Democratization

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Published online: 08 May 2019.

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Introduction: negotiating the promotion of democracy

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ABSTRACT
This article makes the case for why we should turn to studying democracy promotion negotiation, outlines the research questions guiding this special issue, identifies overarching findings and summarizes the individual contributions. After outlining the rationale for more attention to the issue of negotiation, which we understand as a specific form of interaction between external and local actors in democracy promotion, we outline three basic assumptions informing our research: (1) Democracy promotion is an international practice that is necessarily accompanied by processes of negotiation. (2) These negotiation processes, in turn, have an impact upon the practice and outcome of democracy promotion. (3) For external democracy promotion to be mutually owned and effective, genuine negotiations between 'promoters' and 'local actors' are indispensable; the term 'genuine' here being understood as including a substantial exchange on diverging values and interests. The article, then, introduces the three research questions for this agenda, concerning the issues on the negotiation table, the parameters shaping negotiation processes, and the results of democracy promotion negotiation. We conclude by presenting an overview of the overarching findings of the special issue as well as with brief summaries of the individual contributions.

Introduction

Democracy is not simply a good that can be exported from one country to another. External democracy promotion, by definition, involves a complex interplay of external and local actors that can hardly be grasped by the notion of a trade-like import-export relationship.[1] By the very nature of their "mission," democracy promoters continuously interact with various kinds of "local actors," "recipients" or "partners"[2] and frequently become part of the domestic politics of the countries they work in – promoting democracy from within, rather than from without.[3] These interaction processes are certainly shaped by perceived interests (in power, wealth, security, etc.) that motivate external and local actors.[4] But they involve more than just strategic action. Democracy promoters, the majority of which are state and non-state actors from the Global North, have to abide by two important considerations:[5] they must confront the fact that democracy is a

deeply contested concept[6] and – in order to be "legitimate, effective, and sustainable" – democracy promotion "must respond to local priorities and initiatives rather than impose preconceived formulas from the outside".[7]

Therefore, in theory, there is a general agreement that democracy promotion is a fundamentally interactive practice that cannot be grasped by the notion of unidirectionality. Unidirectional notions follow the idea that democracy promotion is something that an external actor A does with a view to contributing to the implementation of a given set of democratic norms and institutions in a recipient country B. In doing so, A can apply a series of strategies ranging from persuasion to military force, while B is essentially left with the choice of either accepting or resisting the offer of support. Interaction, on the other hand, encompasses meaningful agency on both sides, with local actors having ample room to demand, use or divert external aid activities for their own purposes and to "localize" or "appropriate," and thereby transform, the very ideas, norms and institutions that democracy promoters seek to advance.[8] Although most scholars acknowledge the interactive nature of democracy promotion, they have tended to implicitly or explicitly take a unidirectional perspective and have focused on the strategies and policies carried out by democracy promoters, or have tried to assess outcomes instead of processes.[9] What is happening in between – in the interaction process between external and local actors – is largely treated as a "black box"[10] and has yet to be theorized and empirically studied in greater detail.

In this special issue, we intend to address this research gap by focusing on democracy promotion negotiation, that is, the processes of negotiation that occur in the context of and/or explicitly deal with democracy promotion. The concept of negotiation grasps the very process of interaction outlined above: As long as democracy promoters do not choose entirely non-cooperative means, on the one hand, and as long as, on the other, local actors do not entirely and without any objection accept a given set of democracy promotion activities in every single regard, there is necessarily some kind of disagreement between the (at least) two parties that is likely to be articulated and dealt with through direct and/or indirect communication; if successful, this process of communication will lead to an official or tacit agreement that, more or less successfully, reconciles the (conflicting) positions of the parties. This is, generally, what negotiation is about.[11] That democracy promotion, as a contested international practice, is necessarily accompanied by processes of negotiation constitutes the point of departure guiding the research agenda put forward in this introductory article.

In the following, we start by briefly outlining the rationale underlying this special issue. Then, the overarching research questions are introduced. Third, we summarize the overall findings before we, fourth, give an overview of the individual contributions to this special issue. As the analytical framework is explained in detail in a separate article,[12] we here limit conceptual and definitional clarifications to a minimum.

Negotiations in democracy promotion: three basic assumptions

Just as democracy promotion research has not yet made use of existing approaches to negotiation, neither the overall literature on international negotiation nor research on negotiation in aid relationships has addressed the specific issue of democracy promotion.[13] The three basic assumptions guiding this special issue clearly suggest that bringing these strands of literature – research on democracy promotion, on the one hand, and negotiation studies in international relations and development studies, on

the other – together promises new empirical and theoretical insights that will also be of immediate policy relevance. The first basic assumption has already been mentioned: democracy promotion is an international practice that is necessarily accompanied by processes of negotiation. The other two assumptions, outlined in this section, emphasize that such negotiations can be expected to be both empirically consequential and normatively important for democracy promotion.

