

## Paradigms, Policies & Partnerships: Where does EU development policy leave NGOs?

James Mackie, ECDPM, Maastricht

TRIALOG, CONCORD, FORS & Ekumenicka  
Akademie Conference:

*Are we on the right track? Paradigm Review by  
CSOs as Development Actors*

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## 4 key points

1. EU donors have more of a shared paradigm than ever before
2. Civil society has had an impact on this official paradigm & vice-versa
3. Price of this shared paradigm has been that EC under pressure to improve effectiveness
4. Key issue remains the nature of the partnership:
  - Can developing countries themselves not drive development cooperation?



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## Focus

- Talk essentially about:
  - Overall EU development paradigm
- Contend ENGOs part of this paradigm
  - Though official actors are biggest players: EC, Member States, EP ...
- Recognise NGOs also have their own separate paradigm
  - See this as a sort of 'sub-paradigm'
  - Interacts with overall EU paradigm



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## Paradigms?

“Universally recognised scientific achievements that for a time provide model problems and solutions for a community of practitioners”

Thomas Kuhn, 1962,  
*The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*



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## Paradigms

- International paradigms
  - Cold War influence on development
  - Washington Consensus
  - UN Millennium Declaration → MDGs
  - DAC as a forum for exchange → guidelines
  - Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness
- An EU paradigm is emerging:
  - EU Consensus on Development
  - EU Consensus on Humanitarian Aid



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## An evolving EU Paradigm

- Taken 50 years to get here
- 15 years ago first common principles established – *3Cs of Maastricht Treaty*
- But only since 2000 seen first signs of real coming together – *some coordination, PCD ...*
- DAC + EU-MS critical of EC (~1995-2005)
- Emergence of paradigm in policy:
  - 2005 Consensus on Development
  - 2007 Consensus on Humanitarian Aid
- Now even some unity in action:
  - 2007 Division of Labour – *complementarity*



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## EU Development Paradigm

Can argue over how far EC/EU-MS go in each of these areas, but essential features are:

- Poverty focus → MDGs + social development
- Human security + rights based approach
- Cross cutting issues: gender, environment, ...
- Neo-liberal economic model
  - Integration into world economy
- Conflict prevention & good governance
- Effectiveness of aid linked with ODA increases
- Effective multilateralism
- Policy coherence & division of labour

At same time: *enlightened self-interest* :

- European security & well-being remains constant factor



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## Context of other EU external action policies

Development Policy not on its own  
– EU external action now very diverse

- Humanitarian Aid
- Trade
- Diplomacy – CFSP
- Enlargement & accession
- Neighbourhood policy
- European Security Strategy

*But these multiple tools also a source of strength*



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## Factors influencing emergence of paradigm

- International debate
  - UN Conferences in 1990s
  - Process leading up to MDGs
- DAC Peer Reviews
- NGO policy lobbying – played big role
- Public awareness & pressure
- Difficulties with raising ODA levels
  - Debate on aid effectiveness



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## Division of Labour

- Most recent shift or advance of EU paradigm
- 3 types identified:
  - Sectoral, inter-country, intra-country
- In practice for each MS:
  - Reduce number of sectors
  - Choice of countries guided by group
- Each MS to do a *self-assessment*
- Major step to take
  - *In effect a loss of sovereignty*



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## Value Added of EC

WECA – *Whither EC Aid? Project* findings:  
(ActionAid/ECDPM)

- Good consensus on EC value-added
  - Multilateral, joint action, multiple tools available ...
- But, is EC able to realise full potential of its value-added ?
- Achieving ownership & partnership principles seen as biggest problem
  - Often donor driven agenda

[www.weca-ecaid.eu](http://www.weca-ecaid.eu)



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## EU Policies & Civil Society

- Lomé tradition → Cotonou
  - NSAs clear place as *actors of the partnership*
- Conflict prevention
  - Civil society contribution to peace building & early warning work
- Good governance
  - CSOs as agents of democratisation
- Africa-EU Strategy
  - Contributions civil society can make recognised
  - Eg. as watchdogs for monitoring progress
  - But also as a way of *diversifying partnership*



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## NGO roles for EU

- Sources of innovation & new ideas
- Gap fillers – where government do not reach
- As a channel of aid delivery
  - Reaches parts others cannot reach
  - ECHO clearer on this from start
  - But EuropeAid increasingly also
  - Instrumentalisation or realism ?
- ENGOS as bridge to Southern civil society
  - But EC prefers to have direct links
- Watchdogs → accountability & ownership
- Agents for promoting democratisation



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## How might recent paradigm shifts impact on NGOs?

- Harmonisation between donors
  - Should also simplify procedures for NGOs
- Alignment to promote ownership
  - Should mean NGOs have to work less with donors + more with developing country governments
- Alignment → direct budget support
  - May reduce donor funds for NGOs
- Division of labour
  - Will it reduce donor choices for NGOs?



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## A word on partnerships

- Long standing NGO concept – prompted much discussion
- Now also central to EU development paradigm
  - Cotonou, Africa-EU Joint Strategy, ...
  - Ideas of solidarity, equality, mutual benefit,
- But in practice remains elusive
- Are we too hard line perhaps?
  - Do partners really need to be equals?
  - Best partnerships often based on complementarity
  - But each partner should be able to influence direction of partnership
- NGOs have no monopoly on concept clearly
  - but they do have valuable experience



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## Threats to EU paradigm

- New donors not in DAC
  - China, but also India, Brazil
  - Will they weaken the tough aspects of the paradigm?
- Difficulties to achieve its own aspirations
  - Levels of ODA
  - Levels of effectiveness
  - Division of Labour not easy in practice
- Threats to EU's own security:
  - conflict, energy, climate change, water ...



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## 2 key problems with current EU paradigm

- Has become too refined/complex → 'heavy'
  - Officials can no longer cope with all its sophisticated features
  - Multiple guidelines, checklists, procedures ...
  - Mainstreaming fatigue
- Still too donor driven
  - Despite talk of ownership & partnership
  - Complexity in fact discourages developing country ownership



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## Do we need a strong EU development paradigm?

- Real EU action not possible without one
  - For example with Africa-EU Strategy
  - As paradigm has strengthen so has EU unity
- Unified action by EU mobilising 55% global ODA could have major impact on international development
- But powerful paradigms can also reduce diversity and restrict choice



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## What is current agenda?

- Improve the EU paradigm?
  - Further strengthen EU as unitary actor?
  - Is that in best interests of development?
  - What can NGOs do on this?
- Look at NGOs own paradigm?
  - What improvements needed?
  - Issues of effectiveness, fragmentation, alignment ... also apply to NGOs



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## NGOs as drivers of change

- Doers – *first and foremost*
- But also
  - Accountability watchdogs
  - Policy lobbyists
  - Public awareness raisers
  - Promoters of dialogue with South
- Suggest also
  - *Paradigm shifters* – long term task
  - Ground breakers & testers of new ideas



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## Conclusions

- Should we work to further strengthen the EU development paradigm?
- How do we really put developing countries in control of development cooperation?
- Bigger challenge is perhaps how to build real partnerships:
  - *Can civil society/ NGOs show the way?*



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## Thank you for your attention

James Mackie  
ECDPM, Maastricht  
[jm@ecdpm.org](mailto:jm@ecdpm.org)  
[www.ecdpm.org](http://www.ecdpm.org)



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