

From EU 'Policy Principles' to National 'Policy Norms'?

Insights into German Development Policy

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Abstract

From the outset, development policy paradigms and instruments have been intensely debated at the international level. Over the years, discussions fed into several internationally agreed principles and goals such as the MDGs and increasingly established development 'policy norms' (Park and Vetterlein 2010). The European Union, a long-term and important development actor, has progressively included many of the latter into its 'soft law' documents. But in how far have these principles also been transformed into development policy norms in the member states? How do the respective agency and structural factors affect the internalisation of European development policy norms by national actors?

The paper subscribes to the flourishing constructivist norm research and models a five-stage norm cycle taking place at various levels. The analysis then zooms in on the step between norm institutionalisation and internalisation and takes both agency and structural factors that might come into play at different levels into account. As a first empirical case, the focus is on EU Joint Programming as a 'policy norm' and its incorporation into German development policy.

Keywords: European development policies; development policy norms; norm internalisation; German development policy; Joint Programming

Introduction

Since its very inception, development policy has been a policy significantly influenced by international debates and evolutions.¹ In the 1950s and 1960s, most industrial countries introduced national development policies directed towards the developing world. The debate about development paradigms and instruments within the international community experienced intensification in the 1990s when an increasing number of United Nations (UN) conferences shifted the attention to a broad range of development-related topics such as environment, gender or human rights. In 2000, the conferences' results fed into the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) adopted by the UN that will soon be followed up by 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to be solemnly fixed in late September 2015.

The European Union (EU), although being an important donor that looks back on a long engagement in development policy, rarely contributed own new paradigms, but largely participated in and followed the international development dialogue.² It has increasingly included international principles and norms into EU 'soft law' documents producing a "growing complementarity of EU development policy with the UN's MDGs."³

During the last decade, however, the EU has taken a somewhat more proactive stance in the international donor dialogue.⁴ The European Consensus, jointly adopted by the Council, the European Commission and the European Parliament in December 2005, for instance, has generated high hopes and expectations on behalf of scholars and politicians alike: It is the first EU document – even considered by some scholars as a "turning point"⁵ – that fixes common standards and principles for national as well as communitarian development policies.⁶ The agreed principles can thus be regarded to create shared expectations about appropriate behaviour. Still, the 28 national development policies by EU member states largely differ with regards to the financial and geographical scope, historical legacies, institutional setups and instrumental tools. First investigations into how general guidelines are translated into national policies point to a certain lack of implementation and policy adaptation, at least by some

¹ This paper is based on a PhD project that investigates the development policies of France, Germany, Spain and the United Kingdom under a comparative perspective. To this end, it takes four different policy principles (0.7% target, priority to LDCs, budget support and Joint Programming) as cases for the analysis. This paper, however, is limited to presenting first results for Germany and Joint Programming.

² Cf. Hoebink and Stokke 2005: 20 and Farrell 2008: 439. As an exception, the Stabex and Sysmin mechanisms introduced in the Lomé Conventions were greeted as exemplary at the time, van Reisen 2007: 40.

³ Holland 2008: 348. Cf. also Arts and Dickson 2009 [2004], 3.

⁴ EU activism was visible, for instance, in the HIPC Initiative or the increasing focus on sub-Saharan Africa, cf. Holland 2008: 348 and 355.

⁵ Carbone 2007: 1.

⁶ Even if many of the principles and goals may not have been new to most EU Member States, they were jointly fixed in written form for the first time.

member states.⁷ In how far have EU principles thus been incorporated into national development policies and internalised by relevant actors, thereby becoming ‘policy norms’?⁸ Drawing on the prospering field of constructivist research on international norms, this paper digs into how agency and structural factors might affect the transposition of international principles into national policy norms.

My starting point are the assumptions that institutionalised ‘policy principles’ are turned into ‘policy norms’ once they are thoroughly internalised by the respectively relevant actors and that a norm can be considered as internalised once it is fully accepted and regarded as legitimate and right by relevant national actors.⁹ In order to account for the transformation of policy principles into policy norms, the paper merges existing norm models into a five-stage norm cycle that comprises different levels and process stages. With a particular focus on the process between norm institutionalisation and norm internalisation, various agency and structural factors that may impinge on the internalisation of development policy norms by the respective relevant actors are identified from existing norm research and development policy studies. With the help of process-tracing, the analysis seeks to map the process taking place in between the two norm stages, based on various material such as semi-structured expert and practitioner interviews, among others. As a first case, the paper concentrates on one EU policy principle that was introduced in the early 2000s after long-term efforts in favour of an intensified member state coordination: Joint Programming (JP). As EU founding member and an important long-term aid donor, Germany provides an interesting first case¹⁰ that will later be contrasted with first evidence on the attitudes shown by other EU member states that have substantially shaped EU development policy (France, Spain and the United Kingdom).

A Constructivist Perspective on International Norms

This paper departs from the assumption that agents and structures mutually constitute and influence each other.¹¹ More specifically, international norms, depending on the process stage they are currently in, may influence an actor’s behaviour, his interests and/or also his identity. Norms have the strongest influence on an actor’s preferences, interests, behaviour and identity

⁷ Such analyses are relatively scarce, cf. Cox, Healey and Koning 1997: 30. For evidence on France, see Negrescu 2010: 7ff.; for evidence on France and Germany, see Jaspers 2012 and Krüger 2015; for evidence on the Czech Republic, see Horký 2010.

⁸ Cf. Park and Vetterlein 2012b.

⁹ Elgström draws a similar conclusion in distinguishing between ‘formal’ and ‘real’ norm adoption, see Elgström 2000: 458 and 472.

¹⁰ Large donor countries (such as Germany) are seemingly less likely to fully comply with internationally agreed goals and targets than small donor countries, cf. Hoadley 1980: 137.

