstream area, are aimed at elaborating the CDM Project Design Document, a template on which a company describes its calculations for reduced emissions in accordance with the Kyoto Protocol. They include the generation of power in turbo expanders in several refineries, reduction of N_2O in the fertilizer production area, and the use of heat from gases emitted, among others (Petrobras, 2006c, p. 61).

Petrobras definition of a notion of sustainable development continues to support the company's strategy. In the terms "sales policies", "carbon credit" and "renewable energy" that Petrobras explains this notion. One of the social logics is the generation of incomes. Certificates of carbon market guarantee the installation of sales. Moreover, the renewable energy is a good project, but it represents less than 2% of the company's production. The Petrobras' concept of sustainable development is the use of wind power that almost represents less than 2% in 2013 (Petrobras, 2013a, p. 9). Consequently, the definition of sustainability is a repetition of the prior company's objective. In 2008, the sustainability addresses biodiesel and the social support for regional agriculture (Petrobras, 2008c, p. F-70). :

> UBiodiesel refineries (Continued)
>
> The implementation of the three refineries is accompanied by a program for development of the regional agricultural market, which will supply the raw material for the production of biodiesel. Thus there will be an increase in the creation of employment and income, always observing entrepreneurial, social and environmental sustainability (Petrobras, 2008c, p. F-70).

A brief interpretation of the corporate concept of sustainability relies on the group cover ("highest standards"), mitigation and prevention of the surface's losses and an insertion into the issues of global change, but the corporate activities do not change the way how creates pollutions or damages in lives and environments. Then, Petrobras includes sustainable development into its strategy for growth, "profitability" and social responsibility (see the previous analysis). Additionally, sustainable development combines with the minimisation of the effects, reduction of natural resources and pollution, and prevention of accidents. Subsequently, these constructions aim to obtain freedom for oil companies to pollute and harm because the industry will never be eco-friendly while using fossil fuels. Petrobras incorporates the sale of carbon into its sustainable energy argument. All these mean that Petrobras ascribes sustainability in a particular way that allows its strategies to overcome even in a practice of unsustainability

because the oil sector has permission to continue pollution and damages for certain development. The problem is its concept mistakes the social and environmental issues of oil companies. It also implies exclusion from a responsibility of its discourse and actions. As a company included in the oil industry which supports the Petrobras' actions. However, as evidenced, for example, the "tolerable limit" of oil spillage, the sponsorships for investments and the dehumanisation of deaths in the numbers/rates of fatalities are fantasies to protect the unsustainable practices. Petrobras masks problems favouring the financial interests. The ideological cover, indeed, provides the basis for Petrobras to shift the corporate social responsibility' notion for its best interests.

Best practices is an ideological cover for the company's ambitions. By investigating the aviation policy in the United Kingdom, Howarth and Griggs (2006) draw upon developments in DT, showing governments employ ideological cover to pursue their goals. 'Ideological cover' sheds light on a particular protection from a third party group to achieve preferred aims (Howarth and Griggs, 2006). By employing ideological cover, a "third party or agency" will independently support governments for "their desired goals" (Howarth and Griggs, 2006, p. 23). In the present business case, Petrobras utilises this special apparatus to enable the development of the company's plans.

The ideological cover links to ideologies that are the principal support for Petrobras' discourse. This social analysis tries to illustrate a relationship between DT and a brief excursion of ideologies. More concisely, the concept of ideology employed in this analysis interacts with political, philosophical and psychoanalysis areas of knowledge (Althusser, 2012; Laclau and Mouffe, 2001; Lacan, 2005). Moreover, these applied ideologies, especially, in the 'best practice', is a particular employment of DT that connects a post-Marxist concept of ideology. Althusser (2012, p. 120) asserts that ideology is ideas and representations that control the mind of individuals. Laclau and Mouffe (2001, p. 99) include that every identity is overdeterminated because of the conception of objects as partial and incomplete. Thus, social logics encompass symbolism, illusions and individuals (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001). Peculiarly, from a political standpoint, ideologies grasp individual identities and stop freedoms because of the existence of "precarious and relational character of every identity" (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. 99). Indeed, social logics aim to understand the gripped ideologies by examining the public discourse of Petrobras.

The discussed practices of Petrobras highlight the ideological cover in constructions such as a narrow definition of SER, the role of regulators, the measurable and the exclusion of the social. The constructions of ideological cover lead to a political manifestation. These strategies seem to sustain the arguments for those practices. Thus, this section discusses Petrobras' ideological logics by examining the ideological cover of the 'best practices' in the energy sector.

Whilst Petrobras conforms to best practices of the oil industry, Petrobras' practices support the ideological cover through the assumption of an oil company requires a compromise between Petrobras and oil sector guidelines that, in somehow, create their special world. Particularly, Petrobras clearly looks for international growth. Hence, the company needs to accept the rules of the oil industry's regulations, and that means acceptance with certain procedures. The social logics section includes a quotation from Petrobras' definition of best practices. The objective of 'best practice' is to adhere to "the best techniques" that guarantee the conservation of oil and gas resources by "adequate" modus operandi with exploitation of the resources in a "technical, economical and environmentally sustainable manner"; secondly, they continue with a significant safety; and finally, there is a notion of environment and communities within the condition of an oil company (Petrobras, 2010b, pp. 20-21 of Exhibit 2.47; 2013b, pp. 9-13 of Exhibit 2.78). The ideological cover employed for Petrobras conceals an engagement for social, environmental and sustainable clauses.

> Petrobras' activities in 2008 continued to be governed by social responsibility and transparency, aligned with the principles of the UN Global Compact. Reaffirming its commitment to sustainable development, the company developed and supported environmental protection projects and initiatives for the reduction of social inequalities (Petrobras, 2008a, p. 102).

In seeking to merge these different interests into a common goal, the role of ideological apparatus as an assumption of an oil company relies on an "adequate" treatment of the oil and gas resources. To maximise the oil reserves means to withdraw considerably until the exhaustion of those resources due to the natural limits. However, this also includes a constant conception of "preservation" and "mitigation" of the known aspects of oil extraction activities that incontestably materialise in virtue of damages[13]. Yet, these signifiers of oil sector neglect the consequences by masking the oil activities with a discursive impression of "the best". This is public agent's rhetoric. It astutely twists

[13] As examples, see the news of the oil spills in 2012 and 2013 in the littoral of Sao Paulo State.

negative consequences into a positive perspective through a metonymic process (Martin, 2013; Laclau, 2014). This implicates the petroleum industry as it protects its members against non-technical procedures. However, this manifests in mistakes of "operational failure" (Dow Jones Global News, 2013). Undeniably, Petrobras operates within employees/outsourcing companies and natural resources in which there is a necessity to respect the limits of human rights and social definitions of environmental protection. However, the oil sector safeguards Petrobras' methods and procedures that noticeably are a character of proceedings (forms 20-F). As a result, the company's modus operandi is a subject of societal concerns. Specifically, the social logics behave like a device of shifting attention from an operation based on an oil industry that constantly misconceives the protection for communities and environments to a deception of wellbeing's practices.

> Petrobras monitors the development of the projects using a variety of indicators and performance targets, so that the results from all over Brazil can be studied and assessed in an integrated manner. In 2008, a system for the organization of Petrobras' social investments was introduced and a manual drawn up of best practices in the management of social investments, considering the three facets of sustainability – economic, social and environmental – using as a reference the methodologies of the UN Global Compact, GRI, Agenda 21 and WBCSD (Petrobras, 2008a, p. 111).

Secondly, Petrobras' ideological covers constitute the inner commitment to Agenda 21 (2006a; 2006b; 2007a; 2007b; 2008a; 2008b; 2009a; 2010a; 2011a; 2012a; 2013a). Accordingly, this analysis concentrates on the renewable energies as alternatives for the unsustainable practices of fossil fuel activities. Ideologically, the projects of renewable energy in Petrobras downplay the built structure of a petroleum company. Ideologies perform through transferability of 'the other' to represent an arbitrary facet of ideas (Lacan, 2005; Althusser, 2012; Laclau & Mouffe, 2001). Moreover, while they closely identify with research of renewable energies and present efforts to aid the climate change, there is adverse information for this representation. Petrobras (2013a, p. 9) has 2% of the net revenue of renewables against more than 65% in fossil fuels. This picture does not support the ideological cover as a signatory of Agenda 21. In fact, the omission of the true reality of the oil company would fail its endeavour to be a sustainable company that obviously establishes its operations in gasoline, diesel and natural gas (the main causes of unsustainable practices in Agenda 21).

The apparatus of a sustainable company hides the ideological aspiration of an enterprise driven by social responsibility. Guided by desired goals, like transparent and competitive brand, Petrobras associated these with the indices Dow Jones Sustainability Index [DJSI] and BM&F Bovespa's Corporate Sustainability Index [ISE] (Petrobras, 2006a; 2006b;

2007a; 2007b; 2008a; 2008b; 2009a; 2010a; 2011a; 2012a). Petrobras (2006a, p. 65) declares as a sustainable company due the inclusion in DJSI and ISE. Likewise, the company received an award for being transparent in DJSI:

> As recognition of the above, we were awarded the highest score on the Dow Jones Sustainability Index (DJSI) "transparency" criterion for the sixth time, and we were part of the DJSI for the seventh consecutive year. In addition, for the 12th consecutive year, we took the Transparency Trophy awarded by Brazil's National Association of Finance, Management and Accounting Executives (Anefac), the Accounting, Actuarial and Financial Research Institute (Fipecafi), and Serasa Experian (Petrobras, 2012a, p. 49).

Among the illusion of a sustainable commitment, Petrobras disregards other implications to be a transparent and a sustainable company. To illustrate this point, the Operation Car Wash clearly demonstrates that years of corruption inside the company survived because of an organised scheme of employees (executives), contractors, politicians and financial agents (MPF, 2015). This case also dissolves any attempt of transparency on ethics and "a sustainable manner". Additionally, the camouflage of an in-depth explanation about the environmental fines in the annual and sustainability reports, are a disguise for an ideological device. The measurable information in the reports tries to minimise the negative effect of the company's action and decisions. More importantly, Petrobras aims to cultivate a symbolic status of a transparent and committed oil company. However, this frame excludes the problematisation of oil activities and its repercussion.

In short, the ideological logics help the political agent to represent as the best company inside the amount of disrespects within social, political, cultural and ethical effects. As well as, the ideological cover of engagement in the Agenda 21 and the 10th principle of UN Global Compact mislead any representation of sustainable practice because of the little investment made in renewable resources and the memorable scheme of corruption fade the attempts to convince stakeholders and societies what actually matters of "commitment" and transparent awards.

6.1.6 Conclusions

In extended means to represent the discourse of SEA, Petrobras chooses the business case approach, more specifically, the measuring and consulting categories. This entails that Petrobras strategically uses the meanings of SEA that enable them to overcome societal, ethical and environmental needs for their own interests. The social logics of Petrobras represent the ideological construction of a company interested in a particular social responsibility that is sustained by evasive discursive constructions. As demonstrated, the

narrow definition of SER undermines the reality of social inequalities and environmental degradation. Also, the role of regulators performs a set of parameters to support the company's financial goals. The measurable aspects of SEA/SER/sustainability simplify the complexities of the environments and social realities. Further, the exclusion of the social avoids a broader conversation about diversity, transparency and accountability considering capitalist logics of an integrated view towards sustainability. Finally, the 'best practice' is a perfect cover for the ideological construction of Petrobras because most corporate practices are contradictory. Also, the ideological cover exists to safeguard the company's operation in an unsustainable mode.

6.2 Political logics

The political logics address how the regimes and practices have emerged, or "how they are being contested and/or transformed" (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 141). Considering the Petrobras' case of SEA constructions, the previous social logics discussed Petrobras's practices and the political logics here aim to understand how these practices have emerged, contested and/or transformed. Particularly, this section debates how the object of SER/CSR/SEA had the actual position related to three main constructions that support the existing practices of SEA. Specifically, this section aims to contest the emergence of Petrobras' discursive constructions that privilege the development over SER, exclude the social and manage the expectations to be able to support company's goals.

6.2.1 Privileging development over SER

A brief history of Petrobras can show the origin of the development's idea in Petrobras. The development is a thought supported by the Brazilian government since the foundation of the company in 1953. Brazil participated with few armed forces in the II War, but after this war, economies needed to recover their losses through the development of economies. Especially, the UN had the interest in developing Brazil. However, the afraid of multinationals companies made the Brazilian government led the first oil company in Brazil. Petrobras was born in a moment of nationalism and the need for an infrastructure to develop Brazil technologically.

The Brazilian Federal Law n. 2004 on 3rd October 1953 established the monopoly of the Brazilian government over the oil industry and authorised the creation of Petrobras (Petrobras, 2005a, p. 12). With the need for more technologies and expansion, in 1997,

the Brazilian government opened the oil industry (Brazilian Federal Law n. 9,478 on 6th August 1997). Petrobras outlines the idea of development, and it has, at least, two reasons, the support of Brazilian government and the international expansion. Both reasons have the goal to develop economically.

Petrobras incorporates the Brazilian desire for a developed country. In 2015, Brazil is classified as the eighth economy in the world (CNN Money, 2015). However, in 2014, Brazil is the 79th country in the HDI rank (UN, 2014). The lower classification of Brazil in human development means that the government and the companies that support the government fail in the principle of sustainability. I refer to sustainability the concept that spreads the development in all areas and as a result decreases poverty, lower level of education, health problems and damaged environments. Petrobras emerges in an illusion a social responsibility that reifies an economic development in a reality of social and environmental problems.

The company's mission shows support to the Brazilian development. However, Petrobras narrows the definition of SER to balance profitability and safety at the same level with this narrowness. Petrobras supports the development of Brazil by undermining the effects of its activities in social and environments and promoting its strategies of financial goals.

> Mission
>
> To operate safely and profitably in the oil, gas and energy domestic and international markets in a socially and environmentally responsible manner, supplying products and services to meet the needs of its customers and contributing to the development of Brazil and the countries in which it operates (Petrobras, 2005a, p. 3).
>
> Mission
>
> To operate in a safe and profitable manner in the energy sector in Brazil and abroad, showing social and environmental responsibility and providing products and services that meet clients' needs and that contribute to the development of Brazil and the other countries in which the company operates (Petrobras, 2007a, p. cover page).
>
> Mission
>
> Operate in a safe and profitable manner in Brazil and abroad, with social and environmental responsibility, providing products and services that meet clients' needs and that contribute to the development of Brazil and the countries in which it operates (Petrobras, 2008a, p. cover page).
>
> Mission
>
> Operate in a safe, profitable manner, with social and environmental responsibility, in Brazil and abroad, providing products and services that meet the client's needs and contribute to the development of Brazil and of the countries in which the company operates (Petrobras, 2009a, p. 2).
>
> Mission
>
> Operate in a safe, profitable manner, with social and environmental responsibility, in Brazil and abroad, providing products and services that meet clients' needs and that contribute to the development of Brazil and of the countries in which it operates (Petrobras, 2010a, p. cover page).

> Mission
>
> Operate in a safe, profitable manner, with social and environmental responsibility, in Brazil and abroad, providing products and services that meet customer needs and contribute to the development of Brazil and of the countries in which it operates (Petrobras, 2011a, p. cover page).
>
> Mission
>
> Working safely and profitably, showing social and environmental responsibility, in the Brazilian and international markets, providing the right products and services for customer needs and contributing to development in Brazil and countries in which it operates (Petrobras, 2012a, p. cover page).
>
> Our mission
>
> Work ethically, safely and profitably in the oil and natural gas industry, with social and environmental responsibility, providing the right products for costumers needs and contributing for the development of Brazil and the countries in which we operate (Petrobras, 2013a, p. 2).

The privilege of growth over SER means a company that works for a capital accumulation. The wealth maximisation of shareholders (the Brazilian government is the principal shareholder) is the goal of business case (Brown & Fraser, 2006). It favours the development of wealth and the profitable actions that hardly convey a sustainable manner. Petrobras can focus on the development because the company minimises the negative effect of the pollution of its principal products such as diesel and gasoline.

Driven by the growth of its products, services and operations, Petrobras concentrates a development on the financial basis. "Petrobras is committed to the development of technology for the expansion of its activities and the ongoing enhancement of the quality of its products." (Petrobras, 2006a, p. cover page). "Petrobras continued developing initiatives to strengthen the oil and gas chain in Brazil" (Petrobras, 2011a, p. 2). Maintaining a powerful position in the oil industry, Petrobras supports the development of technologies and production, which lead to hiding, for example, the labour claims and pollutions of fossil fuels products.

The idea of development arises in a space of controversies about the type of growth and profitability. It reflects the social logics showed that Petrobras minimises the complexities of SER to support the financial strategies that also supplies the economic development and a pretence use of SER. There are problems of unsustainability due the principal use of fossil fuel and the camouflage of labour claims and environmental accidents. Petrobras aims a development of its creditors and shareholders, but little is done to a truthful engagement in the social conditions or the environmental effects of the corporate operations. Lehman (1999) argues SEA should engage in the mechanisms of the capitalist system. Petrobras, focusing on the economic result, is an example of a company that has the wealth maximisation as the most important goal. Then, this thesis aims to

demonstrate how the political logics work to help the domination of Petrobras in the Brazilian context. Figure 32 demonstrates the idea of dominance of the language of development over social and environmental responsibility:

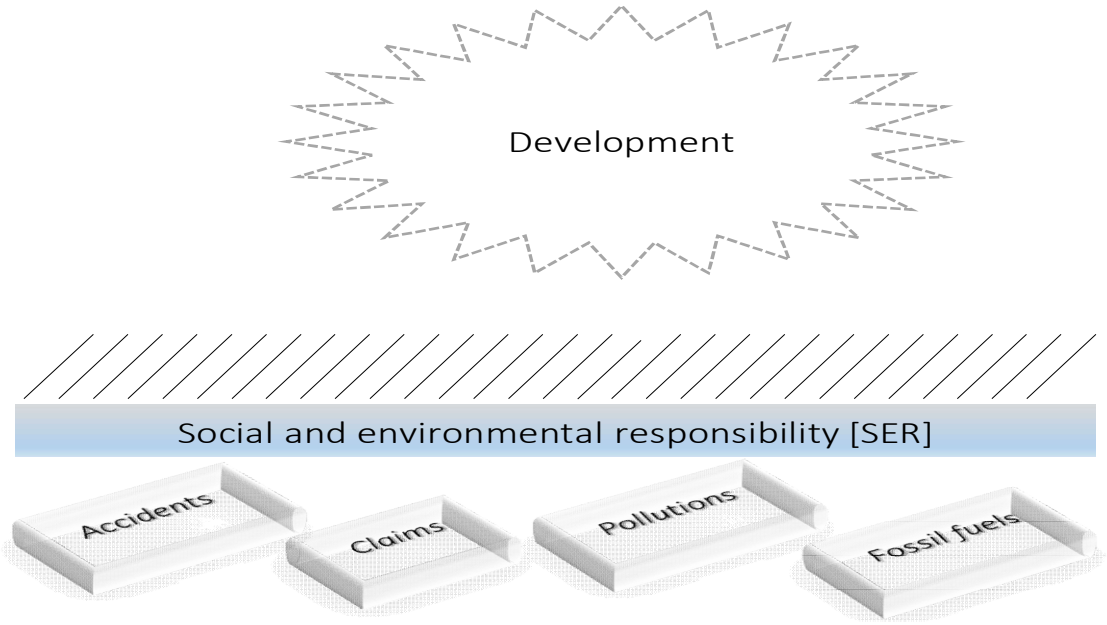

Figure 32 – The minimisation of SER

Likewise, the speeches of the CEOs/Presidents demonstrate the enthusiasm to grow which concerns in terms of a financial and expansion of the business. "Petrobras is on the right path to becoming an integrated energy company with international reach, always striving for growth allied with profitability and social and environmental responsibility" (José Sergio Gabrielli de Azevedo. President and CEO – Petrobras, 2006a, p. 10). Social and environmental responsibility as well as sustainability as a key to the company's political logics, but the principal issue is the lack of disclosures about the controversies and contradictions of the company's operations.

