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**Ownership with Adjectives
Donor harmonization: Between Effectiveness and
Democratization – Synthesis Report**

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Abstract

This paper looks into the impact of donor harmonisation on democratisation processes in recipient countries. It is based on four case studies and explores the political implications of the aid effectiveness agenda and particularly of the new aid modalities. While donors and governments engage in a closer relationship defining policies, other stakeholders such as CSO, parliaments, public oversight institutions, media and subnational governments, dubbed the oversight triangle, may become increasingly marginalised, which could hamper the democratic game and lead to negative “side-effects” on democratic ownership and domestic accountability. The focus is thus on donors’ performance as an increasingly active actor in the domestic political economy in its dimensions of participation, transparency and accountability, rather than as external neutral aid deliverers. Among its conclusions, the study stresses the necessity to address the country-specific political dimensions and the overall quality of the PD commitments, especially regarding downwards accountability and “good” ownership. Furthermore, in order to become development-friendly actors, aid agencies should be institutionally adapted to the political challenges, particularly in terms of organisation, behaviour, staff profiles, aid instruments and practices (FRIDE).



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Find all case studies and final version:

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Introduction

The construction of the new aid architecture, of an aid relation based on mutual accountability and citizen-state relations founded on rights, democracy and the rule of law, encounters huge challenges both in terms of technical implementation as with respect to the political dimensions. In September 2008, donors and recipients meet at the High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Accra (Ghana) for a first deep stock-taking on the advances. Within this context, this paper aims at looking at one specific, yet highly sensitive dimension of the new aid architecture: The impact of donor harmonisation in the democratisation process of partner countries. We explore the political and institutional implications of a closer relationship with the recipient government, intensified especially by the new aid modalities. The increasing proximity to Southern governments and bureaucracies, that go along with the new aid modalities, may foster or hinder the participation of other domestic stakeholders in developmental decisions. In other words, we aim at analysing the awareness and preparedness of donors, once sitting at the same table with recipient governments, to participate in the domestic political economy of development processes.

The following pages summarise the findings of a research process developed between April 2007 and March 2008. This investigation is addressed to European donors and particularly aims at contributing to the current reform process of Spanish development cooperation. Conducted on the basis of a common methodological framework (Meyer/Schulz 2007), the results of country studies in Mali, Nicaragua, Peru and Vietnam feed into our analysis of the interplay between effectiveness and democratisation in its diverse political and institutional configuration.

1 Setting the context: renegotiating aid

How does aid affect local processes of deepening democracy? How does the latest commitment to donor harmonization change this causal link? In this study, we apply a concept of citizenship and social contract that focuses on the *accountability*, *participation* and *transparency* of aid receiving governments. We inquire into the impact of donor harmonisation on the citizen-state relation. It could either be strengthening or weakening. We depart from an assumption that only now, in the context of the PD, donors have become more conscious on the broader side effects of their action. When before the extraversion of accountability outwards to donors had been an “unintended side-effect” (Bräutigam 2000), now, promoting a social contract by fostering downwards accountability has been added to the objectives of international cooperation. Donors have become more aware that the three goals of aid – poverty reduction, institution building and human rights – need to be balanced and that, sometimes, promoting one might harm the other. This study asks if and how this is actually happening in four countries.

We understand democratic deepening as indicated in Meyer/Schulz 2007: “A process which facilitates the increasing institutionalisation of substantial, inclusive and rights-based participation of citizens within the state’s decision-making processes and, in general, in the country’s political project and socioeconomic development.”

Therefore we apply a “political economy approach” which disaggregates the domestic accountability into the three functions:

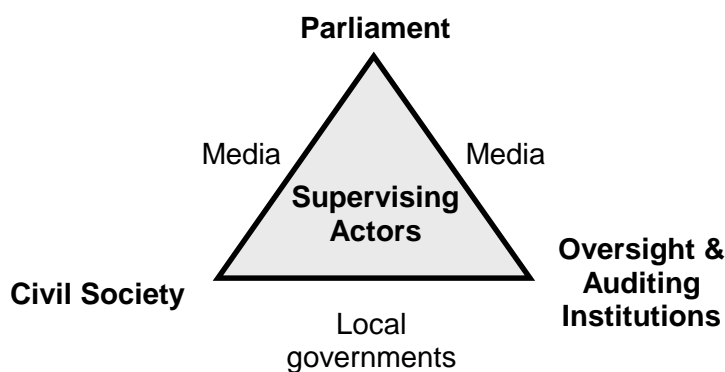
- (1) **Transparency and access to information:** Citizens need to know, what they can expect and what has been delivered. Governments need to disclose

information on rights and entitlements as well as to provide evidence on their action.

- (2) **Participation / “voice”**: Beyond formal political participation in elections and formal representation (however, fully appreciating this), spaces for deliberation on public policies and outcomes have to be provided. These need not (only) to be direct citizen state contacts, but also opportunities for a structured dialogue with organizations representing aggregated interest of groups (see also Foresti & Sharma 2007)
- (3) **Accountability**: Finally, there have to be mechanisms to detect and penalize deviation from public mandate. Accountability can be operationalised in its two dimensions of answerability and enforceability (de Renzio 2007).

Taking an actors perspective, we introduce what we dubbed the “oversight triangle”. There are in principle three mechanisms of restraint – administrative, political and society-based. To these, during the research process and based on the findings of the country studies, we added media and subnational governments.

Triangle of supervising actors



“Aid delivery” has experienced an explosive institutional expansion. The international aid system, nowadays dubbed “aid architecture”, is becoming more and more complex and confusing, as layers of organizational answers were organically laid upon formers, ultimately resulting in rather messy and overlapping responsibilities. A complex and interrelated set of institutions has emerged around the efforts to promote human development. The result for developing states is an overburdening of the administration by the transaction cost to deal with so many actors. For the citizens serious difficulties have arisen to understand who could cater for their entitlements. In other words, there are too many cooks in the kitchen. (World Bank 2007, Faust / Messner 2007).