¹¹ Cf. Wendt 1987: 360 and Checkel 1998: 328.

if they are fully internalised, i.e. regarded as just and legitimate by the involved actors.¹² Different types of international norms may treat the behaviour between states, state behaviour towards the population or also guide the choice of paradigms and instruments in implementing a policy with an external dimension, such as development policy.

Policy Principles and Policy Norms

In constructivist research on international norms, a broad variety of terms such as ideas, goals, rules, principles and norms are defined differently while at times used interchangeably. For the scope of this paper, a distinction between principles and norms is primordial. With regard to the former, Wiener presents a typology of norms based on the respective degree of generalisation and specificity as well as the moral and ethical scope and which distinguishes between fundamental norms, organising principles and standardized procedures.¹³ Drawing on Wiener's concept of 'organising principles' that are located on a mid-level of generalisation and specificity, "inform political procedures and guide policy practices" and "evolve through the practices of politics and policy-making"¹⁴, this paper defines policy principles as institutionalised statements of intent (i.e. laid down 'hard' or 'soft law' documents such as declarations, strategies or memorandums) that guide policy practices. In development policy, these principles are often inspired from (commonly agreed) goals that are commonly pursued desirable states of affairs which imply a dimension of achievement, often including a target timeline and/or indicators for measuring the goal's achievement.

International development policy principles are mostly not legally binding (as those introduced in Paris in 2005) and stem from the larger international debate that seeks towards an effective, coordinated and successful global development cooperation. The difference between policy principles and norms is that the latter are internalised and viewed as legitimate by the actors involved while policy principles lack such a normative or moral quality. Or, as Florini puts it: "the essence of the distinctiveness of a norm is the sense of 'ought'."¹⁵ Policy principles may turn into policy norms once internalised by the respective relevant actors.

According to the somewhat standard definition by Jepperson, Wendt and Katzenstein, norms are "collective expectations about proper behavior for a given identity".¹⁶ This implies that

¹² Since she considers that norms (may) have not only a regulative (prescriptive or proscriptive), but also a constitutive impact on an actor's interests and identity, the author does not subscribe to the distinction between regulative and constitutive norms that is frequently applied, see Jepperson, Wendt and Katzenstein 1996: 54 or Raymond 1997: 214; for overviews, see Björkdahl 2002: 15f. and Risse 2003: 117f.

¹³ Cf. Wiener 2008: 66f.

¹⁴ Ibid.: 67. As examples, Wiener mentions accountability, transparency or gender mainstreaming.

¹⁵ Florini 1996: 364.

¹⁶ Jepperson, Wendt and Katzenstein 1996: 54.

they are “counterfactually valid”¹⁷: they might be violated, but this does not necessarily mean that they are invalidated thereby. This definition suits a focus on norms that guide the behaviour of states either towards their own citizens or towards other states. In the cases under examination, however, the focus is more on norms that “shape the instruments or means that states find available and appropriate”¹⁸ for the implementation of development policy, i.e. what Park and Vetterlein describe as ‘ideas turned into policy.’¹⁹ In their edited book on norms within the policies of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, the two authors contend that “[n]orms shape how policies are devised in certain ways and not others”²⁰ and thus introduce the concept of ‘policy norms’ defined as “*shared expectations for all relevant actors within a community about what constitutes appropriate behaviour, which is encapsulated in (Fund or Bank) policy.*”²¹

While Park and Vetterlein focus on policy norms that emerge and stabilise within an international organisation, the author will investigate international norms that (may later) ‘trickle down’ from this international (here EU) level into national policy-making. In this way, policy norms both create expectations about behaviour and thereby also more directly prescribe a certain way of behaving.²² Accordingly, EU development policy norms are both shared expectations among relevant actors within the EU about what constitutes appropriate behaviour and prescribe a certain toolkit and paradigms for development policy and its implementation.

The Five-Stage Norm Cycle

Since the 1980s and especially over the past two decades, scholarly research has shown a growing interest for international norms and their impact on national politics and policies and produced a vibrant research area.²³ Starting point was the recognition that norms change over time, sometimes even drastically: while slavery and colonization were widespread and accepted in previous periods, for instance, they have been frowned upon since long.²⁴ Furthermore, different norm models have been introduced so far, with regard to which I seek to stress four points.²⁵ First of all, scholars’ attention is often on norms that are either

¹⁷ Kratochwil and Ruggie 1986: 767.

¹⁸ Kowert and Legro 1996: 463.

¹⁹ Cf. Park and Vetterlein 2012a: 4.

²⁰ Ibid.: 4.

²¹ Ibid.: 4 (italics in the original).

²² See also Björkdahl 2002: 16.

²³ For encompassing overviews, see Boekle, Rittberger and Wagner 1999, Björkdahl 2002 or Rosert 2012.

²⁴ Cf. Sandholtz 2009: 3.

²⁵ As a first major reference model, Finnemore and Sikkink presented a three-stage ‘norm life cycle’ in 1998 (see Finnemore and Sikkink 1998). Risse, Ropp and Sikkink established the ‘spiral model of human rights change’

‘exported’ to external, third countries and/or debated in the world community:²⁶ norms regarding inter-state behaviour (e.g. the sovereignty norm or the nuclear taboo) and norms that regard how states treat their citizens (e.g. human or minority rights).²⁷ Yet, the norms under investigation in development policy do not fit into this scheme: they rather guide and shape policy implementation itself, e.g. offer guidance in the choice of instruments or channels.²⁸

Secondly, a single-level norm life cycle cannot fully reflect the norm building processes that are taking place in the field of development policy, especially since this policy is to a large degree shaped by different international debates (as those on women, climate or development financing, for instance). The norm cycle can thus not be limited to the national or international level, but the “complete story of norm evolution is [...] a two-level game.”²⁹ Development policy norms often emerge at the international level, are then (in the ideal case) adopted at the European and finally accepted at the national level.³⁰ The process may further involve the aggregated national population or single individuals.³¹ The processes at various levels thus need to be viewed as separate, not necessarily parallel, yet intertwined. For instance, a certain norm may be strong on the international level, but merely institutionalised or even contested on the national level.³²