The second assumption concerns the empirical relevance of negotiations for democracy promotion. Even if we know very little about such negotiations in the area of democracy promotion, research from related fields as well as recent global developments strongly suggest that negotiations will have an impact on the practice and the outcome of democracy promotion. In terms of related studies, for instance, research on aid negotiations has shown that even weak, aid-dependent countries are at times able to achieve significant concessions when negotiating with donor governments.[14] As regarding recent political developments, democracy promotion, since the turn of the century, has been confronted with "a cascade of negative developments" that include a "global stagnation of democracy" and an open "backlash" against democracy promotion.[15] In this context, many recipients of democracy promotion are not only defending their interests more assertively, they are also increasingly challenging fundamental basics of democracy promotion, including the concept of (liberal) democracy and the normative legitimacy of external democracy and civil society support.[16]

As a consequence, there is certainly no lack of policy disagreements between democracy promoters and "recipients". And, given the increasing scepticism and resistance against democracy in some parts of the world, negotiations are arguably crucial for enabling the continuity of democracy promotion in the face of broadly acknowledged limits of coercive democratization.[17] Yet, again, we know almost nothing about such negotiations and how democracy promotion has (or has not) been adapted in turn.[18]

But our focus on negotiation is not only motivated by the factual acknowledgment that such negotiations do exist and the empirical assumption that they do matter for democracy promotion practices and outcomes. Normatively speaking, we are also convinced that external democracy promotion *should* be genuinely negotiated – with "genuinely" meaning that negotiations have to be more than superficial and involve a substantial exchange on diverging values and interests.[19] More specifically, our third assumption is that genuine negotiations are needed in order to enable democracy promotion to become mutually owned and effective. The rationale behind this assumption is both normative and functionalist:

- *Normatively*, the practice of democracy promotion, even if it can never be democratic in a comprehensive sense, should be designed as to at least limit the gap between the principles of democracy that are to be promoted and the logic of external interference that is inherently in tension with these very principles.[20] It is through negotiations that 'local' actors assume agency and can shape external policies intended to support democratization in their own country. In this sense, then, negotiations are one way to enable local participation in democracy promotion that, in turn, is generally regarded as essential for creating ownership.[21]
- As the discussions on context sensitivity and ownership in democracy promotion suggest, the genuine inclusion of 'local' actors into the planning and the implementation of democracy promotion is crucial also from a *functionalist perspective*, that is, in order to make democracy promotion work.[22] This is not to assume that all

conflicts can be solved if the parties only genuinely talked to each other but rather to emphasize that the underappreciation and – in the case of practitioners – limited implementation of this important dimension by both academics and politicians has contributed to the widespread problems and challenges that democracy promotion is confronted with today.

In sum, we assume that genuine negotiations, if successful, can lead to practices of democracy promotion that are mutually owned (by both promoters and local actors) and effective (in terms of producing outcomes that imply an, at least, partial and gradual development in line with basic democratic principles). And while existing scholarship suggests that, in contemporary practice, the recipient side is regularly not taken seriously,[23] it is not clear at all to what extent negotiations in democracy promotion actually take place, how genuine or substantial they are, and to what extent they produce results such as improving ownership and/or effectiveness. Furthermore, the relationship between the output (mutual ownership) and the outcome (effective democratization) is not necessarily linear. In negotiations between donor and recipient governments, for instance, the two sides may well agree to prioritize rather technical governance support or institutional strengthening with little direct relation to democratic principles. Depending on the context, such approaches can actually undermine democratic principles, and the result of negotiations might, thus, be a mutually owned practice of democracy promotion that is not at all promising in terms of actually fostering democracy.

The research questions

Against this background, this special issue addresses three overarching research questions that concern (1) the content of democracy promotion negotiations, (2) the parameters that shape the content as well as (3) the results that arise from the negotiation process in terms of output and outcome.

In contrast to most studies on negotiation in International Relations (IR), research on negotiation in the area of democracy promotion has – first – to establish what is actually negotiated by the contending parties: in democracy promotion, the very issues that are addressed during processes of negotiation are much less self-evident than in other areas where international negotiation often starts from a clearly defined issue to be negotiated (a given conflict, a specific treaty aimed at, etc.). This difference also holds true for negotiation of general development aid, which usually centres on priority areas, size and manner of aid transfer, conditions attached as well as on administrative and reporting procedures.[24] In the area of democracy assistance, we expect the same kinds of issues to be on the table. But, whereas the need for support to socioeconomic development (economic growth, poverty reduction etc.) is usually not, in principle, contested between donors and recipients, such a basic consensus cannot be taken for granted in the area of democracy promotion.[25]

Still, we simply do not know to what extent such normative and conceptual disagreements are actually articulated, and what role they play in relation to the negotiation of more mundane issues of resource distribution and bureaucratic procedures. Against this backdrop, the first key question is: *in democracy promotion, what actually are the issues on the negotiation table?* This special issue thus firstly aims at addressing the current lack of research in this area by laying out and describing what democracy

promotion negotiations actually entail. What are the salient issues, problems, goals, maybe even concepts of democracy promotion that are the subject of negotiation? Each article of this special issue therefore contains a descriptive part that captures the negotiation process and pays specific attention to the range of issues on the negotiation table.

