Workshop Report

Aid, Norms and the World Society

Duisburg, 15th-16th May 2017

Workshop organized by:
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The workshop was opened by Markus Böckenförde and Liam Swiss. In his opening remarks, Swiss emphasized on the meaning of the workshop as an opportunity to bring together researchers from various fields to discuss issues in the context of aid and world society. The workshop was organized in five sessions which took place over the duration of two days.

Monday, 15th May 2017

Session 1

The session on “World Society and its Discontents” was chaired by Nilima Gulrajani and consisted of inputs from Adam Moe Fejerskov and Liam Swiss.

Adam Moe Fejerskov presented his input on “Disrupting World Society” which focused on the role of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation in the broader context of homogenization in world society. With his input, he aimed at initiating a more nuanced understanding of change and a more dynamic conceptualization of homogenization. He also looked more closely at the intersection of homogenization and heterogeneity. Fejerskov explained that world society deals with homogenization in a way that norms, institutions and the like are being circulated. Within its conception of change, norm diffusion and socialization are related to homogenization. New organizations will adopt existent norms and, therefore, e.g. aid goes always in same direction. With regard to the Gates Foundation, Fejerskov pointed out that it seems to be adopting state-like behaviour. He underlined this point by describing the strong role of the Foundation in the SDG-formation process in the UN-General Assembly as well as by depicting the aim of the Foundation to reach official relations with the WHO. Also, unlike most of other non-state organizations, the Gates Foundation seconds staff to international organizations – a process which usually bilateral donors conduct. Fejerskov explained that the Foundation seems to intentionally seek homogenization as its acting does not appear to be due to field level pressures.

Liam Swiss focused his input on “Foreign Aid and Decoupling: A Framework for Analysis”. He pointed out that there can be seen two types of decoupling: policy and practice (decoupling a policy /intention, e.g. Kyoto, from putting it into practice) and means and ends (policies that distract from main business). Based on this, he developed a framework implying three Cs: commitment, capacity and context. With regard to the aspect of commitment, Swiss explained that a state in a tight coupling situation will have the commitment and will to implement a model whereas in loose coupling, the state will use ceremonial adoption and; therefore, show missing commitment to implement. With regard to “capacity”,
he pointed out that a tight coupling situation would imply a capable state that is able to implement a model, while in a loose coupling situation a weak state/administration would be unable to implement a model. Finally, the aspect of “context”, tight coupling would mean low barriers to implementation of e.g. rule of law while loose coupling would imply high barriers to implementation due to context factors such as conflicts.

Swiss then looked at the ability of aid to narrow decoupling gaps as well as to hinder tight coupling. With regard to “commitment”, aid can increase coupling through education, training and the like, but it can also hinder it through unrealistic demands and the overburdening partners with obligations to new models. In the “capacity” dimension, aid can increase coupling through capacity building, more resources etc. while it can also derail capacity because of high transaction costs, low sustainability etc. Lastly, with regard to “context”, aid can mitigate context through e.g. humanitarian aid or peacebuilding but also create new barriers by distorting labour markets/wages, brain drain and the link.

Session 2

The session on “Aid and Gender (In)equality” was chaired by Andrew Dawson and included presentations from Lars Engberg-Pedersen and Kathleen Fallon.

**Lars Engberg-Pedersen** talked about “Gender Equality Norms and Aid Agencies” and questioned whether global norms can do something to influence aid agencies to do a certain work. With a special focus on global gender norms, Engberg-Pedersen pointed out that they are not easily identifiable as different norms have been developed at different points in time dealing with different issues in different contexts. Therefore norms can contradict each other and changes in norms can be seen over time. Still it is being argued that there is some kind of core in this thinking, for example that marginalization based on sex is not acceptable. What is not accepted can be agreed upon, not necessarily what should be done.

With regard to aid, Engberg-Pedersen concluded that the implication of gender equality norms in laws and programmes is unavoidable to be perceived as a legitimate actor. This is done differently by different donors/aid agencies. He identified four different ways for organizations to engage with gender norms: based on the religious background of an organization, due to the embeddedness in organizational culture, parallel co-existence and through revision of gender norms. Also, five different issues were described that influence the distribution of gender norms. Firstly, actors such as politicians or staff members can be norm entrepreneurs in organizations. Secondly, the normative environment of
organization is important. Thirdly, the internal organizational structures play a role and the question of coherence within the organization. Fourthly, Engberg-Pedersen identified pressures on - and priorities in an organization as important for the meaning of gender norms for this organization. Lastly, global norms and normative competition plays a role for the promotion of gender norms.