Furthermore, it is assumed that only norm internalisation by involved, relevant actors leads to full and thorough norm compliance. The commitment to a norm at the international level in the first place is usually not accomplished by the same actors that are involved in norm compliance.³³ In other words, the adoption of principles at the international level does not automatically lead to individual internalisation within the national setting.³⁴ Even if a norm has been formally adopted at the international level, it may still generate conflict at home: only few states pass the “bottleneck”³⁵ towards full norm compliance and if norm change does

(see Risse and Sikkink 1999 and Risse and Ropp 2013). Sandholtz’s ‘cycle of norm change’ particularly focuses on the role of argumentation and legal reasoning (see Sandholtz 2008), whereas Park and Vetterlein tailored their ‘norm circle’ to policy norms (see Park and Vetterlein 2012b).

²⁶ See, among others, Goldstein and Keohane 1993, Katzenstein 1996, Risse, Ropp and Sikkink 1999, Björkdahl 2005 or Risse, Ropp and Sikkink 2013.

²⁷ For a similar distinction, see Rosert 2012: 599.

²⁸ For similar approaches, see Ascher 1983, Finnemore 1996, Elgström 2000 or Park and Vetterlein 2012b.

²⁹ Florini 1996: 379.

³⁰ Farrell therefore calls development policy a “three-level domain”, Farrell 2008: 226.

³¹ Cf. Rosert 2012: 611.

³² Cf. *ibid.*: 610.

³³ Cf. Diehl and Goertz 1992: 646, Checkel 1998: 332 and Boekle, Rittberger and Wagner 1999: 9.

³⁴ Cf. Wiener 2008: 12. Other studies therefore distinguish between ‘formal’ and ‘real’ norm adoption (see Elgström 2000: 458 and 472) or ‘shared’ and ‘collective norms’ (see Kowert and Legro 1996: 475). The basic idea of ‘two-level games’ was forwarded in Putnam 1988.

³⁵ Jetschke and Liese 2013: 27.

not occur, reversal is more likely.³⁶ While norm internalisation often remains conceptually underspecified,³⁷ I assume that norm internalisation is complete when those actors that are active in the implementation of and compliant behaviour with the norm in question regard the norm as right and legitimate and have included it into their (internal) norm repertoire. This then implies a change in the logic of action from a logic of consequences to a logic of appropriateness.³⁸

Lastly, although “the interaction between structures and actors is the primary driving force in norm evolution”³⁹ too scarce attention has so far been paid to agency. According to Checkel, constructivists long failed to explore how norms arise in the first place and how they change over time because they reduced the agent level (states and individual decision-makers) to the structure level (norms).⁴⁰ Although some attention has been paid to agency in other phases,⁴¹ few scholars have so far looked into agency in the transition phase between norm institutionalisation and norm internalisation.⁴² This bears the risk of an implicit belief in automatic progress that proves incompatible with the assumption that norms are dynamic and change over time.⁴³

Against the backdrop of the above considerations and the existing norm process models, I depict the norm cycle as comprising five different stages (see figure 1). Analytically, the same cycle can be separately mapped at different levels whose processes need not be synchronic, but are very likely interlinked. The different actors, triggers and mechanisms that can be involved at the different stages are largely bracketed here for the sake of brevity, while the focus will be put on norm institutionalisation and norm internalisation.

Most norm scholars agree on the view that norms “do not enter an ideological vacuum,”⁴⁴ but build on the cultural and normative background, the “normative baggage”⁴⁵ existing in a

³⁶ Cf. Landolt 2004: 586. For insights into the ‘contested meaning of norms’, see, for instance, Puetter and Wiener 2007, Wiener 2008 and Wiener and Puetter 2009.

³⁷ Not all research is explicit on who must have internalised a norm before we can speak of norm internalisation, cf. Rosert and Schirmbeck 2007: 255.

³⁸ On this point, see also Checkel 2005: 804.

³⁹ Björkdahl 2002: 17.

⁴⁰ Cf. Checkel 1997: 480 and Checkel 1998: 340ff.

⁴¹ Finnemore, for instance, investigates on the role of the World Bank in norm emergence (see Finnemore 1996: 125) and Finnemore and Sikkink look into the influence of norm entrepreneurs (see Finnemore and Sikkink 1998: 256ff.). Regarding norm empowerment, Checkel studies societal pressure and elite learning as diffusion mechanisms (see Checkel 1997). Gränzer et al. offer insights in national and transnational agency in the empowerment and institutionalisation of human rights norms (see Gränzer, Jetschke, Risse and Schmitz 1998) and Florini focuses on norm entrepreneurs at the stage of contestation (see Florini 1996: 374f.).

⁴² One exception is provided in Risse and Ropp 2013.

⁴³ Cf. Rosert and Schirmbeck 2007: 257 and Sandholtz 2009: 18.

⁴⁴ Cf. Sikkink 1991: 3.