This then forms the basis for our second and third aim, which are concerned with two causal dimensions regarding democracy promotion negotiation. On the one hand, we investigate the *parameters shaping the negotiation agenda* and thus explore the causes that explain why certain issues make it on the negotiation agenda while others are left out or disregarded. In order to answer this question, we analyse, among other things, the role that democracy (promotion) plays in the larger negotiation context, consider the historical background and the power (a)symmetries between the negotiation parties and examine cultural and normative differences and similarities (see the contribution by Poppe et al.).[26] A crucial question in this regard is under what conditions – and through which kinds of dynamics – democracy promotion negotiations become more substantial and address fundamental disagreements.

On the other hand, we seek to understand the *results of negotiation*. These results comprise both the immediate output as well as the broader outcome of the negotiation process. With a view to the output dimension, we investigate whether and how negotiation processes result in explicit or tacit agreements, signalling progress towards mutual ownership. With a view to the outcome dimension, we are interested in the positive and/or negative consequences that a given agreement – or lack thereof – may have for democracy promotion as well as for the political regime of the recipient country (see the contribution by Poppe et al. for further details).

Findings: what is in the black box of interaction in democracy promotion?

All contributions analyse the (non-)issues of their case of democracy promotion negotiation and, thereby, address the first research question. In a second step, they then either analyse the parameters influencing the negotiation process (question 2) or focus on the output and outcome for the practice of democracy promotion (question 3).

Empirically, the contributions to this special issue cover a comprehensive set of processes of democracy promotion. They address various fields of democracy promotion (from democracy assistance to the promotion of democracy in and through diplomatic relations) in different world regions (Eastern Europe, Latin America, North Africa, and Sub-Saharan Africa). In terms of democracy promoters, they focus on traditional, (inter-)governmental actors such as the European Union and the US government. Comparing democracy promotion negotiations in different countries and regions sheds light on the relevance of domestic and regional parameters. Studying local actors' interaction with different types of democracy promoters allows us to identify commonalities in negotiations' issues, strategies and parameters. Yet, to be sure, the contributions to this special issue only cover a limited range of actors and sub fields and cannot be seen as representative in the strict sense of comparative designs. The findings summarized in this section should, therefore, be regarded as tentative. Given the lack of knowledge on negotiations in democracy promotion, this special issue is meant to establish a new research agenda and, thus, has an exploratory character.

Issues: basic norms addressed but low quality of negotiations

The conceptual article in this special issue (Poppe et al.) takes a first important step towards analysing the issues that are negotiated in democracy promotion by developing a typology that distinguishes between five potentially contentious issues.[27] Ranging from disagreements that concern the distribution of resources on generally agreed upon democracy promotion activities or the ways in which stipulated projects are to be implemented to fundamental differences that refer to basic norms that underpin democracy promotion, these issues are characterized by different levels of depth. This is not to say that negotiations that remain at a relatively superficial level – such as the distribution of resources or questions of implementation – are necessarily easier to bring to an agreement than discussions that tackle fundamental questions – such as competing conceptions of democracy and the legitimate role of external actors in the internal affairs of sovereign states. But the relatively marginal role that such normative and conceptual conflicts play both in the literature on international negotiation[28] and in the research on democracy promotion[29] lead us to expect that negotiations will rarely go that deep. Surprisingly, however, in the processes of negotiation analysed in this special issue the normative premises of democracy promotion feature as an important issue that is frequently addressed.

In a series of case studies, political elites in recipient countries questioned and contested democratic conceptions of external promoters, especially in political dialogues. The interaction between external and local actors led either to a gradual adaptation of democracy promoters' agendas to the respective country context or individual issues were dropped off the agenda; in no case, however, did the respective external actor accept a fundamental change of its conception of democracy. In the case of the negotiations over Ethiopia's non-governmental organization (NGO) law, representatives of donor governments from the Global North and of the Ethiopian government engaged in very fundamental discussions about the conceptions of democracy and the appropriate role of civil society (article by Birru and Wolff). In the case of the negotiations of the Inter-American Democratic Charter, Venezuela explicitly pushed for an alternative model of democracy, while the United States and others defended liberal, representative democracy (article by Ribeiro Hoffman). In the case of public administration reform in Croatia, the European Union adapted its objectives to the demands and needs of the Croatian government's priorities. While the Croatian government did not challenge the democratic model of the EU in general, it did demand gradual changes (article by Grimm). In the cases of EU relations with Morocco and Tunisia (before the Arab uprisings), all parties officially stressed a shared commitment to democracy and human rights, but Tunisia explicitly articulated a divergent understanding of democratization, prioritizing socio-economic development and security (article by van Hüllen).[30]

There is, however, a far-reaching caveat to this observation: although basic norms and fundamental issues concerning the relationship between internal and external actors were common and frequent, the quality of negotiations was quite limited. Contestation of basic norms did not lead to an in-depth exchange of arguments or attempts by external actors to persuade local actors (articles by Birru and Wolff; Grimm; Ribeiro Hoffmann; van Hüllen). None of the studies could actually identify traces of a process of arguing, to use the Habermasian concept as introduced to IR.[31] Obviously, formalized political dialogues, diplomatic protocols and standardized implementation procedures

leave very limited space to deeply engage in normative debates about such fundamental issues.

