

BRIEFING NOTE No. 97

Can EU-Africa relations be deepened?

A PERSPECTIVE ON POWER RELATIONS, INTERESTS AND INCENTIVES

AU-EU

By **Jean Bossuyt** — with support from Dalil Djinnit

November 2017

SUMMARY

Sixty years ago, the signing of the Rome Treaty (1957) paved the way for Europe to engage in development cooperation, starting with African countries. Ten years ago, leaders of both continents agreed on a 'Joint Africa-EU Strategy' (2007) geared at establishing a stronger political partnership. Parties now prepare for the 5th AU-EU Summit (Abidjan, Ivory Coast, November 2017), a diplomatic high mass expected to update mutual levels of ambition in volatile times.

In recent months, calls have been made to fundamentally rethink both the narrative and the practice of EU-Africa relations. The Brief examines how much scope there is for deepening this crucial partnership. To this end, it analyses current EU-Africa relations with a political economy lens. This implies focusing on “why things are the way they are” and “where is there traction to move forward”.

The Brief first considers the gap between the potential for enhanced cooperation and the rather sobering track record of EU-Africa relations. This is largely linked to the phenomenon of 'path dependency' in which both parties remain largely trapped. Openings in the wall are appearing though, mainly under the influence of dynamics within the two blocks as well as external events. Building on this, we provide examples of 'pathways to change' that can be observed in various policy domains. Drawing lessons from these actual laboratories of new modes of interaction, we present a set of potential political choices for policy-makers to reengineer EU-Africa relations.

In the short term, we should not expect a major qualitative jump forward. Yet in the medium-term there are plenty of windows of opportunities that both sides could better exploit by: (i) putting their respective interests explicitly at the centre of cooperation; (ii) empowering core institutions to pursue owned agendas; (iii) unleashing the agency and resources of non-institutional actors and subnational authorities; (iv) opting for a strategic mix of result-oriented partnerships and (v) rationalizing policy frameworks and instruments.

1. Intentions to improve EU-Africa relations...yet many hurdles to realize the potential¹

The European Union (EU) has a longstanding relationship with the African continent, dating back to the colonial era and the Treaty of Rome. Reflecting its own post-war history, the European Economic Community (EEC) was based on values such as peace, economic and social progress, democracy, the rule of law and human rights. On the international scene, the Community sought to bring these benefits to the rest of the world through instruments like external aid and trade. Following the wave of independence, African countries became the main beneficiaries of Europe's first steps into foreign policy. Developmental goals were only part of the story behind the 'association' offered to the European project through the so-called 'Yaoundé Conventions' (1963-75). For France in particular, it was critical to bring its overseas territories on board to protect its markets, maintain its political influence and ensure a '**burden sharing**' of the ensuing bill (i.e. the aid provided through the so-called European Development Fund, EDF) with the other (then five) EEC members. Several features of that initial deal still endure and shape behaviour on both sides (see section 2)².

Africa has long ceased to be the one privileged partner of European external action. Over time, as Europe enlarged, its **development cooperation changed in scope and nature**. This resulted in a complex patchwork of (bilateral/regional) partnership agreements across the world as well as a diverse set of external financing instruments (EFIs). Following the end of the Cold War, the EU adopted a stronger '**normative approach**' by using its '**soft power**' to actively pursue a democracy, human rights and governance agenda in the developing world. With the entering into force of the **Lisbon Treaty** (2009) new political ambitions were enacted for Europe - as a politically driven '**global player**', to be supported through a European External Action Service (EEAS). In recent years, the **critical linkages** between development and security as well as between external and internal EU policies have become dominant (e.g. in the case of migration or security).

Despite the expansion and diversification of EU external action, **the partnership with Africa has always occupied a special position**, also at the level of several Member States. It stands out for its longevity, the density of (institutional and often personal) relations, the challenges imposed by geographic proximity as well as the **scale of cooperation and resources** involved. Besides being Africa's main donor of development aid, the EU collectively is the largest source of foreign direct investment, the principal trading partner, a key security provider, the main source of remittances and the first partner in development and humanitarian assistance.

In 2007, Europe and Africa sought to make a fresh start by adopting a timely and highly relevant **Joint Strategy** spelling out an ambitious, long-term and political vision for a continent-to-continent partnership. It was meant to **overcome** the long prevailing **donor-recipient dependency** and shift towards **interest-driven forms of cooperation** on a wide range of issues. One decade later, the track record of the JAES is sobering. There are positive results in specific areas (particularly peace and security). Yet on the whole, the innovative content of the JAES was gradually replaced by short-term crisis management and growing indifference. It is indicative that in anticipation of the Summit, none of the parties has carried out a comprehensive and transparent assessment of progress achieved with the jointly agreed Roadmap for the period 2015-2017.

¹ The author would like to thank: Jan Vanheukelom, Marc de Tollenaere, San Bilal, Volker Hauck, Anna Knoll, Alfonso Medinilla, Claire Mandouze and Niels Keijzer for their valuable comments.

² For a fascinating overview of the political background and evolution of EEC/EU development cooperation, see: Dimier, V. 2014. *The invention of a European Development Bureaucracy. Recycling Empire*. Palgrave Studies in European Union Politics.

While this casts doubts on the political and operational relevance of (an essentially sound) cooperation framework like the JAES, it does not mean Africa is off the agenda. If anything, the continent has moved to the **top of political decision-making in Europe**. This is fuelled by the realisation that tackling Africa's still pervasive development challenges, compounded by a demographic explosion³, is an investment in Europe's own security and future. One commentator aptly described this changing mood among European policymakers: "*far from seeing Africa as charity case, they have come to recognize it as a security threat*"⁴. EU policy discourses increasingly stress that the global importance of the continent is set to rise as a "*vibrant and dynamic macro-region*"⁵.