⁴⁵ Puetter and Wiener 2007: 1069.

certain environment.⁴⁶ After having become empowered⁴⁷ and thereby gained in strength and acceptance, norms then need to find an “institutional home”⁴⁸, i.e. become institutionalised or embedded in national ‘hard’ or ‘soft’ law, politics or polity, in order to sustain themselves in the long run and reach a ‘prescriptive status.’⁴⁹ This may occur explicitly (the new norm is referred to, described or explained in a legal or ‘soft law’ document) or implicitly (the new norm is already palpable, yet not formulated and defined as such). Norm institutionalisation may, however, also be marked by on-going dialogue, argumentation and justification processes or “implementation negotiations”⁵⁰ at the level of the implementing institution(s).⁵¹

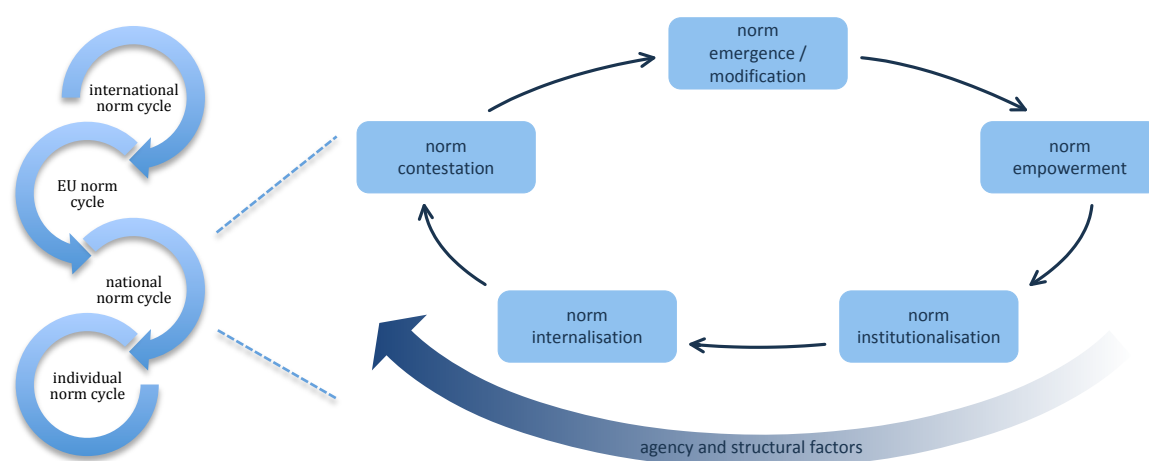


Figure 1: The ideal-type five-stage norm cycle takes place at various levels (*author’s own depiction*).

As already pointed out above, norm institutionalisation does *not* automatically lead over to the internalisation of norms by the relevant actors.⁵²

Despite the fact that some processes are domestic and some international or transnational, the adoption of a particular norm is an internal process characterised by the socialisation and internalisation of the norm.⁵³

According to Wendt, ‘third degree norm internalisation’ is achieved when actors “think the norms are legitimate and therefore *want* to follow them”⁵⁴ – the norms thus acquire ‘taken-

⁴⁶ Cf. Finnemore and Sikkink 1998: 2656f., Sandholtz 2008: 103 or Stiles and Sandholtz 2009: 324.

⁴⁷ While many scholars use the terms ‘norm cascades’ or ‘norm stabilisation’, the author opts for ‘norm empowerment’ (borrowed from Checkel 1997) since it connotes a more dynamic process in which certain actors consciously promote and further spread a certain norm instead of a rather automatic and passive-sounding process.

⁴⁸ Sikkink 1991: 248.

⁴⁹ In the spiral model, norms have gained prescriptive status when actors regularly refer to the norm, ratify the respective international conventions and institutionalise the norm in their domestic legal repertoire, cf. Risse and Sikkink 1999: 29f.

⁵⁰ Elgström 2000: 461.

⁵¹ Cf. Risse and Sikkink 1999: 30.

⁵² Risse and Sikkink underline that these relevant actors can be states, but also non-state actors such as private companies or even individual citizens, depending on the respective norm, cf. Risse and Sikkink 2013: 292.

⁵³ Björkdahl 2002: 18.

⁵⁴ Wendt 2010: 272 (*italics in the original*).

for-granted' quality.⁵⁵ Thereby, a change in the logic of action has occurred as actors now follow a logic of appropriateness: "[m]ost actors, most of the time, then, take the rule as a 'fact'."⁵⁶ However, this does not always constitute a linear process that all relevant actors accomplish synchronously.⁵⁷ Different internalisation degrees among the actors may even offer "norm challengers" a "window of opportunity"⁵⁸ and thereby directly lead over into the phase of norm contestation. Once internalised, norms are thus not necessarily built to last: under certain conditions, they may become contested again and challenged by other existing or new norms.⁵⁹

Methodology and Operationalization

In the existent research concentrating on the transposition of international norms to the national level, different agency and structural factors have been identified and described that either come into play specifically at one stage or may influence norm processes at various moments. However, a comprehensive analytical model that allows to integrate these different factors into a broader picture with a view to make understandable why and how international policy principles are (not) transformed into national policy norms is still lacking – a fact that makes the use of process-tracing particularly helpful.⁶⁰ Thereby, the preliminary theorising about what possibly hinders or promotes norm internalisation is assembled and 'tested' on concrete policy norm cases.

To this end, first of all, the agency and structural factors that have been identified or hypothesized by previous research are grouped and aggregated at four influence levels: the individual, the institutional, the national and the international levels (see table 1). As these factors do not only come into play in between norm institutionalisation and norm internalisation, but possibly already at earlier stages, they are depicted as an accompanying and presumably intensifying darkening arrow (see figure 1).

⁵⁵ Cf. Finnemore and Sikkink 1998: 264.

⁵⁶ March and Olsen 2006: 693. As an example, Tannenwald shows how such a gradual change of logics of action took place over time with regard to the taboo on the use of nuclear weapons, cf. Tannenwald 1999: 442-62.

⁵⁷ Cf. Rosert and Schirmbeck 2007: 281.

⁵⁸ Ibid.: 281.

⁵⁹ Cf. Acharya 2004: 247 or Park and Vetterlein 2012a: 18 and 23. In recent years, norm contestation or erosion has gained increased scholarly attention, see Wiener and Schweltnus 2004, Puetter and Wiener 2007, Wiener 2008, Wiener and Puetter 2009, McKeown 2009, Contessi 2010 or Panke and Petersohn 2012.