Besides formal impediments, the number of issues on the negotiation table also limit the possibility for in-depth negotiations of democratic norms. Usually, democracy is not the only issue on the agenda when negotiating democracy promotion. Projects to promote democracy are part of broader development agendas of international donors.[32] External actors are thus often conceived as donors rather than democracy promoters. In his contribution, Jeff Bridoux finds that entrenched development aid thinking and practices leave little space for negotiations that openly address fundamental issues with regard to democracy. Instead, "the adoption of neoliberal practices that reduce democracy promotion to a depoliticized technical agenda seeking to implement donors' model of democracy" rules out the negotiation of alternative conceptions of democracy.[33] In the case of Ethiopia, studied by Jalale Getachew Birru and Jonas Wolff, international civil society aid only partially overlaps with democracy, governance and human rights support, but is also – if not mainly – part of broader, non-democracy related aid programmes. Similarly, in EU relations with Morocco and Tunisia, democracy and human rights are only one among many issues that have been dealt with during the negotiations analysed by van Hüllen. These findings speak to Peter Burnell's call for analysing the "grand strategy" of external actors when studying democracy promotion. In order to assess democracy promotion, scholars should rather conceive democracy promotion as one of many interacting components of grand strategies.[34]

But there is an additional twist to the observation of relatively superficial exchanges on normative issues: the cases studied in this special issue suggest that it is particularly the democracy promoters who refrain from engaging in meaningful debates. This will be further elaborated below as it points to a key parameter – the normative structure of interaction – that shapes inter-governmental negotiations over democracy promotion. In any case, further research is needed on the micro-level of democracy promotion negotiation to learn more about the interaction on normative issues. As van Hüllen's careful study of the EU-Morocco and EU-Tunisia Association Council meetings show, publicly available minutes and official declarations offer important traces of what is negotiated behind closed doors. But, as the leaked US embassy cables show that are analysed by Birru and Wolff for the case of Ethiopia, fundamental discussions tend to remain in the negotiation room without becoming official or being published. In order to really get a grasp on negotiations in democracy promotion, scholars thus need ethnographic methods such as participatory observation and/or sources that offer first-hand accounts of experience.

Parameters: negotiations indeed change, often even level, the playing field

When it comes to the parameters that shape negotiation processes in democracy promotion, the conceptual article (Poppe et al.) suggests distinguishing between actor characteristics and context conditions.[35] The contributions to this special issue show how, indeed, both dimensions are relevant, and particularly how expectations generated by looking at classical power dimensions are regularly upended.

Actor characteristics
Negotiations in democracy promotion usually take place between the political elites of the countries involved. The key actors analysed by the contributions to this special issue

are, therefore, governments (articles by Birru and Wolff, Grimm, Ribeiro Hoffmann, and van Hüllen). But the contributions also point to the importance of actors that are not seated at the negotiation table: non-state actors. In Croatia, the activities of trade unions opposed to the reform project at hand changed the "negotiation game" for the EU (article by Grimm). Popular support of this kind strengthens the negotiation position of the domestic negotiation party and is likely to lead to renegotiation of the issues on the table. A similar rationale applies in multilateral negotiations, as the case of negotiating the Inter-American Democratic Charter suggests: here, the increased participation of NGOs, which mostly supported the model of representative democracy, shaped the negotiations within the Organization of American States (OAS) (article by Ribeiro Hoffmann).

Institutional and organizational parameters are another factor that most contributions underline. The political economy of development aid and diplomatic approaches have specific forms and rationales, which structure and shape negotiations. Standardized procedures restrict the space of tabling and negotiating normative and fundamental issues (article by Bridoux). Most programmes to promote democracy follow a standardized project cycle, which includes rules for project management, while divergence on fundamental issues is hardly addressed once the decision has been taken to start a programme. Instead, normative issues are either assumed to be an unchallenged premise, glossed over by means of superficial agreements or postponed to the implementation of democracy support (articles by Grimm and van Hüllen). However, the more specific a political reform, the more in-depth negotiations about details relating to democracy take place. As the example of the Ethiopian NGO law shows, US and European donors aimed at convincing the Ethiopian government to change the wording of specific articles of the NGO law (Birru and Wolff). In general, procedural limits are less present in regional multilateral negotiations (Ribeiro Hoffmann).

Context conditions

When it comes to power asymmetries between states, Zartman and Rubin tell us that negotiations have the effect of "leveling the playing field".[36] The contributions to this special issue confirm this general logic of negotiations for the field of democracy promotion. Even in the relatively clear-cut and highly asymmetric case of the EU enlargement process and its rules, Grimm finds that negotiations over public sector reform in accession candidate Croatia lessened external leverage and thus mitigated the hierarchical structure. But, going further, contributions to the special issue find a curious correlate to the Zartman-Rubin proposition: the supposedly normatively weaker party – the recipient or target of democracy promotion – not seldom is quite strong in normative terms, even sometimes has the edge, whereas the supposedly normatively stronger party – the norm promoting democracy – often avoids engaging in normative debate, is relatively silent, or even on the defensive. We can observe this most prominently in the study of negotiations over the Ethiopian NGO law (article by Birru and Wolff). Here, the Ethiopian government consistently defends its position, also in normative terms, whereas the North-Western governments basically recognize the normative arguments made by the Ethiopian side and largely stick to empirical counter-arguments (which are, then, easily disputed by the Ethiopian government). A similar dynamic also comes out of the study of the debates about the definition of democracy in the Inter-American Democratic Charter (article by Ribeiro Hoffman). Here, Venezuela, in the

