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The EU's External Steering Techniques at Work - The Case of Democratization Policies in Morocco

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PATTERNS OF POWER

THE EU'S EXTERNAL STEERING TECHNIQUES AT WORK - THE CASE OF DEMOCRATIZATION POLICIES IN MOROCCO

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Abstract

This paper conceptualizes a framework of political steering that includes modern conceptions of power as formulated by Foucault, Habermas, Bourdieu and others and applies it to the empirical analysis of the EU neighborhood policies. Analyzing the promotion of human rights and democracy as part of a comprehensive security strategy in Morocco since 2003, the authors scrutinize the use and the resonance of hierarchic, indirect and soft steering modes in EU external governance in the Southern Mediterranean. The findings suggest that Europe employs a complex strategy that targets governing officials, civil society actors and society at large, each with a respective mix of steering modes. Whereas classic incentives failed to initiate reforms at the government level, they proved effective in empowering Moroccan civil society actors. Soft modes are shown to play a decisive role in shaping the self-image of the administration officials vis-à-vis the EU and the parameters of public discourse on human rights and democracy, thus allowing for non-governmental actors to encroach on the government and demand democratic reforms. The integrated perspective on steering mechanisms in EU neighborhood policies thereby reveals the need to further explore micro-techniques of power in external governance analysis.

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1. Introduction[1]

> *The ENP [European Neighbourhood Policy] has helped European Union*
> *neighbors to transform their countries [...] It confirms that when we use the*
> *right policy mix and tool kit, we can work as a transformative soft power*
> *spreading stability and prosperity beyond the enlargement area*
> (Stefan Füle, EU Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy, cit.
> in Lobjakas 2010)*.*

In international politics, once the exclusive realm of sovereign nation states, the European Union has evolved as a self confident actor pursuing ambitious goals. Applying a vast range of policy tools, the EU attempts to effect transformative change in its neighborhood. Not least since the European Security Strategy (ESS) of 2003, the EU has put security on top of its external governance agenda, striving to establish a new "security culture" through stabilizing its neighboring states that do not seek or qualify for membership. To this end, the EU has deployed complex policies in order "to promote a ring of well governed countries to the East of the European Union and on the borders of the Mediterranean with whom we can enjoy close and cooperative relations" (European Commission 2003b: 8). This paper aims to shed light on concept and reality of this approach towards external governance by bringing power back into analysis.

Of course the notion of power is not exactly new to scholars of EU external governance. Quite the contrary, there are numerous concepts that relate European external governance to power (see among many Sjursen 2006; Smith 2008: 15f). However, the majority of these perspectives ask whether or not the EU may be conceived of as a power in terms of actors in international politics and not in terms of *power capacities*, that is, abilities to exert influence on the relationships with other actors (Diez 2005: 616). Giving proper analytical consideration to EU power capacities in its neighborhood region – or, in Europe's own words, its "policy mix and tool kit" – necessitates a perspective that systematically integrates power into the relationship of foreign policy actors and allows for a large variety of different power mechanisms.

This paper seeks to embark from an innovative theoretical foundation by drawing from concepts of power developed in (post)modern social theory and only recently made available to studies of global governance (Göhler et al. 2010). We will link these concepts to the empirical analysis of European neighborhood policies[2] by examining the case of Morocco on Europe's Southern Mediterranean border.

By going back to Weber and his definition of power as "the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless on which this probability rests" (Weber 1968: 53) and the more recent debate in German political research on political steering and Europeanization, we aim to conceptualize modes, mechanisms and instruments of steering.

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2   By using the terms European neighborhood policy/policies we refer to the sum of EU policies that aim towards the neighboring states. When making reference to the specific "European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP)" of the EU, we will note this accordingly.

By drawing on modern power theories we hope to avoid the notion that policy effects can be *either* explained within a "rationalistic" approach that relates effects to costs-benefits calculations, incentives and rational actors *or* within a "sociological" paradigm with its emphasis on socialization and social learning effects (Saurugger 2009). The advantage of conceptualizing a coherent and comprehensive framework of power and steering modes in external governance is that it also takes into account discursive steering modes within a realm where hard power is commonly believed to dominate, while neither excluding power asymmetries based on resources and sanction capacities from analysis. We much rather believe that a broad understanding of power and of the intricate ways in which power is exerted through steering modes allows us to reveal strategies that combine steering modes ranging from hierarchic to soft, thus producing "patterns of power" in EU external governance.

We explore three main questions in this paper with which we aim to open up a theoretically informed and empirically innovative perspective on EU external governance:

(1) Which steering modes may be employed in neighborhood policies? Hence, we ask for a theoretical framework that permits a delineation of catch-all terms like power, governance and steering, and which ultimately allows a conceptualization of steering modes for empirical analysis.

(2) Which steering modes are employed in European neighborhood policies and to what resonance? We ask how the EU makes use of its steering instruments, whether some only work in combination or fall into certain patterns. Furthermore, we ask for the resonance of these instruments with their addressees, thus raising the question whether the EU actually lives up to its ambitious foreign policy goals.

(3) Of which – if any – heuristic value is the concept of political steering applied in this paper? So as part of this exercise we critically assess the heuristic value of our framework and the results it yields with regard to state of the art research.

Firstly, we will briefly review the various concepts of power in EU external governance before conceptualizing our heuristic framework for empirical analysis. We will then introduce the case of Morocco and the case study design before delineating the EU's use of steering modes and their respective resonance towards addressees in external democratization policies. Finally, we will refer back to our main research questions and – based upon our empirical findings – will assess concept and reality of the EU's attempts at human rights promotion and democratization in Morocco as well as the value of a power-based framework of political steering for analysis. Though limited in scope and space, we aim to prove the heuristic value inherent in a theoretical approach that goes beyond classical paradigms of foreign policy analysis and attempts to reveal the complex patterns of power involved in international politics in the 21st century.

2.   Conceptualizing Power

In this section, we discuss the existing external governance and Europeanization literature's weaknesses to adequately reflect the complex power mechanisms in the European neighborhood. Based on this, we then apply the framework of political steering as a perspective that is capable of visualizing power even in global governance before conceptualizing the approach for empirical analysis of EU neighborhood policies.

2.1   *Europe as a Power and the Power of Europe*

While the question whether or not the European Union qualifies as a fully-fledged actor in international politics has taken a back seat in the scholarly debate, attempts at describing Europe's external nature are manifold. Most approaches have detected a "new kind of power in international politics" (Diez/Manners 2007: 173). Yet, the list of adjectives used in order to specify the notion of power is long: Europe is being characterized as a civilian, civilizing, gentle, imperial, normative, transformative, soft or smart power. It is beyond controversy that the EU's approach at external governance is guided by some normative momentum – what is contested, however, are simply the nature and policy relevance of those norms (Youngs 2009). Still, adequate criteria to eventually identify a normative or civilian power are often vague. Crucially, the debate on "Normative Power Europe" is inward-looking. Explanations for external action are inseparably linked to the question for the European self. In line with that, the notion of power is applied to describe "actorness" more than actual power capacities: Most contributions ask whether Europe *acts* as a *Normative Power* – not whether it actually *possesses normative power* in terms of a relationship between actors (Diez 2005: 616).

We too ask about power. Yet, we do not strive to analyze a specific *type* of actor (Europe as a power), but an actor's factual empirical *practice* (Europe's power). Both perspectives are intrinsically linked because power comprises a descriptive and a prescriptive side: While the former focuses on foreign policy goals, the latter focuses on outlining the means related to them. The aspect of empirically exercised power is thus conceptually implied, though analytically not made explicit. In Ian Manners' seminal article, Europe's power is simply defined as the discursive representation of its type of actor (Manners 2002: 239). Nevertheless, "Normative Power Europe" is more than a mere concept of classification, but also helpful for the analysis of power capacities in this paper: Normative power is always directed at the shaping and reshaping of values, not less than at the attempt to influence "conceptions of the 'normal'" (Manners 2002: 253). Normative power accordingly also means power in the Weberian sense as the probability of realizing one's will even against the antagonism of others. Being a certain type of power means *being able to exercise* certain forms of legislative, institutional, structural and discursive power (Barnett/Duvall 2005: 8ff). In the case of European external relations, this means being able to influence what is conceived of as "normal" security policies in target countries (Bengtsson 2008: 604). This in turn calls for an analytical perspective that does not only imply, but also clearly conceptualizes power as *power to* in the foreign policy formation of *acting* players.

In the other camp, Europeanization literature has produced a vast range of models theorizing instruments and mechanisms of the European Union's influence on target countries (Lavenex/Schimmelfennig 2009).

Yet, most approaches fall short of a theoretical framework capable of grasping the manifold power mechanisms this paper aims to shed light on.

Although recent research has moved away from a singular focus on hierarchical mechanisms by including so-called "soft modes" (Saurugger 2009), "soft" is mostly applied following the Commission's definition in the White Paper on European Governance, namely the combination of "formal rules with other non-binding tools such as recommendations, guidelines, or even self-regulation within a commonly agreed framework" (European Commission 2001: 20). Hence, a soft mode is widely understood as the non-*application* of hard, hierarchical modes as is the case within the modes "network" or "market". While the correspondent *mechanisms* of regulation (competition or co-ordination in contrast to hierarchical harmonization) are well-defined, the theoretical framework of reference indicating a soft mode as such remains unclear. Furthermore, it is not made clear when the conceptual prerequisite of a horizontality of actors can be assumed as given.