⁶⁰ Cf. George and Bennett 2005: 215. Epistemologically, this paper stands in the tradition of Wendt's 'via media' epistemology (cf. Wendt 2010: 40) and the 'modernist,' 'middle ground' epistemology as described by Adler, combining 'understanding' and 'explanation,' (cf. Adler 1997: 332ff. and Checkel 1998).

	agency	structure
individual level	individual commitment ⁶¹	norm ‘fit’ ⁶²
institutional level	institutional debates ⁶³	institutional characteristics ⁶⁴
national level	national discussions ⁶⁵	national profile ⁶⁶
international level	international processes ⁶⁷	international events ⁶⁸

Table 1: The grouped agency- and structural factors that may come into play between norm institutionalisation and internalisation.

Furthermore, these four levels will be taken as indicators in mapping the process taking place in between norm institutionalisation and internalisation for the different investigated policy norms along an assumed ideal-type process (see I1-4 in figure 2).

In sum, process tracing means to trace the operation of the causal mechanism(s) at work in a given situation. One carefully maps the process, exploring the extent to which it coincides with prior, theoretically derived expectations about the workings of the mechanism.⁶⁹

Process-tracing proves particularly useful as “[t]he impact of international norms varies across time and place, and it is only through detailed process tracing that we can understand when and where they matter.”⁷⁰ To account for the maximum of agency and structural factors that may play a role between the two stages, process-tracing needs to rely on different types of sources. For my analysis, semi-structured interviews with experts for development policy and ‘practitioners’ directly involved in policy-making are the main sources but I ‘cross-

⁶¹ These are personal attitudes (cf. Elgström 2000: 470), professional backgrounds and/or role staff conceptions (cf. Ascher 1983: 427 and 436) or strong commitment and advocacy by single ‘norm entrepreneurs’ (cf. Finnemore 1996: 104).

⁶² Different norm traits are specificity, durability or concordance (cf. Legro 1997: 34), international legitimation, prominence or intrinsic characteristics of the norm such as clarity, specificity or the norm’s content (cf. Finnemore and Sikkink 1998: 266) or formal validity, social recognition and cultural validation (cf. Wiener 2008: 4f.). General ‘norm fit’ to the pre-existing national norm repertoire is a further factor (cf. Finnemore and Sikkink 1998: 268, Björkdahl 2005: 275, Puetter and Wiener 2007: 1069 or Sandholtz 2008: 106).

⁶³ These are text negotiations and/or implementation negotiations (cf. Elgström 2000: 461), struggles over interpretation of meaning (cf. Park and Vetterlein 2012a: 23) or disputes over meaning and application of norms (cf. Sandholtz 2009: 323).

⁶⁴ These are institutional and personnel continuity (cf. Sikkink 1991: 23), organizational culture (cf. Legro 1997: 37), institutional structures and procedures and their congruence with new ideas (cf. Sikkink 1991: 249, also Finnemore 1996: 90), the legacy left behind by ‘pivotal institution builders’ or leaders (cf. Sikkink 1991: 250) or pre-existing institutional norm structures (Checkel 2001: 580f.).

⁶⁵ These are the national discourse and the norm’s national salience (cf. Cortell and Davis 2000: 70), (lack of) public mobilization and pressure (cf. Thiel 1996: 211), contested meanings of norms (cf. Wiener 2007: 6f.) or ‘cultural validation’ (cf. Wiener 2008: 5f.).

⁶⁶ These are: the domestic structure (cf. Cortell and Davis 1996: 454f.), cultural match (cf. Checkel 1999: 86), government ideology (cf. Lumsdaine 1993: 27) or path dependence (cf. Finnemore and Sikkink 1998: 268).

⁶⁷ These are peer pressure (cf. Elgström 2000: 473, Lightfoot 2010: 345) or donor competition (cf. Holland 2008: 353).

⁶⁸ These are the ‘world time context’ (cf. Finnemore and Sikkink 1998: 268f., Risse and Sikkink 1999: 19, Holland and Doidge 2012: 9), ‘environmental conditions’ such as the distribution of power, prevailing level of technology, availability of resources (cf. Florini 1996: 377) or “the political and economic concerns of the time” (Sikkink 1991: 255).

⁶⁹ Checkel 2008: 116.

⁷⁰ Gurowitz 1999: 416.

checked' their 'story' through content analysis of other sources and thereby 'triangulated' the material.⁷¹

In order to know which actors are the relevant actors for norm internalisation in the national context, a more detailed analysis of the domestic structure as proposed by Cortell and Davis shows that overall and from a comparative perspective, "there is a broad centralisation"⁷² at the level of German development policy decision-making and implementation.⁷³ Although different ministries and implementing agencies are involved, the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) is in charge of major policy strategies and guidelines and inter-ministerial coordination,⁷⁴ with a slight trend towards an even increased centralisation over the past years.⁷⁵ In sum, the BMZ is therefore regarded as the main determinant of development policy and thus as my interlocutor with a view to the internalisation of international policy norms.⁷⁶

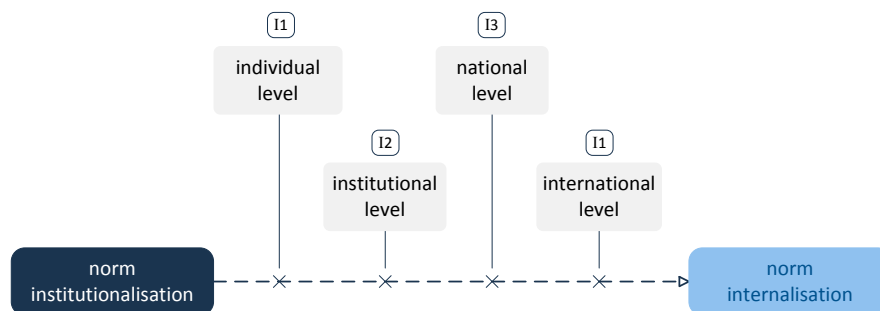


Figure 2: The different factor levels that serve as indicators of the ideal-type process between norm institutionalisation and norm internalisation (*author's own depiction*).