> Sustainability is a key feature of Petrobras 2030 Strategic Plan, which states the corporate drivers that guide all Petrobras business and activities: Profitability, Social and Environmental Responsibility and Integrated Growth. We are strengthening our commitment to development for Brazil and countries in which we operate. We are also showing the challenges facing our corporate functions, which are Human Resources, Social Responsibility, Health, Safety, Environment and Energy Efficiency (HSEE), and Technology (Petrobras, 2013a, p. 5).

The development language takes place due to the oppression of the negativities belonged from the company's operation that normally weaken SER to represent profitability and growth, but Petrobras barely does activities to support a SER's definition with respect to social and the environments. Additionally, employees or ex-employees are a statistical

metric to the business plan (see the fatalities rates and the use of workforce instead a participation of them). In the discursive constructions of SER, Petrobras mainly favours a development of its shareholders and protects the company from risks such as the ones that decrease the financial results. It shares with the Spence's thought. Spence (2009, p. 254) asserts companies are interests in engaging with selected stakeholders. In Petrobras' case, the selected stakeholders are essentially the Brazilian government by the focus on the development of Brazil.

Privileging development over SER is maintained because Petrobras underestimates the issues of social exclusion and environmental damages related to the company's activities, including the minimisation of the negative effects of, for example, pollutions and accidents. Petrobras also hides the problems in the social and environments operated. Also, Petrobras reuses SER as a propaganda of its sponsorships (see the discussion in the social logics).

Outlined how Petrobras supports the idea of development over SER, it is important to highlight this idea seems a metaphor for "the development of Brazil" which mostly signifies an economic development with fantasies of social and environmental responsibility. The fewer level of HDI of Brazil and the social and environmental problems of Petrobras diminish attempts to represent a SER for all Brazilians, but mostly represent an economic development for the most powerful agents. The next section considers the exclusion of the social as a tool to the political logics of Petrobras.

6.2.2 The exclusion of the social

This section outlines how practices of social exclusions have emerged in a scenario of oil activities. The exclusion of the social is a political apparatus to support the business strategies. In other words, the disclosures of Petrobras have a paradox of a company "showing social and environmental responsibility". As an example, Petrobras affirms a prompt disclosure of any risk management regarding losses and claims.

> The Company's policy in regard to the insurance market is to always disclose its risk management practices, in Brazil and abroad, and to communicate, promptly and openly, any material information regarding losses and related claims (Petrobras, 2007a, p. 23).

However, Petrobras does not show a similar enthusiasm to explain labour claims, and their reason is the quantity of claims (Petrobras, 2013b, p. F-75). The silence of the social favours an installation of a discourse interested in the business strategies that is an

illustration of the business case approach. It pursues the capital enlargement (Brown & Fraser, 2006). Additionally, the environmental accidents are disclosed shortly and measurably.

> In 2008, Petrobras Holding was notified of 13 records of environmental violation, which are under discussion, totaling R$ 109.15 million (considering only fines of over R$ 1 million), besides a warning sanction, with no pecuniary value. Some of the charges refer to drilling activities without a license from the relevant environmental agency. Four public civil actions were also registered (Petrobras, 2008b, p. 84

The emergence of accidents in the company's activities does not stop a public discourse of a sustainable company. Petrobras has the pride of being elected a sustainable company according to DJSI and ISE indices (Petrobras, 2006b, p. 3). However, these indices are a metaphor to a superiority of economic-oriented companies with little actions of social, cultural, environmental and institutional aspects towards a sustainable planet. This entails that Petrobras uses financial parameters to signify a capitalist strategy. This thesis outlines the emerged contestation of the company's operation. In the "records of environmental violation", Petrobras restricts its disclosures to the quantified notified records and the BRL amount. However, Petrobras disregards the details of the "under discussion" as well as how they could be charged with "drilling activities without a license" this is the definition of the company regarding social and environmental responsibility. There are also public civil actions that Petrobras prefers to narrow any contestation. Sikka (2010) asserts that corporations have differences between the talk and actions regarding tax avoidance that is a parallel of Petrobras' discursive constructions of SEA. Another example of infraction to laws presents the avoidance of negative impact on the business strategies.

> It was ascertained there were three Environmental Notices of Infraction, totaling R$ 34.95 million in fines, and a Deed of Embargo, with no monetary value, in 2009. For significant fines, we adopt the criterion of amounts that exceeds R$ 1 million. In the embargo case, Petrobras was able reverse the environmental agency's decision and secured a release for its activities (Petrobras, 2009a, p. 84).

An embargo impedes the company's activities to operate. Without a clear information of the reasons for the embargo, Petrobras obfuscates its activities and reinforces a decision based on the financial materiality. This quote describes what interests Petrobras, who has the policy to support the economic growth by shading the social and environmental problems. Petrobras reinforces the economic development through the exclusion of debates in the social and environmental aspects. In this respect, Boyce (2000, p. 54) contends the need of contestability in SEA field which social and environmental

information would increase the transparency of decision-making. Oppositely, Petrobras confines a transparency to the narrow description of the social and environmental issues. Also, the social is massively excluded when Petrobras presents the fatalities.

> Accidents and diseases – We achieved the best annual numbers ever recorded for workplace accidents and fatalities as shown by the indicators for reportable incidents and fatal accident numbers which were down 21% and 69%, respectively, from 2012. These indicators consolidate data for both our employees and professionals employed by service providers. The reportable incidents indicator includes mild injuries (first aid cases). . . Compared with the 2012 number, the fatal accident rate (number of fatalities per 100 million hours worked) fell by 70% (Petrobras, 2013a, p. 44).

Along the analysis of the discourse of Petrobras regarding social, they present the deaths of their workers as means of number. Petrobras decided to show the fatalities by number and rates. This attitude is a dehumanisation of the deaths and the contested actions behind their activities because the company's silences transform the oil activity as a common interest of a company in development or worse in a company that predominates the economic growth over social and environmental unsatisfactory situation. Without names and the reasons for the deaths, Petrobras treats fatal deaths as simple numbers such as the decreasing of "fatal accident rate". Also, this exclusion relates to the "tolerable limit" (Petrobras, 2008a, p. 16) which is an unfriendly view of the damages of oil spills in nature and health. A termination of life or an oil pollution should never be considered less important. Also, the exclusion of the social is evident when the company shows the complaints against human rights:

> In 2011, Petrobras General Ombudsman's Office recorded 31 cases relating to human rights. Thirteen cases were investigated and wrapped up. The others were dropped on account of insufficient evidence to start the due handling (Petrobras, 2011a, p. 19).
>
> An important channel of dialogue with our stakeholders is the General Ombudsman's Office, which has a specific website through which it receives suggestions, criticism or complaints. More than a channel of dialogue among citizens, the workforce and the company's senior management, the Ombudsman's Office is a tool to value human rights and the principles of the UN Global Compact. In 2009, of the 12,047 claims made via phone, fax, letter, e-mail contacts or in person, the area completed 11,193 (Petrobras, 2009a, p. 45).

Petrobras' discursive constructions of SEA deprive the human quality when uses countable death, "tolerable" pollution and "records", which these expressions are contradictory with "showing social and environmental responsibility "and "a sustainable company". The fewer importance of employees is also compared to the lack of names and the treatment for the families. However, Petrobras emphasises the prize of a CEO:

> CEO Maria das Graças Silva Foster was elected one of the hundred most influential people in the world by Time magazine . . . . Other awards received by Ms Silva Foster: the Legislative Medal of Merit, the highest honor awarded by Brazil's House of Representatives for services to society in science, politics, culture, or religion (Petrobras, 2012a, p. 183).

However, Petrobras did not consider the political and ethical situation of the discovered corruption later. In 2014, Ms. Foster was in the centre of the accusation of corruption, which resulted in her replacement and more five members of the board directors (Offshore Energy Today, 2015). The political logics are a result of public discourse with rhetorical meaning instead a commitment to SER. Petrobras pretends to be socially responsible for pleasing the stakeholders less involved in the company's decision-making. These examples demonstrate that Petrobras hides the social problems such as deaths, safety and conflicts through a numerical veil of deceit. Numbers also hides the racial diversity:

RACIAL DIVERSITY

RACE/COLOR	NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES		
	HOLDING	DISTRIBUIDORA	TRANSPETRO
White	25,824	3,120	3,172
Pardos (brown)*	10,959	958	1,601
Black	2,340	227	362
Yellow (Asian)*	642	54	38
Indigenous	229	9	3
Not Informed	17,504	43	27
TOTAL	**57,498**	**4,411**	**5,203**

The information above was self-declared by each employee.
*Based on the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) classification of Brazilian population based on skin color or race.

Figure 33 – Racial diversity. Source: Petrobras (2010a, p. 74)

Petrobras transforms a broader conversation about racial problems in Brazil into a short description of the racial diversity. However, as shown, the majority, almost 48%, of Petrobras' employees is white people that represent a predominance of a race rather than diversity. This case relates to the idea of 'asocial' in the positivism that aims to restrict the type of analysis in more 'objective' means (Chua, 1986a). Most importantly, the discussion of racism relates to oppressions, which links to the existence of 17,574 employees not informed race/colour. In a company that favours the racial diversity, an existence of employees that did not inform their race seems a lack of freedom. As a result, a type of oppression.

In summary, this section presented how Petrobras excludes the social in the conversation of SEA. The examples are not exhaustive but are a representation of how Petrobras co-opts the criticism of the social problems in its activities by embracing an economic type of disclosure. For example, there are issues regarding the dearth of disclosures about the labour claims, environmental violations and the embargo as well as the countable representation of employees' deaths, the unfriendly view of "tolerable limit" of oil spills,

the celebration of a CEO when the corruption of Petrobras was happening and the transformation of racial diversity into numbers. As a result, the exclusion of the social reifies the capitalist logic of a company with the strategy oriented to economic growth. The next section describes how Petrobras manages the expectations.

6.2.3 Managing expectations

The third discussion of political logics concentrates on how Petrobras manages the expectations in the SEA arena. There is a state of antagonisms between discourses and actions of the SEA's discursive constructions. This section demonstrates the existing conflicts of the company's values, objectives and commitments.

Petrobras states its values by starting with "sustainable development" [SD]. As prior discussed, Petrobras employs SD in a particular mean that excludes the social and environmental problems to shift SD by the economic terms. Thus, the SD's definition is narrowed to fit the company's aims and to support economic development with little actions to sustainable development. Lélé (1991, p. 607) asserts the SD's concept includes "a lack of consistency" through "an incomplete perception of the problems of poverty and environmental degradation". Comparably, Petrobras limits the social when omits, for example, the situations of fatal accidents, which misrepresents "people" and "respect of life" that are against its own discourse. Petrobras presents the numbers of fatal accidents but conceals the employees' names, circumstances and the safety issues. Furthermore, the "human diversity and cultural" value is restricted when Petrobras presents the "racial diversity" (Petrobras, 2010a, p. 74). It represented a predomination of a particular race and mistrust when employees preferred not to notify their race that puts doubts in the values "proud to be Petrobras". If the employees respect the corporate decisions then why there are many employees without informed race. Petrobras did not present the reasons why employees preferred to omit the race, thus, it results in a needless of employees' information.

Values
- Sustainable development
- Integration
- Results
- Readiness for change
- Entrepreneurship and innovation
- Ethics and Transparency
- Respect for life
- Human diversity and cultural
- People

– Proud to be Petrobras

Figure 34 – Values. Source: Petrobras (2012a, p. cover page)

The example of "racial diversity" transmits a company that privileges numbers, statistics and finance but it does few to diversity or inclusion of people into the decision-making process because the limitation of "diversity" and "fatalities" dehumanises the company's strategies and favours an economic development. The value "Integration" is contested when Petrobras places "integrated growth", "profitability" and "social and environmental responsibility" as in the same level (Figure 19) which means SEA as a servant to the economic proposes. As well as the values "Results", "Readiness for change" and "Entrepreneurship and innovation" represent the desire to economic growth over issues of unsustainable practices (see the accidents, pollutions and fines).

Petrobras uses values to manage the stakeholder's expectation. The value "Ethics and Transparency" indicates a concern to the business actions that, as discussed, are surrounded by antagonisms. For though the fragmentation of the SEA's discursive constructions of Petrobras may imply the need to reveal how Petrobras sustains the discourse of a sustainable company with values of sustainable development, ethics and transparency with unclear descriptions and countable information of what consists the social and environmental issues.

Transparency is a feature that any report of social and environment ought to address. Petrobras alleged to adopt the UN principles and transparency:

> When affirming its participation in the UN Global Compact, the company established the key strategies which guides its actions for sustainability. The commitment to adopt the ten principles of the Compact – relating to Human Rights, Labor, Environment and Transparency – it is a guideline for its decisions as well as provide coherence between the actions taken and the objectives provided in the Global Compact. (Petrobras, 2008b, p. 25).

Between "actions" and "objectives", Petrobras commits to the UN Global Compact. Otherwise, there is no recognition of transparency in the manner of presenting environmental fines, oil spillage, labour or environmental claims, environmental research, renewable energies, fatalities and human rights. Transparency would show a clarification of with the social aspect of the related issues. In general, transparency must demonstrate the amplest portrait of the facts in multiple sources, voices and evidence. Transparency needs a broader information of the social and environmental aspects in societies (Boyce, 2000, p. 54). On the other hand, Petrobras glorifies itself as being transparent based on the fact that it received a prize for its transparency of its incomes.

"According to a report by the Transparency International, Petrobras was considered to be one of the leading oil & gas companies with a high level of transparency in regard to its earnings" (Petrobras, 2008a, p. 104). Thus, Petrobras narrowly plays as a transparent company with a minor feature of its earnings, but there is no real further commitment in a broader perspective in transparency.

The commitment to transparency masks a broader conversation about what is the actual definition. Borderlines in these commitments stand in the limits of a prestige of being transparent. This portrays Petrobras as a transparent company even just by disclosing its earnings. A definition for this construction is a political logic that conserves the corporation in a status level from an insignificant act.

A way to explain transparency can be based on accountability. Specifically, what events would support the proclaimed words in the accountability field? It would imply arguments that exclude most of the doubts and include much information and evidence to prove the intentions originated in that action. A more open concept of accountability must include the legal, political and ethical constitution of accountability (Boyce, 2000, p. 28). Accountability and transparency demand to explicit the facts and legitimate them with evidence.

Lack of information is an example that a real transparency is a foremost reason for producing reports regarding human rights, social aspects or environmental indicators. For the reason, the disclosures of Petrobras currently have an insufficient information concerning to those issues. Having highlighted the type of 'transparency', the existence of a scheme of corruption attenuates any attempt to guarantee that Petrobras is transparent in a scenario of mistrust and ethical issues.

The corruption involving the Operation Car Wash between 2003 and 2014 is proof that ethical issues surround one of the largest corporations in Brazil (MPF, 2015). The Brazilian Federal Prosecution Service [MPF] commenced the investigation in March 2014; it is estimated that Petrobras had a loss of R$ 2.1 billion (MPF, 2015). As a result, the Petrobras' commitment to the 10th principle of corruption is not enough to fulfil a managerial configuration that could avoid corruption. This has roots in a high level of management. Nestor Cuñat Cerveró was the executive director of international business between from January 2003 to April 2006 (Petrobras, 2006c, p. 130).

> In connection with the investigation of the payment scheme, Paulo Roberto Costa, a former Chief Downstream Officer of Petrobras, was arrested in March 2014 and subsequently charged for money-laundering and passive corruption. Other former executives of Petrobras, including Renato de Souza Duque (a former Chief Services Officer), Nestor Cerveró (a former Chief International Officer) and Pedro José Barusco Filho (a former executive manager of the Services area), as well as former executives of Petrobras contractors and suppliers, have been or are expected to be charged as a result of the investigation (Petrobras, 2015a, p. 10).

The prison of one of the former executives of Petrobras demonstrates that the corruption is a long story of lying. Old employees involved in the corruption scandal mean at least two arguments. The corruption is inside the management and becomes a common practice along years of management. Secondly, the system was corrupted and allowed that practice, but new generations of judges are trying to stop this common practice in Brazil. Nestor Cerveró was condemned for five years of prison that corroborates with the argument that corruption of Petrobras is not a simple problem (Folha de S. Paulo, 2015; Jornal do Commércio do Rio de Janeiro, 2015; O Globo, 2015). However, a conspiracy that involves employees (Paulo Roberto Costa, Renato de Souza Duque, Nestor Cuñat Cerveró and Pedro José Barusco Filho), contractors, financial operators and political agents is the core of the corruption in Petrobras (MPF, 2015). However, new judges in the law department changed this scenario of corruption that tried to return to Brazilian society the principle of ethics.

Corruption in Petrobras exposes a negative facet of corporations. The massive production of money also carries ethical problems. Particularly, the corruption in Petrobras supported criminal groups that took resources to finance political parties. Also, this became a loop of payments for exchange. This corruption scandal has affected the operation of Petrobras.

> Rio de Janeiro – April 22, 2015 - (A free translation from the original in Portuguese). Petrobras announces today its audited consolidated results for 4Q-2014 and the full year 2014 . . . The R$ 21,587 million loss in 2014 resulted from impairment charges in the amount of R$ 44,636 million. Write-offs of overpayments incorrectly capitalized in the amount of R$ 6,194 million were recognized in the 3Q-2014 related to the payment scheme uncovered by the investigations of the "Lava Jato (Car Wash) Operation" (referred to below as write-offs of overpayments incorrectly capitalized) (Petrobras, 2015b).