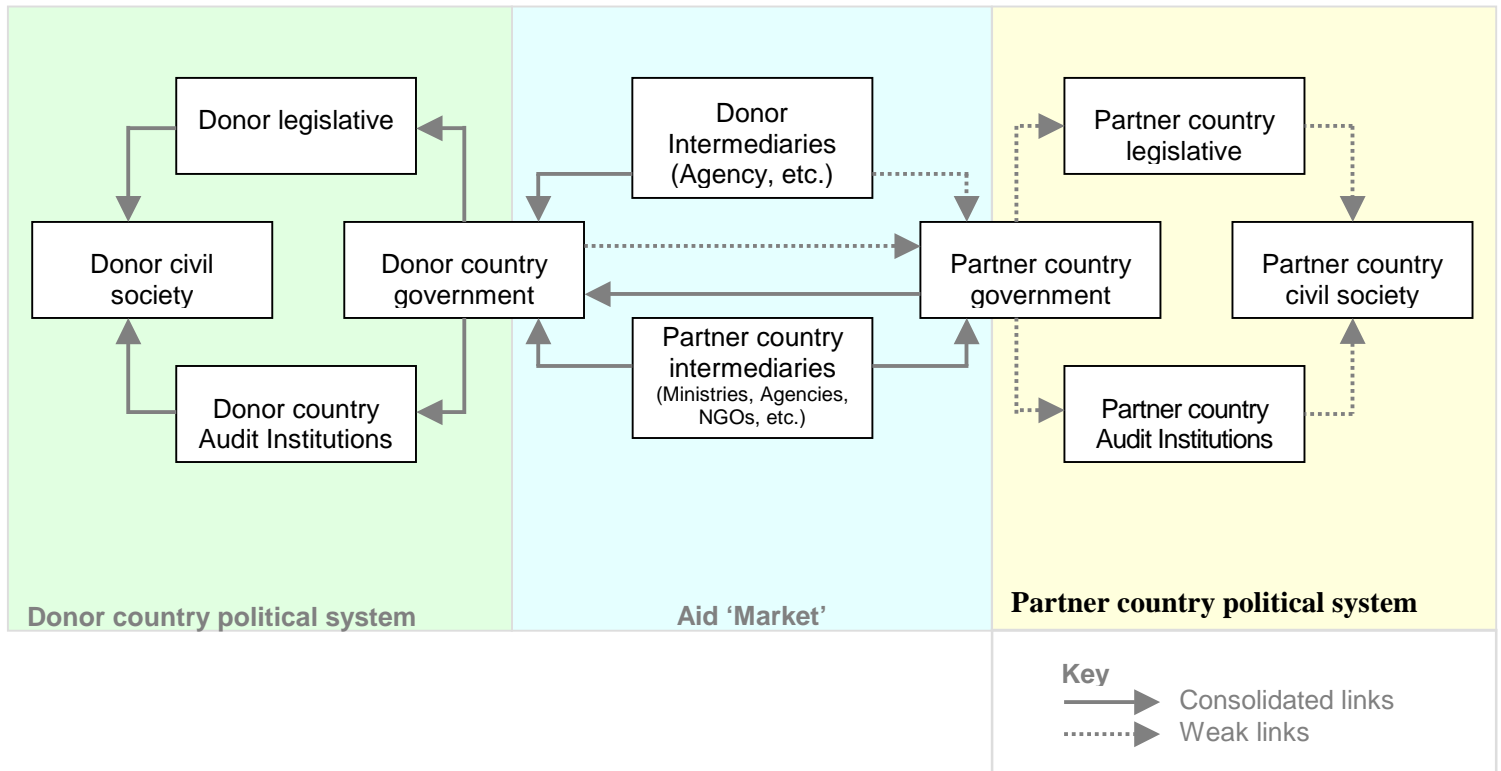
Replying to these huge challenges, donors and recipient countries agreed that the construction of a new aid architecture is paramount to fostering aid effectiveness on the basis of the reconstruction of relationships between donors and recipients, ultimately enshrined in the Paris Declaration 2005. The “Paris agenda” forms part of a wider context related to the reshaping of development and cooperation models. In other words, the Paris Declaration represents the foundation stone of the overall new aid architecture that is being built upon the ashes of previous development models and approaches to donor-recipient relations within international cooperation. There a several

important groundbreaking steps, such as the Comprehensive Development Frameworks and the HIPC initiative with its PRSP (both of which found the basis for *ownership*), the MDG (whose objective 8, global partnership, is an essential step towards *mutual accountability*, and which, in general, describe a globalized social agenda for the XXI century, that requires *result based management*), the Monterrey Consensus (focussing especially on financing for development, but also on viable national systems, as such promoting a possible first conceptualisation of *alignment*) and the Rome Declaration (which outlines *harmonisation*). The graphic in the annex charts the historical development of the development field.

Whilst this is the current general context, this study has focussed on one causal relation, the impact of harmonised donor presence and their distinct behaviour on the citizen-state relationship in partner countries. This question is embedded into the above general developments of the global governance of aid. As outlined in the conceptual framework and methodology of this case study (Meyer/Schulz 2007), we ask how the latest changes in aid delivery, via harmonisation and new aid modalities, impact on the democratisation processes of Southern countries and the political economy that shapes development. We are particularly interested to gather lessons from the various local adaptations of the Paris Agenda and their performance in terms of accountability, participation and transparency.