Kathleen Fallon presented her research in cooperation with Liam Swiss dealing with “Foreign Aid and Norm Diffusion: The case of gender equality”. She explained that changes in relations towards women were seen in the last century. Also, historically, gender and development theory developed in parallel. Therefore, it can be asked what role foreign aid plays in the diffusion of gender equality and institutions. Fallon differentiated in her input between funding in gender mainstreaming and gender specific aid. While both has increased, gender mainstreaming has received much more funding than gender specific aid. In correlation with the increased financing, a spread in gender equality institutions can be identified over time. With regard to the influence of aid on gender norms and institutions, three hypotheses were developed:

H1: Aid to gender equality increases the likelihood of the adoption of GE-related institutions in recipient countries.

H2: Aid to gender equality increases measures of gender equality in recipient countries.

H3: Gender-specific aid has a stronger effect on diffusion processes and GE measures than gender-mainstreamed aid.

Based on a quantitative analysis, the paper by Fallon and Swiss comes to the conclusion that support all three of their hypotheses regarding aid role. Not only is increased aid to women and gender issues associated with the adoption of certain institutions of gender equality across a wide sample of countries and over time, aid also has impact on increasingly gender equal human development in aid recipient countries. Gender-mainstreamed aid is identified to have more influence than gender-specific aid on the diffusion of gender equality norms.
Tuesday, 16th May 2017

Session 3

The session dealt with “Aid and (In)security” and brought together an input from Andrew Dawson on “Foreign Aid and the Rule of Law” with the research from Samer Abdelnour on “Norms of Ex-Combatant Reintegration in Sudan”. The chair was held by Mathias de Roeck.

Andrew Dawson introduced a paper based on research together with Liam Swiss. It used the world society perspective to examine the role of foreign aid in supporting the rule of law as the relationship between rule of law and development is quite important. The components of rule of law were identified as legal compliance of the population (extent to which a population obeys the law); legal compliance of the government (the extent to which the governments political power is subject to and respects meaningful legal constraints). While both these components are important, the research focused on the legal compliance of the population.

Dawson pointed out that world society research concerning rule of law is quite limited. Research has only recently started to be interested in foreign aid and world society. Nevertheless, the promotion of the rule of law as a tool of development assistance has become donors’ priority. The promotion of the rule of law also fulfills the donors’ own security interests. Security Sector Reforms (SSR) are one tool to strategically tackle security institutions. To examine the relationship between aid and rule of law promotion, Dawson introduced several hypotheses. For example, in his research he assumes that aid to SSR increases the likelihood of the adoption of legal institutions and reforms in recipient countries. To explore the hypotheses, the research uses event history analysis to model the effects of foreign aid on: existing constitution, reform of rape legislation, and counter-terrorism legislation. Secondly, fixed-effects panel regression is used to assess the effects of aid on four measures of the rule of law within countries. Findings from this analysis show, for example, that a doubling of SSR aid increases by 22% the likelihood of a constitutional event. Also, a doubling of aid would increase by 44% the likelihood that a law concerning rape was implemented. Due to these findings, it can be said that aid generally is associated with the diffusion of constitutional and legal reforms related to the rule of law.

Samer Abdelnour focused his input on “Norms of Ex-Combatant Reintegration in Sudan”. In this context he looked more closely at social intervention which means purposeful action to advance a social welfare objective. Here, social
entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial actorhood was a particular focus of his paper. Entrepreneurship is seen as a dominant western institution that is spreading globally. It influences people across societal spheres and levels. In this context, actorhood plays an important role. This encompasses templates of social norms, roles, identities and practices. Social enterprise interventions seek to promote entrepreneurial forms of actorhood by encouraging entrepreneurship as a practice and way of life.

