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Deutsches Institut für  
Entwicklungspolitik



German Development  
Institute

**EDP**

Research Network  
External Democracy Promotion

**DFG**

Deutsche  
Forschungsgemeinschaft

Workshop

## Interaction Between Internal and External Actors in Democracy Promotion

organized by the Research Network External  
Democracy Promotion (EDP)

Bonn, 25–27 March 2015

German Development Institute / Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE)

Among both practitioners and scholars of democracy promotion, there is broad consensus that democracy is not simply a good that can be exported from one country to another. External democracy promotion, by definition, involves a complex sort of interaction between external and local actors that can hardly be grasped by the notion of a trade-like import/export relationship. By the very nature of their mission, democracy promoters continuously interact with various kinds of “recipients” or “partners” and frequently become part of the domestic politics of the countries they work in – promoting democracy from within, rather than from without. These interaction processes are certainly shaped by perceived interests (in power, wealth, security, etc.) that motivate external and local actors. Still, they involve more than just strategic action. Democracy promoters must confront the fact that democracy is a deeply contested concept and, therefore, democracy cannot be promoted if it simply tries to implement preconceived formulas from the outside.

As a result, interaction in democracy promotion cannot be grasped by the unidirectional notion of an external actor helping implement a given set of democratic norms and institutions in a recipient country – by way of applying a series of strategies (ranging from persuasion, material support, and incentives to sanctions, threats, and military force), therewith leaving the recipient the choice of either accepting or resisting the offer of help. Rather, interaction encompasses meaningful agency on both sides, with local actors having ample room to use or divert external aid activities for their own purposes and to “localize” or “appropriate”, and thereby transform, the very ideas, norms and institutions that democracy promoters seek to advance. Additionally, due to the diverse range of democracy promoters that work with different state and non-state actors in target countries, interaction in democracy promotion also concerns the relationship within the “architecture of foreign aid”, including a multitude of state-, semi- and non-state organizations.

General agreement as to the interactive nature of democracy promotion and the need for local ownership notwithstanding, existing research on democracy promotion has either implicitly or explicitly assumed a unidirectional perspective. Most scholars have focused on the strategies and policies carried out by democracy promoters or have tried to assess outcomes. However, what is happening in between – in the interaction process between external and local actors – is largely treated as a black box and has yet to be theorized and empirically studied in greater detail. In order to consolidate a research agenda on “democracy promotion as interaction”, the workshop aims at critically assessing the state of the art on the interplay of external and internal actors in democracy promotion and related fields of study that also tackle the issue of external actors somehow intervening in societies (military intervention, peacebuilding, development cooperation). Crucial sets of questions include:

- (1) How can we conceptualize/theorize the interaction between external and local actors?
- (2) How do local actors – governments, political parties, civil-society groups, etc. – respond to democracy promoters; do they adopt or resist externally promoted democratic norms, appropriate or divert external aid? To what extent do “recipient” governments introduce regulations on democracy support (and foreign aid in general)? What is it that drives local actors?
- (3) How do the very democracy promoters, on their part, react when their policies are challenged and/or transformed “on the ground”? To what extent do they adjust their democracy support activities or even the whole system of foreign aid? What is it that drives these responses?
- (4) Which dynamics of interaction emerge, and what are the consequences for both the state of democracy in recipient countries and the shape of external democracy promotion?

## Agenda

Wednesday, March 25

16:00-16:15

**Welcome**

16:15-18:00

**Why Do We Need to Study Interaction in Democracy Promotion?**

*Sonja Grimm, Julia Leininger & Jonas Wolff*

19:30

**Dinner at Tuscolo Münsterblick, Bonn**

Thursday, March 26

09:00-10:30

**Interaction in Democracy Promotion**

From Democracy Promotion to Democracy Reception

*Jeff Bridoux*

Can the EU Engage in Renewed Ways in the Second Revolution  
in the Arab World?