Now that actors and factors to look at are clear, the last thing to make graspable is development policy. Out of the many EU development policy principles that have been institutionalised over the last five decades, I will take the principle of policy coordination as enhanced through EU Joint Programming as a first case for which I will check for (probably) promoting and/or hindering factors at the agency and structural level.

⁷¹ Cf. Checkel 2008: 119. The most important secondary sources are ministerial strategies and communications, parliamentary protocols, media reports and international agreements. In the content analysis, the four indicator levels served as categories of analysis.

⁷² "...eine weitgehende Zentralisierung," Expert Interview 3.

⁷³ For the analytical model applied here, see Cortell and Davis 1996. For the sake of brevity, the German domestic structure in development policy can only be resumed here; the detailed analysis is part of the author's dissertation.

⁷⁴ Cf. also Hofmeier and Schultz 1984: 220 and Schorlemmer 2009: 17.

⁷⁵ With regards to the delegation of ministerial staff to the field, however, the trend is rather reverse, though in-country representation and decision-making power are still rather mediocre in international comparison.

⁷⁶ Nine face-to-face or telephone interviews with independent national experts from French, German, Spanish and UK development policy think tanks or research institutes and five face-to-face interviews with BMZ staff have been respectively conducted from March to June and in June/July 2015. In order to avoid priming effects, the interviews were based on a guideline that comprised open questions addressing the different levels. All interviews have been recorded and are on file with the author.

From EU Policy Principles to National Policy Norms? The Case of Joint Programming

As early as in the 1970s, the need for a stronger coordination between the Community and the member states regarding development policy became apparent.⁷⁷ In 1992, the Treaty on European Union then introduced the so-called ‘three Cs’ to development cooperation: complementarity of EU and member state policies, coherence between the different EU (non-development) policies and coordination between the different donors.⁷⁸ In 2000, country strategy papers (CSPs) were introduced as an instrument of joint multiannual programming between the EU and the different member states present in a beneficiary country, which should rely on a joint analysis of the global political situation, of the country’s macroeconomic, social and environmental background as well as of lessons learned, consistency with the partner country’s other policies and complementarity between donors’ activities. Then, a joint strategic response should formulate objectives, focal areas and division of labour.⁷⁹

Under this system, the goal is to incorporate member state and Commission bilateral country programmes in a single EU country strategy that is aligned with the partner country’s own national development plan and agreed upon by the EU institutions and member states.⁸⁰

The JP approach was further enshrined in several EU development policy strategies and increasingly opened up to other non-EU donors and may be applied to about 50 partner countries by 2020.⁸¹ Still, however: “While EU member states have formally committed to the JP framework, this does not mean that they love it.”⁸²

Germany as a relatively ‘easy case’

In parallel to the European efforts and the reform process of EU development policy, international coordination has been on the German agenda over the last fifteen years. Better coordination was increasingly promoted by Germany in the 1990s and parliamentarians have continuously asked for a stronger coordination of multi- and bilateral development efforts within Europe in the late 1990s and early 2000s.⁸³ Commitments to an international division of labour and an increased EU complementarity were enshrined in the coalition agreements of

⁷⁷ Cf. McMahon 1998: 220-235 and van Reisen 2007: 44.

⁷⁸ Cf. *Treaty on European Union* 1992: art 130u, v and x.

⁷⁹ Cf. Commission of the European Communities 2006: 4 and 11.

⁸⁰ Klingebiel 2014: 2.

⁸¹ Cf. European Parliament, Council and Commission 2005: 6, Commission of the European Communities 2007: 5 or European Commission 2011: 10f. and Furness and Vollmer 2013: 2.

⁸² Furness and Vollmer 2013: 4.

⁸³ Cf. Deutscher Bundestag 1999b, Deutscher Bundestag 1999a, Deutscher Bundestag 2000, Deutscher Bundestag 2003 and Ashoff 2005: 290.

2005 and 2009 and since, the Joint Programming principle has further been institutionalised within the BMZ strategies.⁸⁴

Today, Joint Programming seems fairly internalised within the BMZ and of no significant contention at the national level either. One central and necessary impetus was presumably provided through Minister Dirk Niebel's strong personal commitment and advocacy within the Ministry but also at the international level.⁸⁵ In preparation of the Busan High Level Meeting in late-2011, Niebel strongly advocated the issue in order to reduce aid fragmentation and achieve a European division of labour and later promoted EU JP in countries where donors only just (or again) arrived, like Myanmar and South Sudan, and fragile countries.⁸⁶ Although from the BMZ point of view, JP generally matches the German concern for aid effectiveness, division of labour and partner orientation,⁸⁷ the increased efforts that are necessary to implement Joint Programming still needed to be backed by "very clear political statements and political guidance"⁸⁸ – a prerequisite that was fulfilled by Niebel's strong personal commitment and advocacy from 2009 to 2013. The Minister's strong agency further coincided with a European Commissioner that was equally in favour of Joint Programming: the Latvian Andris Piebalgs.⁸⁹ In February 2012, the two politicians jointly undertook a journey to Myanmar in order to promote the idea of Joint Programming amongst others.⁹⁰ In October 2013, when the end of Niebel's term was approaching, the Commission lauded his "strong political commitment"⁹¹ to Joint Programming. Still, however, the process is seen to also hinge upon the in-country personnel of both the embassies and the EU and their respective commitment and advocacy.⁹² Personal attitudes towards Joint Programming might thus come into play when it comes to the different concertation rounds and procedures.⁹³

At the institutional level, the relatively strong promoting factors at the individual level seem to have left a certain 'institutional legacy': due to the strong agency of the former Development Minister, JP seems broadly internalised at the working level and is continuously

⁸⁴ Cf. *Gemeinsam für Deutschland. Mit Mut und Menschlichkeit. Koalitionsvertrag von CDU, CSU und SPD 2005*: 162, *Wachstum. Bildung. Zusammenhalt. Koalitionsvertrag zwischen CDU, CSU und FDP. 17. Legislaturperiode 2009*: 129 and *BMZ 2013a*: 5.