In a recent Communication⁶ the **EU considers 2017 to be a "defining year" for EU-Africa relations**⁷. It claims that in a rapidly evolving global, African and European landscape, both continents "have much to gain from increased political and economic ties, but also a lot to lose if they fail to act."⁸ It pleads for enhanced cooperation on the basis of mutual interests (e.g. in the field of security) and support for a sustainable and inclusive development that creates jobs while providing economic opportunities for Europe. This commitment is translated in a wide range of 'flagship' initiatives in various policy domains. New strategies towards Africa have been formulated by EU Member States (e.g. Germany with its Marshall Plan) and by global actors (e.g. G20⁹). Calls for a major qualitative jump forward are also made by civil society actors¹⁰ and in a number of European prospective studies¹¹.

These new agendas reflect the sense of urgency with which Europe looks towards Africa. They also suggest a belief in the potential of putting EU-Africa relations on a more solid footing. Yet **how realistic are these aspirations?** What are the prospects for effective change in practice?

2. Multiple path dependencies ...but openings in the wall appear

Intentions to strengthen and deepen the EU-Africa relationship **do not miss ambition** (primarily from the European side) but there seem to be forces at work that **make it difficult to tap the full potential** the relationships. This is illustrated by a number of facts and trends (see Box 1):

³ Population growth on the African continent will be one of the most substantial structural changes in the 21st century (EPSC Strategic Notes. *The Making of an African Century. Where African and European Ambitions Meet*. Issue 23. 2 May 2017, p. 2). It presents both a significant potential economic opportunity as well as a formidable challenge in terms of providing jobs and adequate living conditions while addressing climate change.

⁴ Giles Merritt. 2017. *Wishful thinking underpins the EU's new Africa Plan*. Friends of Europe. Blog dated 30.10.2017.

⁵ Valerie Arnould and Francesco Strazzari. 2017. *African futures: Horizon 2025*. EU Institute for Security Studies. Report Nr 37. September 2017, p. 1.

⁶ European Commission and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. *Joint Communication for a renewed impetus of the Africa-EU partnership*. Brussels, 4.5.2017, JOIN (2017) 17 final.

⁷ The choice was made to focus in this paper on 'EU-Africa relations' and not on the much wider concept of 'Europe-Africa relations' or on the more restrictive version of the 'European Union-African Union (AU) partnership'. In this logic, the EU refers to the various EU institutions as well as the Member States and other key stakeholders involved (such as the European civil society or local authority associations). The term 'Africa' encompasses both the institutional actors (at continental, regional, national and local levels) as well as the non-state actors from civil society, the private sector, etc.

⁸ Ibid. p. 5

⁹ G20 Germany. 2017. *G20 Partnership. Investing in a Common Future*. Conference Report. Berlin, 12-13 June 2017.

¹⁰ See the Africa-EU Civil Society Forum Declaration, Tunis, 12 July 2017.

¹¹ Including: (i) EPSC Strategic Notes. *The Making of an African Century. Where African and European Ambitions Meet*. Issue 23. 2 May 2017; (ii) Valerie Arnould and Francesco Strazzari. 2017. *African futures: Horizon 2025*. EU Institute for Security Studies. Report Nr 37. September 2017; (iii) Friends of Europe. 2017. *EU-Africa Relations: Strategies for a renewed partnership*; (iv) International Crisis Group. 2017. *Time to Reset African Union-European Union relations*. November 2017.

Box 1: No shortage of tensions and obstacles in EU-Africa relations

- The **political partnership** has been weakened over the last years, as tensions accumulated on the so-called ‘*shared values*’. Examples include the decreasing quality of the political dialogue at all levels¹², the use of ‘double standards’ and the fact that the EU itself is increasingly confronted with internal challenges on values - reducing its credibility as ‘norm entrepreneur’¹³.
- **Trade cooperation** continues to be seriously hampered by the ongoing resentment against the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs).
- The joint commitment to ensuring a “**people-centered partnership**” (i.e. involving civil society, the private sector, local authorities, youth, etc.) has encountered major difficulties, exacerbated by the trend of “closing space”¹⁴.
- The **EU institutions** are increasingly **risk-averse** and primarily **driven by short-term** security and migration **concerns**. This, combined by the tendency of core Member States to pursue their own policies and interests at the expense of joint action, has impacted on the ability to deepen the partnership with Africa and with the AU in particular. From a political economy perspective, the EU seems more fragile than ever regarding the capacity of its institutions to address pressing **internal challenges** (such as the economic and financial crisis, the growing inequalities, the transition towards a sustainable development model, the respect for the rule of law / human rights by Member States, growing populism, nationalism, etc.).
- As a young institution, the **AU** has made strides forward. Yet it still faces a host of **structural limitations** (linked to its status, mandate, still limited legitimacy, power and autonomy, financial dependency, capacity shortages, etc.). This makes it hard for the AU to facilitate effective interest-articulation within Africa (e.g. with regional bodies), to be the driver of a shared and coherent continental agenda towards Europe¹⁵ and to negotiate balanced deals with a powerful global player like the EU with 60 years of integration behind it.

The above analysis suggests that the **baseline conditions for a qualitative shift forward** in EU-Africa relations are rather restrictive. This reality invites all parties involved to go beyond merely defining lofty new ambitions for the future. Such aspirational approaches to policy-making tend to mask real partnership dynamics. Hence, it is **time to look ‘behind the façade’** so as to understand better why enhanced cooperation between the two continents remains often an uphill struggle –despite obvious interdependencies and potentialities. This implies adopting a ‘**political economy’ perspective** focusing on power relations, interests and incentives that shape relationships. By doing so, a more realistic assessment of possible reforms and pathways to change may emerge. Below EU-Africa relations are examined with such a political economy lens, with a particular zoom on structural factors and related ‘*rules of the game*’ that largely determine how things work out in practice.

¹² Bossuyt J et al. 2014. *Political dialogue on human rights under Article 8 of the Cotonou Agreement*. Study produced for the Directorate General for External Policies of the Union, European Parliament. March 2014.

¹³ Matala-Tala, L. 2017. *Shared Values? Maybe. But how effective are they?* Great Insights, Nov-Dec. 2017, p. 30-32.

¹⁴ See: Africa Civil Society Forum Declaration, Tunis, 12 July 2017. For a more analytical approach: Carothers, T. and S. Brechenmacher, “*Closing Space: Democracy and Human Rights Support Under Fire*”. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, February 20, 2014. The latter study shows that the issue of shrinking space is a worldwide trend.