*Michelle Pace*

Chair: *Vera van Hüllen*

10:30-11:00

**Coffee break**

11:00-12:30

**Interaction in Foreign Aid**

Democracy Promotion and Development Cooperation in Sub-Sahara Africa

*Stephen Brown*

Democracy Promotion and the Political Economy of Aid

*Jörg Faust*

Chair: *Annika Poppe*

12:30-14:00

**Lunch**

14:00-15:30

**Interaction in Peacebuilding**

Whose democracy? Who is a Democrat? Making Sense of Democracy  
Promotion in (everyday) Peacebuilding Interactions

*Werner Distler*

Democracy as a Means of Conflict Resolution: Working (Mis-)Understandings  
between External and Domestic Actors

*Felix Gerdes*

Interactive Norm Translation

*Lisbeth Zimmermann*

Chair: *Sonja Grimm*

15:30-16:00

**Coffee break**

16:00-17:30

**Interaction with Authoritarian Regimes**

Countering Democracy Promoters with Autocracy Defenders  
*Oisin Tansey*

External Democracy Promotion and the Domestic Politics of  
Authoritarian Regimes  
*Christine Hackenesch*

Chair: *Tina Freyburg*

17:30-18:00

**Wrap-up of the day**

19:30

**Dinner Bierhaus Machold, Bonn**

Friday, March 27

09:15-10:45

**Interaction Between Authoritarian Regimes**

Would Autocracies Promote Autocracy? A Political Economy Perspective  
*Jörn Grävingholt*

International Cooperation of Authoritarian Regimes  
*Thomas Richter*

Chair: *Johannes Gerschewski*

10:45-11:00

**Coffee Break**

11:00-12:30

**Concluding Session: What did we Learn for Future Research of  
Democracy Promotion? (Fish Bowl Discussion)**

On Interaction Between Internal and External Actors in Democracy  
Promotion  
*Peter Burnell*

Moderation of Fish Bowl: *Julia Leininger*

## List of Participants

### Network members:

- Tina Freyburg, University of Warwick
- Johannes Gerschewski, WZB, Berlin
- Sonja Grimm, University of Konstanz
- Julia Leininger, DIE, Bonn
- Annika E. Poppe, PRIF, Frankfurt
- Solveig Richter, University Erfurt
- Vera van Hüllen, Leuphana University of Lüneburg
- Jonas Wolff, PRIF, Frankfurt

### Invited participants:

- Jeff Bridoux, Aberystwyth University
- Stephen Brown, University of Ottawa/Käte Hamburger Kolleg, Duisburg
- Peter Burnell, University of Warwick
- Werner Distler, University of Marburg
- Jörg Faust, DIE, Bonn
- Felix Gerdes, University of Hamburg
- Jörn Grävingholt, DIE, Bonn
- Christine Hackenesch, DIE, Bonn
- Okka Lou Mathis, DIE, Bonn
- Michelle Pace, Roskilde University/University of Birmingham
- Thomas Richter, GIGA, Hamburg
- Oisín Tansey, King's College, London
- Sebastian Ziaja, University of Heidelberg
- Lisbeth Zimmermann, Goethe University Frankfurt/PRIF

Organization: German research network "External Democracy Promotion", <http://external-democracy-promotion.eu>, in cooperation with the German Development Institute / Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE) Sonja Grimm (Sonja.Grimm@uni-konstanz.de), Julia Leininger (Julia.Leininger@die-gdi.de) & Jonas Wolff (wolff@hsfk.de)

Your directions to the German Development Institute /  
Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE)

Tulpenfeld 6  
D - 53113 Bonn

Google map: <http://g.co/maps/5ehk3>

From Bonn Central Station (*Hauptbahnhof*):

Take the U-Bahn (Subway) U 16 / U 63 or U 66 towards "Bad Honnef / Bad Godesberg" and get off at the station "Heussallee / Museumsmeile". You may buy your ticket at vending machines either at the Station or on board (choose ticket type 1b; 2.50 Euro, coins only). At Heussallee Station, follow the signs towards the Heussallee exit. After coming up the escalator, walk straight ahead for about 50 m and turn right onto the footpath towards the "Tulpenfeld" office complex. Follow the signs across Tulpenfeld to the building of DIE at Tulpenfeld 6.