On 22nd April, Petrobras announced the net loss of US$ 7.5 billion (Petrobras, 2015a, p. 5). This loss referred to the company's operations and also because of their over commitment to the consequences – of the Operation Car Wash. PwC asserted, "The Company wrote off US$ 2,527 million of overpayments on the acquisition of property plant and equipment incorrectly capitalized according to testimony obtained from Brazilian criminal investigations" (Petrobras, 2015a, p. 3). Additionally, Petrobras is one of 38 Brazilian

companies who signed the UN agreement on anti-corruption in 2015 (UN, 2015b). If following these policies would help to reduce global corruption then, companies need to provide more information regarding the anti-corruption policies and practices (UN, 2009).

Corruption in a large corporation exposes the essential duty that the media, police and social institutions have to protect societies from criminal groups. Indeed, commitments to and description of sustainability are not sufficient to overcome issues of corruption and transparency. The development of the Operation Car Wash changes the actual forms to approach corruption in Brazil; on 1st June 2015, the MPF propelled suggestions to the National Congress to improve the legislation against corruption (MPF, 2015).

The Petrobras' political logics include a commitment against corruption, support for the transparency and the aspiration to acquire awards with its practices of accountability. However, these logics exclude the roots of corruption, social and environmental problems because the core focus is to sustain Petrobras as one of the leaders of the oil sector, a Brazilian government arm and its strategies to expand their businesses. A clarification of the political logics of Petrobras establishes in the "triumphs" of being a "sustainable company":

> Other triumphs in the area of Social and Environmental Responsibility were the company's inclusion in the Dow Jones Sustainability Index (DJSI) and Bovespa's Corporate Sustainability Index (ISE). Under the former, Petrobras has been recognized as one of the world's most sustainable companies, among 13 oil and gas companies worldwide and just 6 Brazilian companies. Inclusion in the ISE, in addition to emphasizing the company's commitment to sustainability, also expanded its investor base, by attracting those that place a premium on the criteria of social and environmental responsibility when compiling their investment portfolios (Petrobras, 2006a, p. 66).

This quotation clarifies the political logics of support the status of the sustainable company. Petrobras aims to glorify its status as a sustainable company at DJSI and ISE by employing mechanisms to attract the attention of investors that mainly will increase the support for capital growth in the business. Indeed, the existence of years of corruption shows that even with an international commitment to this practice, which did not succeed by internal policies. Thus, there is a necessity for external groups to monitor corporate activities to avoid unethical behaviours. Additionally, external agents also expose the corporation activities and reveal the political logics behind a contested discourse of social and environmental responsibility.

In brief, Petrobras aims to control public expectation by using metaphors of a sustainable company, sustainable development, social and environmental responsibility and

transparency, to name some. However, the corruption scandal exaggerated the reinforcement of economic growth even with an unethical reality.

6.2.4 Conclusions

The political logics addressed by Petrobras aims to control the negative impact resulted from its operation. As an example, Petrobras continues to obscure the environmental damages. The company utilises a defendant logic when approaching accidents. Aiming to undercover the negative impact of its activities, Petrobras conceals accidents. The media, for example, reported two oil accidents between 2012 and 2013, but Petrobras continues to make them silent. In September 2012, oil spills of 15,000 litres occurred in the coastal area of São Paulo State from the terminal Almirante Barroso [Tebar] where Petrobras operates (Brasil Econômico, 2014; Investimentos e Notícias, 2014). For this accident, Petrobras paid a fine of US$ 3.9 million (Agence France-Presse, 2014). Also, in April 2013, another accident took place in Tebar - São Sebastião city. According to Petrobras, there was a volume of 3,500l of oil, but the São Sebastião city' officials contested this data due to the magnitude of the leakage that reached beaches as well as the mobilisation of 300 workers, two airplanes and the equipment to clean the affected zones (Zero Hora, 2013). The second accident resulted in a contamination of eleven beaches in São Sebastião and Caraguatatuba cities (IHS Global Insight, 2013) and a penalty of about US$ 5 million (Agencia EFE, 2013). The São Paulo State environmental regulator [Cetesb] blames Petrobras for "operational failure" (Dow Jones Global News, 2013). The story of the subsidiary of Petrobras, Transpetro (the company in charge for the operation of Tebar[14]) is slightly commented on Petrobras' report (2012a, p. 47) "there were also five fines totalling R$ 39.5 million related to the investigation of irregularities in maritime drilling unit and an oil spillage incident". More than information about the environment and social impacts, Petrobras constantly suppresses the details of its procedures. The municipal secretary for environment affirms that fines do not compensate the damages (O Globo, 2013). For the safety of the environments, Petrobras must act in accordance with health and environment legislation, but the municipal secretary for environment, Eduardo Hipólito do Rego, asserts that Tebar has not possessed the environmental license from the

[14] The terminal is responsible for 55% of the petroleum consumed in Brazil (Gazeta do Povo, 2013; Agência Estado, 2013).

São Sebastião city since 2010 (Agência Estado, 2013). In conclusion, Petrobras reinforces economic development by hiding its damages in the environments.

Some conclusions emerge from this particular political analysis concerning the discursive constructions of SEA by Petrobras. The addressed political logics emphasise the emergence and contestation of the difference between discourse and action. In short, Petrobras tries to mask the corruption, and unsustainable practices of an oil company focused on its development economically. Also, Petrobras utilises a strategy to privilege economic growth over SER through its own controversial discursive constructions. Additionally, Petrobras excludes the social to mislead the existent conflicts between a company oriented by financial results and the surrounded exterior/interior immersed in political, ethical and social issues. Also, Petrobras aims to maintain the public arena using societal needs like sustainable development to soften the resistance of a capitalist company in a developing country that uses metaphors to overcome the mistrust of its actions. The next section discusses the fantasmatic logics constructed by Petrobras.

6.3 Fantasmatic logics

The fantasmatic logics presented are not a pure approach developed in the LCE's methodology. In this particular analysis, the disclosures of Petrobras are used to constitute the subject. This approach is a hermeneutical perspective where I interpret Petrobras as a subject within multiple identities reflected into different voices. The analysis of ten years of Petrobras was placed into the construction of the corpus of analysis which condenses the analysed subject in this fantasmatic approach. Thus, the subject is the focus of the fantasmatic logics analysis. More precisely, the impact on the subject is discussed through two main groups of stakeholders who pressure the ideologies of Petrobras. These groups are the Brazilian Government and the other shareholders. I understand that these groups do not represent the entire group of stakeholders of Petrobras, however Petrobras gives significant attention by a retroductive reasoning analysis. Petrobras has a particular way to emphasise these stakeholders. Glynos and Howarth (2007, p. 145) comprehend fantasmatic logics associate with the resistance to change or the speed to change social practices.

This section discusses the ideologies remained in the background of social and political practices by arguing the role of three main ideologies. First, it presents the constructed ideology of shareholders wealth maximisation. Then, this section debates the ideology of

advanced capital. Finally, this section finishes with the discussion of the ideology of business as normal/traditional.

Petrobras intends to impact two prominent groups of stakeholders. The Brazilian government is the key stakeholders and the second group is the shareholders. There are more groups affected by the Petrobras discourse, but, as shown in the social and political logics sections, the social and environmental problems are excluded then it proves that Petrobras minimises the voices of non-financial stakeholders by using ideologies based on an economic perspective. Thus, this analysis focuses on the Brazilian government and shareholders to discuss the impact of the principal constructed ideologies on supporting the previous social and political logics.

6.3.1 Shareholder wealth maximisation

The ideology of shareholder wealth maximisation is noticeable when Petrobras presents its values that mainly focus on the main shareholders and values to create more economical results "integration", "results" and "readiness for change". It is the typical business case approach that primarily has the goal to represent SEA in a particular way that a real exposition of conflicts (Brown & Fraser, 2006). Petrobras utilises "sustainable development" but it is redirected to its particular interests as illustrated in the social and political logics. Hence, the primordial impact of this ideology is to support the Brazilian government and its shareholders in the economic ambition. O'Dwyer (2003, p. 523) contends the analysed managers of Irish public companies have a tendency to interpret CSR related to the "corporate goals of shareholders wealth maximisation". This is similar to the Petrobras' case, which has a pattern to characterise SER, sustainability and sustainable development as a product of its goals of wealthiness.

> Values
>
> Focus on the Company's main stakeholders: shareholders, customers, employees, society, government, partners, suppliers and the communities in which it operates; A spirit of entrepreneurship and an ability to meet challenges; Focus on obtaining excellent results (Petrobras, 2005a, p. 3).
>
> Values
>
> Giving importance to the company's principal stakeholders: shareholders, clients, employees, society, government, partners, suppliers and the communities within which the company operates; A spirit of enterprise and the ability to meet challenges; A focus on quality in the results; (Petrobras, 2006a, p. 3).
>
> Values
>
> Sustainable development / Integration / Results / Readiness for change / Entrepreneurship and innovation (Petrobras, 2013a, p. 2).

There is emphasis on the economic development, for example, in the CEO's messages:

> This performance has ranked Petrobras the fourth in market value among listed global energy companies, at US $199.2 billion, up twofold compared to the previous year's mark. The company also maintained its investment grade rating and ensured, for the fourth consecutive year, its listing on the Dow Jones Sustainability Index (Petrobras, 2009a, p. 5).
>
> It is with special pride that I present the Company's results for 2005, a year in which we set records for production, profitability and investments. The Company ended the year with an annual daily production of oil and gas of 2,217 million barrels of oil equivalent (boe), consolidated earnings of R$ 23,725 billion and total investments of R$ 25,710 billion, all historical records (Petrobras, 2005a, p. 9).
>
> Our 2014-2018 Business and Management Plan poses investments totaling US$ 220.6 billion, particularly in exploration and production, which will account for US$ 153.9 billion (70% of the total), and US$ 82 billion of that will be used for the pre-salt oil fields (Petrobras, 2013a, p. 5).

These quotations demonstrate Petrobras imposes an ideology of increasing the capital "[f]ocus on obtaining excellent results", "records for production, profitability and investments", "[i]ntegration", "[r]esults" and "[t]his performance" signify certain means to maximise the investments from its shareholders. It is crucial to emphasise that Petrobras' discursive constructions of SEA are mainly supported by the idea of development with most disregarding to a proper perspective and actions towards a sustainability definition that crosses the boundaries of decreasing poverty and protection of the environments as portrayed in the Brundtland Report (1987). A reconstruction of the ideology of Petrobras implies a company that pursues the results primarily for its financial stakeholders that this ideology has impacts on the type of investments focusing on financial performances. These investments are an important way to continue to grow economically which this idea is also shared by the Brazilian politicians. To illustrate, the minister of finance, Joaquim Levy, affirmed the expectation about the late Petrobras' annual results affected by the corruption was related to transparency that disturbed the favourable environment for investments in Brazil (Correio Braziliense, 2015).

> The USA economy grew 3.3%, the European Union 3.4%; Japan 2.2%, completing seven years running of positive growth; and in China — the new booster of the world economy — 10.7%, achieving over 10% for three years running. These significant growth rates helped increase the international reserves of the developing countries and improve their current account balances. The fair winds of the world economy were reflected in the Brazilian trade balance. The balance was US$ 46 billion for the year, the result of exports of US$ 137 billion and imports of US$ 91 billion — an increase of 16% and 24%, respectively, compared to the same period the year before. The positive atmosphere also helped reduce the Brazil-Risk, which closed the year 36% lower than in 2005. The favorable internal and external economic conjunctures culminated in an increase in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which was 2.9% in 2006, boosted by an increased domestic consumer demand for durable goods. Cattle-raising and industrial sectors had above-average rises of 3.2% and 3%, respectively. The highlight in the primary sectors was agribusiness, namely sugarcane, the feedstock for ethanol. – Minister Mr. Joaquim Levy (Correio Braziliense, 2015).

In the Brazilian government, the impact of this ideology covers the discourse of Petrobras is helping Brazil to grow, especially, its investments as affirmed by the Minister Mr. Levy. As a result, the foundation of this ideology portrays Petrobras as rich then, consequently, Brazil as rich. In the view of shareholders, a similar message is crossed through Petrobras' discursive constructions, which sustain a profitable environment of Petrobras that affects the profitability of its shareholders.

> VISION FOR 2020
>
> Petrobras will be one of the five largest integrated energy companies in the world and the preferred choice among our stakeholders (Petrobras, 2007a, p. cover page).

Both discussed stakeholders are impacted by this ideology. Petrobras is an example of the business case approach. Its principal social logics are based on economic growth even with the existence of social and environmental problems sustained by its exclusions that support the ideology of shareholder wealth maximisation. Brown and Fraser (2006, p. 104) argue the business case approach is an extension of the management to enhance the shareholder wealth. Laine (2005, p. 395) discusses the disclosures of sustainable development by Finnish companies and asserts these disclosures focus on the win-win concept that makes society accept economic growth, however, organisations use rhetorical discourse to address the social and environmental issues. Thus, the ideology of Laine's work understands that businesses commonly ignore the social problems using a rhetorical talk to elude societies. As well as the literature, Petrobras uses the ideology of shareholder wealth maximisation to justify the exclusions of the social discussed previously and to reify the capital accumulation of its shareholders through the exploitation of others.

SEA theme is placed aside the usual business rhetoric to support its principal goals. As an illustration, Petrobras gathers a concept of social and environmental responsibility in the same level of profitability and integrated growth:

> Petrobras endeavors to be, by 2020, one of the world's top five integrated energy companies, and the preferred choice among all of its stakeholders. To achieve this goal, its corporate strategy is based on integrated growth, profitability, and social and environmental responsibility (Petrobras, 2010a, p. 19).

Prior discussed, Petrobras minimises the definition of SER to fit the company's strategies because there is a gap between the actions and company's definition of SER that equalises it as a form of profitability and integrated growth. What Petrobras emphasises is the development. Thus, it also means that Petrobras wants to make money and to grow for

the purpose of its shareholders. The constructed ideology of wealth sustains the company's objectives with fantasies and contradictions. The fantasies portray a company involved by a sustainable development value (Petrobras, 2010a; 2011a; 2012a; 2013a) that is a fallacy when CSR is defined more important than sustainability, or the company's objective is more important than the social needs. The Petrobras' constructions of CSR benefit economic development. However, it happens in situations of known controversies. These controversies are primarily evidenced when Petrobras misleads a proper approach to CSR that excludes the social and hides the environmental accidents.

> The year was also marked by a significant growth in the world economy that reflected positively on the economic variables of the developing countries, namely Brazil. Petrobras had some of its best ever records at the year end with regard to increased demand and world expansion and to the rise in commodity prices especially petroleum (Petrobras, 2006b, p. 13-14).

The principal support for this ideology is the camouflage of the issues of unsustainable practices that constitute the key argument for the idea of development. The Petrobras' ideas of growth are sustained while company uses sustainability metaphorically. To exemplify, Petrobras emphasises the economic basis of its decision-making that means an ideology of growth centred on financial choices. In the cases of environmental accidents, Petrobras only shows the ones with the 'significant' fines greater than BRL 1 million. "In 2010, there were 21 environmental infraction notices, which added up to R$80.75 million. These figures only include fines of amounts greater than or equal to R$1 million" (Petrobras, 2010a, p. 91). "We were fined on 31 significant charges of noncompliance with laws and regulations totaling R$ 547.97 million. The criteria used to consider a fine as significant is that it amounts to R$ 1 million or more" (Petrobras, 2012a, p. 42). Hence, the significance of environmental problems for Petrobras is the financial costs, not lives or damages. To this extent, Petrobras frames its principal ideology that represents SEA (sustainability, SER, CSR) as equal to economic development.

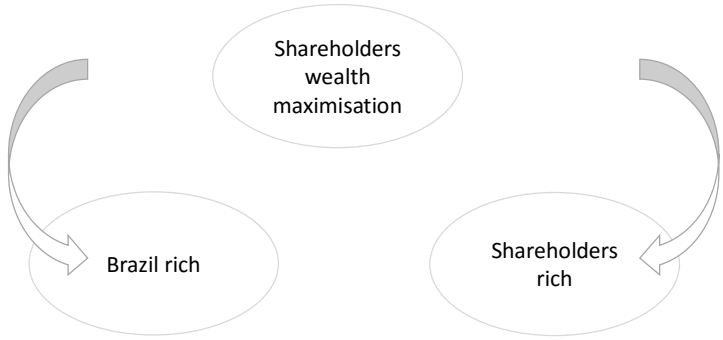

Figure 35 – The ideology of shareholders wealth maximisation

The ideology of shareholder wealth maximisation includes Brazil that sends a subtle message that the wealth of Petrobras also represents the Brazilian's prosperity. Notwithstanding, the corruption scandal in Petrobras broke this alliance, at least, in the public area. On May 2015, Petrobras has portrayed itself as a victim (Dow Jones Institutional News, 2015; Buenos Aires Herald, 2015). Also, the other implicated actors represent the problem of corruption with their participation in hiding this issue. Others than Petrobras are accused of the corruption when demonstrations and political struggles cover the Brazilian scenario with uncertainty. The renouncement of Petrobras concerning corruption is a political defence to protect the business strategies. Corruption and political instability in Brazil has a political impact. There is a chance that Brazil will face a second debate about the impeachment of Ms. Dilma Rousseff (The Times, 2015; Economist Intelligence, 2015). Yet, in this scenario, Petrobras has a history of corruption (see Appendix 2). However, the corruption scandal of the Operation Car Wash is the most expressive scheme, which included politicians, high level of executives, engineering contractors and financial agents during ten years. This scandal repercussed the Petrobras' reputation that in a political way publically separated Petrobras' decision from the Brazilian government.

> The Brazilian government, as our controlling shareholder, has pursued, and may pursue in the future, certain of its macroeconomic and social objectives through us. Brazilian law requires the Brazilian government to own a majority of our voting stock, and so long as it does, the Brazilian government will have the power to elect a majority of the members of our board of directors and, through them, a majority of the executive officers who are responsible for our day-to-day management (Petrobras, 2006c, p. 19).

The Brazilian government who chooses its principal executives controls Petrobras. The authorities' investigation accused the company's directors of being part of the criminal investigation of the Operation Car Wash, which disarticulated the scheme, and authorities continue to examine more agents involved in this scandal. Although, Petrobras and the government had enough proof of their faults. However, Petrobras does not assume that the corruption is part of its business and places the accusations in a criterion of the justice. This attitude supports the principal logic relating to development because the negation of a corrupted company favours the company's strategies.