¹⁵ This is illustrated by the lack of clear AU ‘positions’ or elaborated strategies, spelling out what exactly the AU seeks to obtain ‘politically’ (i.e. beyond funding) from the partnership with the EU in various core policy domains. The main reference is the ‘*Agenda 2063*’ of the AU, yet this is a long-term prospective document providing limited guidance on actual African agendas towards the EU.

2.1. Foundational factors

The *'foundational factors'* that underpin the relationship refer to long run, deeply embedded and hard-to-change features of a structural nature that still largely determine the mindset, attitudes, behaviour and norms of the actors involved. There is ***no shortage of foundational factors*** in the case of EU-Africa relations:

- *The colonisation by different European powers*: while most African countries have been independent for several decades, the colonial legacy is still pervasive in people's minds and institutions,¹⁶ in state formation processes,¹⁷ in the fragmentation of the African continent (across inherited political, administrative and linguistic lines) and obviously also in the relations with the former colonizing powers (more strongly than in other continents such as Asia). This history also helps to explain why Europe finds it difficult to treat "Africa as one" and how not all Member States – in an enlarged Union – attach the same importance to the relationship¹⁸.
- *Structural poverty and low institutional density*. Though success stories can be observed (e.g. Mauritius, Botswana, Cape Verde), high levels of poverty have led most African countries to adopt *'political settlements'* and systems of governance primarily oriented towards the control of rents by elites (particularly in countries richly endowed with natural resources). It has also impacted on the functioning of local institutions, often more driven by informal rules (e.g. clientelism –including in dealing with Europe) than by effective formal, rule-based systems¹⁹. In such contexts, innovation for transformational change is hard to achieve²⁰, even in growth episodes²¹. Furthermore, confronted with the huge task of building nations and lifting populations out of poverty, new African states became highly dependent on aid resources, particularly from Europe. This instilled a culture of donor-recipient relations that continues to prevail in many countries. It prevented the emergence of solid *'social contracts'* between state and society, based on taxation systems. This reliance on external resources is also to be found among regional bodies and the AU as Pan African political entity.
- *Dependency on primary commodities*. This structural factor has shaped the post-colonial development trajectory of African countries. On the European side, securing access to raw materials has remained a core driver of policies towards Africa. Despite discourses on economic transformation, this pattern is still dominant, including among major private sector operators. Also the EPAs –and related fragmentation of Africa in regional blocks to whom different clauses are offered²²– are widely perceived by African policy-makers as a new method to keep the continent locked up in a development model based on the export of primary commodities.

¹⁶ This was clearly visible in the AU in the period that Ms. Zuma acted as chairperson (2012-2017). Constructive engagement with Europe was hampered by anti-colonial rhetoric, resentment and mistrust.

¹⁷ There is an extensive literature pointing to linkages between colonialism and the structural fragility of African nation-states.

¹⁸ This holds particularly true for the Eastern European countries (member of the so-called 'EU-13' countries that joined the EU after 2014).

¹⁹ See for instance the seminal work of Chabal, P. and J. P. Daloz. 1999. *Africa Works. Disorder as Political Instrument*. The International African Institute. 1999.

²⁰ See S. Schepers. 2017. *Radical innovation or muddling through?* GREAT Insights. Nov-Dec. 2017, p. 27-29. In this contribution, the author argues that too many African governments "seem to favour the status quo and path dependency". In his view, "Africa is not lacking so much in capacities... but it does not have the right culture and governance tools to develop an ecosystem of innovation appropriate to the present challenges because it relies too much on the government trajectories inherited from the colonial age".

²¹ Princhett, L., Sen, K. and Werker, E. (forthcoming). 2018. *Deals and development. The political dynamics of growth episodes*. Oxford University Press, 2018. The report includes a case study on Ghana: 'Political Settlements and Structural Change: why growth has not been transformational in Ghana' by Osei, R, e.a.

²² Lopes, Carlos. 2017. *From walls to calls: Africa and Europe can shape the future*. GREAT Insights. Nov-Dec. 2017, p. 11-12.

- *Geography and geopolitics.* The proximity of the two continents is another foundational factor. It has facilitated exchanges in a wide range of areas, fostered rich human bonds and diaspora's, fuelled a (growing) set of mutual interdependencies and shaped EU cooperation responses. From a geopolitical perspective, influential EU Member States have long considered Africa as their natural backyard. A case in point is the enduring phenomenon of the “*Françafrique*” - the system of (informal) networks that was put in place to organize continuing dominance of France over its former colonial empire²³.

All these foundational factors, taken together, still have a major impact on the practice of EU-Africa relations. They bring along ‘*path dependencies*’ in the sense that the parties involved consider it easier or more cost effective to simply continue along an already set path than to look for new directions. An illustration of this line of action can be found in the erosion of the Joint Africa-EU Strategy, solemnly adopted in 2007 by Heads of States of both continents (see Box 2).

Box 2: Why did a promising framework like the JAES fail to take off?

Heralded as a new paradigm of cooperation based on mutual interests, the innovative substance of the JAES was soon diluted. Its political potential to structure interest-driven forms of cooperation did not materialize. Besides the lack of dedicated funding, this happened because both parties did not foresee a new toolbox as well as a related set of organisational arrangements and skills to ensure effective implementation. Instead, they continued to rely primarily on traditional actors, processes, methods and funding modalities built up during decades of delivering traditional development cooperation²⁴. Inevitably, this quickly led the JAES to be largely reduced to a talking shop, a roadmap of priorities and projects with deliverables to be monitored in a bureaucratic way.

2.2. Formal and informal rules of the game

The next political economy lens sheds light on the formal and informal institutions or ‘*rules of the game*’ that largely determine how relations unfold in practice. Contrary to the foundational factors, these rules of the game are more dynamic and open to change.

A first striking element is the ***proliferation of formal institutions*** regulating things at different levels. Several jointly agreed policy frameworks organize, in a dispersed, often overlapping if not conflicting manner, the relationships between Europe and Africa. These include the Joint Africa-Europe Strategy (JAES), the Cotonou Partnership Agreement (CPA), the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), the Strategic Partnership with South Africa as well as the various EPA arrangements. Each of them is accompanied with a specific set of principles, institutional arrangements and financing instruments.