One of the main questions is the accountability framework of aid relations that is best pictured in the “aid chain” (see for example Alonso 2007). Between the taxpayer in northern countries and the ultimate poor men and women that should benefit from aid, a significant number of intermediary organizations is positioned (see graphic below). Most of these enter in relationships that are difficult to measure, overloaded with diffuse objectives and incentives, and immersed in considerable difficulties to attribute action to impacts. Recently, maybe most obviously spelt out with the Monterrey Consensus (de Haan / Everest-Phillips 2007), attempts are made to define more clearly the terms of engagement within the aid chain, up to speaking of a long-term contract. To put it bluntly, the donor-partner compact is money and advice, traded for commitment to poverty reduction and good governance. Meanwhile, the accountability links within the recipient countries are generally still weakly consolidated, maintaining in practice the concentration of accountability on “outwards” links from the partner governments. Thus, one of the challenges of the Paris agenda consists in the revision of the role that other domestic actors may assume in their interplay with the recipient government.

Accountability chain



We identify two broad dimensions of the Paris agenda, one which could be dubbed the “technical part” and the other the “spirit”. On the technical end, all five key commitments of the PD have generated sophisticated tools to ensure their implementation. So has the ownership principle produced procedural standards for consultations and a common framework for formulating country planning, the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP). Alignment and harmonization have led to matrices of donor activities and quality criteria for government systems, most notably public financial management (PFM) systems, with an increasingly important assessment modality (PEFA). New aid modalities have gained importance and are becoming a central part of bilateral and multilateral aid, feeding directly budgets for governmental policies. Thus far, the amounting use of instruments such as general and sector wide budget support stills is analysed mostly from a bureaucratic and technical perspective. Nonetheless, the role of parliaments, public expectations and the domestic demand side are increasingly understood as necessarily endogenous dimensions of the PFM agenda (CAPE 2007, Santiso 2005). Results measurement, although still far from being operational in most countries, has shifted the attention towards establishing evidence of performance of state actors and has aided to reinforce statistical capacities. In some countries, third party assessments of the adherence to mutual commitments have been installed, very often as rather soft mechanism. It is mostly this technical dimension that is being measured in the twelve indicators. (see OECD 2007a)

These elements – the technical part of PD – are quantifiable or at least measurable against negotiated benchmarks, even though the quality of the indicators is being increasingly contested. There seems to be a movement to water down the 2005 consensus, when the baseline was established. The 2006 survey gave a significant freedom to define locally the definitions of indicators (OECD 2007a). This has been

used by donors rather to appear politically correct, than to establish a critical point of departure for a push for further reforms (Booth 2008).

In the other hand, beyond these ‘technical’ issues there is what could be called as “spirit of Paris”, which comes down to two pivotal points of accountability relations within the aid chain.

- One element of this, the “**partnership dimension**”, represents the bid for a more horizontal relation between donors and recipient governments within the general reconstruction of the aid architecture. This refers to then WB president Wolfensohn’s picture of the recipient government occupying “driver’s seat” on the road to effective development, while negotiating forms and terms of aid with donor governments supposedly sitting in the same car. An obvious tension exists between horizontal partnership and recipient leadership (Jerve, A.M./ Skovsted Hansen, A. 2008), for example related to question how much intrusion in sovereign affairs is marshalled by aid or, in other words, how much policy space for a finding one’s one trajectory out of poverty is left to national governments. From a donor’s perspective this issue is rephrased as question how political and economic reform can be triggered by smartly applying aid volume, choice of instruments together with conditionalities or selectivity criteria.
- The other dimension is summarized in the arising concept of “**democratic ownership**” (OECD 2007b) that follows the necessary distinction between governmental ownership and country ownership. It is claimed that national development strategies should not only be decided upon and followed up by the executive but form part of a legitimate and consensual process that can hold those in power to account. The renegotiation of a social contract should be seen an important political and institutional dimension when analysing the political economy in which development is shaped of recipient countries (Meyer/Schulz 2007). This idea converges the aid debate into a larger stream of democratization thought that claims that all public policies, not only those supported by foreign assistance, should be submitted to public scrutiny. With this one enters into the slippery slope of defining the quality of ownership.

In that light, the “spirit of Paris” could be interpreted as a strive for deepening the accountability relations between donors and governments as well as between governments and citizens – and as a third possible flow of accountability between donors and citizens in partner countries. The principles of mutual accountability and ownership are paramount to these, but the others – alignment, harmonization and managing for results – can potentially reinforce them.

However, in terms of setting in place mechanisms for measuring mutual accountability, donors and partner countries are still struggling to define the elements of the aid contract and make them measurable. Similarly, the PD defined no other criteria for the quality of ownership (and contributes even less landmarks for “good ownership”) than the existence of a national strategy, rubber-stamped by the World Bank. There are some guidelines as to how to conduct a participatory process, but little is defined how “participation of parliament and civil society” should be tackled, beyond the knee-jerk “broad-based civil society consultation“, that remain most often rather shallow (Eurodad 2008). For this, instead of exclusively focussing on development blueprints of NGO participation, a broader focus on the political economy of development should look into the roles of citizenry, parliaments and public oversight institutions.

Within a wider understanding of democratisation, our research also found that intermediary organizations between citizens and state have to be taken into account, particularly those for interest aggregation – such as workers units, chambers of commerce, political parties, women’s organization and social movements – and those for structuring the general public debate – such as media and research institutes. To define common standards and targets for “good ownership” would obviously be difficult given the immense variety how “social dialogue” is institutionalised in the partner countries. Additionally, donors and governments are increasingly entering into a debate on who actually defines what ownership is about and whom it belongs to. It would obviously be too intrusive and confrontational if donors would be the ones to evaluate, such as leaving it to governments will probably run into a conflict of interest. But within the debate on governance, we already can refer to a variety of mechanisms between self-assessment, peer-review and external appraisal (Rakner & Wang 2007) that could be adapted to the understanding and assessment of ownership quality.