With regard to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) in Sudan, Abdelnour explained that in nearly every peace agreement a security protocol is embedded. The general idea is that states or IOs should collect arms, disband fighting groups and provide employment opportunities to support peaceful society. Abdelnour’s research project was situated in context of the Blue Nile State, a heavily war-torn, “transitional area” and was based on qualitative interviews. Here, the Sudanese government addressed DDR differently from international norms/the conventional approach. The government was mandated in the peace agreement to conduct DDR but struggled with the international norms. It needed to develop a more fitting concept for the complexity of the situation.

The key findings from Abdelnour’s research show that promoting entrepreneurship transfers enterprise-related risks into the lives of beneficiaries. Usually, intervention ideals are simple, uniform, normatively optimistic and; therefore, “blind” to this risk. Another finding is that social interventions can reproduce wartime inequalities, this means that some groups struggle more compared to others.

Session 4

The session on “Global Goods and Bads” was chaired by Kathleen Fallon and embraced presentations by Paula Castro and Mathias de Roeck.

Paula Castro talked about her research project “Buying support at the UNFCCC: The strategic use of climate aid”. Using the example of the Copenhagen Climate Change Conference in 2009, Castro showed how donors of climate aid, such as the United States or the European Union, used aid funds to make ‘developing’ countries back the Copenhagen Accord. So far, she explained, studies have mainly focused on the strategic use of general aid (ODA) in UN-negotiations where decisions are made by formal voting. Castro stated that her paper, in contrary, analyses statements of donor countries, based on hand-coding summaries of the climate change negotiations, and the reactions of recipient countries to them. She pointed out that even though statements are not
binding, they have a high relevance, as they showcase countries’ position and are often made public by the media. The ways they are viewed by others; therefore, carry reputational effects. From her analysis, Castro drew the conclusion that aid buys support not only regarding formal voting. Moreover, she found that in addition to general ODA, particular types of aid are strategically used. At UNFCCC negotiations, climate mitigation aid and climate adaption aid were primarily used to find positions in favour of climate change agreements. Castro assumed that those types of aid have a particular effect on climate positions due to the fact that the participating delegations in climate negotiations have a limited authority to provide general aid, but are responsible for the distribution of climate related aid funds.

Mathias de Roeck presented his and Nadia Molenaer’s paper titled “Past is Prologue. Aid and Political Governance in post-2005 Burundi. A Historical Institutionalist Approach”. Based on the principles of the world society theory, de Roeck assumed that rising ODA flows between 2006 and 2015, of which a great deal went to democracy promotion, had a positive effect on democratic norm diffusion in Burundi. After the end of the civil war in 2005, the international state community believed that the conflict had been solved through the establishment of democratic institutions such as the Power Sharing Agreement and the 2005 post-war elections. De Roeck contrasted this success story with results from indexes measuring liberal values, showing that democratic institutions are constantly losing power since 2006.

Finding that this paradox cannot be explained by the theory of world society, De Roeck approached the perspective of historical institutionalism. His main findings were that the development of institutions in Burundi is a result of historical path dependencies and power structures. He argued that, on the one hand, ODA has facilitated the spread of democratic norms: for instance the post-war elections and the reforms of the security sector were only feasible through them. On the other hand, they also strengthened the former rebel group CNDD-FDD, which is now the governing political party and uses its power to autocratize state structures. De Roek concluded that the impact of ODA on norm diffusion depends on certain preconditions and alone is not able to change on-going dynamics in a country, but may even strengthen them.
Session 5

The session, chaired by Stephen Brown, focused on the question of “New Donors, New Norms?” and included an input given by Nilima Gulrajani.

Nilima Gulrajani introduced her and Liam Swiss’ research paper on “Norms and New Donor Countries”. Gulrajani talked about the growing number of bilateral aid-providing states in the global development community and investigated the drivers and implications of donor proliferation. While the motivation for providing development aid is declining among the northern donor community, scholars are observing a rapid and expansive growth of bilateral aid-providing countries. Many of them do not belong to the established donor community of OECD-DAC member states, but are new emerging donors. Coming from a social-constructivist perspective, Gulrajani argued that one major driver of emerging countries in the development community is gaining reputational legitimacy as a donor.