minority position, makes a strong and plausible case to include participatory elements as well as anchor social justice. And while not successful in the end, those opposed to Venezuela's position – particularly the United States – are surprisingly hesitant when it comes to engaging in an actual argument. In the case of EU relations with Tunisia (before the Arab uprisings), the EU did respond to the Tunisian government's sequencing argument, which prioritized socio-economic development and security over democratic reforms, by emphasizing the role of democracy and human rights, but traces of an actual process of arguing could not be observed. In any case, neither with Morocco nor with Tunisia has the EU been willing to open its objectives and strategies of democracy promotion for discussion with the recipient governments (article by van Hüllen).

How can we account for this? Part of the answer might lie in the normative structure of interstate relations. Structurally, in intergovernmental negotiations, the party that aims at interfering in the internal affairs of the other – in what is presented as a partnership type relationship of mutual cooperation – tends to be on the defensive.[37] Moreover, in cases in which the declared goal of democracy promotion is perceived to be strongly entangled with other interests, this might further diminish the willingness to actually discuss the issues on the table as 'real' issues. In situations like that, the promoter is likely not taken (as) seriously with regard to its pro-democratic motivation. While this is a somewhat speculative thought, it might be worth pondering on as this dynamic is regularly demonstrated when looking from the 'other side': democracy promoters frequently dismiss liberal and pro-democratic arguments and justifications brought forth by authoritarian governments as merely poorly veiled rationalizations for policies for remaining in and increasing their power.[38] More often than not this is a plausible claim. But we should keep in mind that democracy promoters quite similarly can and do use pro-democracy policy in the interest of *other* interests.[39] In that structural sense and despite the promoters holding the normative edge, all parties in democracy promotion negotiation often act in a similar way.

In light of this argument, the results of Jeff Bridoux's contribution in this issue raise a crucial question. Bridoux argues that normative premises on the part of the democracy promoters inhibit an in-depth exchange about diverging notions of democracy: as "democracy promotion operates within a neoliberal framework that expresses the transition paradigm, knowledge about democracy that matters is essentially produced by democracy promoters," and knowledge claims made by recipients remain invisible to them. As a consequence, Bridoux argues that democracy promoters should "realize that negotiating democratic knowledge is critical if democratization is to succeed."[40] While this is an important argument, it begs the question whether domestic elites in the recipient countries would be willing to allow for such a process of joint knowledge production that, in Bridoux's conception, can certainly not be limited to state representatives from both sides. What if domestic elites readily accept the externally given paradigms in order to pursue their own interests? As Birru and Wolff suggest in their contribution, underlying inter-governmental discussions on diverging conceptions of democracy may well be a common, if implicit interest to basically continue a relationship in which democracy promotion plays a marginal and/or superficial role at best. This points to the need for more research on the compromises made in aid negotiations. Local actors might lean into limited democratic reforms in order to negotiate other issues on the table.[41]

Results of negotiation: neither failure, nor meaningful agreements

In their analytical framework, Poppe at al. distinguish between outputs and outcomes of negotiation processes. The immediate output or result of the negotiation process refers to the achievement (or not) of an agreement as well as – if yes – to its type and substance. With regard to outcomes of negotiations, the framework focuses on the (non-)agreement's positive and/or negative consequences for the practice of democracy promotion as well as for the political regime of the recipient country.

With regard to the output dimension, the cases of democracy promotion negotiation studied in this special issue mostly produced results in the middle of the spectrum: negotiations neither collapsed openly nor did they yield explicit agreements that represented some genuine convergence or compromise between the parties. This is particularly notable in the cases in which negotiations touched upon normative issues. Here, agreements were rather de facto and basically consisted in tacit agreements to disagree (articles by Ribeiro Hoffman and Birru and Wolff). Where official agreements were reached, these turned out to be rather superficial, reflecting the result of tactical bargaining rather than a mutual understanding (article by van Hüllen). This kind of output is very much in line with the lack of substantive normative engagement mentioned above, as is the finding that even the serious disagreements that clearly persisted in these cases did not mean that negotiations ended in open confrontation. While in some cases – such as in Ethiopia (Birru and Wolff) and Croatia (Grimm) – it was the external actors that clearly preferred an agreement, or at least the prevention of an open confrontation, in spite of persisting differences, in other cases – such as in Venezuela (Ribeiro Hoffman) and Tunisia (van Hüllen) – it was the recipient country that formally agreed to something it did not agree with substantively.