The victim attitude reinforces the social and political practices through Petrobras' discursive constructions. Petrobras sends a message for its shareholders that the company concentrates on the ideology of wealth maximisation even in a scenario of

mistrustfulness. This message has influences on the Brazilian governmental goal by supporting the necessity of developing the Brazilian economy in the aim of prosperity. Also, shareholders are supported in this desire to become richer.

To conclude, the ideology of shareholder wealth maximisation strengthens the social logics, as an example, when Petrobras sustains and privileges its development over SER. Thus, the role of this ideology is to succeed in a capitalist mechanism that utilises social, cultural, institutional and environmental aspects as resources and ignores an appropriate perspective for issues of unsustainability undermined in its practices.

The next section focuses on the ideology of advanced capital.

6.3.2 Advanced capital

The second ideology adds the previous concerning a superiority of the corporate expertise to create new ways of making money, which frames in the shareholders' mind that Petrobras is the best choice among others. "2020 Vision We will be one of the world's top five integrated energy companies and the company of choice for our stakeholders" (Petrobras, 2012a, p. cover page). Petrobras supports the advanced capital ideology due to the assumption of a capability to explore a developing country. This ideology creates a new flag for the expropriation of resources to construct a new path to increase the generation of wealthiness. This path drives on a "choice for our stakeholders", but the privilege is primarily for the shareholders when Petrobras prefers economic development and excludes the social (see the social logics discussion).

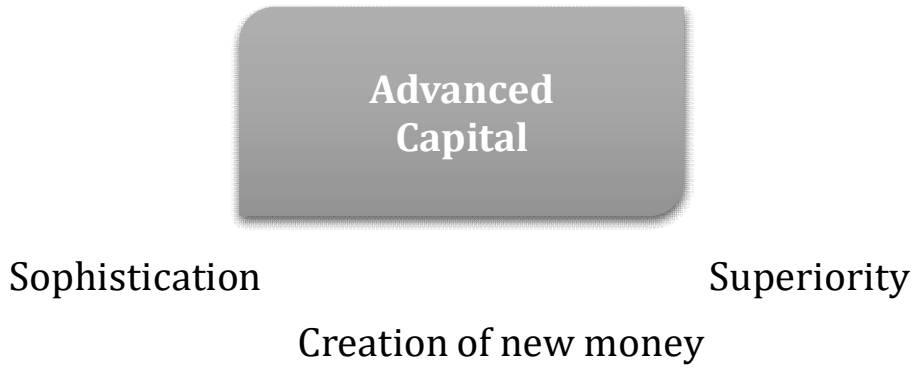

Figure 36 – The ideology of advanced capital

The enhancing of management in term of CSR supports the advanced capital ideology. WBCSD (2003, p. 15) outlines a list of benefits of CSR including improvements of systems,

reputation and the attracting of long-term capital investments. The impact of this ideology is the continually enhancing of a capital-oriented company that aims to persist in growing with sophisticated discourses and technologies. Petrobras incorporates a sophisticated talk when affirms to operate with best practices. "Both in Brazil and in other jurisdictions in which we operate, as well as to evolving industry standards and best practices" (Petrobras, 2011b, p. 19). "Best Practices in Petroleum Industry: practices and procedures generally employed in the Petroleum Industry worldwide by prudent and diligent Companies under conditions and circumstances similar to those experienced regarding relevant aspects of the Operations" (Petrobras, 2013b, p. 9-13 of Exhibit 2.78). There is a background in pursuing a company in this practice, which makes the company with superiority producing more capital. Best practice is a trick to shadow a company with the best ways to explore, operate and use the "industry standards" in contested practices of social responsibility that seem to favour the key influential stakeholders: the Brazilian government and shareholders mostly. Prior discussed, Petrobras utilises the ideological cover of its industry to protect its activities and practices. The practice of an energy oil company operated by Petrobras pollutes which is a parallel of the competitors such as Shell, BP and others. Then, Petrobras uses 'best practices' of its industry to emit a message that as an advanced capital company allows Petrobras to provide the best performance to create money in a developing country.

It is the voice of a developed company in a developing country. In other words, this ideology sustains the aim of the Brazilian government to transform Brazil in a developed country and the desire of shareholders to create more money. However, this ideology relates to contradictions on the subject of the notion of SER, CSR and SD. That is also support for the political and social logics discussed above. An advanced capital ideology highlights the best technologies and claims superiority. Petrobras describes itself as a company operating in an "integrated specialised basis":

> Petrobras is a publicly listed company that operates on an integrated and specialized basis in the following segments of the oil, gas and energy industry: exploration and production; refining, commercialization, transportation and petrochemicals; distribution of oil products; natural gas and energy (Petrobras, 2005a, p. cover page).
>
> Brazil's leading oil company Petrobras was founded in 1953 and is now a publicly traded business corporation. At end-2012, it was the world's seventh largest energy company in market cap terms according to consulting firm PFC Energy, and was ranked fifteenth by Petroleum Intelligence Weekly (PIW) based on market value and an analysis of six operational criteria. In the oil, gas and energy industry, Petrobras operates on an integrated specialized basis in the following segments: exploration and production, refining, marketing, transportation, petrochemicals, oil product distribution, natural gas, electricity, chemical gas, and biofuels (Petrobras, 2012a, p. cover page).

This ideology fails to accomplish the complexities of what a company "showing social and environmental responsibility" means. Addressing the SER in a capitalist mode, Petrobras intends to please shareholders in the achievement of a 'better' new way to make money, particularly, in this new era of developing countries through an idea of faster money. "In 39 years of developing Brazil's offshore basins we have developed special expertise in deep-water exploration and production, which we exploit both in Brazil and in other offshore oil provinces" (Petrobras, 2007c, p. 22). This ideology also connects to the notion of global capitalism. Lehman (1999, p. 219) asseverates the global capitalism has supplied corporations with a capacity to overgrow countries limits and has attained economic recognitions "that follow from short-term and unsustainable economic practices". It is the cases of corruption in Petrobras (see the Appendix 2). Also, as a result, the Operation Car Wash has affected the corporate economic results as well as the principal owner. However, the corporate discourse maintains the rhetorical concepts of SER to support the development over situations of mistrustfulness and unsustainability. Business case utilises a rhetorical concept of business regarding sustainable development to help economic growth with little efforts to transcend the social practices (Laine, 2005).

The contested sustainable actions practised by Petrobras demonstrate that the new technologies aim to help them to grow economically and internationally. "Petrobras invests in developing new technologies and looks for new energy sources, without forgetting sustainable development and social responsibility" (Petrobras, 2006b, p. 6). The development is considered more important than SER.

> Internationalization goals
>
> International strategies include operating in new areas with major Exploration and Product (E&P) potential, internationalization and valorization of the Petrobras brand, and extending the downstream activity in profitable and growth potential markets. The Company estimates investments abroad to be US$ 12.1 billion in the 2007-2011 Business Plan. Some of the internationalization goals worth mentioning, with focus on further production in the Gulf of Mexico and Nigeria, are the production of 383,000 bpd of oil and Liquified[sic] natural gas (LNG) and 185,000 boed[15] of natural gas. Also for 2011, it is expected to have 499,000 bpd of processed load in refineries abroad (Petrobras, 2006b, p. 17).

An essential impact of this ideology on Brazil seems to relate to a desire to be advanced country that investors can spend their money with no hesitation due to the "investments abroad" and "specialised basis". Petrobras supports the Brazil's image of sophistication

[15] Boed = barrels of oil equivalent a day (Petrobras, 2006b, p. 14).

when addresses the advanced technologies, techniques and methods. In other words, Petrobras contributes to the Brazilian policies of progress.

This section discussed the ideology of advanced capital that has an important impact on its principal stakeholders. Petrobras represents itself by using best technologies and practices to influence the shareholders' choices because Petrobras primarily pursues economic results and operates in the 'best' way to continue the creation of new forms to exploit and enlarge the capital invested in a developing country.

The next section presents the third ideology of business as normal.

6.3.3 Business as normal/traditional

The ideology of business as normal/traditional triggers impacts on the Brazilian government and shareholders by affirming the company will continue to operate as normal that is a legitimation of what societies accept or are inclined to accept consisting the concept of business. The traditional context of businesses is the one that promotes "creation value for the business (owners)" (Brown & Fraser, 2006, p. 105). That is, generally, the continuance of exploitation and expropriation in the name of the country, but as has been debated, the Petrobras' practices typically assists its elitist groups (shareholders).

> We are an integrated oil and gas company that is the largest corporation in Brazil and one of the largest companies in Latin America in terms of revenues. As a result of our legacy as Brazil's former sole supplier of crude oil and oil products and our ongoing commitment to development and growth, we operate most of Brazil's producing oil and gas fields and hold a large base of proved reserves and a fully developed operational infrastructure. In 2012, our average domestic daily oil production was 1,980 mbbl/d, an estimated 96.1% of Brazil's total. Over 73.5% of our domestic proved reserves are in large, contiguous and highly productive fields in the offshore Campos Basin, which allows us to optimize our infrastructure and limit our costs of exploration, development and production. In 44 years of developing Brazil's offshore basins we have developed special expertise in deepwater exploration and production, which we exploit both in Brazil and in other offshore oil provinces (Petrobras, 2012b, p. 23).

The business case approach (as a form of Petrobras' disclosures) tries to perpetuate its particular goals over the claiming for universal goals. To clarify this, Petrobras aims to develop the operation and to increase its revenues using SEA topics to conceal basically public opinion (see the social logics). The use of SEA and CSR in the business case approach is a pretend commitment that serves to what is perceived rather than what is the real (Brown & Fraser, 2006, p. 105). Thus, this ideology serves to maintain the business as usual (Brown & Fraser, 2006; O'Dwyer, 2003). The Brazilian history may elucidate this practice.

This brief history of Brazil started when Portugal discovered Brazil in 1500. The slavery of local Indians and later the African people was the backbone of the businesses until 1889 (Golden Law[16]) that supported the development of businesses, and it was considered a normal way to do business. Between 1500 and 1535, the principal activity was the extraction of brazilwood (Fausto, 1995, p. 42). From 16th to 18th centuries, Brazil was centred on mercantilism, which characterised a trading that Brazil contributed with goods such as sugar, tobacco, cotton, coffee, gold, balsam, roots, precious stones and gems in exchange for other manufactured products (Meade, 2004, p. 29). In this period, the principal idea of business was to exploit the slaves and to expropriate lands and environments. This traditional kind of business was viewed to provide a great advantage for powerful groups. In comparison with Petrobras, the notion of business became more fashion, but the exploitation and expropriation of natural reserves have framed the normal category of a corporation that seeks to represent the analogous sort of business in the Portuguese times.

In terms of business as normal/traditional, the principal effect on the Brazilian government poses in the desire to become a developed country. However, the wealth distribution, educational quality and wellbeing of Brazil place the country in the 79th rank of HDI (UN, 2014, p. 161). Thus, the development is mostly to increase the economy, but it has hardly enough for the Brazilian population. In 2015, CNN Money (2015) classifies Brazil in the eighth economy of the world. As a result, the development of Brazil is principally relating to economics rather than facing the social problems. Therefore, Petrobras relates to a similar idea of development due to its emphasis on the traditional kind of business. The major impact of this ideology is the conservation of business to exploit social and environments that predominately favours elitist groups in the control of the business, which is, in the case of Petrobras, the Brazilian government and shareholders to grow in relation to an economic aspect.

[16] The law that abolished the slavery in Brazil.

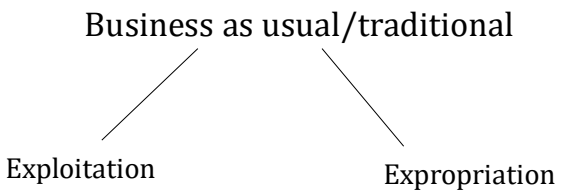

Figure 37 – Ideology of business as normal/traditional

The principal idea of business as normal/traditional is a win-win notion (Brown & Fraser, 2006; Laine, 2005). More importantly, a win-win concept considers sustainable development in enjoyment for society with no "radical restructuration" of the social practices (Laine, 2005, p. 395). As a result, the traditional view of business represents SEA in an enjoyable mean for societies that rhetorically addresses the issues of what sustainable development signifies. Petrobras presents the principal achievement "to contribute to the development of Brazil" (Petrobras, 2007b, p. cover page). However, Petrobras is a State-owned company that has given the rights to explore the oil and natural gas in Brazil.

> We do not own any of the subsoil accumulations of crude oil and natural gas in Brazil. Under Brazilian law, the Brazilian federal government owns all subsoil accumulations of crude oil and natural gas in Brazil and the concessionaire owns the oil and gas it produces from those subsoil accumulations pursuant to concession agreements. We possess the exclusive right to develop the volumes of crude oil and natural gas included in our reserves pursuant to concession agreements awarded to us by the Brazilian federal government, and we own the hydrocarbons we produce under those concession agreements. Access to crude oil and natural gas reserves is essential to an oil and gas company's sustained production and generation of income, and our ability to generate income would be adversely affected if the Brazilian federal government were to restrict or prevent us from exploiting these crude oil and natural gas reserves. In addition, we may be subject to fines by the ANP and our concessions may be revoked if we do not comply with our obligations under our concession agreements (Petrobras, 2009b, pp. 12-13).

The company emphasises its "concession agreements" that permit itself to access the hydrocarbons, and it essentially sustains the corporative goal of "production and generation of income". Likewise, the exploitation of oil and natural gas reserves does not differ to the traditional idea of business. To illustrate, the system of plantation employed in Brazil configured business to centre on the production of goods and generation of incomes with cheap labour (slavery), but this ideology of business as traditional denies the contradictions, the sad history of slavery, the decimation of Indians and the devastation of environments. It is evident a most positive discursive construction of the

statements that support this ideology which the language coincides to the capitalist logics (Spence, 2007).

> Our ability to achieve our long-term growth objectives for oil production depends on our ability to discover additional reserves and successfully develop them, and failure to do so could prevent us from achieving our long-term goals for growth in production. . . . Unless we conduct successful exploration and development activities or acquire properties containing proved reserves, or both, and are able to raise the necessary capital to fund these activities, our proved reserves will decline as reserves are extracted (Petrobras, 2013b, p. 15).

As discussed, Petrobras prefers a development driven in economic parameters over SER. Then, there is an ideology under this practice that consists of the idea of business concentrated on the support to a capitalist goal associating its practices with "long-term growth", "successful exploration" and "development". Spence (2007, p. 875) states the business case uses the notion is sustainable development in a subverted mean to fit corporate purposes. Consequently, this ideology as well as its social practice exclude and hide the social and conflicts involving its activities.

> We are subject to numerous environmental, health and safety regulations and industry standards that are becoming more stringent and may result in increased capital and operating expenditures and decreased production (Petrobras, 2011b, p. 19).

Petrobras' disclosures draw in a particular view regarding regulations of health, environment and safety that can affect the company's production and development. This ideology of business as normal, hence, favours economic growth through the exclusion of the negativities of its activities. In the Petrobras' words, these regulations "may result in increased capital and operating expenditures". Then, it is a well-defined message that Petrobras supports mean to reduce the capital expenses and disregards a proper look at the social and environmental aspects because the goal is to help the business to an economic development and to continue to be the traditional concept of the company. It is the classical description of business case. Brown and Fraser (2006, p. 105) outline the business case changes the approach to SEA and CSR as a "managerial distraction or a trade-off against profits" to use in the managerial decisions that aim to minimise the effects of regulations to promote the business' goals. Business case approach and Petrobras' discursive constructions seem to frame SEA typically in a perception perspective rather than exposing the "real conflicts" (Brown & Fraser, 2006, p. 105).

> We are now quite close to self-sufficiency in providing oil and oil products to our main market - Brazil. This target, which is symbolic for Brazilian society, will materialize in a sustainable manner in 2006, as soon as the recently launched P-50 platform reaches its peak production capacity of 180,000 bpd in the Campos Basin. In a situation in which a scarcity of energy resources, mainly oil, has become more and more evident, achieving self-sufficiency represents an important step

> towards reducing the risk and vulnerability of Brazil´s trade balance. And Petrobras is proud to be making an important contribution towards reaching this goal (Petrobras, 2005a, pp. 9-10).
>
> The year 2006 was a landmark for Brazil when it achieved petroleum self-sufficiency. It was also the year when Petrobras, known worldwide for its excellence in producing oil, natural gas and by products, joined the select list of companies in the Dow Jones Sustainability Index (DJSI), the top world index for assessing corporate performance relating to social and environmental responsibility. Its best ever profit of R$ 25.9 billion, around 9% more than 2005, was the highest among Latin American business corporations (Petrobras, 2006b, p. 7).

Petrobras ignores the social when representing what makes "a landmark for Brazil" and a "symbolic for Brazilian society". Otherwise, the company performs its practices as normal because the primordial emphasis is what contributes to the economic development. To illustrate, Petrobras uses "best ever profit" and "excellence in producing oil" to represent means to support the traditional idea of business. The ideology of a traditional concept of business constitutes a traditional way to exploit the natural reserves of oil and gas to promote the shareholders' interests of capital accumulation, generation of profits and a sustainable development of its brands and production.

At a final point, the corruption scandal of the Operation Car Wash has not changed the Petrobras' ideology of its business. Petrobras plays as a victim of corruption which signifies a reification of the traditional concept of business because Petrobras uses SER and sustainable development rhetorically to confine the public expectation but the company does little to change its operation. The principal beneficiaries of this ideology are the Brazilian government and shareholders that chiefly support the exploitation for their self-interests.

In conclusion, the ideology of business as normal/traditional seeks to perpetuate the wealth of few powerful people. In the Petrobras' case, the Brazilian government and its shareholders have their desires supported of a type of business based on the exploitation and expropriation that has results concerning financial outcomes. Also, the desired impact on Petrobras is to justify the business activities and to legitimise the business as has always been in Brazil through an economic focus. This idea is a portrait of business as old times operated in Brazil. The new ages added technologies and ideas, but the normal concept of business remains a fashion concept of business using the old cover, which represents a company to grow disregarding unsustainability practices, environmental damages and all over cases of corruption.

6.3.4 Conclusions

The fantasmatic logics particularly addressed discussed three principal ideologies concerning the social and environmental discursive construction of Petrobras. Because of the major focus of Petrobras is on the development and as a consequence the same results for its owners. The first ideology is the shareholder wealth maximisation that reinforces the thought of Petrobras rich, Brazil and its shareholders rich. Secondly, the advanced capital ideology emphasises the sophistication of the company's expertise that sustains a company able enough to create extra money in a developing country. The third ideology captures the traditional concept of business regarding exploitation and expropriation to the benefit of the Brazilian government and its shareholders. Thus, Petrobras represents its discursive constructions to transform its principal stakeholders rich in a continuum form to perpetuate the wealthfor its owners.