⁸⁵ One of the interviewees labelled him a 'fan' of Joint Programming, cf. Practitioner Interview 1.

⁸⁶ Cf. Niebel 2011: 343f. and Practitioner Interview 1; cf. also *BMZ 2011, Entwicklungspolitik Online Redaktion 2012* and *BMZ 2013b*.

⁸⁷ Cf. Practitioner Interviews 1, 2 and 4.

⁸⁸ "Der Prozess hat sich etabliert, ja, ist aber wie gesagt abhängig von den Leuten, auch vor allen Dingen von der Hierarchie. [...] So ein Prozess braucht ganz klare politische Aussagen und politische guidance." Practitioner Interview 1.

⁸⁹ Cf. Practitioner Interview 1.

⁹⁰ Cf. *BMZ 2012*.

⁹¹ "Die Kommission lobt besonders Niebels "starkes politisches Engagement" in der Einführung des EU Joint Programmings." Sarmadi 2013.

⁹² Cf. Practitioner Interviews 1 and 5.

⁹³ Cf. Practitioner Interview 5.

supported and pushed unless the successive Minister changes the course.⁹⁴ This is, however, little likely since the principle fits the importance attributed to a joint, coordinated approach generally favoured within the ministry.⁹⁵ Furthermore, the somewhat similar German Country Strategy Papers (*Länderstrategiepapiere*) on which the BMZ bases its bilateral cooperation programmes and projects and which have a relatively long tradition within the BMZ⁹⁶ suit the JP approach fairly well. Even though they may not be completely congruent to the joint CSPs, the BMZ can ideally link its strategies to the joint papers, which, in the long run, promises a reduction in the work load, and confine itself to drafting simpler and thinner ‘chapeau papers.’⁹⁷ In this way, the joint EU papers can gradually replace the German country strategy papers, which is already the case or being prepared in countries such as Mali or South Sudan.⁹⁸

One institutional feature that slows down Joint Programming is the adaptation of bilateral budget cycles to the joint rhythm. For technical reasons, this is a rather long-term process and the personnel directly involved into EU Joint Programming in the bilateral working units is perceived to have ‘mixed feelings’ as implementation is yet incomplete.⁹⁹ As JP is extended to more and more countries, the relatively weak in-country representation might put the BMZ under further pressure since the process is decisively shaped by the in-country personnel.¹⁰⁰

As a national feature, German budget law generally constrains multi-year indicative commitments since the federal budget is subject to annual parliamentary assent which makes BMZ staff sceptical regarding JP’s fit to the German domestic structure.¹⁰¹

It is difficult to already give a country also a concrete financial perspective, to deliver clear figures, since our budget law does not allow for that.¹⁰²

As some BMZ personnel remains “sceptical whether this indicative planning suits us [the BMZ]”¹⁰³, Germany especially stresses its commitment to the idea of division of labour and of making use of comparative advantages.

⁹⁴ Cf. Practitioner Interview 1: “*So lange der politischen Zielrichtung von Minister Niebel nicht widersprochen wird ganz vehement, gilt für uns immer noch: Joint Programming, überall da, wo es eingeführt werden soll, wird es unterstützt und treiben wir auch mit an.*”

⁹⁵ Cf. Practitioner Interviews 4 and 5.

⁹⁶ Cf. Wiemann 1997: 187, Ashoff 2005: 291 and Practitioner Interview 4.

⁹⁷ Cf. Practitioner Interview 5.

⁹⁸ Cf. Furness and Vollmer 2013: 3, Practitioner Interviews 2 and 4.

⁹⁹ Cf. Practitioner Interviews 1 and 4. Many bilateral programmes run on multi-year budget cycles so that not all partner countries are scheduled for planning and programming each year, cf. Practitioner Interview 3.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Practitioner Interviews 1 and 2, Cox, Healey and Koning 1997: 26, Wiemann 1997: 185 and Ashoff 2005: 296.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Practitioner Interview 3.

¹⁰² “*Es ist schwierig, einem Land auch tatsächlich eine finanzielle Perspektive schon zu geben, also genaue Zahlen denen zu liefern, das gibt halt unser Haushaltsrecht auch so nicht her.*” Practitioner Interview 5.

¹⁰³ “*Wir arbeiten immer unter parlamentarischem Vorbehalt, deswegen waren wir immer skeptisch, ob diese Indikative Planung so in unserem Sinne ist.*” Practitioner Interview 3.

At the international level, BMZ personnel sees the strong coordination and collaboration with France and also with the European Commission as a positive feature for the promotion of Joint Programming.¹⁰⁴ Where Germany participates in the Joint Programming exercise, it is broadly viewed as “supportive,”¹⁰⁵ as a country that actively promotes the issue,¹⁰⁶ takes a “lead role”¹⁰⁷ as in Zambia or as a “strong team player”¹⁰⁸ as in the pilot in South Sudan. Nevertheless, the international good will of increasing coordination may at times collide with each country’s ambitions to make it’s mark, leading to a certain donor competition, especially in countries where many donors are present and willing to make a difference, which might slow down JP efforts.¹⁰⁹

France, Spain and the UK: mismatch and reluctance?

The German structural environment and agent-driven processes thus proved overall propitious for the institutionalisation and internalisation of increased donor coordination through Joint Programming, making German development policy a rather ‘easy’ case. First insights gathered through expert interviews with researchers from France, Spain and the United Kingdom, however, point to different and (much) tougher conditions in these major development policy-shapers.