These formal institutions represent the ‘***visible tip of the iceberg***’ and are supposed to organise EU-Africa relations. To understand how EU-Africa relations function in reality, it is crucial to also acknowledge the existence of less visible informal rules, which largely shape the behaviour of actors and determine performance. Policy-makers and stakeholders interested in reinvigorating EU-Africa relations ***need to pay much more attention*** to these ***informal rules***. They should move centre-stage to allow parties to base their cooperation on more realistic foundations. Here are a few key ones:

- *Donor -recipient mode of operation.* This pattern, linked to decades of development aid, is still conditioning EU-Africa relations. It fosters ‘*clientelist*’ and ‘*donor-Disneyland*’ cooperation approaches whereby: (i) Europe transfers aid money to African elites and state/regional bureaucracies and in return expects loyalty regarding European agendas, including requirements of good governance, democracy and respect for human rights; (ii) African governments or regional/continental bodies express a formal commitment to comply with these demands to ensure

²³ For a recent perspective on this issue see J. Ilunga. 2017. *The world is changing: The relationship needs changing too*. GREAT Insights. Nov-Dec. 2017, p. 33-35.

²⁴ Bossuyt, J. and A. Sherriff. 2010. *What next for the Joint Africa-EU Strategy? Perspectives on revitalising an innovative framework. A Scoping Paper*. ECDPM Discussion Paper No 94. March 2010.

continued access to aid resources. Often this game ends up in a stalemate²⁵ and frustrations on money issues²⁶. The vested interests generated by this '*aid industry*' also create incentives to keep partnership constructs like the ACP-EU partnership alive (see box 3).

Box 3: How sticking to ACP-EU cooperation may hamper the deepening of EU-Africa relations

Relations between Europe and sub-Saharan Africa have long been organized through successive Lomé Conventions (1975-2000) and the Cotonou Partnership Agreement (2000-2020) with the Group of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (ACP). While this framework has often been an incubator of new cooperation approaches, it has gradually lost momentum as a result of changing geopolitics, evolutions with the EU and the ACP Group and the rise of (competing) regional structures (e.g. the AU). As the trade and political pillars of the CPA were largely regionalized, ACP-EU cooperation has *de facto* been reduced to a development tool²⁷.

The expiry of the CPA in 2020 provides a unique opportunity to modernize EU cooperation frameworks, particularly towards Africa. However, both European and African players seem to have great difficulties of doing away with this postcolonial arrangement. A hybrid proposal is now on the table to maintain the ACP-EU construct while strengthening the regional partnership with A, C and P. This may suit vested interests on both sides (primarily geared at maintaining control over substantial aid resources) but is unlikely to provide the various parties with a suitable framework to address mutual interests and pressing cooperation challenges.

- State-driven development and cooperation processes. Formally the architecture of EU-Africa relations respects the principle of '*multi-level governance*', i.e. the need to involve all relevant institutional actors (at continental, regional and national levels). Yet in practice, pressures to deepen integration processes (spearheaded by the AU and the RECs) are challenging the monopoly position of nation-states in steering development and cooperation processes. Many (fragile) African states tend to resist such moves, as they seem reluctant to truly accommodate demands from their own civil society and local authorities to make pan African systems of governance more inclusive. To compound the problem, the EU tends to pursue policies that '*de facto*' end up hampering continental integration processes (as illustrated by the way the EPA's were managed). Coherent EU approaches towards Africa remains a huge challenge considering the limited preparedness for joint action between the EU and Member States²⁸ -a trend exacerbated by recent '*re-nationalisation*' attempts of EU powers and responsibilities.
- Limited scope for the participation of non-state actors, political society and subnational authorities. Formally, there is plenty of space in the various EU-Africa policy frameworks for ensuring a 'multi-actor' approach to cooperation. Yet in practice, the scope for meaningful involvement of civil society, the private sector, local authorities or political society (e.g. Parliaments) remains limited. This is not a procedural or capacity problem. It is rather a reflection of prevailing political conditions on the African continent, including the growing number of authoritarian regimes and related phenomenon of '*closing*

²⁵ Aid conditionalities were supposed to keep up the pressure to undertake governance reforms and to accept the EU's terms for new trade agreements, such as EPAs. Yet there is ample evidence that EU conditionalities and the contractual type of cooperation has no real impact on changing the course of African political regimes. For a concrete study see: IAG and ECDPM. 2011. *Support Study on the EU Governance Initiative*. Final report, November 2011.

²⁶ The International Crisis Group Report ("*Time to Reset African Union – European Union*", p. 1-2) argues that the question of financing is one of the areas of greatest tension between the two institutions. The EU increasingly resents being treated as "*a cash machine*" and expects the AU to pay its "*fair share*". Reforms are envisaged on the financing of the AU (Kaberuka Report) yet it remains to be seen if this will materialise any time soon.

²⁷ See Bossuyt, J. e.a. 2016. *The future of ACP-EU relations: A political economy analysis*. ECDPM, Policy Management Report 21, January 2016.

²⁸ This is visible, amongst others, in relation in the complex issue of how to finance the security-development nexus and the extent to which development assistance can be used for such purposes, particularly the military component.

space for alternative powers (e.g. at subnational levels) and dissenting voices emerging from society.

- **Cultural norms.** Many of the recurrent tensions in EU-Africa relations are linked to the ongoing influence of deep-seated cultural norms. This is particularly visible on the issue of *'values'* where the perception remains strong that Europe all too often seeks to impose its ways of thinking and living²⁹. Other symptoms are the recurrent criticisms on the *"paternalistic"* or *"patronizing"* behaviour of European actors, the clashes of *'civilisation'* perspectives³⁰ and the difficulties for actors on both sides to display inter-cultural sensitivity when doing business together³¹.