7 ARTICULATION AND CRITIQUES

This chapter theoretically develops the previous empirical discussions with an emphasis on the foundation in DT. The discussion of this chapter draws on the phases of articulation and critique derived from the LCE's methodology. In this chapter, I articulate the connection between the empirical discussion and the theoretical foundation in DT. "[A]rticulation serves as a means to conceptualize the way we conduct research in the social sciences while also contributing to our overall understanding of the logic of critical explanation" (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 165). In particular, this articulation concerns to re-connect empirical data and theory in a redescription manner that aims to show a sense of plausibility. However, articulation in the excursion to reach a hegemonic meaning arises within antagonisms and dislocations which these elements are considered in the critiques of the discursive construction of SEA constituted by Petrobras' disclosures.

More specifically, the concept of articulation also enforces the concept of undecidability (Derridean term). The principal idea of articulation happens in an arena of heterogeneity in which any attempt to elect a signification, interpretation, a view is contingent (Derrida, 1992; Laclau & Mouffe, 2001). Thus, articulation is necessary in order to achieve a moment of hegemony because of the fragmented discourses can only make sense in a contingent articulation (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001).

> Deeper levels of contingency require hegemonic - that is, contingent - articulations, which is another way of saying that the moment of reactivation means nothing other than retrieving an act of political institution that finds its source and motivation nowhere but in itself (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. xi).

However, my (re) interpretation is also related to a deep level of contingency and undecidability that is an instance of the impossibility to ensure a complete moment of objectivity.

> [T]he notion of undecidability has been crucial. If, as shown in the work of Derrida, undecidables permeate the field which had previously been seen as governed by structural determination, one can see hegemony as a theory of the decision taken in an undecidable terrain (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. xi).

The notion of undecidability does not only mean the difference between two poles to make decisions but the contingency of each decision in a field of heterogeneity (Derrida, 1992). From an analysis grounded in a philosophical-political basis, it is also limited, contingent and fragmented (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001). However, it is essential to discuss, understand, critique and reveal hegemonies, ideologies and equivalences surrounded in the area of undecidability. My interpretation is contingent but necessary. The critiques,

therefore, are a subject of contestation and discussion that are the principal claims in the post-structuralist and critical theory studies of SEA. The critiques of SEA link to the notions of displacement and antagonism.

A displacement refers to the relationship between signifier and signified (Laclau, 2005, p. 26):

> Since this is the way things are, we cannot simply differentiate the 'true' meaning of a term (which would necessarily be permanent) from a series of images connotatively associated with it, for the associative networks are an integral part of the very structure of language.

The notion of displacement is more evident when there is a dissociation between a "true signification" and the "evoked meaning" (Laclau, 2005, p. 26). As a result, I consider the critiques connected to the displacements. In more analytical, it means a revealing explanation between intentions and signification within the range of the SEA's discursivity. Secondly, the phase of critique associates with the notion of antagonism.

> The impossibility of closure (i.e., the impossibility of 'society') has up to this point been presented as the precariousness of every identity, which manifests itself as a continuous movement of differences. We must now, however, ask ourselves: are there not some 'experiences', some discursive forms, in which what is manifested is no longer the continuous deferment of the 'transcendental signified', but the very vanity of this deferring, the final impossibility of any stable difference and, thus, of any 'objectivity'? The answer is yes. This 'experience' of the limit of all objectivity does have a form of precise discursive presence, and this is antagonism (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. 122).

The concept of antagonism constitutes the assumption that every object in society involves "the impossibility of closure" which is a post-structuralist perspective to understand the social realities. A definition of antagonism establishes through the constitution of contingency, and then, antagonism emerges within a "revelatory function" that considers all social configuration a contingent form of objectivity (Laclau, 1990, p. 18). Antagonism, thus, relates to contradictions and adversity of meanings are an important political discussion due to the articulation of hegemonies that claims for objectivity in a subjective world. In a methodical sense, antagonism is an important concept to understand how objects in social life remain into diverse appearances of significations.

The tone of this chapter is to discuss the articulation of SEA constructed by Petrobras by assuming that discourses and discursive practices are representational forms of societies (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001). The articulation is an approach to recapitulate the methodology of LCE through the five steps.

The problematisation phase has ramification in the whole thesis. To illustrate, the problematisation of the object, SEA, has started with a brief history of sustainability in Chapter 2, and, then, Chapter 3 presented approaches of SEA and in Chapter 6 the empirical data have shown the use of business case approach to address the ontic level of SEA. In short, SEA is a discursive construction that needs to be part of a political discussion concerning its effects in social realities.

The retroductive explanation phase is for me an intrinsic connection between theory and empirical data that has been employed in the entire thesis in an endless circle, which means an organic understanding of a social reality regarding the discursive construction of SEA. The retroduction reasoning is a sense of interaction that goes back and forth to understand the logics related to the problematisation. This interaction aims to explain the articulation and to support the final critiques.

In summary, this chapter makes clearer links between the empirical findings and the theoretical elements of DT. Especially, the articulation of SEA highlights the interrelationships of social, political and fantasmatic logics throughout these elements in DT. And, in each discussion, the critiques emerge as a mean to elucidate the meanings left behind from the principal picture of SEA articulated by Petrobras.

At the core, this Chapter aims to demonstrate four empirical discussions with a theoretical foundation in DT to understand, critique and evaluate Petrobras' discursive construction of SEA. Thus, through this discussion is possible to reconnect the practices and the theory in a plausible way that has the goal to elucidate how Petrobras, as a political actor, uses SEA in its particular articulation. This chapter is divided into four sections. The first section debates the judgment to frame what is SEA for Petrobras. The second section constructs a clear understanding of how the logic of equivalence/difference plays an important mechanism in the political agenda. Further, the ideologies portray the structure of power in ramification, perpetuation and maintenance of hegemonies. Then, the last section discusses the hegemonic process to place the SEA in a privileged condition.

7.1 A judgment for SEA

This section discusses the process of judgment concerning the decision of Petrobras of what consists SEA for them. It presents that, theoretically, objectivity is impossible in any particular judgment in which links to the notion of undecidability in Derrida's work. Then,

this section debates the emergence of a double ontic gap when Petrobras decides to define SEA in its particular means.

Judgment is not an easy task. A process to decide has infinite subjectivity, but the target is to show a judgment with some objectivity. However, a complete objectivity of any discursive constructions is impossible as discussed in the notion of antagonism (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001). "[A]ntagonism constitutes the limits of every objectivity" (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. 125). In Derridean term, undecidability connects to this impossibility vis-à-vis judgment respecting its characteristics of subjectivity and contingency in each object of social life (Derrida, 1992).

The activity of judgment is unequivocally subjective, in that, for example, Derrida (1992, p. 23) explains the decision of a judge includes not only laws and rules but also ways to confirm, prove or assume them in which evokes a subjective act of interpretation. Each new judgment, the judge, needs to conform to a prior rule. However, it is done through a new affirmation that may conform, reinvent and/or destroy a pre-existing law, rule and/or principle (Derrida, 1992, p. 23). An absolute interpretation is impossible (Derrida, 1992; Laclau & Mouffe, 2001). For this result, the decision of Petrobras of what constitutes SEA for them is an act of subjectivity in a pretence way of objectivity because to judge, decide or choose penetrates the notion of undecidability that prevents a complete objectification.

> The undecidable, a theme often associated with deconstruction, is not merely the oscillation between two significations or two contradictory and very determinate rules, each equally imperative (for example respect for equity and – universal right but also for the always heterogeneous and unique singularity of the unsubsumable example). The undecidable is not merely the oscillation or the tension between two decisions; it is the experience of that which, though heterogeneous, foreign to the order of the calculable and the rule, is still obliged – it is of obligation that we must speak – to give itself up to the impossible decision, while taking account of law and rules (Derrida, 1992, p. 24).

The impossibility to achieve a decision refers to the infinitude of interpretations including laws and rules concerning a sense of a fair decision which is an illusion (Derrida, 1992). To elucidate, Derrida (1992, p. 25) asserts "the idea of justice" is "irreducible" for the existing "the other" that contributes to the endless and inconclusive decisions without some ramification of subjectivity. In the case study, a decision of what constitutes SEA is subjectivity and tries to ignore antagonisms, but they are unavoidable due to the contingency of each discursivity (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001).

In the Petrobras case, the constitution, naming and institution of SEA is:

1) An impossible act: Petrobras aims to fix meanings for SEA that can associate with the company's strategies, but, in DT, the attempt to fix a meaning is temporal, fragment and contingent. The impossibility also connects to the notion of antagonism which is a barrier to close the system of signification. The moment of fixation takes within the contingency of discourse that can only be momentarily fixed by metaphors. Metaphors support the contingency of discourses and perform with varying interpretations to allude an objectivity. In essence, the Petrobras's actions are impossible but transitorily supported by the sutures of rhetoric.
2) A rhetorical act: The impossibility of closure disrupts any objectification of discourses that can only exist temporarily through the uses of metaphors in which is a rhetorical act. Petrobras uses metaphors to allude an objectification in an impossible way. This entails that the truth of SEA is impossible because the various ways to try the objectivity is transitory and attached to comparisons that do not necessary mean the original claim, but an overdeterminated and biased aim with a hegemonic tone.
3) A hegemonic act: In this impossible way, rhetoric is necessary to control the best meanings to achieve hegemony. Petrobras has intentions to use, for example, a flag of a sustainable company to help the principal ambition in the excursion for economic development (the following sections discuss in more details the hegemonic formation).

These three elements constitute how the decisions of Petrobras have the closest level of contingency. When Petrobras decides for a meaning of SEA, it regards to the articulation of double ontic gap.

A double ontic gap emerges in a moment of contestability that exists to fulfil the hiatuses between a complete objectivity and a moment of stability. The precarious and partial objectification relates to the undecidability of each discursive construction. This means that an objective moment is an act of performativity which represents a contingent moment (Derrida, 1992). Thus, a double ontic gap exists because of some kind of violence supported by a symbolic comparison (metaphors) (Derrida, 1992; Laclau & Mouffe, 2001). In other words, without metaphors, the signification of language will not be fixed when surrounded by hegemonic practices due to the disruption of antagonisms that cancel an extensive objectification (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001; Derrida, 1992). See Figure 38:

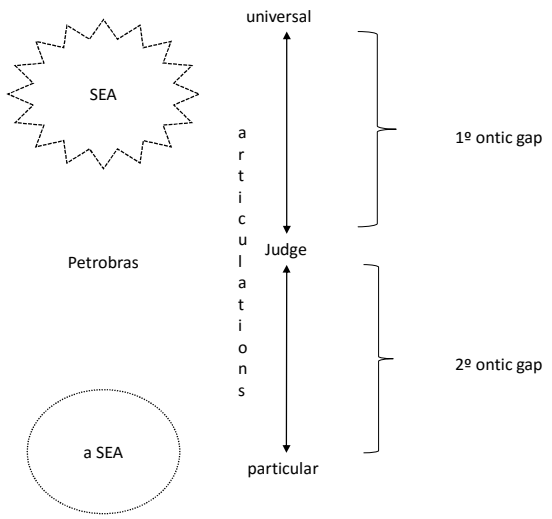

Figure 38 – Double ontic gap of the discursive constructions of SEA

There are two levels concerning these gaps. The first ontic gap of articulating SEA captures from the universal meaning of SEA, but it does not exist. The second comprises a particular meaning for SEA, which is contingent because there is no common meaning for SEA that satisfies all the particular expectations. The first ontic gap involves attempting a universality of the SEA's discursivity in which metaphors play an essential task to overcome issues of incompatibility between poles compared due to the presence of antagonism. To illustrate, Petrobras claims for a universal aim for SEA when compares its "social responsibility policy" with "international benchmark in social responsibility" (Petrobras, 2007b, p. 1). However, there are antagonisms when Petrobras does not present the labour claims or do not show the problems of fatalities when utilises ideological cover of its practices to continue exploring the natural resources with the "best" technologies that do not necessary mean a better quality of social conditions for employees and societies. Discourse and discursivity are contingent and maintained through the logic of equivalence/difference.

The constitution of SEA by the case study involves discussing the logic of equivalence/difference, as for example, the link between sustainability and growth. The prime articulation of SEA is an equivalential meaning for development. The logic of equivalence/difference makes negativity less until this logic shifts to a positive term. Thus, metaphors have the function to create a sense of positivity even in an impossible continuance. To illustrate, Petrobras uses metaphors to minimise the negativity of pursuing a development over social and environmental responsibility. To achieve universality by a particular view is impossible, firstly, because of the limited/dominant perspective sustained in self-interests and, secondly, theoretically, it is impossible then, an articulation of a meaning is transitory and maintained through metaphors to fill the lacunas between objectification and momentary fixation.

Additionally, the impossibility to take a universal meaning for a signified derives from "the other" (Lacan, 2005; Derrida, 1992). The impossibility of closeness surrounding the chain of signification concerns to antagonism that is 'the other'. In the case study, the empirical data have shown antagonism of in the logics of the corporate strategy that do little to mean social equality or environmental protection. Thus, there are antagonisms in the measurable presentation of the social and environment in a less significant for a sustainable planet. As a result, Petrobras' discursive constructions of SEA are permeated

by antagonisms that are hidden using metaphors that politically interrelate two poles with a strange compatibility which creates the displacements.

Petrobras performs SEA in an act of a judge, which shows how the judgment of SEA is biased to reach a hegemony. There is an apparent moment of stabilisation when Petrobras defines SEA. However, the infinitude ways to interpret is a "performative" act that cannot be "just" (fair) but an imperative act (Derrida, 1992). Empirically, the sense of sustainability is unreachable regarding the impossibility to judge the notions of SEA, sustainability and sustainable development in an impartial or fair interest broadly. Thus, the representation of SEA by Petrobras is an imposition, a constraint and a particular view.

Critiques of this constitution associate with the use of rhetoric to fill the gap between the company's desires for universality and the particular interest of a meaning of SEA. The case study constantly relocates the constitution of SEA aside social, environmental and ethical parameters. It is, therefore, a dislocation because of the claim for a universal idea of sustainability is denied to place it in a particular interest. Derrida (1992, p. 27) asseverates the "performative utterances" have "some quality of violence". In comparison, the case exemplifies that the constitution of SEA links to an authority of judgment that can only occur through the negation, exclusion and omission of 'the other' as social problems, labours claims, air pollution and corruption. The next section presents a logic for the exclusions.

7.2 A logic for the exclusions

This section relates to the notion of the logic of equivalence/difference that concerns to a simplification of elected meanings in a supportive way for the political actors. Theoretically, the logic of equivalence/difference is a dissolution from the "negative-referential equivalence" that aims to incorporate ambiguity in the forms of equivalential articulations and to subvert the character of the objects (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. 128). In the sense that any object cannot be fixed then this logic tries to stress the possible limits in the contingent forms of discursivity. This means, for example, that the opposite or negative sides of objects are reduced or simplified to benefit elitist groups.

Relating to Petrobras, the logic of equivalence/difference is used when Petrobras reduces the definition of SEA. To illustrate, Petrobras shifts a definition of social and environmental responsibility to result in only a single and capitalist desire of massive

economic growth. Specifically, the logic of SER is reduced to mean the same for profitability and integrated growth (See Figure 19). In other words, Petrobras diminishes the meanings for responsibility, the social and environment to signify one single objective. This simplification is able to achieve because of the fragmented discourses representing social relationships that are precarious and contingent. And, the use of metaphors that compare different worlds with a familiar sense. To exemplify, I recapitulated four examples, not all-inclusive, from Chapter 6 concerning the metaphorical use.

(1) The corporate strategy is associated with "integrated growth", "profitability" and "social and environmental responsibility" (Petrobras, 2013a, p. 2) that is a metaphor to mean equally proportion of grow=profitability=SER. However, these elements are not completely compatible. Namely, the integrated growth often relates to better performance in the financial indicators that mean an improvement of the increasing of revenues, clients or investments to prolong expanding the company in economic terms. Then, profitability has an intrinsic logic to sustain profits that might be little distant from the idea of developing the social communities affected by the operation of Petrobras. It is, for example, the case of the disaster in the mangrove with the oil spill of the Rlam in 2009 (Petrobras, 2009a, p. 115). Thus, Petrobras simplifies the notion of SER to mean a relationship between the company's goals and economic growth that may not denote a similar relationship between the social and environments.

(2) The measurable representation of SEA is another example of the logic of equivalence/difference. Among many ways to represent fatalities, Petrobras prefers to show the meanings less contestable or narrow. The numbers of deaths and the decreasing of the percentage of fatalities are means how Petrobras minimises the impact of deaths without using the word 'deaths' in its operations. Because the idea of disclosing deaths would imply dangers and worrying regarding the company's operation. Then, the use of "fatalities" aims to reduce this impact by lowering the company's faults in those deaths. An interpretation of Petrobras' disclosures shows the safety procedures and equipment provided have the potential to be enough to safeguard lives of the employees or outsourced people. But with many examples of accidents, they are not enough. Indeed, the company disregards to face this problem, then. As a result, the discourse is used to hide and minimise the harmful impact of its procedures. A plausible interpretation of the fatalities of Petrobras is the idea that with safety process and the 'best practices' of the oil

sector, therefore, Petrobras can continue to operate. However, the corporate operation happens with dangerous procedures and the continuum negation of the impact of lives in their decisions because the principal goal is to grow not to address the social problems. The logic of equivalence/difference has its own limitation regarding 'the other', which are antagonisms that always surround the discursive practices. In this way, the antagonist meanings for Petrobras' practices emerge in the representation of SEA in measurable ways because the avoidance of contestation through these ways is evident when there are practices of destruction. Moreover, discourses are an important tool to obscure these practices via short descriptions ("the number of fatal accidents was stable"), measurable fatalities ("fatal accidents rate") and the positive language ("Intense work was done") when tragedies are behind.

(3) The use of 'best practice' is a social and political apparatus to legitimise the company's operation. The 'best practice' policy means a justification of the "practices and procedures" that have been accepted in society in relation to energy companies. In which is a cover to legitimate their conduct as an oil company in a way that the company will pollute as much as its competitors, and the company will prevent accidents in the same manner as similar companies do. Alternatively, the company may need to use corruption to be able to endure to grow economically as a 'normal conduct' without the need to assume publically what are the bad decisions. Instead, Petrobras prefers to proceed as a victim even with criminal evidence from principal executives involved in the key operation of corruption inside the company (see Appendix 2). There are problems in assuming a best practice policy. First, this policy gives Petrobras, for example, a justification for the "occupational safety" but cases of fatalities put limits for this "safety". It is a flag to protect the company to achieve its goals in which with equivalential reference tries to link the corporate goal to safety. However, a company focused on the economic side of sustainability may achieve a partial sustainability's idea. This partial representation appeals for the 'best practice' but with few examples of the 'best protection' for lives in communities affected by oil spills, for families with an unexpected loss or for the environments with pollution of dangerous toxins. Secondly, the logic of equivalence/difference is a way for political actors (such as Petrobras and its principal stakeholders) to perpetuate their goals and to portray the discursive constructions of SEA with similar kind of performed sustainable development that may favour the installation of greenwashing and corruption as part of their core businesses.