Our research focuses on this second dimension – “quality of ownership” – taking into account how donor harmonisation, as part of the aid effectiveness paradigm, impacts on it. Concretely, our main question is if donors are aware of and prepared for the political dimensions of the Paris agenda, whose founding of a closer relationship between donors and recipients implies a more prominent role of donors in the political economy of development.

2 Case studies: Ownership! Whose Ownership?

A theoretical framework and methodology had been proposed for all case studies. An exception is the study in Vietnam, which has been previous to the project. It has been conducted by a team of in-country staff of a governmental agency and an international NGO. Studies in Mali and Nicaragua have been conducted by a research team composed of a national and a FRIDE researcher. The Peruvian study was conducted by an aid manager of an international NGO in Peru. The following paragraphs reflect the seminar debate on the country cases.

Vietnam – strong ownership? Vietnam heads all charts when it comes to economic growth and poverty reduction and falls in the red zone when measured against indicators of political freedom. The presentation stressed the strong ownership of the government, that in 2006 had its own socioeconomic development strategy widely consulted and recognised as the basis for alignment, avoiding an externally-driven, standard PRSP process. Vietnam features a complex, but functional harmonization set-up, led by the Vietnamese government. Entrepreneurial donors endeavour into new coordination practices and are followed by the more cautious ones. The general budget support is in its seventh operation, with 13 multilateral and bilateral donors aboard and 17 different policy areas. The Government and the Party are committed to the fight against corruption and in its prevention. Triggered by scandals, successful donor coordination has supported these anti-corruption initiatives by government. Donors are very much concentrated in the capital, owed to the mechanics of new aid modalities. Thus civil society is often confounded with urban groups, ignoring to a certain extent the rural organization, with their emerging contestation. The presentation claimed that policy dialogue with government through the general budget support and dialogue platforms is open to the participation of international and Vietnamese NGOs. It includes issues such as the promotion of civil society and the capacity of the parliament. Particularly, access to information is being significantly promoted. Other participants stressed, that political participation still remains tightly controlled. The debate circled

around the emerging forms of political participation under the government's rigid grip on public debates within the one-party system and about the difficulties to attribute these developments of political opening to the donor presence. It was discussed whether the persistent limited space for opposition in Vietnam raise doubts about donor's commitment to democratic opening or reflect a sensitive, non-confrontational engagement.

Nicaragua – counterproductive ownership? Nicaragua has been leader and test case in donor harmonization. As of 2007, the Paris agenda is living a rough awakening after the change of government. When the Ortega government came to power, it has opted for a strong governmental ownership that imperils the deliberative spirit of the aid effectiveness agenda. The Sandinista government also abandoned spaces for political dialogue and entered into a markedly hard-line discourse against Western “interventionism” based on political conditionalities. In this context, the 2006-2010 development plan turned out to be poorly owned, when no civil society member stood up to defend it. In the polarized political landscape of Nicaragua, state institutions are being dismantled and recreated with political clients. In general, there are worrying signs of an mounting authoritarianism by concentrating powers in the hand of few people, increasingly limiting access to information and the setting up of a parallel ‘movement’ structure of popular councils. Stunned by the rapid decay of their former darling and already expelled of the comfortable “special relationship” with the previous administration, donors seem helpless. There is an important lack of sound capacities for political dialogue in a suddenly adverse environment. One of the main lessons from the Nicaraguan case is that, in order to foster sustainability of aid effectiveness, donors need to improve their understanding of the political and institutional context in which aid takes place.

Peru – alignment by decree? Peru is a mid-income country with an aid dependence of 0,7 % of GNP. Nonetheless, excessive inequalities and extreme poverty – particularly on a urban-rural divide – mark the picture. Peru has a history where institutions have been dismantled and authoritarian presidentialism, although with recent improvements. Aid delivery in Peru features a particular choice for delivering through NGO, even when it is official development aid. Thus the NGO sector has become in one view a lively support structure for the excluded, an unrestrained duplication of structures and proliferation of actors, in another. Whilst probably both view have their point, government seeks to get hold on NGO activities by aligning them by decree on national plans and seeking to channel more funds through government structures. A concerned was expressed that alignment is requested rather to the short-term policies of government rather than to long-term institutional objectives. Thus, the new control over aid funds is suspected to be misguided towards electoral purposes. This is getting more worrying when a legal ‘figure of national emergency’ is introduced, that could be applied to crack down on NGO working on sensitive issues like miners syndicates or mobilization against trade agreements. On the other hand, there seems to be no initiative neither from donors nor from NGO to stop the bypass system and take “Paris” seriously.

Mali – subversive ownership? Since 1999, Mali has been a laboratory for aid harmonization. It has rather been a test-field than a leading actor. Many coordination initiatives have failed, and high hopes are put on the new structures arising from the local adaptation of the PD. Mali assembles all formal features to trigger aid influx: democratic governance and high poverty rates. The presentation exposed three unconnected worlds, labelling them theatre, bureaucracy and village. The presidential discourse – “the theatre” – is both useful in attracting aid and serving electoral purposes

of political marketing. It does not, however, care about measurability of action and does not enter into the role as coordinator between implementing ministries. The donors – “the bureaucracy” – are busy inventing coordination structures and programmes for service delivery and institution building. Suffering the disbursement pressure and interaction-cost of coordination, they mostly work with the executive, are deeply immersed into core functions of statehood such as financial management, public service and decentralization, but rather shy away from domestic politics, that go beyond Western blue-prints of “civil society”. The third arena – the village – remains disconnected from the above worlds. Decentralization has not yet reached the areas beyond Bamako and main regional cities. The development policies seem to be dictated by donors. However, on a second level, when it comes to implementation, Malian actors reinterpret the guidelines, thus establishing a kind of “subversive ownership”. This is particularly exacerbated by the lack of viable data.

3 Common challenges: Framing donorship in the political economy

This chapter intends to map the causal chains that link domestic political processes with the presence of foreign aid actors. The aim is to sensitize aid planners in headquarter and field offices on the explicit and implicit effect of international cooperation on the democratisation of partner countries political system.