2.3. Openings in the wall

The above may cast serious doubts on the capacity for renewal of EU-Africa relations. Yet political systems and international relations constantly move. These **dynamics can 'shake up' existing patterns of interaction** and gradually create space and momentum to challenge things and gradually change the prevailing rules of the game. In this logic, some openings in the wall can be observed:

Growing assertiveness of African governments

Part of the informal rules of the game that govern post-colonial EU-Africa relations is an implicit understanding that Europe supports the development of African countries. In practice this has nurtured a relationship whereby African countries accept financial and technical assistance and in return allow development agencies to influence policy formulation. This is a highly simplified representation of a complex tit-for-tat relation, yet it responds to a well-known rule of the game.

In particular, in Eastern and Southern Africa there are governments who no longer stick to the traditional modes of engagement. While Zimbabwe may be deemed a more extreme case, there are other countries in the region such as Mozambique, Tanzania and Uganda that have long been labelled as donor darlings, but now seem to break the vows. In each of these cases, the scenario unfolds along similar lines. The central position of donors (dominated by the EU and Member States) starts to unravel as political elites decrease their political interaction with EU ambassadors, resist threats to cut budget support and turn their eyes rather to (local) business executives and domestic resources.³² These governments are helped by the fact that other global players (e.g. China) and economic powers (India, Russia, Brazil, the Gulf States, etc.) are omnipresent in Africa, supplying capital and other benefits without interfering in domestic affairs. As this process builds up, communication between high-level government and donor officials becomes structurally strenuous³³. Similar patterns can be observed in so-called *'developmental states'* (i.e. Rwanda and Ethiopia).

²⁹ See Madu, U. 2017. *A Dialogue of the Deaf?* Great Insights, Nov-Dec. 2017, p. 20-23. The author argues that a *"Normative Europe narrative in which the EU is the global guardian of norms and values, exporting them in its external action, puts the EU-Africa relationship on an uneven keel"*.

³⁰ Both president Sarkozy and Macron held discourses whereby the problems in and with Africa were linked to *"civilisation issues"*, including a reluctance to embrace modernity.

³¹ International Crisis Group. 2017. *Time to Reset African Union-European Union Relations*. Africa Report Nr 255. 17 October 2017, p. 1. The report argues that EU-Africa *"relations are too emotional, bound up in colonial history a breeding ground for mistrust and resentment. If the relationship is to be deepened, both sides must deal openly with disagreements"*.

³² When large gas reserves were confirmed off the northern coast of Mozambique in 2012, this was informally considered by local politicians a second liberation: first of the colonial power and now from the need to bow to donors.

³³ In an interview in Der Spiegel of June 10, 2016, President Museveni captures well the prevailing mood: *"we would certainly be happy for more help, but not at the price of condescension and arrogance... in official meetings with Western diplomats from the US and the European Union, the major issues of our relationships are simply not discussed. The topics are on climate change or any other issues they want us to agree with them. But they never discuss how we could develop an equal partnership. They should stop using pompous orchestrated summits and begin serious dialogue with small meetings"*.

The result is that the states involved –even if they are cash strapped- seem more reluctant than in the past to abide to the ***informal rule of taking external advice in exchange for money***. At best, this represents a clear willingness of African actors to reclaim their ‘*own policy space*’. At worst, it leads to populist discourses with rather aggressive ‘*nationalistic*’ or anti-western agendas without a defined self-interest. Justified or not, it certainly summarises the growing resentment in various African countries to continue on the terms that dominated the past decades. This changes the rules of engagement profoundly: ***what can the EU and other donors do when the partner refuses the dance?***

Societal dynamics

Most of the (visible) EU-Africa relations take place within formal structures between state officials at various levels. Within these arenas, it is not easy to challenge the prevailing rules of the game for the abovementioned reasons of path dependencies and vested interests. Yet ***change can also come ‘from the bottom-up’ and be pushed by non-institutional players and local authorities***³⁴. The degree to which these societal forces can effectively help to change the rules of the game in EU-Africa relations depends largely on key contextual factors and sector dynamics. A case in point is the policy domain of extractive industries, a longstanding playing ground for huge political and economic interests from Africa and Europe. Evidence shows how collective action by societal actors at various levels is gradually opening space in specific contexts for a more transparent and equitable system of managing natural resources. Similar dynamics between non-institutional actors and local authorities from Africa and Europe can be observed in the field of democracy, the rule of law, media and human rights.

Regional and sub-regional integration processes.

Another paradox of EU-Africa relations is the widely shared recognition (on both sides) that deeper regional integration is needed in Africa, on the one hand, and the rather sobering track record achieved so far in such processes on the other hand. This has fuelled increased interest among academia³⁵ and supporting donor agencies³⁶ to invest in a greater understanding of the political economy of regional integration in Africa. These studies all point to the need for more realism in assessing the potential of regional integration as a driver of change. Evidence suggests that regional dynamics can (over time) challenge the prevailing rules of the game ***if and when a critical mass of champions and multi-actor coalitions can engage in collective action***. Traction for such innovative processes is more likely to emerge when actors deal with specific thematic issues and sectoral priorities than in regional bodies with a very broad mandate³⁷.

Europe’s choice for ‘principled pragmatism’ in external action

Another opening in the wall is the changed power position and (financial) leverage of Europe in the world and in Africa. This process has been going on for quite some time and reflects the emergence of a multipolar world, in which Europe faces severe competition in traditional spheres of influence such as the African continent. Not all European policy-makers are willing to see this relative decline in power and continue to overrate their leverage on partner countries.

³⁴ With the rapid urbanisation, cities in Africa (through their alliances) are also expected to increasingly act as change-maker, both locally and globally. For a recent analysis see: World Bank. 2017. *Africa’s Cities: Opening Doors to the World*. World Bank Group, Washington D.C., released 9 February 2017.

³⁵ For an in-depth analysis see: Bach, D.C. 2015. *Regionalism in Africa. Genealogies, institutions and trans-state networks*. Routledge Studies in African Politics and International Relations. December 2015.

³⁶ See study commissioned by Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs to ECDPM: Vanheukelom, J, B. Byiers, S. Bilal and S. Woolfrey. 2015. *Political economy of regional integration in Africa. What drives and constrains regional organisations*. Synthesis Report of the PERIA study. ECDPM. December 2015.

³⁷ Ibid. See executive summary PERIA study produced by ECDPM.