(4) There is a negation of the social problems when Petrobras fails to disclosure the labour claims. Many reasons can explain why Petrobras denies showing the details of the labour claims. The logic of equivalence/difference is not only a simplification logic but the better choices to benefit actors in the political arena. Petrobras prefers not to show the problems because they could destroy the image of a company interested in the developing of Brazil. First, this development is marked with some limitations, and the principal of them is the goal for its own economic growth rather than a reasonable disclosure of the problems surrounding the labour claims and the work conditions.

In conclusion, the simplification of SEA makes its definition incomplete, narrow and contradictory. Whether SEA means, two principal elements may need to be a part of the system of significance. First, a concern for the social is important for its conceptualisation, including welfare and culture. However, as shown, the discourse of SEA articulated by Petrobras has another configuration that is apart from a comprehensive understanding of the social problems such as fatalities, sponsorships, oil spillage and labour claims. This picture portrays the discursive constructions of SEA in a frame that mostly reinforces an economic monology approach. In comparison, SEA studies in Brazil also have a similar approach. However, this configuration (Petrobras and Brazilian studies) is only possible because discourse is incomplete and contingent in which political actors use in their understandings.

This incompleteness and contingency of discourse produce gaps that are occupied by metaphors that have the function to create a sense of completeness within the impossibility of totalisation (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, Laclau, 2014). The totalisation will never occur because of antagonisms are always emerging in any articulatory practice (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001).

Secondly, the concerns regarding environment need to be addressed. However, Petrobras' discursive constructions aim to avoid contestation, for example, through the measurable representation of environmental indicators and the "tolerable limit" of the company's pollution of oil spills. These examples have the target to manage expectations via political logics of how certain interests become visible and others not.

In short, Petrobras represents SEA with little concerns about social and environment, which means that SEA is more a manoeuvre term than support for the most famous concept of sustainable development in the Brundtland Report (1987), for example. It is

an antagonist that the notion portrayed by Petrobras of SEA disregards the social and environment. This forms SEA feasible because of the incomplete and multiple shades of discursivity that political actors use to sustain the desired benefit. Theoretically, the rhetorical apparatus like metaphor fill the gaps between the fragmented discourses and the chain of signification.

There are some critiques respecting the Petrobras' configuration of what is SEA. Essentially, Petrobras shifts universal meanings for sustainability to place its own interests. Additionally, the signification of SEA is pervasive in a way that the principal beneficiary is Petrobras and its principal stakeholders. And, Petrobras is an example that politics pervades the field of discursivity and reinforces the capital accumulation over the needs of social protection, welfare, and a safe workplace, protection of natural resources and reduction of wealth centralisation in a developing country. The next section draws an ideological representation of SEA.

7.3 An ideological representation of SEA

This section presents the discursive constructions of Petrobras in a psychoanalytic lens that means a review of the ideologies outlined in the fantasmatic logics to demonstrate its roles in the political arena.

Ideology is a representation of overdeterminated identities (Althusser, 2012; Laclau & Mouffe, 2001). In the Petrobras' case, the impact of ideologies in the group of the Brazilian government and the remaining shareholders produces different results into their identities. However, the constructed ideologies have a concentrated message of capital accumulation, exploitation and perpetuation that culminates in the current articulation of the hegemony of development.

The ideology of shareholder wealth maximisation is possible because the articulation of this hegemony using rhetoric makes a portrait of the real in a symbolic order in which ideologies camouflage the negativity of hegemonies by representing reality through overdeterminated ideologies.

The overdetermination of identities affects individual to be free of biases. Its perception of a fact respects personal experiences, but also, group pressure that creates a tension between the individual in its space and the individual in social space. Lacan (2005, p. 222) asserts 'the other' has the key of desire which underpins the formation of identities. In

some degree, most of the identities are overdeterminated. The individuals are not fully themselves, but also a diversity of other people influences. In this arena, politics remains in the social domain and creates a space for the proliferation of fragmented discourses that with overdeterminated identities stand the hegemonic formation.

'The other' is the multiple desires of actors, but also the creation of desires in the mind of the actors (Lacan, 2005). 'The other' links to the reinforcement of ideologies that serve to sustain hegemonies. Particularly, Petrobras uses, as discussed and not limited, ideologies surrounding the balance of its interests in the economic results. As argued, the ideologies are an apparatus to maintain the circumstances of power.

In the case study, 'the order' of the ideology of shareholders wealth maximisation has a variety of signifiers that represent the illusions of the hegemonic articulation of development. First, one of the antagonistic meanings of this ideology is the shifting of SER to draw a representation of wealthiness. However, this construction of wealth ignores the basis of social problems of, for example, the daily activity of an oil company focused on the capital accumulation of its owners and less concerning the environments and lives of workers. This ideology strengthens the use of natural resources to ensure the extraction of oil from deep waters, but the company "minimises" the expected risks of pollution and accidents. By deconstructing it, this ideology only portrays the wealth as a goodness but disregards how wealth is achieved.

Secondly, this ideology supports the social logics of 'best practices' that aim to legitimise the exploitation through the protection of the oil industry and regulation that correspond political mechanisms to ensure the continuum of wealth accumulation. I present two negative effects in these mechanisms; the oil industry is a combination of oil companies, and most of them have a past of greenwashing and harmful accidents. The second effect is the political influences in regulation, which point the minimisation of the risk of their followers but, there are cases of oil accidents in which the specific regulator impose a fine or a specific action and does not stop the polluter to continue to operate (see the example of the Tebar).

The second ideology of advanced capital fascinates the Petrobras' shareholders via sophisticated techniques and superiority of its know-how that fantasise the company's activities with good attributes and hide the problems such as the technical issue of the Tebar accidents and polluted oil companies respecting the 'best practices'. Then, this

ideology supports the hegemony of development, but it co-opts the public expectation of advanced company that would expect a contribution of better quality. Indeed, what the company offers are more ways to justify the exploitation of the Brazilian natural resources to the benefit of minority and privileged group.

The third ideology of business as normal/traditional intends to perpetuate the traditional idea of business to promote elitist groups. In this case, the Brazilian government and the rest of the shareholders are the principal groups. The evident message in this ideology is the stagnation of the kind of business. This ideology emphasises the history of development in Brazil with fantasies of interests. However, the development of Brazil has covered many cases of struggles against the slavery and later the labour condition, as well as the type of activity that has a path of the devastating of forests and lives. To illustrate, in 1988, the environmentalis Chico Mendes was assassinated when he fought to preserve the Amazon rainforest and, in 2015, the catastrophe in Minas Gerais, after a huge flood, resulted in residues from a subsidiary of BHP Billiton that contaminated rivers and the Atlantic Ocean with toxic mining metals. This ideology proposes to hide a broader signification of the hegemony of development by ambushing public opinion into a company as a prime model for Brazil and abroad. See Figure 39 that presents the relationship between ideologies and 'the other' and the influences in the hegemony of Petrobras:

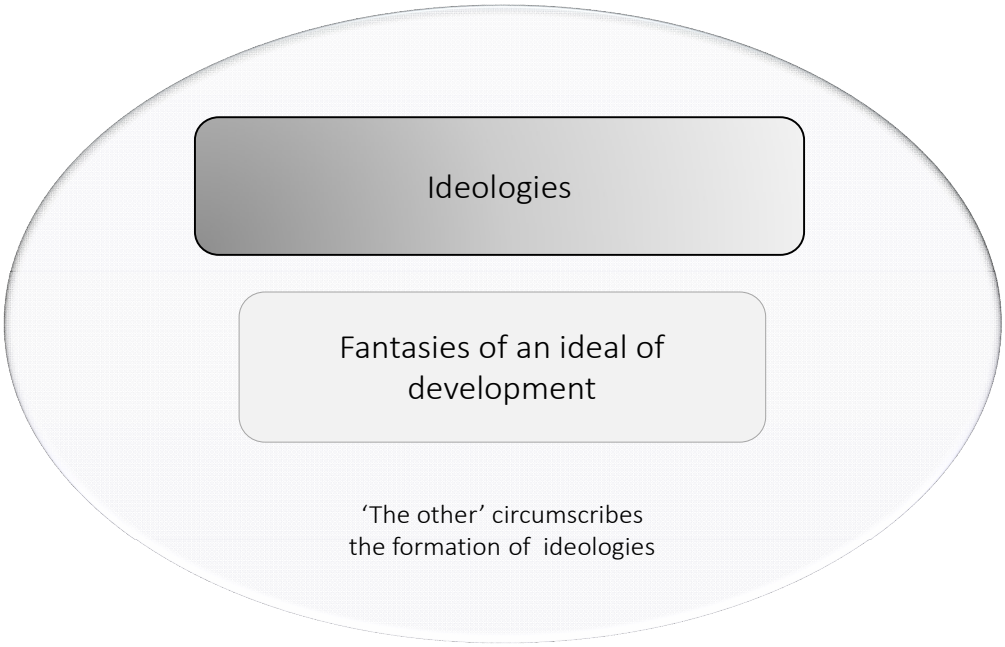

Figure 39 – Ideologies and 'the other'

In short, ideologies have the goal of deceiving the marginalised actors in the political domain and serving as a support for hegemonies that can only constitute through illusions. A complete representation of language is impossible, and then, ideologies and 'the other' permeate the articulatory practice that by rhetoric and ideological apparatus try to maintain hegemonies. Inasmuch as the system of signification is never closed, and then, the articulatory practice makes the combination of signifiers suitable to a specific purpose. However, any articulatory also results in the constitution of antagonisms that predominate the discursivity. In this tension of ambiguity and contradictions, ideologies of the case study have the potential to deceive by means of misrepresentation of realities. This representation gives the support for hegemonic installation. The next section addresses the formation of a hegemonic discourse of SEA.

7.4 A hegemony for SEA

This section outlines the formation of hegemonies in a political space: the discursivity of Petrobras considering SEA. There are reasons why hegemonies can emerge in a field of discursivity.

First, hegemony is the attempt to fix temporarily a central point by articulatory practice (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001). The constitution of hegemony is only possible because there is

an impossibility of closure the system of signification (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001). Then, political actors use all social forms of domination to guarantee its self-interests. Secondly, the undecidability of discourse produces multiple views, and then, hegemonies establish in the gap between heterogeneity and the totalisation of the significance field (Laclau, 2014; Laclau & Mouffe, 2001). Thirdly, the rhetoricity of society supports the hegemonic formation through the uses of figures of speech such as metaphor, catachresis and metonymic that have the function to reach a sense of totalisation without reaching it (Laclau, 2014; Laclau & Mouffe, 2001). Hegemonies regard to power, and political agents use hegemonies to sustain their status in society.

The principal point for the success of hegemonies is the master signifiers that are constructed naturally in the social field, but political agents articulate these signifies to pursue a unification and, as a result, a discursive domination that favours the political strategies. In a more practical way, the discursive constructions of Petrobras regarding SEA aim to achieve a universal meaning by the use of rhetoric.

To exemplify, the social logics illustrate the construction of an idea of development over SEA which shows how Petrobras, in a range of possibilities, places SEA corresponding a development of the Brazilian government and the rest of its shareholders but with little concerns about the social conditions of the Brazilian context or affected areas of the Petrobras' operation. This construction is metaphorical because it gives an impression, not truth.

By comparing its policies with international bodies, Petrobras reduces the meanings of sustainability using the logic of equivalence/difference to aid its strategies. For example, Petrobras (2007b, p. 1) accepts the challenge of becoming "an international benchmark in social responsibility". However, as demonstrated, the "social responsibility" corresponds a form of capital accumulation over social and environmental exploitation. In hegemonic terms, what Petrobras aims is to dominate the Brazilian society using metaphors to fill the dearth of a definitive definition of SEA and its variations.

Thus, Petrobras prefers the signifier "development" for SEA in a way that the Brazilian society constructs the nodal point naturally. Then, Petrobras politically shifts a broader comprehension of development to manipulate what is 'development' in more beneficial associations. As a result, the articulated definition of development mainly associates with interests for the principal stakeholders over a broader approach to the development of

Brazil. However, it is performed subtly by claiming universality in a particular way. To illustrate, Petrobras (2007a, p. cover page) affirms "operate . . . with social and environmental responsibility, in Brazil . . . that contribute to the development of Brazil". Particularly, Petrobras uses the expression "development of Brazil" but, deconstructing it, this development mostly means a certain interest in extracting natural resources in Brazil for the benefits of the Petrobras' shareholders. Another example is the optimistic discourse regarding the decreasing of the number of fatalities and the compensations for oil spillage that are equivalential references to mask the principal intentions of exploitation.

This entails that this development will occur even with safety problems because the fatalities are controlled and measurable but as a "socially responsible" company, one of the major issue is to protect lives. However, lives are not too important when there is a positive language in "decreasing" of fatalities. Additionally, the environment is not either essential when Petrobras uses the expression of "tolerable limit" for the oil spillage which this attitude weakens any endeavour to recognise a responsible action to protect the environment.

In practice, the hegemonic formation debated in the signifier 'development' takes place within rhetorical devices. In such, the metaphors of corporate strategy and SER prove the incongruent surrounding concerning the SEA's articulations. Also, the 'best practice' also illustrates the metaphorical mechanism to interrelate the company's operation with third parties.

As I have debated, the notion of SEA is reduced (logic of equivalence/difference) to signify some kind of similarity with integrated growth and profitability. In this narrowness appears antagonisms that are part of the hegemonic articulations. Some examples are the disconnection between the logics of growth and profitability and the logic of SER. In a way that these elements aim to hide the social and environmental problems to promote the hegemony of development of their parties rather than a SER in the models of the Brundtland Report (1987). The metaphor of simplifying SER as in the same level of profitability and growth is political and aspires to give more power for political agents to remain their beneficial status in detriment of others.

The second example of rhetorical devices is the articulation of 'best practices' which reinforces the hegemonic formation. The ideological cover of a company in the path of

showing the 'best practices' protects the corporate strategies and hides the problem of being an energy company extracting fossil fuel from deep water. Petrobras associates its practices and procedures with the oil industry. However, as noticeable, there are many cases in this industry regarding pollution and greenwashing (see BP, Shell, Exxon Mobil and BHP Billiton). Petrobras has examples such as the Podium diesel product labelled as a "clearer fuel" (Petrobras, 2006b, p. 4). It is evident that all products derived from diesel will produce air pollution of sulphur components that are harmful to human health and the environment. Also, the castor beans used to produce biofuel are, as well, harmful and Petrobras vainglories its "sponsorship" (Petrobras, 2005a, p. 46).

When Petrobras articulates the nodal point of development extracted from the social constructions, this process demands a different source that is not regarded to the social fabric which results in a strategy condemned to marginality (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001). More specifically, what Petrobras articulates is a temporary fixation of a hegemony of development that has the past in the social origins but has transformed to mean a particular objective. This articulation is transitory, contingent and predestined to become in the edges of the core constitution of the nodal point (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001). Petrobras, then, shifts the social nodal point of development to place it in a particular notion of development including the exclusion of the social, the perpetuation of the business as normal, the economic growth for its shareholders, exploitation of resources and harmful actions.

In the 'best practices', Petrobras ascribes a legitimation in a field of impossibility because the company wishes to unite its discursive practice in a hegemonic mean. However, it is contingent and momentary due to the impossibility to have a definitive system of signification (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001). Nevertheless, the partial fixation of an articulated signifier is sustained by ideologies and rhetoricity of the language (Žižek, 2008; Laclau, 2014).

In an impossible way, metaphors fill the lacuna of the totalisation desired in hegemonic formations and the precarious articulation of all discourses (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001). The ideology of shareholder wealth maximisation, advanced capital and business as normal/traditional permeate the fragmented discourse of SEA that has ideologies and rhetoric to do 'sutures'. The idea of suture originates from the existing precarious identities due to the inherent 'other' within social practices that have difficulties to reach

transparency and a "closed symbolic order" (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. 88). This concept is perfect for politics that represents the impossibility of closure and the precarious overdeterminated identities in the hegemonic articulation.

The antagonisms of the 'best practice" are, to start, the gap between discourse and action. The discourse of best practice is wonderful in the paper and even in speeches, but, in practice, those practices represent fundamentally surrounded by antagonisms such as the use of the term of 'sponsorship' to actually represent an investment in the economic interests. In practice, Petrobras invests in the development communities to be able to produce the biofuel as well as invests in the Formula1 and in a popular football team (Flamengo) to promote their brand. The sponsorship is metaphorically combined with the needs of social projects and the "Olympic ideal" to help the decreasing of poverty, better condition of life for marginalised groups and support for the international claims of human rights. However, in a redescription of those practices, Petrobras contradicts itself when misrecognises the importance of lives in "fatalities", suppresses the labour claims, disregards a proper attitude surrounding ethics and transparency when numerous cases of corruption desolate the Brazilian society. The articulation of 'best practice' prevents any unification of a truly good practice when the company excludes other stakeholders from the benefits of acting in a 'best practice' way.

The exclusion of the social presented in the previous section emphasises the hegemony of development when to illustrate, Petrobras redirects the SER's notion of meaning profitability as well as when the company adopts the criterion of only revealing the fines that exceed BRL 1 million. This criterion results in a short and technical description to minimise the negative effect of an appropriate explanation. As a result, the SER's notion is dislocated to a narrow position that does not have the plausibility of the desired effect, which means that dislocations make the problems of these articulations visible. The principal aim of the hegemony of development of Petrobras' discursive constructions is to place Petrobras in a privileged position to control, manipulate and make decisions based on illusions of development that privilege its powerful group and mislead public expectations regarding a fake illusion of reduction of poverty and better wealth distribution.

More than the rhetoricity and the logic of equivalence/difference of the discursive constructions of Petrobras, ideologies cover the discursivity of the current hegemony

established in the development signifier. From overdeterminated characters, Petrobras represents 'development' in a real condition of existence, however, with illusions that mostly symbolise the identities of the principal stakeholders in those articulations. More simply, the articulated ideologies facilitate the system of hegemonies in the political space by showing fantasies of the positive side of hegemonies and hiding the antagonisms. Ideologies have the role in demonstrating "a symbolic dimension" (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. 97). However, all discourses hold 'the other' thoroughly which means the presence of antagonisms ever occurs with all discursive construction. Also, the identities are overdeterminated by biases, beliefs, experiences, and so forth that affect the transparency of language (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001; Althusser, 2012).