3.1 Transparency and access to information

Citizens have to know what government proposes, what it is doing and what it delivers. Donors can support or obstruct this.

The country examples show some advances in reaction to Paris commitments. Attention to budgetary processes and new aid modalities – first and foremost budget support – have triggered support to institutional development actors to country based information and statistic systems.

Another component is to know who does what in terms of aid provision. In the wake of the Paris Declaration, most countries have instated donor-reporting systems. This is done locally, and complements the DAC reporting, as well as discloses sharp differences between what government think it gets and what donors say they do.

Whilst these initiatives are a rather technical system between government and donors, their public display, very often supported by web-pages, allows for engagement by civil society. Besides the lack of adequate internet access, few citizens in the South are actually prepared to make sense of the data provided. To that end it is necessary to disaggregate the term “civil society”. Intermediary organizations, such as media, interest groups and watchdog organizations, are required as transmission belt. They are needed to analyse data and from there construct consistent, publicly relevant narratives, be they measurable provisions to entitlements (“In 2010, no child shall go hungry to bed”) or corruption scandals.

In some countries, such as Nicaragua, some of the sources for information have disappeared lately as a consequence of the change of government. In other countries, such as Vietnam, information is available, but engaging with it is more challenging due to the tight control of the public. In that respect, donors have either limited power or inclination to stand up for basic rights such as freedom of association, freedom of speech and access to information.

Previously, institutions of restraint and auditing bodies have been doing their work rather silently. With the new attention towards government systems in the wake of the Paris Declaration commitments, some donors have propped up these institutions and have invested in their communication strategy. Although donors push for extending the independence of supreme audit institutions, their constitutional position and the leeway they are conceded depends heavily on domestic politics.

Parliaments in the four case study countries fulfil different roles. In general, most of the cases show political representation driven rather by clientelist motives than by the representation of electorates and programmatic choices. Additionally, parliaments are poorly equipped to exercise their role of overseer and inform constituencies.

In all case studies, access to information on government programmes was seen as being limited to the capital. Although in all countries, decentralization programmes are under way, the main debates are focused in the capital and neither local governments nor decentralised civil society groups are integrated into a national debate. Often donors are concentrated in the capital, and have little contact with remoter regions.

Information and statistics are not always disaggregated by gender. This would allow a tracking of the gender-impact of policies and outcomes, and, thus, allow for a social mobilization and media reporting focussed on gender inequality.

On a more general note, donors themselves distort access to information for citizens because they give too little, too much, or the wrong information to civil society. On the one hand, donors still subscribe to old habits of flag-posting and have some communication strategies for their projects, not for the overall engagement with government and the development of the country as a whole. Donors also provide too little information. The political dialogue with government, the mutual agreements on conditionalities and the assessments to establish the point of departure for governance reforms are often not shared with civil society.

3.2 Participation / “voice”

Participation and voice refer to the possibility of citizens to shape government policies and reclaim changes and improvements in their implementation.

Although rather implicitly, the Paris Declaration has moved participation from default models of project participation to a level of citizen participation on national development planning. In many instances this move has not been fully taken on. “Participation” still generates pictures of “sitting under the mango tree”, spaces for invited consultations that are rather geared towards informing citizens and approving policies with the “consulted” rubber-stamp requested by the donors, than to hold government proposals under scrutiny and ultimately be able to change them. Opposed to this, there is a concept of participation that attempts to increase the society-state interface by moving both closer to each other. State institutions would move closer to citizens if complaints and social auditing mechanisms are inscribed in institutions and service programmes. And society could move closer to the state if their capacities of claiming rights would be enhanced by supporting social mobilization, interest aggregation and institutional capacities to engage technically with government policies. The default model of the aid industry for participation is the Comprehensive Development Framework and the according poverty reduction strategy process.

In general, donors very often still recur to blueprint approaches to “participation” that does not quite take the step to serious engagement on policy level, as opposed to

tokenistic consultations that are too often one-directional. In other words, donors still sit “under the mango tree” whilst the train has moved on to more institutionalised practices of critical civil society, southern-based policy research centres, political parties, organised social movements, business representatives and others.

Another general finding is that, in order to enhance participation and voice, it is as important to view this both from a sector approach perspective, in the sense of alone-standing democracy promotion, as well as to inscribe its logic in to every other programme, by promoting institutional openings in public administrations and helping clients of these to claim better services.

3.3 Accountability

Accountability within a state means that those in power disclose their objectives and actions and that they face sanctions in case they do not comply (Moore & Teskey 2006).

“Mutual Accountability”, as defined by the Paris Declaration, defines partner government’s responsibility for downward accountability to citizens and parliaments, donors’ commitment to predictability, and the obligation of both to establish an open dialogue and measurement of this and the other Paris commitments. The country studies provide an wide set of institutional and cultural configurations of how “holding those in power to account” actually materializes.

Impunity is the greatest enemy of accountability. In various countries (e.g. Mali, Nicaragua and Peru) corruption has been detected and no sanctions were applied. This gives the wrong signals to government and discourages civil society. Whilst there is consistent campaigning by International NGOs against conditionalities, it does not seem that impunity can stop aid flows, although measures against corruption figure frequently in aid framework agreements, such as the World Banks Poverty Reduction Support Credits or the European Commission’s Governance Profile.

4 Recommendations: Moving towards good practices

This chapter is to turn the sight towards the implications for donors. Five levels are explored that constitute the overall set-up of aid delivery: Political dialogue, analytical capacities, choice of instruments, institutional configurations and human resources.