Yet there are signs that Europe is prepared to reposition itself in the new global order with more realistic ambitions. The Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy (EUGS) exemplifies this³⁸. As a global player, the EU now puts forward, in a much more explicit way, its '**own interests**' in foreign policy, security, defence and economic affairs. The leitmotiv that should guide future external action is '**principled pragmatism**', to be reflected in the establishment of a politically driven portfolio of functional partnerships with '*willing partners*'. To a large extent, this EU external action '*à la carte*' is already visible in several policy areas, where the EU looks for the most appropriate institutional channels to promote its interests rather than getting stuck in the formal institutions. There are obvious **dangers attached to such a move**, yet it has the potential to create space for more interest-driven forms of cooperation with African stakeholders at different levels.

3. Pathways to change: practicing new modes of interaction between the EU and Africa

What does all this mean for the future of EU-Africa relations? It certainly confirms that merely formulating new aspirations, strategies and plans will not suffice to breathe new life into the system. The core challenge on both sides is to modify ways of thinking and acting. However, this will not happen overnight or by sheer magic. From a political economy perspective, **actual changes in practice will emanate from evolutions in the power relations as well as from the appearance of different incentives** for policy-makers (on both sides) to go beyond business as usual. These dynamics, in turn, can trigger the search for innovative dialogue mechanisms, approaches and working methods.

Changing EU-Africa patterns of interaction can already be seen in various core policy areas –with varying levels of depth and maturity as well as possible negative effects. It is too soon to speak of effective transformational changes. Yet these attempts to experiment with new modes of interaction represent **actual laboratories** for the much-needed renewal of EU-Africa relations.

A **few examples to illustrate** that other mindsets and approaches are possible are provided below:

3.1. EU-Africa cooperation on Energy

One of the initial eight partnerships on the JAES included a focus on energy. This ought not be surprising: African countries face huge challenges in terms of ensuring affordable, reliable and clean energy to populations and businesses, requiring massive investments and technological/societal innovations. The potential for mutually beneficial cooperation is also there, taking into account Africa's natural endowments (e.g. in terms of wind and solar energy) and Europe's technological expertise and ongoing efforts to achieve the energetic transition at home. Furthermore, there is a clear link with the EU's evolving Energy Security Strategy³⁹.

³⁸ European Commission and High Representative. 2016. *The European union's Foreign and Security Policy. Shared Vision, common Action: A Stronger Europe*. June 2016.

³⁹ In recent years, policymakers increasingly acknowledge the need for stronger coherence between internal and external policies as well as between the EU's energy interests and broader developmental concerns. However, there is still a way to go in terms of putting in place a coherent approach to ensuring EU external energy security. Member States have different visions on what this entails, institutional mandates need to be clarified (e.g. role EEAS?) and more solid strategies are required to guide the various financing instruments. See R. Youngs and S. Far. 2015. *Energy union and the EU Global Strategy*. Carnegie Europe, 02.12.2015.

Incipient yet promising moves have been made to experiment with new modes of interaction between the EU and Africa on energy matters⁴⁰. While formally embedded in the JAES, the **trap of over-institutionalizing dialogue and cooperation processes has been largely avoided**. Instead, space has been created for an interest-driven involvement of a wide range of public and private stakeholders across levels of governance. Furthermore, new **funding modalities** are tested out to leverage indispensable private sources of financing. While blending is not a silver bullet⁴¹, it helps to mobilise substantial additional resources with notable impact (e.g. the EU supported ElectriFI program)⁴². In the process, trust has been generated and multi-actor alliances have seen the daylight that can drive the agenda forward⁴³. These promising steps now need to be consolidated, particularly in terms of ensuring that the benefits of enhanced cooperation are equitably spread and contribute to sustainable development.

3.2. Peace and security

It is interesting to go deeper into the reasons why peace and security is generally considered as the main success story of the JAES⁴⁴. The topic logically featured high in the Constitutional Act of the newly born AU (2002). This explains why the AU Commission was pro-active in designing a specific ‘*architecture*’ to deal with peace and security (APSA or the ‘*African Peace and Security Architecture*’) based on a multi-level approach and related task division (i.e. between the AU, Member States and the RECs). This facilitated a buy-in of the international donor community, particularly the EU (which has major geopolitical and security interests at stake in this policy domain). The EU realized the importance of investing in the AU’s institutional development to ensure political ownership by a legitimate pan African body. It showed creativity in putting in place the African Peace Facility (APF). A structured dialogue was organized between the AU and EU on peace and security matters that maintained momentum -despite disagreements and tensions.

Most analyses concur that a further deepening of this specific EU-AU partnership is now required, amongst others to deal with new challenges such as the spread of jihadist and other non-state armed groups and the rise of ad hoc military coalitions to combat them (such as the Multinational Task Force in the Lake Chad Basin and the G5 Sahel)⁴⁵. Other issues on the table are the growing tensions on “*who should do what*” (subsidiarity principle) and above all on “*who should pay for what*” (with the AU expected to mobilize a greater share of resources). Another priority is to strengthen strategic partnerships on peace and security in Africa - with the UN in particular⁴⁶.

⁴⁰ See Africa-EU Energy Partnership.2016. *Status Report Update: 2016. A mid-term report on progress achieved and future perspectives*. AEEP, 2016.

⁴¹ Grosse-Puppendahl, S., S. Bilal and K. Karaki. 2017. *EU’s Financial Instruments for Access to Energy. Support in remote and poor areas of Africa*. ECDPM, Discussion paper No. 218. November 2017.

⁴² ElectriFI, is an innovative mechanism to unlock, accelerate and leverage investments increasing access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy in developing countries.

⁴³ Experience shows that financing instruments on energy also need to take into account context specific aspects (e.g. when can which instrument best be used?), stakeholder’s vested interests and public and internal pressures to show results. See above mentioned study of Grosse-Puppendahl, S. a.o.. p. 19.

⁴⁴ It is also an area where parties involved carry out impact analyses. For an example, see Desmidt, S. and V. Hauck. 2017. *Conflict management under the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). Analysis of conflict prevention and conflict resolution interventions by the African Union and the Regional Economic Communities in violent conflicts in Africa for the years 2013-2015*. ECDPM. Discussion Paper, No 211, April 2017.