As we will argue further down, "market" and "network" are not genuinely soft mechanisms. Moreover, the implementation of institutionalized frameworks such as these can be considered a mode of indirect steering, where the "soft" actor setting and the possibility of "hard" external intervention structures the actors' behavior.

It is widely assumed that societal change in target countries takes effect *either* through incentives *or* through socialization and social learning. Both conceptual designs have accordingly developed own strands of literature (Saurugger 2009). In contrast, the finding that the EU has been highly successful in the transfer of rules in turn entailing no or even counterproductive effects (Youngs 2009: 899) questions a distinction between two separate logics as functional equivalents. We rather expect them to extensively interact with each other. By going back to an understanding of what power is and in which ways modern social theory has found power relations and mechanisms to work, we aim to show that there is analytical value in including hierarchical interventions as well as modes that are genuinely based upon concepts of horizontal social interaction.

2.2   Power, Governance or Steering? Towards a Conceptual Framework

Our fundamental understanding of power is that it is the medium in social relations to limit, extend or – generally speaking – *structure fields of action*. Thus, when power is exercised, certain options to act are opened up or closed off. This may be because of the actions of another actor or because of structures that enable or disable someone to take a certain course of action (Göhler et al. 2010: 3).

How does governance relate to this concept of power? While the governance paradigm itself is contested,[3] we shall draw on the insights of Höppner et al. (2006) whose distinction between governance and steering is derived from political cybernetics (cf. Deutsch 1966). In their understanding, both concepts refer to a *regulating* and a *regulated* system but differ decisively in how information between the two systems is absorbed and in how input is given.

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3   Comprehensive discussion can be found at Börzel (2007) and Mayntz (2005).

The term governance commonly refers to

> *"*institutionalized *modes of coordination through which collectively binding decisions are adopted and implemented [...]. Governance structures relate to the institutions and actor constellations while [governance] modes of social coordination refer to the processes which influence and alter the behavior of actors."* (Börzel 2007: 3f, highlighting DB/MG)

Thus, the term governance is appropriate when we talk about structures and modes of social interaction that have been institutionalized and commonly serve to regulate or resolve a certain policy problem. The key difference to steering is that within governance arrangements, the policy problem or targets are externally given. In terms of cybernetics, governance works within a closed functional chain: The regulating system works according to an index value or reference variable that is externally given and cannot be altered. The regulated system submits feedback to the regulating system which adjusts its commands (in technical terms its correcting variable) accordingly (Höppner et al. 2006: 12), similar to an air conditioner that is set to generate and hold a specific air temperature.

Within modes of political steering on the other hand, the index value or reference variable is controlled by the regulating system itself and is thus subject to intentions. This means, the regulating system has power because it does not *have to* learn (Deutsch 1966: 304). While there is feedback within attempts of political steering, for example through elections, this feedback will be received selectively because the index value can be controlled (Höppner et al. 2006: 12f).

The key feature of steering modes in contrast to governance is therefore that the formation, modification and implementation of intentions for actions are part of the same process and may be questioned by the feedback of its addressees, whereas in governance arrangements the "problem" that is being regulated has been externalized. To sum up, political steering refers to the *intentional use* of power; to "carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless on which this probability rests" (Weber 1968: 53).

We differentiate between *modes, mechanisms* and *instruments* of political steering (Höppner 2008). Steering modes refer to the degree of hierarchy involved and the power theories associated with them, whereas a mechanism labels the specific functional relationship within social interaction that alters fields of action. Instruments are necessary to trigger one or several of these mechanisms. Hierarchy is determined by the degree of institutionalization of sanctions (1) and the degree of formalization of processes (2). Given these presumptions we can distinguish between three categories of steering modes, each encompassing one or several mechanisms and possible instruments (*see table 1*).

Table 1: Modes, mechanisms and instruments of political steering

Steering Mode		Steering Mechanism	Instruments & Functions
Hierarchic Steering	Steering through institutionalized means of coercion	Compliance	Codified law in conjunction with means for physical violence as resource for possible sanctions
Indirect Steering	Steering through incentives	Rational choice	Monetary funds or any mutually valued scarce resources to alter addressees' cost-benefit calculations
	Structural Steering	Establishing negotiation systems	Establishing horizontal negotiation systems (e.g. Round Tables) among stakeholders while retaining means to hierarchically intervene should stakeholders generate unintended outcomes
		Establishing competition systems	Establishing rules and regulations for a market or competition between stakeholders to foster innovation and efficiency in production of public goods; retaining means to alter parameters of competition hierarchically
		Establishing networks	Establishing or manipulating institutionalized governance networks by controlling different sorts of capital (economic, social or cultural capital) needed by stakeholders to advance their position within the network
Sofrt Steering	Steering through discursive practices	Subjectivation	Strategies to constitute specific, power-bound subjects (assujettissement)
		Categorization	Assigning items, events, subjects to certain categories that are part of a greater discursive formation
		Structuration of speaker positions	Structuring certain speakers' position to speak legitimately within a public discourse
		Production of knowledge	Collecting, structuring and communicating data as knowledge and placing it in public discourse on certain subject matters
		Production of truth	Process through which knowledge and asserted meanings are established as undeniable truth
		Performative practices of the self	Practices of the self which incorporate, translate or manipulate discursive patterns (e.g. biopolitical normalization techniques)
		Reference to empty signifiers	Employing vague and political terms or concepts to (de-)stabilize social identities and effect integration or resistance
	Steering through arguing	Justification	Employing questions and reasons within a strategic or communicative mode of action to persuade the other
	Steering through symbols	Symbolic densification	Loading a symbol (e.g. a headscarf) with a densified and specific cognitive and affective meaning

Source: Adapted and modified from (Göhler 2007: 90, 2009: 165).

In the following, we provide a brief idea of how these modes and mechanisms work and on what theoretical grounds they were developed. We are aware that many of the paradigms they refer to seem mutually exclusive (e.g. Foucauldian and Habermasian concepts of discourse), but we believe them to also be mutually productive as heuristic "lenses" in empirical analysis, where each concept sheds light on different aspects of social interaction. A more complete and more eloquent theoretical discussion of these modes may be found elsewhere (cf. Göhler 2007; Göhler et al. 2009b, 2010).

(1) *Hierarchic steering* works via institutionalized means of coercion as most commonly found in consolidated state systems. Codified law provides specific sanctions for actions in order to assure compliance. The highly formalized processes require both stable power asymmetries between actors (e.g. by having a monopoly over means of physical violence) and functioning social institutions.

(2) *Indirect steering* aims at effects that cannot be achieved by employing coercive means, but ultimately depends on the possibility of external intervention. *Steering through incentives* for example manipulates actors' cost-benefit-calculations by putting forth rewards or punishment for certain behavior. This mode still requires a power asymmetry in the sense that a mutually valued resource is distributed unequally among the actors.[4] Within *structural steering*, different frameworks are established to allow stakeholders to interact horizontally (e.g. in Round Table negotiations) in order to generate pareto optimum solutions to a given problem, for example through negotiations or competition. It has been shown, however, that an expected external intervention in the case of failed negotiations or competition structures the behavior of stakeholders to the effect that they try to avoid this intervention (Göhler 2007: 90). So while actors are not forced to pursue a certain course of action, their options are still structured by institutionalized sanctions (incentives) and formalized processes (e.g. through a competitive bidding process), and thus rely on power asymmetries between actors.[5]

(3) *Soft steering* has many names in the literature.[6] However, the majority of what has been labeled "soft modes" can be subsumed under indirect steering because the aforementioned power asymmetries and possibilities for external intervention ultimately persist. More recent studies into modern power theories (Göhler et al. 2010), however, proved that genuine soft steering modes exist. They are soft modes because *no institutionalized sanctions or formalized processes* are involved which means that there is a horizontal relationship. A horizontal relationship indicates the absence of a power asymmetry, not in general, but between steering actor and addressee in the moment a steering attempt is initiated (Göhler et al. 2009a: 17f; Göhler et al. 2010: 4). This absence may result either from an equal distribution of relevant resources or from equality created internally (as is the case in arrangements of *steering through arguing*).

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4   It makes no difference whether these incentives are positive and seen as a reward or negative and employed as punishment (as in the case of a government's announcement to create a pollution tax if the industry fails to meet certain emission caps within a given time frame) because in both cases, cost-benefit-calculations are altered and no coercion is used. However, the distinctions can become blurred as in "economic sanctions" endorsed by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), which may be enforced by force.

5   Indirect steering modes are therefore quite contradictory and have been given much attention in governance literature. Different authors have applied terms that insinuate an interdependency, a layering or a mix of different steering and government modes to the effect that "softer" modes are embedded in more hierarchical modes in order to be effective; cf. Börzel (2010).