In the case study, ideologies represent a fantasy of development that has the duty to mislead societies and limit contestation through technical, short, measurable and restricted discourse. Antagonism is part of any articulation of discourse (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001). However, political agents try to hide this issue using ideologies, rhetoric and equivalential references. To illustrate the role of ideologies, the advanced capital ideology supports the social practice of 'best practice' by the articulation of sophisticated technologies and methods in a positive concealment of economic enlargements. This articulation also accomplishes the operation of exploitation and expropriation that chiefly assist the installation of corporations in developing countries with excuses of the 'best' possible within remarkable cases of oil spillage, disrespects for lives and corruption.

In conclusion, the hegemony of development of the Petrobras' articulations sets in a moment of fixation that metaphors aim to give the sense of familiarity, ideologies fantasise the positive effect of hegemonies, and the logic of equivalence/difference simplifies to manipulate the current hegemony easily in the desired programme. The hegemony of development takes through social and political logics of 'best practices', the exclusion of the social, managing expectation, privileging development over SER, narrowing the SEA's definition and showing 'the measurable' feature of SEA. Also, the fantasmatic logics presented the impact of three ideologies in the background of the social and political logics. These ideologies have the responsibility to preserve the current hegemony portraying the hegemonic formation as empty of negativity. However, as discussed, it is impossible. There are antagonisms in all hegemonies, and these are the reason why a totalisation aspired by hegemonies is impossible (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001).

Accordingly, the hegemony of Petrobras concerning SEA is contingent, fragmented and precarious. There are dislocations between the hegemony of development and what it actually means. See Figure 40 for an illustration of the hegemony of Petrobras with not exhaustive examples of positive language on the left side and the antagonisms on the right side.

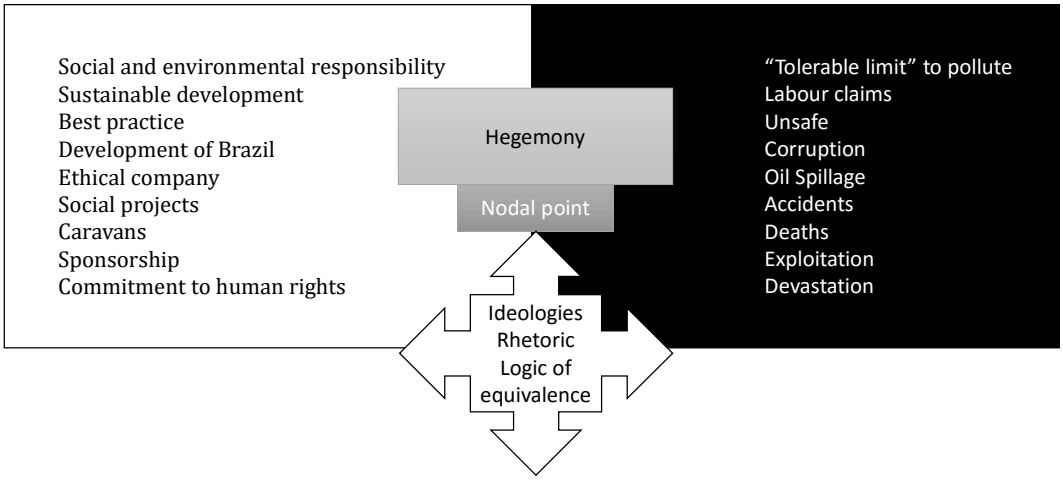

Figure 40 – Hegemony of Petrobras

Thus, the hegemony of Petrobras poses in the signifier of development which has the objective of unification with can only occur symbolically (metaphors, ideologies and equivalences). The hegemony of Petrobras is more than a discursive act. It shows how society is surrounded by power. Therefore, political agents interfere in the natural order of societies to create its own particular interest. Hegemony is a human activity of domination that aims to control a field by excluding, hiding and symbolising the unavoidable negative effects of any excursion of oppression. This thesis has an intrinsic responsibility to discuss and expose politics of domination in the arena of SEA.

8 CONCLUSIONS

SEA is a political term that changes according to powerful elites in historical movements that support the debate of this thesis regarding understanding, identifying and critiquing the SEA's discursive constructions of Petrobras and the Brazilian SEA studies. This thesis is an empirical-theoretical work that from the analysis of discourse (micro level) uncovers the political foundation surrounding the interdisciplinary debate on sustainability, sustainable development and other derivatives from SEA. The SEA discourse represents different social constructions, which reflects external influences within any social constructs. The thesis discussed the impact of the discourse of (economic) development on the construction of SEA of the largest Brazilian company and demonstrated how this discourse is incorporated into the Brazilian academy concerning SEA. Also, this thesis analysed the articulations of the discursive constructions of SEA in Petrobras' disclosures. The thesis challenges the Brazilian literature on SEA as well as reflects on corporate practices of SEA and their effects on an emerging economy. The three main contributions of this thesis are: (i) the discussion of the rhetorical persuasion of the case study that does not present facts but a range of contestable and contradictory tropes concerning the impact of the discourse of SEA in an emerging economy context; (ii) the indeterminism of SEA and sustainability which renders the question, "what is sustainability?" open to political manoeuvres; (iii) the complicated measurement of social, ethical, cultural and environmental aspects of corporate disclosures and how these concepts are narrowed to reflect corporate agendas.

In examining the Brazilian literature and Petrobras' case through the lenses of DT, LCE and rhetorical redescription, this thesis makes five original contributions: (i) in the previous literature of SEA, DT was not often used (Spence, 2009b), and so, this thesis enhances our understanding of SEA through a deeper insight into the political elements that pervade the strategies to maintain, operate and co-opt the social and environmental significance of SEA; (ii) the dialogue of an emerging economy, such as Brazil, incorporates new perspectives into the discussion of the discourse of SEA and (economic) development that is innovative in the Brazilian context with examples of domination, stagnation, oppression and reification of the traditional form of business; (iii) the focus on rhetoric exposes roots of subordination and domination, which are the essentials in maintaining the *status quo* including insignificant changes of the social and environmental issues; (iv)

the empirical approach with a holistic structure widens the understandings of the social, political and fantasmatic logics of the SEA literature and; (v) this thesis combines an analysis of the literature and the case of Petrobras to characterise and critique the state of the Brazilian academy and its impacts and reflections on the significance of SEA. This thesis, therefore, argues for more critical studies in the Brazilian academy due to the persistence of idea of SEA and development that takes-for-granted deep exclusions and contradictions and provide little space for critiques.

The social and environmental significance of SEA is an important debate due to its consequences in societies. In the Brazilian academy, the narrow perspective of the business case reduces the significance of SEA to a single dimension that excludes any critical viewpoint of the intrinsic assumptions that business is good for society. These assumptions harm society when the materialist and financial values prevail over the value of social life, because the real intentions of these assumptions will expose particular and harmful ambitions of development of certain groups. This commitment to growth lacks a profound concern about the effect on social practices and environments (the shareholders of Petrobras are privileged in the discourse of development and SEA). This thesis introduced Derrida's (1992) undecidability. The application to Petrobras' case transformed the system of significance of SEA into few desirable meanings regarding a responsibility of benchmark to allow pollution (Petrobras, 2008a), a limited view of sustainable development for its own shareholders in economic results or, to name some, the dehumanisation of deaths into a simple number.

The discussion of an emerging economy regarding SEA links two opposite poles (development with social and environmental responsibility – Brundtland, 1987). The principal clash between the discourse of development and SEA is the counter-argument of developing without considering the social and environmental impacts. In the name of 'best practices', Petrobras presumed that using best techniques, technologies and industrial standards would protect them from critical investigations and public attention. However, the Petrobras' case of corruption (The Operation Car Wash) caused internal and international impacts. The discourse of a 'best practice' lost power when it was exposed to the corruption scandal, as considered financial gains for particular agents more important than development for all Brazilians. This behaviour is a result of the hegemony of Petrobras in Brazil that considers the unpleasant attitude of corruption as part of their

core business due to a long period of hidden strategies that did not only occur in the Operation Car Wash period. It is only mere evident of Petrobras' history of corruption (see Appendix 2). The focus of the Brazilian literature on SEA on the business case and the silence of Petrobras in revealing their (corruption) actions demonstrates the protection of the normal kind of practice of business in Brazil that continues to exist as a culture of exploitation that originated from Portuguese colonisation. As another interesting point, the signs of oppression are still alive in Petrobras' disclosures when the company presents a hegemony of white employees and gives little voice for diversification. There is the reification of capital accumulation in the discourse of development and SEA. The case tries to hide and obscure the operation with tragedies, accidents and labour claims that only aids the reification of wealth and makes few steps to help social development and environmental protection. To illustrate, the Amazon is considered the lung of the planet, and yet, Brazil (one of the principal country in the Amazon area) fails to defend it properly. Petrobras had recurrent issues regarding a protective position in defending environmentally sensitive areas (see the cases of oil spillage in the littoral of the State of São Paulo). Brazil has significant cases of devastation and murder of environmentalists. Between 2002 and 2013, Brazil leads the list of 425 environmentalists killed defending their lands, forests and water resources (Global Witness, 2015). Similarly, Petrobras silenced the voices of oppressed people when they hid the claims of their workers.

This debate concerning [economic] development is possible because agents use rhetorical strategies to legitimise their policies, where these strategies contrast with the discourse of transformation for a better life (Brundtland, 1987). The use of rhetoric from political agents makes possible the antagonisms within the articulatory practice that this study illustrated. When Petrobras used the metaphor of profitability this was equalled with the social and environmental with the purpose of sustaining the neo-liberal approach and, as a result, did not change the capital-oriented strategies. The Brazilian academy constructs SEA in a similar manner and measures the benefit of social and environmental disclosure in how much those disclosures affect profitability. Thus, as the case and the SEA studies illustrate, the use of rhetoric is essential to prolong the logic of exclusion concerning the mystification of the social and environmental changes for the benefit of the most powerful stakeholders in the control of Petrobras policies and the general significance of Brazilian SEA. This significance is focused on a narrow perspective to give greater importance to economic development. This discussion brings to society the harmful cases that play with

societal needs to ensure the legitimisation of unethical behaviours. As a political thesis, I have the duty to demonstrate how the structure of SEA can be manipulated into something *undesirable* through articulatory mechanisms when, for example, fatalities are merely presented as a single disclosure of a number; where profitability is equated with social and environmental responsibility with no consideration of impact of this hegemonic logic of exclusion; where the sponsorship is transformed into economic investments; where oil spillage becomes a *tolerable* part of the business; and where labour claims are hidden because of undesirable information of several cases of complaints that could expose the state of oppression, exploitation and unsafety. Additionally, the Brazilian academy obfuscates a deep discussion of SEA practices through the continuing focus on measurement, performance and financial values for social and environmental disclosures that preserve the *status quo* of capital accumulation in a developing country. It is complementary to the discourse performed by Petrobras about development and SEA. Thus, the rhetorical approach is appropriate to expose and contest how public and powerful agents perpetuate their dominance throughout mystification of the agenda of SEA.

The fourth main contribution of this thesis relates to the holistic structure of the analysis that expanded the debate of the social, political and fantasmatic logics of SEA. These logics explain how, why and what impacts are on stakeholders concerning the Petrobras' case and the Brazilian SEA studies. The most interesting conversation of the analysis of these logics is the restriction of certain disclosures. These particular disclosures are weakened through the certainty that Petrobras sold, distributed and produced more fossil fuels products than clean energy. Thus, Petrobras hid the problem of pollution due to its effects on the image of a company that 'develops' Brazil, but, actually, the operation is not safe, healthy or eco-friendly for Brazilians. A certain ideology of development is shared with the Brazilian literature, which concerns a sophisticated language to cover the apparatus of expropriation, exploitation and perpetuation of their core business in a platform protected from external critiques and investigation. After the corruption scandal of the Operation Car Wash in the media, I expected changes in Petrobras' public discourse. However, they portrayed themselves as a victim, which only reaffirms that agents in the hegemonic situation will not change unless the external threat is strong enough to substitute their structure (Gramsci, 1971). Particularly, this thesis debates the subtle, intrinsic and harmful disclosure of development and SEA that only operates to continue

strategies of elitist groups. To demonstrate these strategies, the caravan and sponsorships showed that the company's commitment to SEA is merely a donation that represents an illusion of a sustainable company. As explained, the social, political and fantasmatic logics exposed the self-interest of those 'donations', which deceives societal expectations of a sustainable planet as a fallacy. In the state of the Brazilian literature, its role is to keep the traditional business and the hegemonic position of corporations, such as Petrobras, due to its inactivity in examining the SEA practices critically.

The literature review and the Petrobras' case illustrate a variety of naming, instituting and articulatory practices that endeavour to maintain the current hegemony of development in an emerging economy, which allows Petrobras to continue to exercise significant profits at the expense of the social and environmental. The constructed idea of development in Petrobras' discourses emphasises a rhetoric of wider development, but, in reality, these discourses were the antithesis of political, social and ethical developmental issues. These constructions aim to hide struggles between social inequalities and exploitation of natural resources and constitute excuses about a fanciful notion of rhetorical and hegemonic neo-liberal development.

Corruption was a surprise during the analysis of the case study because the company used it as an inactive information even with a long history of corruption. In the case, the most important aspect of corruption is the rhetorical disclosure that masks a harmful reality. In 2015, the loss of US$ 6.75 billion regarding corruption has not stopped the complaints about the ethical behaviour of Petrobras. However, in cases of financial errors, the company has to respond accordingly to restate the financial report respecting International Accounting Standards. Should not annual or sustainability reports of the period of the scandal have the same attention: Should Petrobras not restate its commitment to social and environmental in light of the impact of political corruption? The company should restate in cases of material and relevant events, transactions or conditions, such as corruption. The fact is that the latest case of corruption has all the previous compulsory aspects to be interpreted as an event to restate the previous publication of social and environmental disclosure. However, the case study ignores it and pretends that nothing happened with a rhetorical discourse that continues to mislead public opinion. As a result, the case of corruption accentuates the role of rhetoric to

conceal important facts in corporate discourse. In this case, corruption was not taken seriously, which leads to a harmful discourse of SEA for societies.

The type of development constructed indicates a preference for the economic growth of Petrobras, which connects with the Brazilian colonial era amidst the exploitation of social and environmental resources. Petrobras utilises ideologies to obfuscate the notion of 'development'. Then, the hegemony of development is taken-for-granted via ideological apparatus, which represents a neo-classical economic understanding and manages social and political expectations by portraying a company that supports democracy and accountability in Brazil. In contrast, the Governmental projects in Brazil are a blunt instrument to weaken the social pressure for development that includes the wider Brazilian community. The evidence of unsustainable practices, oil accidents, as well as the corruption scandal clarifies the rhetorical meaning for SEA for Petrobras. The simplification of corporate strategies, the metaphors of sustainable company and 'best practices' conceal attempts for a broader definition of sustainable development. The case narrows its definition of social and environmental responsibility, which results in minimising contestation related to its practices as well as the effort to dominate its audiences. However, these constructions aid a development only for its allies. These practices exclude other concerns such as the act of exploitation, expropriation and dehumanisation of its activities. Furthermore, ideologies support these practices through positive beliefs that maximising capital, sophisticated and technical discourse and the ideology of business as usual would result in sustainability. However, these ideas ignore the fact that sustainability regards the benefits of multiple environments and lives and not only for some groups. An individualist view of sustainability only carries a few groups on this journey. Then, the universal claim for sustainability is co-opted to help influential groups with harmful actions and rhetorical discourses.

This study goes further to a critique of the business case approach through highlighting the pervasiveness of a 'sustainable' discourse surrounded by fallacies, illusions and disconnections. Also, SEA Brazilian literature reinforces the 'business as usual' ideology. Then, as a result, this also demonstrates that politics pervades any discursive practices and reflects the domination of powerful agents influencing decisions, discourses and practices in diverse spheres in societies. As a member of the academy, I have the responsibility to contribute to the critical literature regarding the role of SEA by

reinforcing and reifying the hegemony of development. Also, the Petrobras' case manifests the hegemonic construction of development in the Brazilian society origins and reflects the literature review focused on the business case approach. This hegemony elucidates the participation of ideologies hiding and constraining a broader construction of SEA, which accomplishes the agenda of sophisticated illusions of sustainability.

More than using a different theory and methods to analyse the SEA's discursive constructions, this thesis contributes to several new ways to articulate and constitute SEA in a political arena where the principal achievement is the camouflage of undesired and unavoidable impacts while Petrobras principally seeks the goal of economic growth. The unethical attitude of corruption exemplifies how corporations in the desire of economic development treat indifferently the consequences of its activities in social, environmental and ethical dimensions. Debating on the signification of SEA is fundamental. If SEA links to the notions of sustainable development, sustainability and social responsibility, then it failed during the analysis of the case due to Petrobras' choices of the SEA's signification. These significations are narrow to mean a constrainable reference of capitalist strategy that uses collective efforts to create illusions of those notions. I argued that critical studies are necessary to engage properly in the contestation and empowerment of twisting the meanings within the SEA's discursive constructions. Hegemonies, rhetoric, ideologies and forms of simplification in the logic of capital expansion permeate these constructions. Critical studies serve to open the frontiers of knowledge by expanding methodologies, theories and discussions. I argued the contributions of this thesis trigger behaviours in a wider way concerning SEA that is narrowly represented in Brazilian literature, rethink practices of SEA and enlighten society to the consequences relating to the reification of hegemonic development. An appropriate approach to accountability requires a proper transparency to achieve a substantial engagement.

This thesis is limited in three ways. First, the translation from Portuguese to English of Petrobras' reports and the news reports may include a personal interpretation because my lack of experience in translating documents. Secondly, the documental analysis represents a partial analysis. However, I consider that multiple documents and sources can reveal a rich and informed context of the object of study. The analysis of public documents includes the limitation of its contents and availability. Finally, the analysis of a single case may restrict the whole perspective of corporations in Brazil. However, I

analysed the biggest company and a political important company that may set a scene for other companies and Brazilian culture through its integration in the community.

Regarding future research, I indicated the discussion of hegemonies, ideologies and rhetoric in different contexts to add to the field cases that may contribute to fill a void of what SEA signifies in diverse areas. The field may also benefit from the connection between management, law and economics literature, which would promote the diversification and multi-disciplinary interpretations of SEA. Finally, I suggest including other theoretical elements from DT that may enhance literature in accounting and political philosophies concerning understanding practices and theories on a deeper level.