⁴⁵ International Crisis Group. 2017. *Time to Reset African Union –European Union Relations*, p. 7

⁴⁶ Hauck, V. 2017. *Time to strengthen strategic partnerships for peace and security in Africa*. ECDPM’s Blog. 13 November 2017.

3.3. Youth

This is another test-ground for a renewal of EU-Africa relations. It is a more recent focal area, so there is less hands-on experience and accumulated knowledge on how best to proceed. However, things may accelerate as the issue of youth is moving rapidly to the forefront of the policy agenda in both Africa and in Europe. There is growing realisation of the multi-dimensional nature of the topic (with linkages to issues such as democracy, sustainable development, technology, migration, etc.) and quite some debates on the conditions for youth to be effective drivers of change.

Youth is also the main item on the agenda of the upcoming AU-EU Summit. Such high level attention may further enhance the profile of the topic, yet from a political economy perspective, it is doubtful that the formal institutional road is the most promising way forward. Both the EU and the AU/RECs seem to follow a rather instrumental approach in dealing with this highly complex and political topic. A more promising road to exploit the huge potential of bringing youth more directly into the process (on both sides) consists in fostering the ‘agency’ of young people. This amounts to ‘youth proof’ relations across the board, stimulate a meaningful inter-continental dialogue to effectively include young people in policy processes and put in place innovative funding mechanisms to support young entrepreneurs in a wide range of areas⁴⁷. Some of these avenues have already been tested out, resulting in positive dynamics. Empowering youth directly as drivers in their own right, can generate opportunities to change some of rules of the game that now hamper EU-Africa relations.

3.4. Migration

Despite the existence of various frameworks for dialogue on migration, divergent narratives still impede a fruitful cooperation⁴⁸. There is abundant evidence that the EU, pushed by domestic constituencies, has followed a rather narrow agenda on migration in recent years, primarily oriented towards stopping (illegal) migration flows. In the process, the EU largely circumvented available institutional channels to deal in a partnership mode with migration issues (such as the ACP-EU framework or the AU). The Valletta Summit exemplified this new, result-oriented EU approach to deal with urgent matters through ad hoc processes allowing for direct negotiations with relevant regional and bilateral actors, with mixed results⁴⁹. According to the International Crisis Group, this “fortress approach coupled with ham-fisted diplomacy... has alienated Africa” as it felt frustrated about the EU “discriminatory approach” (e.g. accepting Syrians fleeing conflict but turning away from Africans escaping poverty) and the attempts to “bully them into automatically receiving deported migrants”⁵⁰.

European policy-makers increasingly recognise that this **narrow approach has major limitations and that more comprehensive approaches are needed to dealing with migration**, focusing on making migration more safe, providing alternative livelihood options and engaging with a wide range of actors and stakeholders to improve opportunities for individuals. This broader thinking in Europe could be exploited by Africa by leveraging continued support for border controls against increased EU investment in education, job creation and economic transformation (not only in transit countries).

⁴⁷ For an example see Abila, G. 2017. *Technology to empower society: the Barefoot Law experience*. Great Insights. Nov-Dec. 2017, p. 36-38.

⁴⁸ Abderehim, T. 2017. *The race to close the gateway to Europe*. GREAT Insights, Nov-Dec 2017, p. 24-26. The author points out that regarding narratives, the EU is prioritising return and readmission while African states view migration as an opportunity and focus on inter-African facilitation of labour mobility and more paths for legal migration. See also: Knoll, A and F. de Weijer. 2016. *Understanding African and European Perspectives on Migration. Towards a better partnership for regional migration*. ECDPM. Discussion Paper. No 203. November 2016.

⁴⁹ The results are mixed in relation to readmission with some countries cooperating but others not (mainly due to internal political economy constraints and the lack of popularity of such measures).

⁵⁰ International Crisis Group. 2017. *Time to Reset African union – European Union Relations*, p. 9.

3.5. Investment mobilisation

Mobilising Investments for Africa's structural transformation is one of the key areas that the African Union (AU) wants to discuss at the 5th AU-EU Summit. The potential of enhanced cooperation in this area is huge, both for Africa's economic transformation (beyond traditional sectors) and for Europe's own priorities (i.e. ensuring more prosperity and stability on the African continent).

The EU considers itself well prepared to discuss investments for inclusive transformation, having adopted this summer its new External Investment Plan (EIP), which should be officially launched at the Summit. The EIP is meant to stimulate investment in Africa and the EU Neighbourhood by leveraging private investment and development finance⁵¹. Yet, the EIP has so far been mainly a European affair, to set it up, with intense intra-EU negotiations. A critical test now will be the political ability of both parties to overcome the traditional '*donor-recipient*' approach. Rather than focusing solely on key investment projects, the EIP could usefully contribute to support African financing institutions and their activities⁵². Adequate coordination mechanisms could facilitate synergies with other investment initiatives (by the by the EIB, the World Bank, the G20, etc.).

4. Political choices that may help to reengineer EU-Africa relations

The gap between the potential of EU-Africa relations and actual practices is not an accident and certainly not due to a lack of relevant agendas, strategies and plans. The mismatch between ambitions and results is primarily the product of systemic factors, path dependencies, vested interests and skewed incentives (on both sides) preventing transformational approaches. However, **relations are not static**. They evolve as key events modify the playing field or when policy-makers reframe their interests and incentive schemes. One should also keep in mind the warning of Dani Rodrik on the limits of political economy analyses: "*An excessive focus on the role of vested interests can easily divert us from the critical contribution that policy analysis and political entrepreneurship can make*"⁵³.

Perhaps what EU-Africa relations most need now is courageous 'political entrepreneurs' that seek to overcome existing modes of cooperation, strategically use 'openings in the wall' (identified in section 2) and further experiment with new modes of interaction (illustrated in a non-exhaustive manner in section 3). The opportunities are there. What we largely miss now are policy-makers (on both sides of the fence) that are ready to openly embrace a number of political choices with the potential of adapting EU-Africa relations to the new political and economic global realities and power relations. In this logic, **five (interlinked) political choices could be potential drivers of change:**

1) Put interests (in the broad sense) explicitly at the center of EU-Africa cooperation.