6   In International Relations it was Nye (1990) who engaged in a discussion on "soft power". The most elaborate discussion to date on "new governance modes" and "soft steering mechanisms" can be found in Europeanization literature; among many see Citi/Rhodes (2006: 469-472); and Eberlein/Kerwer (2004).

We distinguish three soft steering modes according to the respective power theories they stem from. *Steering through discursive practices* is connected to the discourse theory most famously articulated by Foucault and Laclau/Mouffe (Arndt/Richter 2009). While pre-discursive intentions are not possible according to this perspective, discourse in the Foucauldian sense enables subjectivity and thereby agency in the first place (Allen 2000: 127) because power can only be conceptualized where something like freedom exists (Arndt/Richter 2009: 30-32). Through discursive practices societal discourses and meanings are intentionally altered in a way as to create in- or exclusion effects. Examples are discussed in section 2.3.

Steering through arguing refers to the speech act theory as formulated by Jürgen Habermas and the capacity to convince the other to alter his convictions and actions by asking questions and giving reasons, thereby triggering the mechanism of justification (De La Rosa/Gädeke 2009: 83-95). An actor may pursue a strategic or a communicative mode of action depending on whether he lays open his motives for action – or not (De La Rosa/Gädeke 2009: 96-105). If both actors engage in a speech act, they enter a reciprocal commitment which excludes power asymmetries because each side may be subject to persuasion. Hence it is a horizontal relationship the moment the actors enter a discourse on these terms.[7]

Steering through symbols finally, refers to the attempt to successfully assert a certain densified meaning of a symbol. Symbols represent norms and values and make them available for sensual experience (Göhler et al. 2010: 10). Besides carrying a cognitive meaning, symbols are therefore also characterized by their affective component. Contrary to a more semiotic understanding of symbols as mere signifiers, we understand them as hermeneutic phenomena, their meaning is never fixed, instead they always need to be interpreted by the recipients (Cohen/Langenhan 2009: 141f), which allows for steering attempts that aim to provide specific templates for interpretation.

Soft steering requires an "ensemble of cognitive and affective means of sense-making" (Göhler et al. 2010: 13, translation DB/MG) that can be addressed and activated, for example by certain normative arguments or certain symbols. Göhler et al. use the metaphor of the "sounding board" that needs to resonate. While the concept needs more elaboration, it should be obvious that an actor does not need to share, but he needs to know about the socio-cultural context of addressees in order to employ a steering instrument. Compared to other steering modes, soft steering is therefore less predictable, but also more sustainable if employed successfully because it alters the way individuals think of themselves and the world around them.

Figure 1 summarizes the ideal-type model of political steering. Therein a *steering actor* intentionally exerts power, that is, he structures the *addressees'* fields of action. In this ideal model, addressee and *recipient* are identical. He does so by applying a steering *instrument* that triggers the steering *mechanism*, the specific functional relationship within social interaction that alters fields of action, such as obedience, rational choice or the appropriation of a specific subject role.

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7   This also implies that the actor's intentions which he pursues through his steering attempt may be put in question and are ultimately altered.

Figure 1: Ideal-type model of political steering
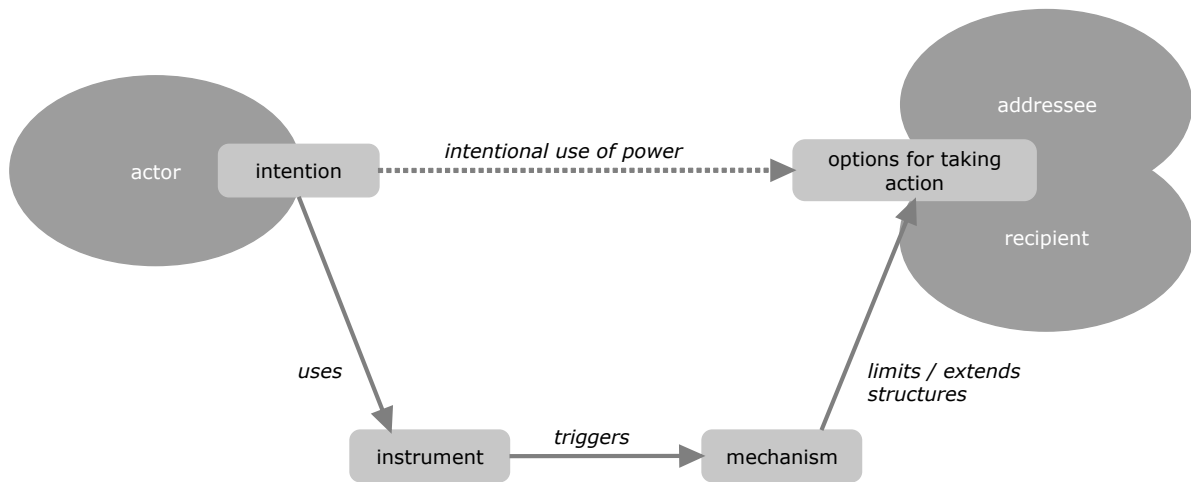
2.3 Framework for Analysis

After this brief introduction to steering modes and their linkages with political theory, we shall now conceptualize the approach of political steering. We begin by formulating premises that will guide the empirical analysis.

(1) We define the EU as *steering actor* in the context of European neighborhood policies. We assume the EU to have a singular actor quality in neighborhood policies. This means, the EU is pursuing genuine interests and can therefore act intentionally in terms of political steering.

(2) We use a broad concept of *intentionality* and consider all effects as intentional that can be regarded both a logical and therefore anticipated consequence of EU action as well as being in the broad interest of EU foreign policy. In this regard the European Security Strategy serves as the normative framework for the EU's intentions as will be shown in the next section.

(3) When conceptualizing the *addressees* of political steering in EU neighborhood policies there is the "Neighborhood" or "Southern Mediterranean" as political spaces that are broadly referred to. We consider the respective target or partnering states in this region as the factual addressees, as they are the subjects who enter into formal treaties and agreements with the EU.

(4) Finally, it is important to distinguish between *addressees* and *recipients* of steering attempts, since they might not be identical outside of theory.

Before we approach our empirical case in the next section, we shall explain how we will infer from specific policies and instruments to the steering modes outlined in the previous section and *table 1*. After having developed our framework deductively, we will approach our empirical case inductively. A given policy will be analyzed according to the degree of hierarchy (as determined by institutionalized sanction capacity

and formalized processes). *Hierarchical steering* exists only where coercion is involved. In foreign policy this is the case in treaties that contain clauses on binding sanctions for instances of non-compliance. *Indirect steering* mechanisms rely on voluntary involvement by addressees, but also upon a stable power asymmetry that enables the steering actor to offer incentives or recalibrate system parameters in cases of unexpected outcomes. In external governance, these mechanisms are at work whenever incentives are offered for the implementation of certain programs or when structures and processes are established that initiate competition, negotiation or institutionalized cooperation in order to let stakeholders generate the desired outcome among themselves. From the perspective of political steering it is not so important whether and how these "governance modes" work in themselves, but rather how they are put in place and used as instruments to attain certain political ends.

Soft modes finally, require a horizontal power relationship between the steering actor and the addressee at the moment the steering attempt takes place, be it because of equally distributed resources or because of ad hoc effects that neutralize power asymmetries. Steering through symbols depends on the right interpretation by recipients, for example because symbols are used that reflect locals' collective memory. Negotiations and political dialogue are only subjects to steering through arguing if they are the result of a free deliberative process and not of bargaining or even threats. The EU commonly applies the instrument of "political dialogue" to effect change (Kinzelbach 2009), but the outcomes, e.g. Action Plans, will have to be tested thoroughly for intervening factors.

Many mechanisms exist for steering through discursive practices; they all draw on the inescapable power that manifests itself in the Foucauldian concept of discourse. *Subjectivation (assujettissement)* forms and also binds the individual subject through power and may already begin at labeling, for example by calling a state "partner" instead of "recipient" in development programs. By *categorization*, items, events or subjects are assigned a certain position within the discourse that structures individual fields of action, e.g. the categorization of a NGO as terrorist organization by the UN, which will lead to a drain in resources. Certain *speaker positions* may be structured in a way that allows certain individuals to legitimately speak for a specific group within the public arena, thus assuming power to define the group and formulate their interests. Data can be used to *produce "knowledge"* about elements of society and thereby frame the course of action, e.g. by presenting statistics on society that single out women and minorities as underprivileged groups in society. Still, more modes exist, for example the reference to vague terms (*empty signifiers*) such as "human rights" or "good governance" to integrate heterogeneous segments of society. While these seem to be the most relevant ones for the EU's democratization policies, others are included in the comprehensive overview in *table 1*.

3.   The Case of EU Democratization Policies in Morocco

In this section we focus on our case study design and the case of EU democratization policies in Morocco. We shall also briefly outline the institutional context of Morocco and the EU's policy programs in the country.