With a view to the outcome dimension, it is interesting to note that the existence of an explicit agreement does not seem to be immediately consequential for the practice of democracy promotion. In the case of the negotiations of the Inter-American Democratic Charter, its successful adoption by the OAS – which, de facto, did not reflect any compromise on the issue at stake – has obviously made neither democracy promotion by the OAS and/or in Venezuela any less controversial (article by Ribeiro Hoffman). Agreements in the case of EU relations with Morocco and Tunisia have not fared much better either (article by van Hüllen). In contrast, the lack of an explicit agreement in the cases of Ethiopia (on the proposed NGO law) and Croatia (in one of the two reform projects studied) has not prevented democracy promotion from continuing – even if, certainly, the Ethiopian NGO law as such has had constraining effects on democracy promotion. This finding shows two things: First, the study of outputs of democracy promotion negotiation has to go beyond the explicit agreements or non-agreements with a view to identifying whether negotiations actually result in a convergence of, or at least a substantive compromise between, positions. Second, a comparison of these four studies suggests that overall relationships – between the US/the OAS and Venezuela, between the EU and Morocco/Tunisia, between the US/European donors and Ethiopia, and between the EU and Croatia – have crucial effects on the effect that any specific (non-)agreement will have on the practice of democracy promotion (articles by Ribeiro Hoffmann, van Hüllen, Birru and Wolff, and Grimm).

Turning to the consequences of democracy promotion, negotiations for the effectiveness or impact of democracy promotion, it is important to acknowledge that the studies compiled in this special issue do not more than offer a few very tentative findings. Thus,

much more systematic research is needed on this complex causal chain. This said, we do find some preliminary evidence for the above-mentioned notion of a non-linear relationship between the reaching of an agreement and its wider impact (on the effectiveness of democracy promotion and the political regime in the recipient country). In the case of Ethiopia and donors from the Global North, for instance, the shared aim to reach a tacit agreement that would allow for the bilateral relationship to continue had precisely this effect and also facilitated the continuation of some democracy assistance activities – but arguably stabilized an increasingly authoritarian regime (article by Birru and Wolff). Similarly, agreements between the EU and Morocco and Tunisia, while allowing for some kind of democracy promotion, ultimately contributed to stabilizing authoritarian regimes (article by van Hüllen).

An open political question that clearly deserves more research and discussion is whether it would be promising for democracy promoters to be more willing to engage more actively with the normative premises and foundations of their own work. Being on the normative defensive, as in some of the cases studied here, does not seem to be a promising position. And, at first sight, the call for taking normative contestation seriously is hard to reject. As Ribeiro Hoffman's analysis of the negotiation of the Inter-American Democratic Charter underlines, superficial negotiations that result in a fake consensus approval of an agreement will create problems when it comes to implementing this agreement. Also, as Bridoux argues, superficial negotiations, which are constrained by technocratic aid agendas and practices, may well hinder an effective support of democratization processes. To what extent and under which conditions meaningful and frank normative discussions are the solution to the problem at hand is, however, far from clear. As Carothers has emphasized, a strategy to openly engage with normative contestation and to negotiate international norms that would put democracy promotion on a more secure normative footing is also risky.[42] Given that such norms would not only define what is permissible but also what is not, they would necessarily also impose limitations on democracy promotion. What is clear, however, is that the lack of an agreement as to what democracy and democracy promotion should look like does present an important impediment to democracy promotion.

Overview: the contributions to this special issue

In the following contribution, we present the conceptual approach that guides this special issue (article by Poppe et al.). After defining negotiation and situating our approach in the broader literature on international negotiation and democracy promotion, we develop an analytical framework that allows us to systematically study negotiations in the area of democracy promotion. Following the cue of the three overarching research questions outlined above we conceptually examine the range and type of issues that can be negotiated, the parameters we assume to influence negotiations, and the potential results of these negotiations processes.

A second article that takes a somewhat less empirical perspective on negotiation is the one by Jeff Bridoux. He argues that democracy promotion is problematic and often prone to fail because there is little if any room left to recipients of democracy promotion to formulate knowledge claims about democracy that deviate from the well-rehearsed combination of liberal democracy and free-market economy. This is demonstrated in the exemplary case of the United States and Tunisia. Consequently, Bridoux calls for a closer examination of democratic knowledge production and for an embrace

of a "democratic emergence paradigm" in lieu of a still widely dominant "transition paradigm".

The remaining four articles all approach their empirical cases by first asking what issues are actually dealt with in democracy promotion negotiation. They then, secondly, turn to focusing either on the matter of parameters or on the results of the analysed negotiation processes. First, Andrea Ribeiro Hoffmann draws our attention to negotiations around the drafting process of the Inter-American Democratic Charter in the early 2000s. Here, Venezuela made a spirited attempt to change the definition of democracy to be adopted by amending the liberal representative model with participatory elements as well as including social rights. Ultimately, Venezuela was not successful and Ribeiro Hoffmann finds clues as to why particularly in the constellation of actors involved, in how and where Venezuela was located structurally in the field of international democracy promotion, as well as the influence that the terrorist attacks of 9/11 had on the adoption of the final agreement.

Taking us to Ethiopia next, Jalale Getachew Birru and Jonas Wolff trace the process of international negotiations that accompanied the drafting of a restrictive Ethiopian NGO law in 2009. Diplomats from Northern donor governments sought to have at least the most restrictive provision in the drafts changed, including foreign funding restrictions as well as a constraints on the activities that foreign (funded) organizations were still allowed to pursue. As the two authors show, these attempts met only with partial success and had a severe impact on Ethiopian civil society, but also point out that the newly adopted law has not affected international civil society support in Ethiopia to the extent that it was expected.