4.1 Political dialogue

In all case studies, the dialogue between donors and the recipient country is pursued mainly on the policy level (for example, in sector wide approaches). On the contrary, political dialogue, understood as the exchange of concepts, ideas and prospects regarding the overall political system, broader governance issues and democratisation, does not have a strategic place in the existing aid relationships. In this sense, the influence of donor harmonisation in the democratisation of partner countries is generated indirectly, by a closer relationship focussed on developmental issues, but seems to lack a broader perspective on the underlying political processes.

Political agenda of aid and aid effectiveness: Supposedly based on merely technical commitments, the implementation of the Paris Declaration also generates political implications of the donor-recipient relationships. Special attention should be drawn to the quality of ownership within a mutual accountability oriented relationship. Whilst the set-up of national development plans or sound procurement and medium term expenditure frameworks is the principal indicator of the Paris Declaration, the

underlying political economy in all country studies shows that ownership develops in a very complex environment that is not always benefiting democratisation. In this context, donors need, firstly, to become aware of the impact of harmonisation on the dynamics of the respective political system and, on this basis, define their criteria for aid to become democratisation friendly.

To this purpose, it is vital that embassies and agencies' field offices of donor country identify possible synergies and coherences, especially in highly dependent countries, where diplomatic relations are also shaped by aid volumes and fund assignment. Different scenarios should be adapted to each national context and potentials, which are very diverse in the four country studies of this research project. Possible roadmaps for enhancing integrally governance and deepening democracy should be discussed very carefully with the partner country government, respecting partner country sovereignty and policy spaces, but also clarifying donors' interest in the development of the overall political system and an ownership that advances gradually towards more participation, accountability and transparency. Ideally, this more political dialogue should take place in a coordinated way and within the top-level dialogue mechanism.

Dialogue among donors: Adapting different approaches to aid delivery, the donor community in all country studies tends to disperse in different groups (entrepreneurial, like-minded, Paris sceptics, etc.). Joint work on the political dimensions of aid seems very difficult to achieve, but is paramount to, first of all, foster a learning process and, on the medium run, avoid free rider situations, when trying to reinforce democratisation friendly development aid. To this end, donors need joint spaces and processes, preferably in an adequately established scheme of observation, analysis and follow-up (see below: analytical capacities). Beyond coordination, it is necessary to carry out more joint studies of the political economy and its relevance to development processes. It is likewise necessary to identify the determining factors and ingredients for consensus on the development of the different stakeholders. Constant dialogue on the interests, limitations and incentives of each donor is also required, especially in the context of weak institutions. A specific code of conduct could improve donors' joint actions. These initiatives could be launched by "like-minded" or entrepreneurial donors, but should, as far as possible, facilitate the gradual participation of donors that are still not involved in the Paris agenda.

Support to dialogue among national stakeholders: The case studies suggest that the oversight actors face important difficulties to engage fully in the political economy of aid and especially of new aid modalities. In general, focussing on government ownership, donors have invested rather fragmented efforts into the engagement and capacities of these stakeholders with respect to accountability, participation and transparency. Though, a more active and informed role of civil society, parliaments and public audit institutions is desirable. Apart from revising their support to participation and consultation mechanisms, the donor community could promote a better interaction among these stakeholders. In this sense, it is paramount, firstly, to identify clearly the existing demand for institutional strengthening and resources, facilitating to these actors a greater autonomy and capacity. Secondly, joint donor funding for civil society activities, strengthening of the parliament and support to audit bodies should be coordinated around feasible road maps for improving governance and democratisation (see above). Thirdly, stable spaces for interaction and identification of common interests could be opened by creating debates circles that include agency officials, independent experts, academia and representatives of the oversight actors. Finally, common denominators amongst the different stakeholders could be most effectively identified

and fostered in some selected sector wide approaches, where the interaction of national stakeholders may find fertile ground to create positive experiences of enhancing the political economy.

4.2 Analytical capacities

Democratic deepening is intimately linked to establishing facts and narratives on the quality of the political system. Donors are getting involved in this process on three levels in partner countries. First, donors have to analyse the situation and trajectory of democratic rule in order to situate themselves. Second, donors have to enter into a dialogue with partner governments in order to establish a common understanding on what could be “good governance”. Third, donors impact on the capacities of civil society to monitor government performance. The following describes the options for donors according to this structure.

Donor analysis of partner countries: The new aid agenda, supposedly, puts governments in the drivers seat. This forces donors to analyse their willingness and capacity for institutional reform and their pro-poor orientation. There are a number of tools that have been developed lately (OECD DAC 2005b), such as the British Drivers of Change methodology (GSDRC no date), the Swedish Power analysis (SIDA 2006), or lately the Dutch Strategic Governance and Corruption Assessment (Unsworth&CRU 2006). These methodologies allow field staff, senior planners and diplomats who conduct political dialogue to determine strategic entry points for engaging with government. The methodology has to be flexible, but must allow for cross-country comparisons in order to facilitate organizational learning within the agency. A mixed team of in-country and headquarter staff could best provide this analysis. Implicating consultants has to be assessed cautiously, as this impedes the ownership of these analysis by staff who later have to work with it. To conduct such assessments is both necessary and highly labour intensive. This, again, is another argument for focussing on fewer countries. These kind of analyses might be undisclosed for staff use only.

Shared analysis with government: Given the importance of governance issues for development outcomes, a number of assessments are currently used, which establish benchmarks both for capability and legitimacy. Basically, these can be divided by the authorship of those drawing them up. It can be external assessments, negotiated benchmarks, self-assessments or peer-reviews (Rakner/Wang 2007). This is a product that has a two-fold objective, one is to establish the state of governance, the other to generate willingness for reform. Whilst in the light of the former (establishing evidence) an external expert-based assessment might be more recommendable, in the light of the latter (fostering reform) an inclusive process is more recommended. Whilst donor proliferation and administrative over-burdening has become partially controlled on the level of programme implementation through joint programming and programme approaches etc, the proliferation of instruments and respective is replicated at the level of governance assessments. Which means that instead of overburdening governments with their programming desire they do so with their governance assessment questionnaires. Therefore joint, or at least coordinated, approaches are necessary.