3.1   Case Study Design

Without having the space to lead a lengthy methodological discussion here, we shall lay open how and why we decided to approach our empirical analysis. First of all, we pursue our research question of steering mechanisms in a qualitative case study. To be more specific, we aim at "causes of effects" (instead of "effects of causes"), which led us to choose a "mechanism-oriented" over a variable-oriented approach (Exadaktylos/Radaelli 2009: 512-514), which may be labeled as "heuristic case study":

> *"[Heuristic case studies; DB/MG] examine a particular case or perhaps several cases for the purpose of developing more general theoretical propositions, which can then be tested through other methods [...] Case selection is driven by theoretical considerations [...] and only particular aspects of the case are investigated"* (Levy 2002: 135f).

Since the case study is not to test pre-established hypotheses but ideally serves to generate these for future research, a cross-case comparison would be premature at this point. Therefore, we pursue a within-case analysis through which we more or less evade the issue of selection bias regarding case selection (Collier et al. 2004: 95f).

We are aware of the trade-off, however (Exadaktylos/Radaelli 2009: 512). Due to the within-case design, the results of this analysis will necessarily be of limited range in terms of generalization and validity, but they do serve the purpose of thoroughly evaluating the applicability of our heuristic framework.

There are good reasons for choosing the *Kingdom of Morocco* for this within-case analysis. First of all, we can discard any conditionality effects based on a membership perspective in the EU or NATO. Furthermore, Morocco is only peripherally affected by the conflict in and around Israel and the Palestinian Territories and has no considerable natural resources that would stimulate international interest. As Morocco stands as the single most largest recipient of funds through the *European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument* (ENPI) with € 654 million pledged between 2007 and 2010, we consider Morocco a *most-likely* case (Levy 2002: 143) for detecting a high number of and large variety in steering mechanisms at work.

For our analysis we used data from a variety of sources covering the time period 2003-2010, mainly EU institutions, Moroccan civil society and other research institutions.[8] We applied a hermeneutic approach in interpreting the data and clustered our results in a matrix developed according to our heuristic framework.

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8   However, a systematic gap in the data is the lack of documents from Moroccan government institutions, which were impossible to access with the limited resources given.

To ensure for the intersubjective reliability and validity of our findings, we created hermeneutic filters[9] in the interpretation process. The data proved to be adequate for the scope of this paper, although more in-depth research is imperative to test the findings presented here.

3.2   Democratization Policies as Security Practices

European Mediterranean Policy is security policy. The European conception of the Mediterranean region as a regional security complex dates back to the 1990s, when Islamist terror organizations started to be perceived of as a threat to *regional stability* leading to the European diagnosis of a special "Mediterranean condition" (Pace 2009).

By analyzing European foreign policies within the neighborhood region, we hence analyze security practices. Following the Copenhagen definition of security, we understand such practices as discursive. Not material threat, but an actor's *utterance* of security relevance – *securitization* – is the analytically relevant *action* (Waever 1995: 57). In addressing the securitizing actor, the action's referent object, the actual audience and the effect of a securitizing action (Buzan et al. 1998: 25), the heuristic model of political steering is capable of visualizing security *policies* as steering *actions*.

Still, the scope of this paper does not allow for an all-encompassing study of all steering attempts within the broad field of neighborhood policies since 2003. Hence we constrain our analysis to policies directed at the advancement of democratic principles. This limitation to democratization policy as a component of the EU's comprehensive security approach is analytically auspicious for a number of reasons: First, such policies cannot be applied in classical governmental modes. We simply expect coercive steering mechanisms (as well as such entailing coercive elements) to be non-enforceable in the highly politicized sector of democracy policies. Thus, we expect a high degree of non-hierarchical steering attempts. What is more, highly politicized issue areas are structured by frames that are not as consolidated as in more technical sectors and thus not as difficult to influence or alter by actors (Malmvig 2005: 359). We thereby avoid the methodological problem of missing variance in the effects of steering attempts (Haverland 2006).

Despite the EU's general assumption that the Mediterranean as a region and Europe develop along the very same axis – and that democratic development and economic liberalization are two components of this common line of development (Pace 2006; Youngs 2008), we explicitly delimit democracy policy from economic adjustments. We thus avoid effects of economic mechanisms intervening into the analysis of *political* steering. What is more, we can only assume the overarching security frame to be the intention of EU steering attempts if we clearly demarcate our notion of democratization from economic reform.

Thus, analytically relevant policies for the scope of this paper refer to (1) the attempt to transfer democratic norms; respectively to actions that are directed at EU-activities in this regard, if (2) those actions are related to political, societal or legal change and (3) are not related to economic liberalization.

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9   E.g. instead of using only one matrix, several were created in the first phase and only findings that were considered relevant (in terms of steering mechanisms and effects) in different contexts, according to different sources and interpreters, were added to the final matrix.

3.3   Institutional Context

Being an Arab African country at Europe's borders, Morocco's geographical position plays a decisive role in the formation of its foreign policy. While enjoying close relations with the other countries of the southern Mediterranean, Morocco's cooperation with the European states has always been vivid, most so in the country's (rejected) membership bid in 1987.

Since its independence from French colonial rule in 1956, Morocco has been a monarchy with a constitutionally anchored multi-party system (Bertelsmann Foundation 2003). Separation of powers is little developed. On the basis of the constitution, King Mohammed VI, in office since 1999, is the political, military and religious leader of the country. The formulation of foreign policy – and hence Moroccan-European co-operation – lies in the exclusive domain of the king.

Since the 1990s, the country has been undergoing a constant process of reforms in the sectors of human rights and especially the protection of minorities. Freedom House assesses the over-all state of political and civil rights as being "partially free" (Freedom House 2009), while Polity IV acknowledges a liberalizing trend within an authoritarian system (Center for Systemic Peace 2007). While the influence of the Moroccan parliament is limited, the last parliamentary elections of 2007 have been described as fair and free, with an admittedly low voter turnout of 39 per cent. Given the complex Moroccan voting system, no party could obtain more than 11 per cent of the votes (McFaul/Cofman Wittes 2008: 20). The biggest movements are the conservative Independence Party (PI), the Socialist Party (UNSFP) and the op-positional Islamic Party for Justice and Development (PJD). Overall, the existing approximately 30 political parties cover a wide range of the political spectrum, whereas their structures are hardly consolidated and lack democratic constitution.

Disappointment in the government's performance mainly strengthens the Islamic opposition, notwithstanding the king's high popular legitimacy. The country's educational elite predominantly supports a democratic development within the frame of a monarchic system. Reliable data on people's overall attitudes towards democracy are not available (Bertelsmann Foundation 2003).

With the domestic liberalization processes under way – and the increase in international funding – the number of Moroccan civil society organizations has considerably grown as well as their political room for maneuver. However, the activities of non-governmental organizations remain under the surveillance of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (UNDP 2009). Being mostly active in the fields of human rights, education, women and children's rights and environmental protection, the vast majority of NGOs is anxious to cooperate with the government. Many organizations are active within international networks (Baron/Hattab-Christmann 2009). On the declaratory level, the engagement of civil society actors is well appreciated by King Mohammed VI. Besides them, a few state-organized or state-controlled "NGOs" exist (Carapico 2007: 8f).

When it comes to the bilateral relationship with the EU, Morocco has the reputation of a regional role model despite a growing dissatisfaction by the EU over stalled progress in human rights and governance affairs. The legal framework for the relationship between the European Union and Morocco is the *Association Agreement* in force since March 2000 (Council of the European Union 2000). On the political

level, it establishes the *Association Council*, in which representatives from the Council, the EC and the Moroccan Government convene and take unanimous decisions that legally oblige both sides (Art. 78-80), while on the working level, it creates the *Association Committee* (Art. 84), in which EU and Moroccan officials discuss more technical issues.

Particularly relevant for EU democratization policies are the *Euro-Mediterranean Partnership* (EMP) and, since 2004, the *European Neighbourhood Policy* (ENP) programs which both rely on the processes outlined in the Association Agreement. All projects to be facilitated under these programs are based on the assessment on policy deficits and needs reported in the initial Commission *Country Report* for Morocco. Following this report, working groups within the Association Committee negotiate in private a mutual *Action Plan* which must then be adopted by the Association Council. Both sides are obliged to report data for the monitoring and evaluation process, however, the Commission is exclusively reporting on the implementation in its annual *Progress Report*. Regardless of how important these documents may be, the *National Indicative Programmes* (NIPs) are more interesting from a researcher's perspective as they contain the specific goals, expected results, performance indicators and – most importantly – the allocated funds out of the EU budget for a period of four years.[10] Most of the programs are financed through the *European Neighbourhood Policy Instrument* (ENPI). But while funds out of the ENPI are usually directed towards government institutions, the *European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights* (EIDHR) directly sponsors civil society organizations conducting micro-level projects.

While a detailed discussion of the policy priorities outlined in the Country Report for Morocco (European Commission 2004b) and the subsequent Action Plan of 2004 (European Commission 2004a) would exceed our scope here, it should be mentioned that policies in the realm of democracy and human rights constitute only a minor part of the EU's programs in Morocco, especially with regard to the budget (*see figure 2*). As seen in the NIPs, the EU clearly prioritizes more technical development cooperation and alleviation of social grievances in Morocco, modernization of the economy and addressing environmental issues over human rights and democracy promotion.

