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Methodology

Detailed analysis of the project's research problem could play a crucial role in shaping the ways in which EU specific democratisation policies are adapted. Thus this research takes a discursive constructivist approach to the study of EU democratisation policies in the Middle East, both conceptually as well as empirically.

Discursive constructivism takes the radical strand of social constructivism and combines this with a Foucauldian inspired discourse analysis. Discourse analysis is less a theory than a methodology, that guides analysts on how to read, how to interpret texts and how to pose questions surrounding these texts. Hence it is a relevant tool for understanding EU external policies. The research extends this work by analysing the discourse of democratisation as an unstable concept that changes meaning according to the discursive context in which it is framed.

Discourse analysis is thus used throughout the various stages of the project in order to explore whether there are any inside/outside distinctions, paradoxes or contradictions in the EU's democratisation discourse.

The research has been conducted through three stages:

Stage One

Research interviews were conducted in Brussels (March - April 2009) and EU texts analysed (ongoing). This stage enables the PI to interpret the EU's internal discourse on democratisation.

Stage Two

At workshops organised in the two case studies, the PI presented the EU's internal discourse to societal actors in Egypt (October 2009) and Palestine (November 2009). The PI sought to explore whether the Middle East world 'hears' EU discourse in the way EU actors think they do, that is, to investigate any outside distinction (discourse outside the EU's frame) in the EU's democratisation discourse.

Stage Three

At the final events of the project held in Brussels, Belgium in February 2012 the PI reported back to EU actors what societal players in the Middle East make of the EU's discourse on democratisation. Thus the overall project research findings were shared and discussed with EU officials, as well as Palestinian and Egyptian state and non-state actors, who were also invited to participate at the final events of the project.

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