She explained that the label of a “donor” has become a widely accepted norm in the field of global development cooperation. Donors are internationally recognized as economically and politically strong and modern states, which take responsibility for the weaker ones. So, providing aid can be driven by the wish for reputational legitimacy and for an identity status beyond being perceived as “developing country”. She indicated that the institutionalization of the donor identity was mainly spurred by the OECD-DACs and northern states. As an example, Gulrajani named the EU regulation for new member states to conduct an own aid-programme. Finally, Gulrajani pointed to the risk of states putting reputational benefits forward, but actually lacking the strength to implement their project intentions. According to Gulrajani, this might lead to a de-coupling of reputational from functional donorship legitimacy.

Session 6

The last workshop session “Norms into policy” was chaired by Liam Swiss and included contributions from Stephen Brown and Mark Furness.

Stephen Brown gave insights into his work on “Aid Effectiveness Norms from the Paris Declaration to the Global Partnership” and concentrated on how aid effectiveness principles from the Paris Declaration have been brought into practice. Brown firstly looked back at the origins of assessing aid, which had already been discussed at the World Bank in 1998, years before the OECDs Paris declaration. He stated that even though donors embraced the reform proposals enthusiastically, they brought them only slowly into practice. From his field work
in Ghana, Mali and Ethiopia, Brown drew the conclusion that the Paris Declaration has not significantly changed that: The agenda became broader, but norms became also weaker. For the cases of Mali and Ghana, he found that especially the first two principles “Ownership” and “Alignment” have only been adopted in form, but not in substance. Brown explained that the principles are often embraced formally at institutional level, but not internalized by practitioners in the field and transformational effects are yet to unfold. He doubted that the Paris principles are applied differently in other countries.

Brown assumed that difficulties in putting the Paris Declaration into practice are results of a lack of will, related to interests and incentives, for instance security or commercial interests. He claimed that bringing the principle of ownership into practice needs a strong executive government. Where this is not the case, donors are capable to impose their priorities on recipient governments. Finally, Brown criticized that there is no binding agreement, which could increase the likelihood of the principles to be practically effective.

**Mark Furness** presented his project plan “German Aid in MENA” which aims to explain change and continuity in German aid policy and practice in the MENA region since 2011. Furness stated that against expectations, recent studies on the development cooperation in the MENA region show that the Arab Uprising did not lead to a change in western donorship strategies. He observed that there is still a gap between rhetoric and practices. Instead of strengthening democracy and using aid for problem-solving, Western donors prioritize their own economic and security interests in the region. By highlighting the case of Germany, Furness argued that the government needs a coherent cooperation strategy for the MENA region in order to gain legitimacy as a donor and become a ‘player’ instead of a ‘payer’. Germany doubled development aid since the beginning of the Arab spring. The policy framework of the Germany development cooperation strategy, however, remained the same as before.

Based on the historical institutionalism theory, Furness traced the gap between social and institutional change back to a complex and bureaucratic decision-making system. To make his argument clearer, he tried to link it to findings from the aid effectiveness literature. Furness applies the narratives of strategy and securization to the German foreign policy decision-making system. Firstly, he assumed that the traditional autonomy of German institutions involved in foreign affairs like Auswärtiges Amt, BMZ, BMI or BKA can be a reason for a lacking “whole of government” strategy in the German aid system. Secondly, he presumed that fragmentation and incoherence also result from prioritizing national security interests. In the German case, Furness named domestic political
concerns like the fear of migration, which have driven aid increases and led to a risk-averse strategy that prioritizes short-term stability in the region rather than core questions of development.

Conclusion

At the end of the workshop, participants were looking for possibilities to further deepen research on ‘Aid, Norms and the World Society’. The workshop showed that there is a great interest among researchers to link assumptions from world society theory to other theoretical approaches. Most of the papers tried to combine the world society ideas with theories such as historical Institutionalism or with findings from aid effectiveness literature. Here, the participants saw the opportunity to develop a story line for bringing the papers together and develop new perspectives on the world society approach. The participants suggested a focus on finding similarities between world society theory and other concepts. According to the discussants, especially, linking aid effectiveness and the world society theory is still unexplored and could lead to new findings regarding aid norms and its institutions. From the presentations and discussions, it became also clear that exploring the effects of de-coupling on norm diffusion and aid effectiveness carries potential for further research and might be a central topic in following discussions.