According to French experts, the issue of European policy coordination may be present within the French Foreign Ministry, but is rather seen as a technical question that is “not at all centre stage.”¹¹⁰ What is more, the substantial part of French official development assistance (ODA)¹¹¹ funds that are channelled through the European Development Fund and the other EU development instruments is seen to create a certain competition with French bilateral programmes and French diplomats are perceived to be increasingly distrustful towards working with the European Commission as this process is perceived as fairly complex.¹¹²

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Practitioner Interview 2 and BMZ 2015.

¹⁰⁵ Expert Interview 2.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Practitioner Interview 5: “*Im EU-Kontext werden wir glaube ich als eines der Länder wahrgenommen, die das auch befördern möchten, die sich auch aktiv in den Prozess einbringen.*”

¹⁰⁷ OECD 2010: 68.

¹⁰⁸ “*starker Team Player*”, Sarmadi 2013.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Practitioner Interview 1.

¹¹⁰ “*Ce n’est pas du tout sur le devant de la scène*” Expert Interview 7.

¹¹¹ The Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) defines ODA as “those flows to countries and territories on the DAC List of ODA Recipients and to multilateral institutions which are: i. provided by official agencies, including state and local governments, or by their executive agencies; and ii. each transaction of which: a) is administered with the promotion of the economic development and welfare of developing countries as its main objective; and b) is concessional in character and conveys a grant element of at least 25 per cent (calculated at a rate of discount of 10 per cent).” OECD 2015.

¹¹² Cf. Expert Interview 9.

Due to the budgetary constraints from the financial crisis, the Spanish proportion of ODA channelled multilaterally is equally quite high. Still, however, experts do not perceive Spain to have a clear strategy of its role and potential in European development cooperation.¹¹³ Spanish civil society and the broad public further see the allocations to multilateral cooperation (e.g. through European funds and instruments) rather as a ‘tax’ that Spain pays to the EU than as Spanish ODA.¹¹⁴ In sum, Spain is thus described to be quite reluctant to joint coordination efforts at the EU level as the national focus is very much on bilateral cooperation.¹¹⁵

Most reluctant, however, seems to be the United Kingdom: the Department for International Development (DfID) that designs and implements British cooperation is seen as “generally reluctant”¹¹⁶ to anything more than information-sharing. Since 2012, the United Kingdom has substantially increased the funds made available to development cooperation and in June 2015, a law entered into force that enshrines the duty to meet 0.7% of GNI spent on ODA (fulfilled since 2013), making DfID even more cautious to maintain the visibility of British aid.¹¹⁷ British experts explain that DfID sees EU development cooperation as relatively slow, bureaucratic and inward-looking and that therefore “they do not want the Commission to be in the driving seat.”¹¹⁸ That is why DfID rather advocates the opening up of Joint Programming to other (multilateral) actors.¹¹⁹

Conclusion and Outlook

Constructivist norm research provides useful lenses for investigating international debates on development policy and their repercussions at the national level. After establishing a five-stage norm cycle that draws on existing norm models and particularly focuses on policy principles and policy norms, I opted for process-tracing in order to take into consideration different possibly hindering or promoting agency and structural factors at different levels. Process-tracing has allowed to provide an encompassing picture of the on-going processes and to account for the different and complex interlinkages between the different levels. While primarily based on expert and practitioner interviews, source triangulation was further helpful

¹¹³ Cf. Expert Interviews 6 and 8.

¹¹⁴ “*Lo que damos al Banco Mundial y a la Unión Europea no es ayuda. O, si es ayuda, es la de otros, nosotros pagamos un impuesto.*” Expert Interview 6.

¹¹⁵ Cf. *ibid.*

¹¹⁶ Expert Interview 4.

¹¹⁷ Cf. *ibid.*

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, cf. also Expert Interview 5.

¹¹⁹ Cf. Expert Interview 4.

to complement the ‘insider stories’ with further rather ‘outsider’ material. The different psycho-social mechanisms and micro-processes at place, however, had to be bracketed from the analysis for the sake of the bigger picture. What is more, process-tracing is relatively time-consuming and sample-biases are difficult to exclude.

In the German case, Joint Programming seems fairly internalised at the BMZ level although some possibly hindering factors persist at the individual and national levels. A number of structural, but also some important agency factors presumably favoured JP’s ‘fit’ in Germany: The strong commitment and advocacy by the former Development Minister provided the political guidance that was viewed as necessary within the BMZ in order for Joint Programming to settle within the institution and its staff. This strong personal commitment seems to have left a certain institutional legacy that is still influential. What is more, the international concertation procedures fairly well fit Germany policy-making as the joint CSPs are relatively congruent with the existing institutional procedures. As rather hindering factors, the procedure is further dependent on the commitment shown by in-country personnel and the German budget law generally complicates multiannual commitments. At the international level, donor competition may further slow down the procedure where many donors are present and willing to make a difference.

A look at the French, Spanish and UK attitudes on Joint Programming as perceived by national development experts makes policy norm internalisation appear fairly country-specific. Further research will show whether national agency and structural factors can indeed help to understand this differential outcome. The analysis of additional policy norm cases will further help to tackle the question whether policy norm internalisation is also issue-specific.

Since a full ‘EU-ization’ of development policy is fairly unlikely in the near future, national actors and structures still largely determine the European outcome. Only a few weeks before the UN Sustainable Development Summit in New York will solemnly seal the post-2015 agenda, international policy coordination seems ever more relevant. Still, as this paper argues, institutions and actors ‘back home’ do not automatically give new policy principles a warm welcome only because political leaders commit to them at the international level – a fact they should bear in mind before making noble promises they might not be able to live up to later.

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Interview Material

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- Expert Interview 3 on German development policy, 9 April 2015.
- Expert Interview 4 on British development policy, 7 May 2015.
- Expert Interview 5 on British development policy, 14 May 2015.
- Expert Interview 6 on Spanish development policy, 26 May 2015.
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