As Sonja Grimm shows us in the case of the EU-Croatia relationship, the unidirectional notion of the asymmetric relationship of external leverage and domestic passivity in democracy promotion fails to capture the capacity of local actors to substantially change, modify and adapt external reform demands – even in the relatively hierarchical structure of the EU enlargement process. Using the example of public administration reform in Croatia, Grimm shows us the negotiation instruments that the domestic as well as external actors can (and do) choose to employ and she highlights the domestic parameters that have an impact on what is shown to be a continuous negotiation process between the Croatian government and the EU. Grimm develops an interaction model for democracy promotion within the EU enlargement process, thus specifying the overall analytical framework proposed in this special issue (by Poppe et al.) for this type of relationships.

Whereas Grimm looks at EU engagement with a democratic country in the context of the enlargement process, Vera van Hüllen turns to the other end of the spectrum of EU democracy promotion: EU efforts at promoting democracy and human rights in authoritarian regimes in the context of the EU neighbourhood policy. Focusing on Morocco and Tunisia before the Arab uprisings, van Hüllen analyses if, how, and to what effect the EU and its Mediterranean partners have negotiated issues related to the normative foundation and practical implementation of the EU's democracy promotion agenda. As she shows, such issues have indeed been addressed since the early 2000s, but this has been done without any serious engagement with the contested issues at hand. This holds true for both Morocco, where negotiations were relatively harmonious and smooth, and Tunisia, where negotiations were much more openly conflictive. As a consequence, conflicts were left unresolved and agreements in both cases reflected a logic of bargaining and, thus, lacked substantive "(co-)ownership".

Notes

1. Bermeo, "Is Democracy Exportable?"; Groß and Grimm, "External-Domestic Interplay in Democracy Promotion"; Poppe and Wolff, "Normative Challenge of Interaction."
2. A brief note on terminology: in this introduction, we use "local" – as opposed to "external" – actors to refer to all those governmental and non-governmental, collective and individual actors that are home to countries in which democracy is being promoted. The countries as such will be called "recipient countries" (while the category of "recipients" does also include non-state recipients of democracy assistance). Both terms (locals, recipients) are certainly problematic but used for lack of a better term. In any case, we deliberately avoid the euphemistic talk of "partners," which masks the fundamentally asymmetric nature of democracy promotion.
3. Leininger, "Bringing the Outside In."
4. See Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy*; Schimmelfennig, "Strategic Calculation International Socialization"; Youngs, *International Democracy and West*.
5. Although a number of regional regimes to defend democracy were established in the Americas, Africa and Latin America during the last two decades, donors from the Global North are still the main contributors to international democracy promotion.
6. Kurki, *Democratic Futures*.
7. Diamond, *The Spirit of Democracy*, 316. See also Crawford, "Promoting Democracy from Without," 17–18; Fukuyama and McFaul, "Should Democracy Be Promoted," 5.
8. See Carothers, "Democracy Assistance: Question Strategy"; Poppe and Wolff, "Normative Challenge of Interaction"; Zimmermann, *Global Norms Local Face*.
9. For brief overviews of the scholarship, see Leininger, "Bringing the Outside In"; Poppe and Wolff, "Normative Challenge of Interaction"; Zimmermann, *Global Norms Local Face*, Chapter 2.
10. Groß and Grimm, "External-Domestic Interplay in Democracy," 913.
11. See Albin, *Justice Fairness International Negotiation*, 1–2; Zartman, "Common Elements Negotiation Process," 32. Negotiation, as defined in our conceptual contribution to this special issue (Poppe et al., "Beyond Contestation," 3–4), encompasses direct, official negotiations that aim at reaching a formal agreement as well as a broad range of unofficial and/or indirect processes of communication that (if successful) produce tacit or implicit agreements.
12. See Poppe et al., "Beyond Contestation," in this special issue.
13. On international negotiations, see, for instance, Jönsson, "Diplomacy, Bargaining and Negotiation"; Kremenyuk, *International Negotiation: Analysis, Approaches, Issues*; Starkey et al., *International Negotiation in a Complex World*; Zartman and Rubin, "Power Practice of Negotiation"; Zartman, "Common Elements Negotiation Process". On the negotiation of foreign aid, see Elgström, "Norm, Culture, Cognitive Patterns," and "Norm negotiations"; Gibson et al., "The Samaritan's Dilemma"; Habeeb, "US-Egyptian Aid Negotiations"; Kivimäki, "US-Indonesian Negotiations Conditions"; Spector and Wagner, "Negotiating International Development"; Whitfield, *The Politics of Aid*.
14. Habeeb, "US-Egyptian Aid Negotiations"; Kivimäki, "US-Indonesian Negotiations Conditions"; Whitfield, *The Politics of Aid*.
15. Carothers, "Democracy Aid at 25," 66–8; see also Burnell and Youngs, *New Challenges to Democratization*; Poppe and Wolff, "Contested Spaces Civil Society."
16. See Carothers, "Backlash Against Democracy Promotion," 67–71; Kurki, *Democratic Futures*, 4–6; Risse and Babayan, "Democracy Promotion and Challenges," 390; Poppe and Wolff, "Normative Challenge of Interaction."
17. Beetham, "The Contradictions of Democratization"; Bueno de Mesquita and Downs, "Intervention and Democracy"; Grimm and Merkel, *War and Democratization*.
18. For exploratory case studies see Groß and Grimm, "External-Domestic Interplay in Democracy," on EU support for public administration reform in Croatia as well as Wolff, "Negotiating interference," on the (temporarily successful, but ultimately failed) bilateral negotiations between the US and Bolivia.
19. In his plea for participatory methods for evaluating democracy assistance, Gordon Crawford, "Promoting Democracy Without-Within," 6–7, has distinguished between an "instrumental" approach in which "so-called 'stakeholders' participate as *objects*" and a "genuinely participatory approach" in which they participate as "*subjects*".