Within the Action Plan's and the NIPs' chapters on human rights and democracy, particular attention is given to legal and administrative reform (good governance) and on the ratification of UN human rights conventions along with developing a national human rights action plan (European Commission 2004a: 4f). The biggest part of the most recent budget (2007-2010) is dedicated towards institutional reform of the judicial sector.

Since 2006, the Commission is regularly reporting on the progress in these areas (European Commission 2006a, 2008c, 2009b). Initial satisfaction over electoral law reform and fair parliamentary elections in 2007 has given way to increased criticism by the Commission that Morocco is failing to achieve the goals set forth in the Action Plan, especially regarding human rights (European Commission 2009b: 2-5).

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10   Up until 2006, the NIP only covered a period of two years.

Figure 2: Allocation of pledged EU funds under the National Indicative Programmes in million €
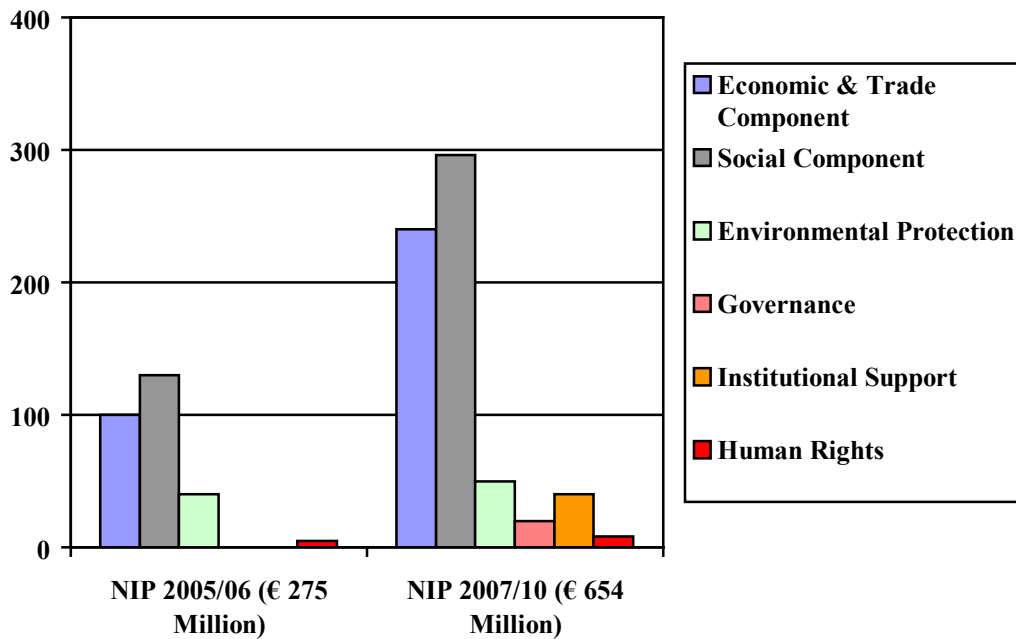
Source: National Indicative Programmes Morocco, 2005-2006, 2007-2010 (European Commission 2004e, 2006c).

4.   Steering Modes at Work

In this section, we apply our theoretical framework of political steering to the case of EU democratization policies in Morocco. Here, we document the results along the ideal-type mechanisms outlined in *table 1* before analyzing overall steering patterns in the subsequent section.[11]

4.1   Hierarchic Steering Mechanisms

Prerequisite for hierarchic steering mechanisms to exist in EU neighborhood policies towards Morocco would have to be a clause within the Association Agreement that institutionalizes coercive means to sanction certain actions such as non-compliance. While articles in the Agreement make reference to conflict resolution,[12] they still require the parties to mutually and voluntarily consent to take certain actions. Furthermore, since the EU and Morocco are free to cancel the Agreement, we can exclude that hierarchic steering – as we know it from state affairs – has any part in neighborhood policies towards Morocco.

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11   Yet, in contrast to the ideal-type model, we only included those mechanisms into our analysis which we could extract from our data.

12   According to Art. 86 arbitrators may be appointed to solve their disputes. This is the single specific section dealing with conflicts between the parties.

4.2   Indirect Steering Modes

Incentives

The EU's attempt to reward the Moroccan government with € 2 million for the adoption of a National Human Rights Action Plan is the most prominent case of steering through incentives (European Commission 2004e: 5). Still, the incentive did not have an impact; the Action Plan has never been realized. In the meantime, the EU has granted Morocco the long-aspired "advanced status" that remarkably does not involve any incentive structures. This abandonment of compliance indicators sparked the criticism of civil society actors (Kausch 2009: 175).

Through another instrument, the EIDHR, the EU addresses the Moroccan civil society directly. In addition to the financing of specific projects, its main focus is the capacity building of NGOs through training of activists, especially in project management. Moreover, the EU provides resources and infrastructure for networking among civil society actors (European Commission 2004e: 33). Thus, a two-fold incentive for NGOs is created: a financial one through the funding of projects and an immaterial one through the scarce resource "know-how" enhancing the social and symbolic capital of activists. These incentives are positively received by the addressees; Moroccan human rights organizations praise the professionalization of their staff as crucial for their work (EMHRN 2007: 5). However, similar training programs for judicial officers, though significantly better funded, did not yield any results.

Though, the resonance of incentive mechanisms on the (civil) societal level benefits from a number of domestic factors equally important for most other steering attempts: The attitude of the Moroccan population towards the European Union is comparatively positive (Martinez et al. 2008: 36). Furthermore, the category "the West" is seldom used as a negative frame, there is a clear discursive differentiation between actors such as France, Spain, the EU or the US (Senyücel et al. 2006: 16). Among the direct addressees in civil society, the EU benefits from a pragmatic stance: Any form of funding is soberly perceived as a financial incentive through which a donor pursues its interests.[13]

Crucial for the success of European steering attempts is the (discursive) maintenance of Moroccan sovereignty – the fear of European interference into national interests is very present (Willis 2009: 234). If the impression arises that an external actor directly influences an NGO's day-to-day actions, the organization substantially loses societal influence (Khakee 2008: 16).

Establishing Negotiation Systems

The Association Council can be described as a negotiation system. Its declared goals are meetings at eye-level and open deliberations. Yet, we do not assume this to be the dominant mechanism at work: Despite the inefficacy of the open discussions in the body and its sub-committees, the Association Council has taken root as an important institution (European Commission 2009b: 4). There is no possibility of an

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13   As a Moroccan activist states: "Financing is no almsgiving […] because there are doubtless interests, declared or implicit" (cit. in Khakee 2008: 17).

external intervention – the EU hence steers *within* the negotiation system, not through *establishing* it. Here, we assume the justification mechanism to be at work.

We also hold the intensified implementation of political dialogues in almost all democracy-relevant policy sectors (European Commission 2004a) to be steering attempts through arguments in the strategic mode. The dialogues as institutions are not expected to be effective – change is only aimed at "by taking the thematic approach" (European Commission 2003a: 13).

Establishing Competition Systems

The EIDHR funding line establishes a competition system within the Moroccan civil society through the calls for bids. As a major donor for the sector, the EU provides an average € 1 million for civil society organizations. The primary goal here is the establishment of a competitive situation: All performance indicators of the NIPs solely measure the number of seminars held and disseminators trained (European Commission 2004e: 33, 2009a) – and not effects on society. The advertised incentives have a steering effect on the existing competition for societal and political influence on the one hand – and constitute a distinct subsidiary competition system among European-oriented NGOs on the other. The mechanism *competition* is able to function as the European Union – unlike other external actors – cautiously tries to avoid the impression of all too obvious interference into domestic affairs by setting aside targeted support for and direct links to specific actors (Boubekeur/Aghar 2006; Senyücel et al. 2006). The competitive situation for EU funds is thus perceivable as a legitimate domestic competition of *Moroccan actors*. Although the EIDHR only publishes data on its calls for project proposals, not on the actual applications, the positive image of the EU, the relatively high grants and the rather broad application criteria suggest that this steering mechanism is indeed effective.

Yet, this case of successful steering is not without its limitations. The EIDHR's funding requirements (European Commission 2004c, 2005, 2006b) tailor the competition system in a way that, albeit not explicitly, excludes Islamic actors – only secular organizations are eligible for funding. Missing the "real vectors of society" (Khakee 2008: 19), the Union finances one part of it against another, deepening the domestic cleavage between faith-based ("Islamic") and secular actors.[14] The intended effect of a competitive situation thus only affects a segment of the actual addressees and contradicts the EU's own inclusive policy standards (Bicchi 2006b). This tightening of a cleavage seen as "artificial" is Moroccan activists' main point of criticism against the EU democratization policy (Khakee 2008: 19).

Establishing Competition Systems

Building on the incentives for non-governmental organizations (funding, data infrastructure), a national network of NGOs was established in 2009, critically evaluating the progress of the EU-Moroccan partnership and actively politicizing democracy and human rights issues (Poncincs 2009). Best practice models and

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14   While only European-oriented NGOs compete for EU money, Islamic actors have their own reliable sources of capital (see: Carapico 2007: 9).

specific knowledge are disseminated among the members with the EU as the exclusive provider of funds, data and expertise.