This thesis discussed antagonisms and displacements between action and discourse of SEA in an emerging country context, which promotes a deeper discussion concerning rhetoric, discourse and hegemonic formation constructed by political elite groups. I act to give more space for critical studies in Brazilian literature and a contribution to international studies concerning a view from an emerging economy. I promoted the discussion of empowerment in a limited literature context that needs to give space for significant critiques of SEA and its articulations in corporate area.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - LCE respond critiques in the discourse analysis

The discourse as an object of analysis and discourse analysis as method have countless approaches and disciplines. To illustrate this, Parker (2013, p. 224) describes eight different styles for conducting discourse analysis; he presents a scale to detail the softener ("little space") until the most critical approach ("more politically progressive"). First, conversation analysis, ethnomethodology, narrative analysis, thematic analysis are in the small-scale of the 'little space' of approaching discourse, which means less analytical about the content and more descriptive and reflectional; these attempt to reconstitute and organise life events and to be able to discover themes (Parker, 2013, pp. 225-229). The next two approaches, Critical Discourse Analysis [CDA] and Foucauldian Discourse Analysis [FDA], introduce the concepts of power and ideologies. CDA and FDA pinpoint history, theory and subjectivity in a deeper way than conversation analysis, ethnomethodology, narrative analysis and thematic analysis. Finally, the more critical approaches on Parker's scale (2013, p. 232) are Semiotic Analysis and Political Discourse Theory. Parker argues "these next two approaches raise questions about how we conceptualise the process of reading discourse as if from the 'outside' and in relation to politics". Subsequently, this thesis draws upon in more detail the two approaches CDA and LCE (methodology based on DT, that Parker called Political Discourse Theory). These studies have expressive works in social research. Additionally, the origin of these perspectives seems to understand the politics of social construction, power relations, social relations that are consonant with DT.

Linguistics is the primary field of Critical Discourse Analysis. Philo (2007, p. 175) emphasises CDA as a "text-based" analysis; Norman Fairclough in 1989 first introduced CDA in his book, *Language and Power*. This thesis utilises Fairclough's studies because of his contribution to multiple areas of knowledge such as humanities and social sciences (see Ainsworth & Hardy, 2004, which raise a broader application in economics, labour market studies, gerontology and cultural studies). Furthermore, CDA is applied in accounting, for example by Laine (2005); Ferguson (2007); Nielsen, & Madsen (2009); Cortese, Irvine, & Kaidonis (2010); Merkl-Davies & Koller (2012). Fairclough (2003, p. 2) asserts the conception of language in discourse analysis is "irreducible part of social life". In other words, whose examination is "textually oriented discourse analysis" (Fairclough,

2003, p. 2). CDA in the Fairclough´s ideas keeps on structured modes that reflect on social interaction. It would seem, Fairclough (2003, p. 3) maintains that through people talking and writing it is certainly possible to understand "the social effect of discourse". In summary, CDA is a method for analysing text (spoken or written). Next, I will explain why Critical Discourse Analysis is quite unsuitable for the purpose of this study. Especially, the fewer understandings of how and why social relations are confined to an area of hegemony and ideologies that constrain individuals to be themselves.

A significant difference between CDA and DT is paradigmatic. The first seems to be closer to a structuralist perspective, and the second, a post-structuralist paradigm. Philo (2007, p. 178) declares CDA is "text-based" and that the semantic and grammatical features of the text are highlighted. Then, the structure of the text primarily permits in this analysis. On the other hand, DT develops structuralism and DT provides the academy with an analytical tool when enquiring about social interaction and relativism. Thus, a post-structuralist paradigm considers a stable structure can only be transitory. From this, power constructs destabilise the political field. In relation to discourse, the text has a form, but it also has diversity in each context, such as metaphors, metonymies, catachresis that create new situations, new ideas or new ways of interpreting realities in harmony with specific views. In light of this, Philo (2007, p. 194) is able to assert a broader methodology that may analyse "total system – rather than in isolation as with studies with remain focused on text". In this thesis, the use of LCE based on a post-structuralist paradigm has a broader scope to analyse the formation of discourse and its relationship to politics.

From these insights into the failures of CDA to fulfil the DT premises, my thesis takes LCE as a more appropriate approach to critique discursive constructions in social, cultural and political space. I present eight critiques of the failure of CDA in providing a method/methodology to approach my research question in a political field. First, the 'critical' of CDA is not sustained. Collins and Jones (2006, p. 67) argue that CDA "knows nothing", CDA fails in the "critical" and "emancipatory" agenda because when Fairclough describes 'new capitalism' and 'new labour', he did not explain the deep historical struggles and "the hidden connection". Political struggles that historically manifest are part of Marxist theory, which is the foundational to LCE, including a post-Marxist and post-structuralist perspective. When LCE use Marxist positions, the main results are to seek for a particular problem in society, which is universal. From a post-Marxist approach,

the problems can be universal, but mostly transitory with is an expansion of elements discussed in the social, political and cultural arena. Discursive constructions have innumerable ways of articulatory practices allow strong groups to assert their self-interest, as a hegemonic group. By implication, this entails that LCE recognises the dynamic process of social realities. The DT' point of view of reality includes incompleteness of the discourse's features and external factors to understand the political struggles. DT situates in a post-Marxist, which explains "the specific logic of social articulations" – any attempt to affirm a position in discourse is temporal, fluid and depends on the power relations (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. 87).

Secondly, ambivalence and double hermeneutic are a dilemma in CDA. Bucholtz (2001, p. 168) when he emphasises the problems of the ambivalence of CDA in accord with one point of view (the analyst). Another is the "double hermeneutic" and Frezatti, Carter and Barroso (2014, p. 436) affirm that this problem implies a limited scope for CDA, in particular, it ignores "the broader social context" (Frezatti et al., 2014, p. 436). Double hermeneutic produces an impasse in social studies because interpreting an object "concomitant production of meaning and meaning-making within the research process" is complicated (Brogden, 2010, p. 323). Laclau & Mouffe (2001, p. 93) agree that the articulator and the articulated objects negotiate strategies of domination; this field is complex and "mutually contradictory discursive surfaces".

Thirdly, the predictability is a problem in CDA. Bucholtz (2001, p. 168) notes that critical discourse analysts seem to understand the problem before carrying out any analysis. The reason is they do not recognise the working function of society and language, "the danger of over-obvious analysis". This takes place when the analyst pre-conceived the problem and do not include its subjectivity into the analysis. The CDA's idea is quite convincing while assuming that any text may offer responses for what is outside the text. However, as DT explains, the unspoken in discourse plays a substantial influence in social constructions. As an example, context and hegemonic practice are articulated in the discursive constructions to create the reasons that dominate groups in the modern world. There are motivations when producing discourse, and then, the analysis should try to understand them before having any premises. Thus, the social phenomena change over time, space and between social groups.

Fourthly, CDA avoids examining how "meaning in discourse is negotiable, fluid and contestatory" (Bucholtz, 2001, p. 168). The political aspect of DT demonstrates hegemony as the principal analysis for how social relations construct limitations, dislocation, contestation, restriction and contingency in the lives of individuals. Understanding the logics of social and fantasmatic are part of LCE, which explain and explicate how and why discursive constructions are embedded with ideologies and hegemonic practices. Similarly, Philo (2007) demonstrates the inability of CDA to comprehend an analysis of divergent social interests. In spite of that, DT clarifies these interests and makes them visible by exposing the political scenarios in hegemonies.

Further, another limitation to CDA is its incompatible to analyse the historical aspect. Namely, Anaïs (2013) mixes two approaches to connect a historical analysis of ideology, CDA and Foucauldian Discourse Analysis – particularly genealogy of Foucault enables researchers to capture the historical relation of power in social life. However, the mixed approaches in Anaïs' (2013) work seem to contradict the CDA's principles because CDA fails to capture historical struggles as it places text as its central analysis.

Next, CDA is closer in proximity to a positivist paradigm in comparison to LCE. The epistemological and ontological assumptions of CDA avoid researchers comprehending a particular standpoint without a causal reason. A positivist approach relates to the generalisation, cause, general theory and universal truth (see Chua, 1986a for more discussion about positivism in accounting). As Luke (2002) asserts account for Fairclough's CDA is primarily distinguished in social practice; CDA is a normative view of social relations. Thus, CDA suggests that a normative or positivist framework dismisses social relations in its complexities. Generalisation overrides social relations unique and particular understandings that depend on individual views, historical timing, ideologies, culture, power relations, context and structures.

Additional, CDA considers the context from inside the text. However, Fairclough refuses to analyse extra-discursive formation of discourse. Meanwhile, Luke (2002, p. 102) contends that textual analysis requires a "social theoretical discourse" to explain the social context; this allows the inherent power in the text to be highlighted along with its consequences. Analysis may be addressed in a wider theorisation approach of the contemporary world. In the same way, the non-linguistics aspects of discourse are the means of comprehending the externalities such as ideologies or strong forces that

provoke competitive, contradictory, contestatory obstacles of constructions a simple meaning. Political analysis is shaped by social, cultural and political relationships. Specifically, ideologies and power relations that are represented by hegemonic practices exist in social movements within the discursive constructions should be explained by the silences in the discourse.

Further, CDA is inadequate to identify modes of emancipatory discourse and to deconstruct configurations of power/knowledge in any discourse (Luke, 2002, p. 105). Both, power and knowledge need to be understood by the analyst due to the social and political logics within hegemonic and emancipatory discourses. Emancipatory and the deconstruction of power are incorporated into the political realm of DT. This realm includes articulations, dislocations and contradictions. The deconstruction of discursive practice of social relations is observed in Jacques Derrida's work, in what Laclau and Mouffe (2001, p. ix) assert as a Marxist category in how "displacing some of their conditions [the former] of possibility and developing new possibilities". The inadequate CDA method/approach disallows an understanding of dislocation, theorised by Laclau and Mouffe (2001). Dislocation occurs when new possibilities are chosen ahead the traditional possibilities. DT pinpoints that discursive practices are unstable. Therefore, meanings are debatable and contested by dominant groups with the contemporary society. The debate of meanings produces a powerful game that through the deconstruction of practices would reveal a reality surrounded by powers.

Finally, this thesis demonstrates eight reasons why LCE is the best choice for this study, after accounting for the limitations of CDA. As discussed, the LCE are alternate to discourse analysis because its roots in a post-structuralist approach. This approach conceives an extensive comprehension of realities because it tends to recognise hegemonies, articulations and political scenario. A political analysis of discursive constructions of SEA is appropriate to employ a deeper philosophical background to uncover agents' intentions. In short, LCE have a wider approach to discourse analysis that serves to support the research's question.

A methodology connects the philosophical foundation and to the research question. In this thesis, LCE are an appropriate because they aim to achieve these goals by examining both features (inside and outside) of discursive constructions. The LCE have attributes that assist in understanding social realities and how to critique the motives of the

dominant players as they negotiate certain discursive practices within a political space. This methodology provides means to capture contexts. Along with the non-linguistic features of LCE, they have a better understanding to explain how politics has influences to determine certain meanings. LCE offer means to enable critiques and to expose hidden power relations. LCE are widely supported by DT. This theory has the capacity to debate and critique political, social and fantasmatic logics of social relationships better than other methodologies or approaches. For example, CDA is unsuccessful in addressing these logics.

In particular, LCE have a broader viewpoint than CDA; it has both positive and negative outcomes. For example, there are many complexities and a range of possibilities in the discussion of social formations. However, LCE provide for a rich discussion of those constructions due to the inclusions of political and social formations. Nonetheless, the CDA's methodology does not supply the actual design. In other words, LCE are complex, with miscellaneous ways to analyse, interpret and critique within the overall perspective of meaningful discourses and practices.

There is a way to improve and reduce the complexities of the LCE methodology. A proliferation of studies may reach a better understanding of this methodology in a political field. In a post-structuralist paradigm, this should open comprehensive debate of what the constructed meanings in each context. Also, critical studies may explain how and why power relations and ideologies operate in this field. Moreover, it is important to explain why some meanings are excluded or separated in this discussion. Reality is complex, but understanding a small part may find useful critiques that can develop the research area. This understanding is challengeable and requires a larger comprehension of reality, which DT and LCE seek to encourage and increase the debate through societal discursive constructions.

Appendix 2 – The corruption in Petrobras

The objective of this appendix is to highlight some reasons of how Petrobras has hidden the corruption for many years. The history of corruption may unveil the powerful groups that have maintained the scandal. The principal recent case of corruption is the Operation Car Wash (*Lava Jato*).

However, Petrobras has a history of corruption that spans many decades. In 1988, two employees were sacked of its subsidiary (Petrobras Distribuidora) because of an internal inquiry revealed a scheme between the employees and bankers (Reuters News, 1988a). At that time, the Petrobras's president, Mr. Armando Guedes Coelho, was fired when issues occurred at the time of his administration such as ten days of a strike, his lobbying against the Brazilian alcohol fuel programme and the scandal of corruption (Reuters News, 1988b). Additionally, the resignation and the replacement of Mr. Coelho linked to politicians implicated in the choice of Petrobras' presidential position, as they are friends of the Brazilian president Jose Sarney (Financial Times, 1988). In 1992, another corruption scandal included three high-level officials in Petrobras that were also associated with the administration of the Brazilian President Fernando Collor (Reuters News, 1992). For the first time in Brazilian history, a president faced impeachment with accusations of corruption that involved Petrobras in an irregular loan of US$ 40 million regarding a purchase of an airline company (Financial Times, 1992). Before the final result of impeachment, Fernando Collor de Mello renounced his position.

In 2006, Petrobras faced accusations of a corruption network involving the governing the Workers Party (*Partido dos Trabalhadores - PT*), allied parties, state-run companies and pension funds (Dow Jones International News, 2006). The principal accusation is an expensive vehicle given as a gift for the GDK former; GDK is an engineering company which has a contract with Petrobras (Dow Jones International News, 2006). In 2007, The Brazilian Federal Police arrested fourteen people accused of corruption in Petrobras in the Operation Deep Waters (*Águas Profundas*) (Latin America News Digest, 2007). This scheme gave insider information to private companies when to compete in public tenders to operate in partnership with Petrobras (Latin America News Digest, 2007). Another accusation of corruption happened in 2009 when Petrobras was accused of irregularities in a refinery in Venezuela when Camargo Correa (one's Petrobras contractors) overpriced its services (EFE News Service, 2009). In 2009, a congressional probe investigated

Petrobras and accusations of tax evasion (US$ 760.3 million) through a creative accounting, cost overruns at a refinery project in Brazil, over-inflated contracts for the construction of platforms and donations for the Sarney Foundation that belongs to the ex-Brazilian president and senator Jose Sarney (IHS Global Insight, 2009).

Ms. Rousseff (the actual Brazilian president) was the chairperson of Petrobras when a scandal involved the acquisition of a Texas oil refinery took place. In 2006, Petrobras purchased 50% of the refinery that cost nearly US$ 1.2 billion, but the previous owner only purchased it for US$ 42.5 million (The Wall Street Journal Online, 2014). These examples demonstrate how the history of corruption in Petrobras connects to political parties and politicians. This short history of corruption presents a basis to understand how Petrobras has controlled and managed the corruption throughout the years.

The most recent corruption scandal is the Operation Car Wash that exposed a massive system of political influences. The Brazilian Federal Police considers the Car Wash case the biggest investigation of corruption and money laundering in Brazil (MPF, 2015). According to the Brazilian Federal Police (MPF, 2015), the corruption scheme centred on bribes and overpayments of contracts through an organised network including political parties, contractors, financial operators and Petrobras 'directors between 2004 and 2014. To date, six people arrested, BRL 870 million recovered and the cost projection of the crimes is BRL 6,194 billion (MPF, 2015).

The impact on Petrobras can be more than what the company predicted; a lead prosecutor said the amount could reach US$ 5.3 billion (Middle East North Africa Financial Network, 2015). The investigation could also affect the current President Dilma that may have to face impeachment due to her position as Petrobras' chairperson and energy minister between 2003 and 2010 and the accusation of "illegal shuffled state funds around to make the economy appear healthier than it was before elections a year ago" (The Times, 2015). Also, the police are investigating the mentor and predecessor Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva whether he received bribery (The Times, 2015). The intricate web of corruption has bruised the company's investments, "sent its stock price to historic lows" and on September 2015, the company was downgraded to junk status by a credit rating agency (Business News Americas, 2015). Also, there are shareholders unsatisfied with the lower level of the stock prices, and they have made charges against Petrobras in an attempt to

recover their losses. The US authorities investigate whether the corruption scandal hurt the interests of US investors on the New York Stock Exchange (Business Day, 2015).

Political instability caused by the Petrobras' corruption and its implications for more than 50 politicians investigated may have a direct impact on the Brazilian economy that is facing a recession, a lower grade by rating agencies and may have a second president on the battle of impeachment (Economist Intelligence, 2015).

Having emphasised part of the Petrobras' history of corruption and some impacts on the company and Brazil, I aim to discuss how Petrobras has maintained the corruption apart from authorities. As noted, corruption follows Petrobras but never before has it reached the scale as the recent Car Wash scandal, which has had a massive impact on the Brazilian economy, and political system that put elite agents in the court. In terms of revenue, Petrobras is the largest state company in Brazil, and then its failure unavoidably bruised the country. The strong alliance between Petrobras and Brazil demonstrates a dependence in terms of the company's success that can aid the country in developing its social programs (the principal flag of the leading the Workers Party, PT) and the public opinion. However, the Operation Car Wash revealed a company with mistrust regarding its ethical statements. For this, Petrobras has hidden the unethical associations with the involvement of politicians. There are hypotheses surrounding how Petrobras has concealed ten years of the most famous corruption scandal. In my perspective, most reasons are characterised by the loss of power to manipulate authorities.

This appendix draws three hypotheses of how Petrobras has controlled its corruption. First, the political influences were weakened when the police investigated most of the politicians and directors involved in the corruption. Secondly, the nature of economic expansion enlarged as never before subsequently it resulted in entering into international markets with more fiscal and legal restrictions which transformed a backlash when the scandal came to light. Thirdly, the legal system in Brazil became more sophisticated to investigate influential companies and agents that shook the support for corruption.

In summary, this appendix presents some possible reasons of how Petrobras has hidden the corruption scandal. More importantly, Petrobras seemed to lose the political influences when most involved entities are/were investigated and sentenced by the Brazilian authorities. Then, the need for the international investors intensified the restrictions that forced Petrobras to allow the investigations. Further, the Brazilian legal

system expanded its sophistication that produced the basis for the corruption's examination. In my opinion, the recent corruption scandal in Petrobras was exposed because Petrobras lost their 'friends' in the political system and its expansion caused a coercion from the legal institutions in Brazil and abroad where the company operates.