Analytical capacities of civil society: Donors impact indirectly on the democratic quality by distorting the academic and intellectual landscape of partner countries. An immediate, necessary adjustment is to devise strategies for human resource recruitment and remuneration practices that do no harm. Moreover, strategic funding for locally generated evidence should be developed. Monitoring public policies and public budget

becomes increasingly important, and civil society capacities have to be stepped up accordingly. One instrument would be structural funding for national research organizations and think tanks. To that and it is necessary to depart from naïve concepts of participation and disaggregate “civil society”. Intermediary organizations, such as labour unions, professional organizations, parties and others, fulfil an important role in interest aggregation. Policy oriented research, does not have to be necessarily independent, but it has to obey to academic rigour. Hence, genuine and thorough knowledge production of these entities should be funded. This kind of support to analytical capacities of civil society could be pooled between donors in order to avoid too much dispersion and focus on some few centres of excellence. Some of our interview partners in the partner countries that are engaged in policy research, however, stressed that donor diversity is an asset for democratic diversity.

4.3 *Menu of instruments*

There are two ways in which donors strengthen the involvement of citizens. Donors either develop larger programmes for poverty reduction, that have an *inbuilt logic* that facilitates that governments take on their role effectively as regulator and service provider and that citizens can actively engage in this. Or donors, promote states’ responsive capacities and citizens’ capabilities directly.

Poverty reduction programmes with inbuilt democratizing logic: The related modality that has generated most debate is general budget support. The argument is that by channelling funds through government systems these become more solid, and, at the same time, citizens start claiming more coverage and quality of services as well as more inclusion in formulating policies. The evaluability of this assertion is still contested, however, it can claim certain plausibility (see IDD 2006). No donor provides his main share with this modality, it is always backed up with other aid instruments, such as technical assistance, projects or capacity building initiatives.

Budget support and other programme modalities always find themselves confronted with a chicken and egg problem. Budget support needs capable government, but, on the other hand, it is particularly this instruments that develops governments systems and capacities. Therefore, the actual debate rather than putting up some – rather high – minimal standards, focuses on identifying the trajectory of state willingness, in order to enter a virtuous cycle of mutually enhancing donor engagement and capacity development, even though this cycle is entered an a very low level.

Promoting states’ responsive capacities and citizens’ capabilities directly: Important lessons are learnt from the democracy promotion community. It is important to link the “voice” component with that of accountability. Most programmes work only on one side of the equation of the citizen state contract. It is important to strengthen both state capacity to be accountable and citizen capacity to monitor government performance and influence policies. The linkages in the oversight triangle – civil society, parliament and horizontal controls – need to be worked on.

Voice & accountability SWAp: Most programmes for strengthening civil society are piecemeal funding of certain groups, sometimes close to a particular donors. Often civil society organizations depend on project funding without having an predictable institutional support. One way to overcome this would be to set up joint funds.

Access to information is a key condition and therefore independent media plays an important role. Taken this into account, there are again two consequences. First, donors could set up programmes to enhance the capacities of journalists and media in aid

receiving countries. These kinds of programmes would situate themselves on the interface of democracy promotion and development aid. Then, second, donors have to work on their own transparency towards the domestic public. Disclosure and communication strategies of embassies and aid agencies should become default actions whenever budgeting, programming and political dialogue takes place. Therefore, the local press is a key player.¹

4.4 Institutional set-up

Whilst debates in donor headquarters increasingly establish the Paris commitments as pivotal point, country offices are faced with the constraints of both implementing these and “getting the job done” as usual. Disbursement pressure, interaction costs generated by harmonization, unsequenced planning and budgeting cycles of donor and government, short-term planning that does not allow a perspective of political and constitutional development are some of the contradictions that come together in field offices. Field offices have to be equipped with the right mandates and incentives to negotiate aid, disburse the funds entrusted to them, and contribute to the building of viable institutions, both effective and democratic. That is a lot to ask. Here are some elements that need to be considered:

Cautious decentralization and delegation to country offices: Devolution of decision making to field offices, posting of senior staff in partner countries and more flexibility in the programming instruments are necessary conditions to make country ownership possible. Only when field offices have the mandate to adapt to the local interpretation of the Paris Declaration, can they take the broader impacts on democratic accountability and the spaces for administrative, political or civil oversight into account. However, some donor agencies have witnessed a “decentralization by omission”, meaning that a large leeway was given to country offices not regulated by any kind of guidelines or substantial support from headquarter-based policy units. In other words, field staff are left alone. Devolution needs to be backed and fed by headquarter. One of the most important issues is to enable institutionally (and contractually) the circulation of personnel between partner countries and headquarters.

Cross-country learning is paramount. One way to ensure learning, is to conduct comparative studies from headquarters with participatory research design, including field staff. An innovative approach is to have field staff assess a neighbouring countries office’s practices or facilitate their self-assessment process. In order to better respond to the contexts of partner country politics and react to political opportunities and turn-arounds, the organizational culture in agencies need to be innovation friendly and entrepreneurial. To generate this kind of vision-driven organizational culture is a mayor managerial challenge in aid agencies, particularly when concerns of financial accountability persist and bureaucratic procedures suffocate initiative.