4.3   Soft Steering Modes

Subjectivation

An obvious steering mechanism in European Union democratization policy is the creation of *specific* subjects through discursive practices. The EU attempts to connect the Moroccan government to "modernization", "democratization" and "development". Through manifold discursive linkages, the aim is to subjectivate an actor to self-responsibly strive for Western models of state and society within the international developmental discourse.[15] Political decisions are thus supposed to be construed as consequential and necessary steps along a linear path of development, political action is supposed to be balanced in accordance with human rights and developmental goals. This mechanism is horizontal because it ultimately depends on the addressee's appropriation of the subject role as a new self-image and cannot resort to coercion or incentives. The rationale behind this strategy is to applaud progress instead of punishing deficits, for example through conditionality.[16]

The king has appropriated the subject role as a "reformer". In the run-up to the 2007 parliamentary elections, Mohammed VI declared the act of voting to be the expression of the new, modern Morocco. Hence, the Moroccan population became a recipient of this modernization discourse, but rejected it by non-voting. Only 37 percent of eligible voters cast their ballots, especially reform-oriented segments refused to vote (McFaul/Cofman Wittes 2008).[17] The self-image of "modernizers" is only appropriated by government leaders while the country's population and civil society take up a skeptical stance (EMHRN 2007: 5).

A second subjectivation strategy is being pursued through the ENP's partnership discourse. As it is the case with the "modernizer" role, Morocco is consequently addressed as a "partner" (and not as, for instance, a "recipient") throughout all relevant policy documents. This steering attempt aims at the creation of a sense of ownership of policies (European Commission 2004d: 8). Thereby, externally proposed reforms are intended to be framed not as foreign interference but as domestically volitional steps. Not only the government is the addressee of this steering attempt. As shown above, the indirect steering of NGOs can take effect precisely because citizens accept the mutually agreed goals in the Action Plan as sovereign *Moroccan* interests (Khakee 2008: 12), that can in turn put pressure on the government to work towards the realization of these very aims.

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15   For such discursive linkages see among many European Commission (2004e: 2, 8, 31) and European Commission (2008a: 1).

16   An internal Commission paper of 2008 explicitly states: „for this reason […] it will be essential to avoid any sense of castigation of partners whose performance has not warranted increased allocations, concentrating solely on applauding the achievements of the best performers", European Commission (2008b) cit. in Kausch (2009: 174).

17   Another reason for the low voter turnout might just have been the fair and free character of the election: many voters declared not to take part because they were no longer offered financial incentives (Friedrich Ebert Stiftung 2007b: 1-3).

Categorization

The most prominent example of a steering attempt through categorization is the framing of democracy and human rights as technical issue areas of EU-Moroccan cooperation. The Moroccan government as the steering addressee is apparently to be affirmed that democratization is not a top priority of EU engagement in the country. In the official documents (in particular European Commission 2004e: 8f), democracy promotion is grouped as an "other component" with issues such as environmental protection. Democratization is neither made explicit as an overall goal of the Action Plan, nor is it touched upon in the speeches of the Commissioners competent for Neighbourhood Policy.[18]

This comprehensive categorization of democracy as a non-issue faces the critique of civil society actors, who, as steering recipients, seek to shift the focus towards human rights and democracy (EMHRN 2007: 5, 11). The steering attempt therefore did ultimately resonate – the politicizing outcome may have not been aimed at, but willingly accepted as a possible effect. We hence understand it as intentional.

A second categorization strategy is similar to the one above, but did show clear non-intended effects. The efforts for a comprehensive judicial and administrative reform were not directed at the implementation of specific norms or proceedings, the explicit policy goal was rather the subjective *perception* of individual rights. "Rule of Law" is thus also categorized in technical terms (European Commission 2004a: 4). On the one hand, the EU aims at long-term democratization effects (European Commission 2006c: 16), but prioritizes measures directed at the increase in efficiency of the apparatus and better implementation of existing regulations on the other (European Commission 2006c: 18f). This strategy, however, indirectly strengthens the societal influence of judicial officers and judges: The signifier "rule of law" is subject to intense semantic fights within the Moroccan discourse. A multitude of societal actors tries to influence the course of the judicial reform process by pushing their own interpretation of "law". As the Ministry of Justice and its administration work towards a depolitization in order to maintain their legitimacy, the EU's framing of the reform process as technical issues plays into the hands of conservative elites (Sater 2009: 190). Rather than gradual transformation, the steering attempt brings about a strengthening of existing structures.[19]

The comprehensive framing of proposed reforms as logical modernizing steps of domestic origin constitutes a third categorization strategy. The language used in the official documents classifies any European policy demand as support for existing Moroccan reform processes (EMHRN 2007: 5; European Commission 2004e: 5, 8, 31, 2008a: 1). This counters the perception of external interference into national affairs on all levels of addressees and opens up room for maneuver for EU-financed NGOs. Furthermore, the categorization practice enables the Moroccan government to appropriate and use the "modernizer" role without taking the risk of losing domestic legitimacy.

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18   Cf. Ferrero-Waldner (2008). On the contrary, democratization efforts are well highlighted when addressing European audiences. Exemplarily, the "Sub-Committee on Human Rights, Democratisation and Governance" is the only one of the seven sub-committees explicitly named in press releases and speeches directed at EU publics.

19   In contrast, evidence from the Twinning programs suggests that Moroccan officials are less emphatic on democratic principles the more politicized the respective administrative branch is (Freyburg 2009: 23). Thus, non-intended effects are also likely in less technical issue areas.

The understanding of democracy to be security-relevant underlying all neighborhood policies is another categorization strategy. The conception is generally approved by the government (Senyücel et al. 2006: 18), while it is not shared, but still accepted as a legitimate European practice by the majority of civil society actors (Martinez et al. 2008: 12f; Senyücel et al. 2006: 16).[20]

Structuration of Speaker Positions

As a discursive backing of the established competition and network systems among NGOs, the EU actively tries to enhance the position of non-governmental organizations in the public discourse. Both towards the EU and the Moroccan government, NGOs are being highlighted as capable and legitimate civil society actors and thus equal cooperation partners in the neighborhood policy documents. The National Indicative Programmes even single out specific NGOs as best practice organizations (European Commission 2004e: 8f, 31) trying to encourage other NGOs to live up to the example and make their voices heard.

This steering attempt's primary addressees - NGOs - describe their position towards the government as considerably enhanced and refer to the EU as the crucial actor behind this revaluation (EMHRN 2007).

Production of Knowledge and Production of Truth

The arrangement of Country Report, Action Plan and Progress Reports refers to the EU's unquestioned power to authoritatively produce legitimate knowledge about Morocco. The presentation of *specific* data as *relevant* (e.g. statistics on poverty) and the construction of causalities (e.g. poverty as a result of weak economic performance and not of, for instance, moral misconduct) as objective *knowledge* form the basis of political intervention. Although the jargon of EU documents is highly technocratic, data on "economic development" or "security" deal with contested epistemic constructions that are equally interpretable from other (e.g. Marxist or Islamic) perspectives. It is therefore no negligibility that the Moroccan government fully complies with this form of monitoring and even contributes to it by delivering data. Remarkably, the Commission's *exclusive right* to report on the progress of the Action Plan's goals – under the claim of objectivity – is being accepted by the government level addressees. This asymmetric production of knowledge not least contradicts the ENP's "partnership" discourse. However, the successful steering practice directly resonates within civil society. In calling for more political rights, human rights organizations explicitly formulate their claims within the context of this "new knowledge" by arguing on the basis of the Action Plan's goals. Non-state actors even try to modify this knowledge formation by suggesting own benchmarks for a better assessment of the human rights situation (EMHRN 2007: 6, 9f).

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20   Even a representative of the Islamic PJD states: „Les vrais enjeux sont ceux de la démocratisation (…). [S]i on la réussit, on réussira le développement, on éradiquera l'immigration clandestine et le trafic de drogue. *L'Europe sera plus sécurisée…Il y a un intérêt commun entre l'UMA et l'Europe.* Si on réussit la démocratisation des régimes, l'Europe gagnera en matière de lutte contre l'immigration clandestine" (cit. in Martinez et al. 2008: 12f, highlighting DB/MG).