20. See Bridoux and Kurki, *Democracy Promotion: Critical Introduction*, 107–110; Crawford, "Promoting Democracy Without-Within," 8–9, 17–18; Kurki, *Democratic Futures*, 241–258; Poppe and Wolff, "Normative Challenge of Interaction," 397–399.
21. This, of course, does not solve the difficult question as to the 'who' that is to participate in negotiations, be included or have ownership (The government? Parliament? A certain group of civil society organizations? The people?).
22. See Bridoux and Kurki, *Democracy Promotion: Critical Introduction*, Chapter 5; Diamond, *The Spirit of Democracy,* Chapter 14; and Grävingholt et al., *Three Cs of Democracy*.
23. See, for instance, Bridoux and Kurki, *Democracy Promotion: Critical Introduction*, Chapter 5, on the limits of context-sensitivity in democracy promotion, Crawford, "Promoting Democracy Without-Within," on the limits of participatory evaluation of democracy assistance, and Kurki, *Democratic Futures*, on the (non-)recognition of alternative models of democracy. Carothers, "Democracy Aid at 25," 61–6, offers a differentiated assessment of the (real, but limited) extent to which the democracy aid-community has corrected "shortcomings" such as the attempt "to export Western institutional models" and the failure "to grasp local contexts in any depth" (Carothers, "Democracy Aid at 25," 61).
24. See Whitfield and Fraser, "Negotiating Aid," 28.
25. See Grimm et al., *All Good Things*; Hobson and Kurki, *Conceptual Politics Democracy Promotion*; Wolff et al., *Comparative Politics Democracy Promotion*.
26. Poppe et al., "Beyond Contestation."
27. Ibid.
28. To the extent that negotiation studies incorporate the role of ideology, norms or culture, they mostly do so as a background feature that inform the actors, their preferences and negotiation styles, rather than as something that is on the negotiation table. See, for instance, Jönsson, "Diplomacy, Bargaining and Negotiation"; Spector and Wagner, "Negotiating International Development"; Starkey et al., *International Negotiation in a Complex World*; Whitfield and Fraser, "Negotiating Aid."
29. In the area of democracy promotion research a research team directed by Milja Kurki has emphasized the neglect of conceptual contestation in the study and practice of democracy promotion (Hobson and Kurki, *Conceptual Politics Democracy Promotion*; Kurki, *Democratic Futures*). See also Grimm et al., *All Good Things*; Wolff et al., *Comparative Politics Democracy Promotion*.
30. Birru and Wolff, "Negotiating International Civil Society Support"; Ribeiro Hoffmann, "Negotiating Normative Premises"; Grimm, "Democracy Promotion in EU Enlargement Negotiations"; van Hüllen, "Negotiating Democracy (Promotion) with Authoritarian Regimes."
31. Müller, "Communicative Action, Rationalist Theory"; and Risse, "Communicative Action World Politics".
32. Leininger, "Bringing the Outside In."
33. Bridoux, "Shaking Off the Neoliberal Shackles."
34. Burnell, "Democracy Promotion: Elusive Quest."
35. Actor characteristics include: regime type of recipient country, domestic strength of recipient government, relevance and institutionalization of democracy promotion in donor's foreign policy, people's support to democracy promotion. Context characteristics include: power asymmetries, cultural and normative con/divergence, larger (historical) context of the relationship, regional and global context. See Poppe et al., "Beyond Contestation."
36. Zartman and Rubin, "Power Practice of Negotiation." See Poppe et al., "Beyond contestation."
37. See Wolff, "US Democracy Promotion, Bolivia."
38. See Carothers, "Backlash Against Democracy Promotion," 69–70; Poppe and Wolff, "Contested Spaces Civil Society."
39. Grimm and Leininger, "Not all Good Things"; Wolff et al., *Comparative Politics Democracy Promotion*.
40. Bridoux, "Shaking Off the Neoliberal Shackles."
41. Bergamaschi, "Mali: Donor-Driven Ownership." See also van Hüllen, "Negotiating Democracy (Promotion) with Authoritarian Regimes."
42. Carothers, "Backlash Against Democracy Promotion," 71.

Acknowledgements

Disclosure statement

Funding

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