Adaptation of methodological guidelines for political economy analysis and political strategies: Planning, implementation and evaluation guidelines need to include the political dimension of aid. Just as environmental and gender objectives have been “mainstreamed” – which has often been the rhetorical disguise for their disappearance – the impact of aid on local politics needs to be reflected continuously. However, rather than adding another paragraph in a planning matrix or another box to

¹ A promising line of action is the initiative “*heart of change*” promoted by the London based PANOS institute www.panos.org.uk/heartofchange

be filled out in an assessment sheet, thinking politically, analysing institutional impacts and acting with in-built logics of democratic opening should be fostered by a culture of learning. This has to be reflected in the organizational structure of aid agencies, such as composition of task teams, open evaluation guidelines and strategies for evaluation uptake, blurring of borders between regional and functional units and others. Currently, many administrative procedures and internal competition, together with the well-known pressure for disbursement, rather generate climate of fear, approval culture and aim accomplishment than one of entrepreneurial openness to look for what works and what doesn't.

In a globalized world, coherence issues have to be centralized: Non-aid issues are increasingly important within international development departments in donor countries. Influencing their government colleagues to be more poverty sensitive has become part of their mandate. Country offices can monitor the impact of non-aid policies – be they cotton subsidies in Mali, restrictions to immigration and facilitation of remittances in Peru, labour standard in Vietnam, or investment in privatized public services in Nicaragua. An upwards communication from field offices to the headquarter is needed, to strengthen their voices in the cabinet by providing in country evidence and narratives. This is a new role that needs resources, political dedication and the right skills.

A main lesson from the case studies is that there is a range of local interpretation of the PD, and actually in the last years the debate has shifted to some extent from the donor headquarters to the national capitals of partner countries. This is why donor agencies need to devolve the decisions to their field offices, not without equipping staff with necessary skills and back-up from headquarter. Donors can “buy a seat at the table” with government when they apply new aid modalities. But then, they have to know the “table manners”, that is, knowing how to speak, how to analyse and how to influence.

4.5 Human resources and incentives

Within agencies, in-field human resources are paramount not only to effective aid delivery, but also to the performance of donors in the political economy of partner countries. Over the last decade, most donors have invested heavily in staff quantity and quality, being conscious of the need for politically sensitive, often all-rounder professionals in a shifting and increasingly complex development agenda. The degree of commitment with both donor policies and development of partner country has intensified within this group of professionals that interacts directly with a wide range of actors in developing countries. Furthermore, mostly at the headquarters level, donor agencies have reinforced substantially methodological and analytical capacities in order to face the challenges of the new aid architecture. Nowadays, expertise in public financial management, donor coordination and policy dialogue has been clearly identified as tasks to tackle in order to prepare agency staff to the aid effectiveness agenda. However, still little has been done to foster donors' adaptation to the challenges of the political economy. Political reform and democratisation often do not always form part of the staff expertise, and understanding of the role of the donor community in domestic political processes is generally weak.

Incentives for staff performance: Mainly focussed on technical dimensions of aid delivery, the case studies evince an overconcentration on procedures and mechanisms that leaves little space for analytical work. Disbursement pressure and approval culture are still perceived main incentives for expatriate staff, creating a vicious cycle in which

aid seems to be managed on tight deadlines, but not sufficiently adapted to the real world conditions in the partner countries. Contrary to the credo of decreasing transaction cost, coordination with other donors is extremely time-consuming at least in its early stages (in some cases, up to two years to draw up a sector wide code of conduct), which appears to encounter only limited comprehension in most headquarters, interested in pushing on with the compliance of the indicators of the Paris agenda.

Rotation and knowledge management: Given the high level of internal rotation of expatriate staff in virtually all donor agencies, it is vital to improve knowledge management, which currently experiences permanent loss. Although rotation is seen as beneficial in order to facilitate a continuous “refreshment”, ideally also dropping in to the respective headquarters, draining of lessons learnt is still a huge challenge. This problem is especially acute in the analysis of the political economy of a partner country, which often requires consolidated access to informal information networks. More generally, a revision of the rotation system, with a certain level of flexibility in relation to the extension of permanence in partner countries, would be useful.

Integration of national staff: In most developing countries, in-field offices employ national professionals as part of their staff or in specific medium-term consultancies. Developing their professional career with consultancy contracts, from the government and the different ministries, national and international NGOs and research centres, and development cooperation agencies, many of these professionals provide a sensitive source of information and could act as a link between offices and national actors, often via informal networks. Nonetheless, donors generally take no advantage from this cluster of professionals, which represents an enormous opportunity for understanding the political context and developing coherent strategies for the country’s political economy. Furthermore, donors should generally shift from a functionalist approach (“national staff is cheaper”) to a more comprehensive analysis of the strategic potentials of this group of professionals (“national staff is an entry point”).

5 Conclusion

The Paris Declaration enshrines the potential for a more political perspective on the changing aid relationships. It potentially allows shifting the focus from an often confrontational stalemate between donors and governments, to an encounter on neutral ground based on globally agreed and locally renegotiated principles. This renegotiation of aid includes organised civil society and oversight organs at both sides of the accountability chain. The Paris commitments, that potentially enable this new dialogue, have two levels – on the one hand, what we called the “spirit” and then the more technical, measurable indicators. It is important to hold the tension between the necessary technical details and the “spirit”. If democratic practices are to deepen, it is paramount to tie the “spirit” to internationally agreed principles of social inclusion and political participation. These are ultimately defined by human rights. It is a main challenge to bridge this gap between immersions in nitty-gritty technical coordination structures and grandiose universal principles. Both are important, but one without the other leads to little progress.

Our study revealed that local interpretations of the Paris commitments, by no means a magic bullet, are very diverse. Therefore donors have to, first and foremost, understand the local political context. Bridging Paris with Bamako, Hanoi, Managua and Lima is the challenge.

Abbreviations

CSO	Civil Society Organisations
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
EC	European Commission
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council
EU	European Union
DCF	Development Cooperation Forum
HIPC	Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative
IADB	
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
ODA	Official Development Aid
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PD	Paris Declaration
PEFA	Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability
PFM	Public Financial Management
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programme
SWAp	Sector Wide Approach
UN	United Nations
WB	World Bank

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Annex



La nueva arquitectura de la ayuda