What is more, the EU at least tries to influence the way how a society transforms certain knowledge to unquestionable truths, as the example of a Museum of National History shows. Although the plan to set up such a museum also addressing human rights violations was never realized, the EU's ambition to contribute to concept and construction of the project is manifest (European Commission 2006c: 19-21).[21]

Reference to Empty Signifiers

The conceptual fields "partnership" and "commonality" are not only used in subjectivation and categorization strategies. The European Union also takes advantage of those notions' ambiguity to structure Moroccan fields of action. The empty keyword "common interest", crucial to European neighborhood polices (European Commission 2004a, 2004d; Prodi 2002), is particularly important here: The horizontal actor setting of the Association council and the stated "common interests, joint ownership [...] and mutually recognized acceptance of common values" (European Commission 2004a: 1) are discursively extended to a shared interest backing every individual policy measure. The use of empty signifiers like "good governance", "modernization" or "development" as legitimatizing brackets could indeed establish mutual consent in situations where conflicting interpretations did exist: While the notion "democracy" carries negative connotations in the context of external influence, the substitution term "(good) governance" is used in the same sense (as the simple renaming of the respective chapter in the National Indicative Programme shows: European Commission 2004e, 2006c) but does not entail the same political explosiveness (Balfour 2004: 21f).[22]

This purposeful usage of linguistic vagueness resonated in two ways: First, the overarching empty signifier "common interest" was accepted by its addressees. Within civil society, technical policy adjustments were indeed perceived as a result of converging interests (Senyücel et al. 2006: 16); even Islamic actors stressed common (strategic) goals in democratization policy (Martinez et al. 2008: 12f). Second, the use of vague notions like "governance" and "modernization" were accepted on the governmental level but rejected by civil society actors (EMHRN 2007: 39f; Friedrich Ebert Stiftung 2007a). Voiced criticism explicitly concerned the EU vocabulary's vagueness allegedly allowing state elites to legitimize superficial reforms (Kausch 2009: 169; Youngs 2010). As a result, most non-governmental organizations tried to establish own, unequivocal interpretations trying to substantiate the government's lipservice to vague slogans (EMHRN 2007: 39f).

Justification

As shown above, Morocco and the EU interact as partners. Accordingly, the justification mechanism seems to be at work within the setting of the Association Council, the Association Committee and the various working groups, where institutionalized or formalized sanction mechanisms are absent. The confidentiality

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21   For the specific importance of museification of knowledge in the context of collective memories see Anderson (2006: 178-185).

22   On the introduction of the „governance facility" cf. European Commission (2008b).

of the negotiations, thus the exclusion of public pressure and matters of prestige, the contractual condition to take "decisions by agreement" at working level (Art. 89 Association Agreement) as well as individual statements by participants (cf. i.a. European Commission 2008a, 2008c, 2009b: 4f) do not substantiate the classification as *negotiation system* structured by the possibility of external intervention.

The Moroccan government was highly successful in appropriating the technical EU jargon and using it to insist on an equal role. The fact that Morocco could use the binding force of subjectivation and categorization patterns to extract concessions from the EU suggests that the *justification* mechanism takes effect. However, it has not yet been clarified whether European and Moroccan officials interact in a strategic or communicative rationality. It is the declared goal of the "Political Dialogue" to discuss human rights and democracy issues (Art. 3 Association Agreement) without foreordained conclusions. In doing so, the EU pursues the objective of *convincing* the Moroccan government of the normative rightness of "good governance" principles. According to diplomats and press statements, the negotiations in the shared perception of horizontality have resulted in increased mutual trust (European Commission 2008a: 6; Kausch 2009: 174). Still, measured against its intention, the European steering attempt has failed as the Action Plan's policy goals regarding human rights, democracy and rule of law have not been met (European Commission 2009b: 4f).

In contrast, Moroccan human rights organizations accuse the dialogues of being "cheap talk". The EU would then act in a *strategic* rationality simply pretending commitment to reforms and evading the charge of not tackling human rights issues straightforwardly enough (Youngs 2010: 17).

Strikingly, the European Union did not try to address the Moroccan public through arguments. This steering mechanism was exclusively used at the governmental level, in line with the repeatedly observed strategy to avoid the impression of external interference into Moroccan affairs at all costs and count on indirect effects instead.

Symbolic Densification

The data analyzed does not suggest extensive steering through symbolic densification. The EU is indeed eager to keep its flag (respectively the program logos) visible in the news, on internet pages and on construction signboards of sponsored projects. Other than that, it is likely that the EU tries to establish specific keywords from the human rights discourse as word symbols with affectively resonating meanings. Yet, our resources did not provide evidence for this.

Most strikingly, there is – apart from the placement of logos – no comprehensive "advertising strategy" in the media where symbols would be used in order to achieve positive connotations of the European Union. Again, society at large is not directly addressed.

5.   Patterns of Power? Analyzing the Results

In this section we will connect the dots and analyze how and to which resonance the EU employs its steering mechanisms in external governance. Furthermore, we will assess the value of our heuristic framework for this analysis.

5.1   Steering Strategies and Their Resonance in Morocco

The European Union is generally differentiating between three actor groups in its policies towards Morocco: Moroccan government officials, civil society actors and society at large. These groups may also serve as units of analysis when looking at overall steering strategies and their resonance. We found indirect and soft steering modes to work jointly within complex steering strategies, but to mixed results. Whereas indirect steering mechanisms mostly failed at the government level and soft modes proved to be more effective, they worked well intertwined with soft modes on the civil society level. The Moroccan society at large was not addressed directly, but expected to be recipient of changes taking place within the government and civil society organizations.

While indirect steering modes, chiefly incentives, are considered to be classic components of foreign policy, they did not work for the EU in Morocco when it came to democratization and the promotion of human rights. This is the lesson learnt from the failed attempt to offer financial support upon delivery of the national Human Rights Action Plan. The subtle use of soft modes, however, resonated more with the governing elite. Politicians and officials readily accepted the role of an equal "partner" in bilateral relations and the frame of "modern reformers" in North Africa. This subjectivation strategy was successful because the EU was at the same time able to categorize political questions as merely technical issues of "governance" (the term serving as empty signifier in this regard). This move offered Moroccan officials the positive selfimage of agents of modernization without obliging them in areas where they would like to be distinct from the EU by adhering to traditional values and norms. Hence, the EU created ownership for a modernization process it could sell to state leaders and their administrations by highlighting its technocratic nature. In effect, the EU successfully established itself as legitimate producer of knowledge on policy deficits and measures needed in Morocco (e.g. through annual Progress Reports). Despite this positive resonance to discursive practices, the goal to get the elite behind a national Human Rights Action Plan and subsequent political reforms was not met through successive attempts of steering through arguing, as the need for reforms regarding political freedoms apparently did not resonate with the subjectivation of a modernist administration elite.

In sum, the EU proved that it was willing and able to learn from mistakes by shifting to soft modes (subjectivation, categorization, production of knowledge, reference to empty signifiers). Although substantial reforms are still missing, the EU did influence Moroccan officials' view of themselves towards an image of reformist role models for the region. This discursive shift is important because the elite discourse sets the parameters for what is perceived as policy deficits and appropriate responses.

When addressing the civil society level, the EU relied primarily on incentives. While direct funding was offered to specific micro-level projects, NGOs could also profit from knowledge and expertise disseminated

at workshops and other events to enhance staff's social and cultural capital. By pre-installing a competition mode through its call for bids, the EU aimed to foster a specific type of secular NGOs by making incentives available to whoever best fulfilled the criteria for "professional" NGOs. This however drives a wedge between faith-based ("Islamic") and secular NGOs.

Civil society actors were also affected by soft modes aimed at government officials when they started to vigilantly criticize attempts to depoliticize human rights and governance issues. In their criticism, human rights NGOs frequently referred to EU-published material such as the Action Plan and Progress Reports, thus using knowledge produced by the EU to establish themselves as legitimate speakers within the discourse on modernization in Morocco. Since NGOs mostly take a pragmatic approach towards external funding and enjoy increased credibility and legitimacy due to their public criticism, EU funding for Moroccan organizations is not seen as inappropriate external intervention.

Overall, the EU succeeds in fostering civil society actors in Morocco by using indirect steering through incentives and through the creation of a competitive system to fund NGOs and provide them with knowledge and expertise in project management. Civil society actors in turn enjoy a strengthened position as legitimate speakers on the issues of human rights and the state of democracy because they capitalized on the new discourse on modernization making frequent use of EU data in their criticism of the country's slow progress in human rights and political reforms. However, through exclusive bidding processes and through the secular image promoted for Morocco's future development, the EU risks to create the very gap between secular and faith-based Islamic organizations that it had originally feared.

Finally, looking at the society at large, it comes at no surprise that the EU did not directly target the Moroccan society. Of course it was anticipated that, in the end, society would benefit from spill-over and multiplication effects from changes taking place at the governmental and the civil society level. The low turnout in the 2007 elections, however, raised doubts on whether the self-image of modern reformers actually captivates Moroccans or whether they are disappointed by the lack of substantial progress in the realm of human rights and political freedoms.

While many (complex) options to visualize this strategy exist, we chose to simplify our findings in *figure 3* to provide the main patterns of power. We differentiate between the governmental and civil society level as *recipients* of the various *steering modes*, which are depicted with exemplary *steering instruments* (indirect modes being colored black, soft modes gray). Their location in the figure and the dotted arrows indicate their position and interdependencies within the steering strategy and not causative relationships. Hence, we find production of knowledge to be at the heart of the two-track approach emerging. It is through the EU's monopoly on producing data and knowledge on Morocco in their bilateral relationship that empty signifiers may be employed and subjectivation and categorization schemes are activated towards government officials. On the civil society level, incentives are preceded by a selective competition system, which in turn also relies on criteria previously established as knowledge. Speaker positions and empty signifiers cross the boundary between the two levels: Civil society actors are affected by empty signifiers as their resonance threatens to depoliticize and thus demobilize the agenda for political reform, whereas through their enhanced speaker positions, civil society actors encroach upon positions in public discourse previously reserved for state actors.

Figure 3: The patterns of power – Simplified European Union steering strategy
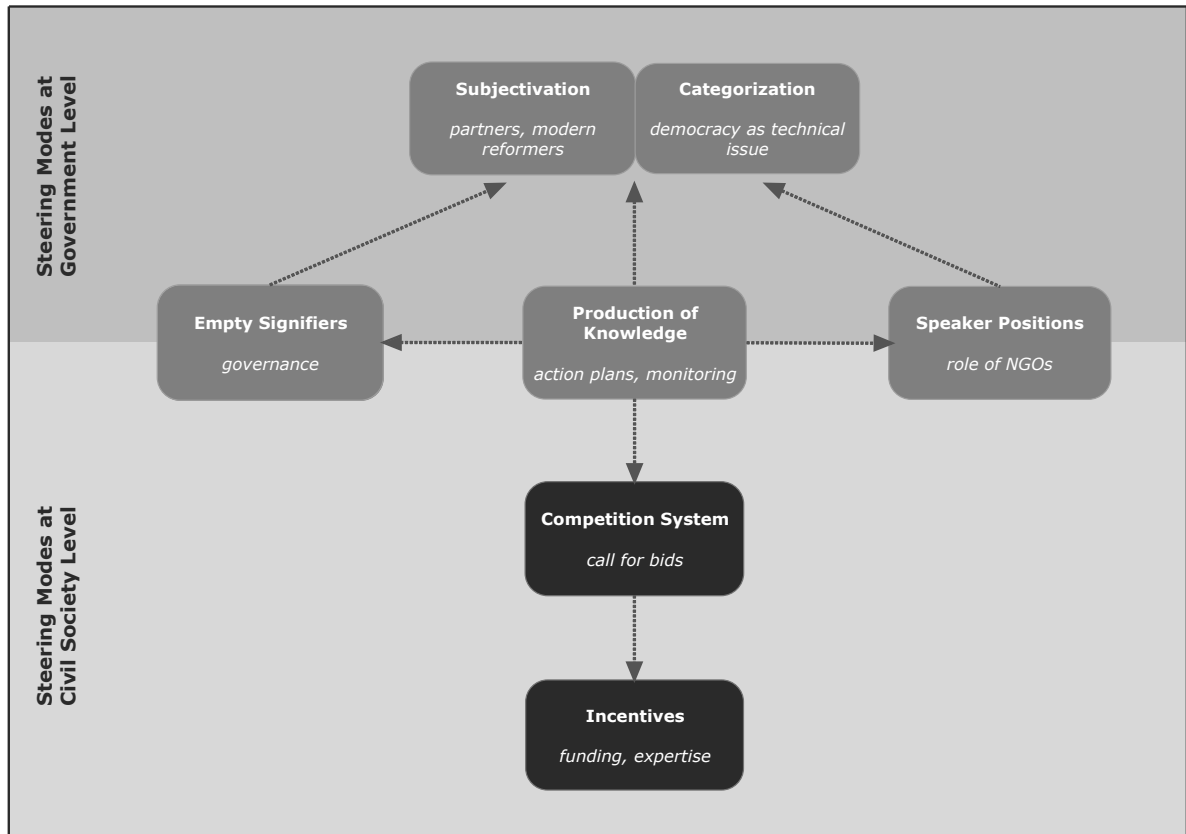
In conclusion one should be careful to label the two-track approach targeting state actors on the one side and civil society actors on the other, coincidental. We find these patterns of power reflected in the EU's strategic papers which point towards complimentary effects of work at the top *and* the grassroots level (European Commission 2003a: 6f, 2004d). This is an intriguing insight as the EU is often criticized for diffuse or inconsistent policies (Kausch 2009: 178; Martín 2009: 244) or for low reflexivity in its foreign policy (Bicchi 2006a: 299).

5.2   Assessing Political Steering as a Framework for Analysis

The main advantage of a modern theory of political steering is its integrated approach towards power in international relations. In this paper we attempted to show that indirect and soft modes are employed jointly and may only be effective when applied in steering strategies that target different addressees with respective steering modes. Where some may only hypothesize on the effectiveness of financial incentives at work, the framework applied here also identified the creation of a competition system and subjectivation techniques to be crucial components influencing the outcome of a strategy to fashion an independent civil society sector in Morocco. This suggests that the European Union is indeed able to shape "conceptions of the normal" (Manners 2002: 253). Our approach conceives of power as being more than carrots and sticks, hence integrating more subtle ways to exert power such as discursive practices. Only then are seemingly

technical and depoliticized actions taken within the EU's neighborhood policies shown to be political and power-based, e.g. its monopoly to publish legitimate knowledge about a country and its society. Hence, our heuristic model proved to be useful to expose the contingency and political nature inherent even in micro-level policies.

However, some flaws within our framework were also revealed as we applied it to the case of Morocco. While it is useful to differentiate among steering modes according to the degree of hierarchy and the respective power theories attached to them, the same cannot be said for the steering *mechanisms*. As mechanisms barely showed in ideal-types in this analysis, but rather in combination, serious questions about the validity of inference remain. Much closer process-tracing is necessary to exclude other functional relationships and link observations to the use of a specific steering instrument and a subsequently triggered mechanism. This points to great methodological challenges. Since this modified framework of political steering draws on various power theories, a mixed and comprehensive methodical tool kit is needed for empirical analysis, especially when analyzing soft steering modes. In the end, a comprehensive steering approach might risk to be too demanding for research.

On both the theoretical and the empirical level, there is room for improvement. On the theoretical level, the various steering mechanisms drawn from contemporary power theory should be checked for overlap and more closely linked with specific methodical tools already in use within the different schools of power theory, e.g. discourse analysis. On the empirical level, it is imperative to do more in-depth research into the case of Morocco to validate our findings as well as cross-case analyses to find out whether the EU acts coherently or how other steering actors differ in their foreign policy. The framework of political steering has so far only provided us with raw material to build more precise hypotheses on the patterns of power within EU neighborhood policies.

6.   Conclusion

European neighborhood policies are about power. This might sound trivial, but is not when considering how the EU would react if the Moroccan government asserted to produce reports on the state of democracy in Europe. The case presented shows that power is not only about adopting legal norms and formal compliance.

In this paper we explored three main questions: What kind of political steering modes can be extracted from political theory and may be applied in external governance? Which steering modes are empirically employed by the EU in its neighborhood policies and to what resonance? Finally, how useful is a heuristic framework that conceives of external governance as political steering?

We analyzed EU neighborhood policies towards Morocco between 2003 and 2010. Drawing on a renewed debate on political steering modes (Göhler et al. 2010) and modern theories of power, we conceptualized a framework that sought to integrate power mechanisms all along the spectrum of hierarchy and horizontality without abandoning a mutual understanding of what power is: a force which limits, extends or – generally speaking – *structures fields of action*. Accordingly hierarchic, indirect and genuine soft modes were conceptualized from the literature and linked with specific steering mechanisms for empirical

analysis.

What can be said about concept and reality of the EU's ambitious goals to effect transformative change in the field of Human Rights and democracy in Morocco? We found the EU to bundle indirect modes, which retain the possibility of external interventions, and genuine soft modes, which rely on a horizontal relationship between the actors, whereas hierarchic steering modes – unsurprisingly – are not involved in neighborhood policies towards Morocco. The EU takes a differentiated approach towards the different addressees of political steering: While soft modes such as the production of legitimate knowledge in Country and Progress Reports as well as subjectivation practices to induce a self-image of modern reformers were particularly important in addressing Morocco's governing elite, indirect modes prevailed towards civil society actors. Here, the EU trusted a process of establishing competition and network systems through its call for bids and various formation events to foster a secular and professional civil society sector.

Analyzing the resonance on the ground, the discursive practices were shown to resonate well with Morocco's governing elite in inducing a discourse of modernization and reform, whereas arguing on ground of this modern self-image did not result in an endorsement of meaningful domestic reforms. However, civil society actors were strengthened through access to European funds and expertise and evolved as empowered speakers in the public sphere. Human rights NGOs most notably capitalized on the discursive shift in the country publicly criticizing the contradictions between the image of a reformist administration and the lack of substantial reforms. Long term change and a spill-over to society at large thus remain possible, despite apparent stagnation (European Commission 2009b).

Finally, when assessing the heuristic framework of political steering, we reach a critically positive conclusion. Analyzing EU neighborhood policies through the perspective of political steering – that is the intentional use of power – we were able to give a more precise assessment of "what kind of power" is applied in EU external governance while integrating the much cited "soft modes" (Borrás/Conzelmann 2007; Knill/Lenschow 2003; Lavenex et al. 2009) into a comprehensive theoretical understanding of power. The empirical results presented here may only serve as raw material for refined research hypotheses and more work needs to be dedicated especially towards the methodology to be used in analysis of steering mechanisms. Yet, we believe that there is great value in retaining the power category not only for foreign policy actors, but more significantly for foreign policy action. With the EU becoming increasingly involved in world politics and in addressing policy sectors that were previously within the realm of domestic politics only, it seems worthwhile to further analyze international actors' impact on states and societies – and the patterns of power involved in transforming them.

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