In the past decades, EU external action towards Africa has primarily been couched in terms of development. While this remains a highly legitimate objective, the EU external action has expanded dramatically and the Union's global and own interests have been made more explicit in recent years (as

⁵¹ Pooling together €4.1 billion of contributions from the European Commission into a newly created European Fund for Sustainable Development (EFSD), the intent is to stimulate up to €44 billion of infrastructure and productive investment. One of the main innovations is the EFSD guarantee of €1.5 billion, which aims to reduce (actual but also perceived) risk for private investors and financiers.

⁵² Bilal, S. 2017. 'Can Africa and Europe jointly walk the talk on investment mobilisation?' ECDPM's Blog (forthcoming)

⁵³ Rodrik, D. 2013. *The Tyranny of Political Economy*. Project Syndicate, February 8, 2013.

reflected in the June 2016 EU Global Strategy). So it seems time to fully and transparently integrate the *'interest dimension'* into EU external action. There are evidently risks attached to such an evolution, including too huge a focus on narrow EU self-interests in the short term and a dilution of the values agenda⁵⁴. Yet, growing political ***clarity on EU agendas may create opportunities for Africa to bring its own narratives and interests more strongly into the equation***. The asymmetry of powers between the two continents will not disappear overnight, but at least the cards would be more openly on the table. Reform-oriented (public and private) actors in Africa (where useful reinforced by alliances with European stakeholders) could be formed -not simply to react towards European proposals but to come up with credible alternatives reflecting a broader set of interest

2) Consolidate institutions (on both sides) that can push forward innovative agendas

While there is a longstanding discourse on *'equal partnership'* relations⁵⁵, in day-to-day practice the balance of power is such that Europe tends to dominate the game. Not surprisingly, there is a strong feeling on the African side that the EU systematically sets the agenda and imposes its priorities.

This deep-seated frustration of Europe *"speaking at Africa rather than with Africa"*⁵⁶ is compounded by the ***lack of institutions in Africa with sufficient authority and bargaining power*** to push forward coherent and owned policy agendas at different levels, including the AU⁵⁷. In this context, calls are made for Africa to speak *"with one voice when negotiating with Europe"*⁵⁸. Yet how realistic is such a *"common front"*⁵⁹ (around the AU) considering the prevailing conflicts between competing levels of governance? From a political economy perspective, a pragmatic approach is more likely to prevail. Rather than engaging on grand designs, ***it will be critical for African decision-makers to make their own institutions (at different levels) more fit for purpose through targeted actions and incremental approaches***. This can be done by regaining policy space (including in terms of African knowledge production⁶⁰), promoting more inclusive approaches to policy formulation and implementation and ensuring greater financial autonomy. These recipes have been on the table for long, yet African reformist political entrepreneurs will have to push them forward in often constrained environments, starting where real traction and opportunities exist. The EU and other external partners can provide a helping hand by continuing to engage with African institutions (despite their fragility and limitations) and smartly support their autonomous growth.

The ***challenge of institutional development and generating innovative agendas also applies to the EU***. For decades the Union has refined its regulatory capacity to organise collective action among an expanding set of Member States in a growing number of policy areas. Yet geopolitical changes, a set of pervasive internal and external crises and growing (citizen) opposition to further integration have forced the

⁵⁴ Bossuyt J, A. Sherriff e.a. 2017. *Strategically financing an effective role for the EU: first reflections on the next EU budget*. ECDPM. September 2017.

⁵⁵ In prospective studies on EU-Africa relations, an interesting split can be observed. While the above mentioned report of Friends of Europe strongly advocates to establish an *"equal partnership"*, the analysis of International Crisis Group argues that the notion should remain *"an aspiration"* but be *"de-emphasised and replaced with a more pragmatic understanding of AU and EU mutual interests"* (p. ii).

⁵⁶ See Madu, U. 2017. *A Dialogue of Deaf?* Great Insights, Nov-Dec. 2017, p. 20.

⁵⁷ See the Kagame Report ('The Imperative to Strengthen our Union') adopted by the AU (January 2017). It makes the point that *"the unfortunate truth is that Africa today is ill-prepared to adequately respond to current events, because the African Union still has to be made fit for purpose"*. A similar message can be found in: Kouassi, R. 2017. *Ensuring a more effective and beneficial cooperation*. Great Insights, Nov-Dec. 2017, p. 4-10.

⁵⁸ Kouassi, R. 2017. *Ensuring a more effective and beneficial cooperation*. Great Insights, Nov-Dec. 2017, p. 7.

⁵⁹ Ibid. p. 7.

⁶⁰ Sidiropoulos, E. 2017. *'Africa Rising' means taking ownership of its knowledge production*. Great Insights, Nov-Dec. 2017, p. 17-19.

Union to go beyond its comfort zone and explore how it could enhance its ‘agency’ as global player⁶¹ and actor of economic diplomacy⁶². The process is still ongoing and involves shifting relations of power and influence between different EU institutions. Yet such reforms are also critical for Africa –as they hold the potential for the gradual emergence of a more politically inspired, interest-driven and coherent EU approach.

3) Unleash the agency and resources of non-institutional actors in Africa and Europe

There are plenty of promising societal dynamics on the African and European continents, sharing common agendas and emanating from citizens, youth, women, human rights activists, entrepreneurs, cities, subnational authorities, etc. They want to be shapers and makers of their own destiny. They do not easily find their place in the various ‘invited spaces’ -formally open to them in EU-Africa frameworks. These actors increasingly prefer to engage with policy-makers through their own ‘claimed spaces’⁶³ -where they have more control on the agenda and can spell out their own policy alternatives. They also strongly insist on the need to **democratize EU-Africa relations** by moving away from a too formalized and institution-led approach to a more open-ended and actor led format.

This will be a long and **uphill struggle**. On paper, it would appear in the self-interest of both African elites (at various levels) and the EU to promote more inclusive approaches to policy formulation and implementation. For instance, unleashing the full potential of the private sector (on both sides) is unlikely to happen if the whole process remains dominated and managed by government officials. It is also hard to see how the SDGs can be achieved without an effective involvement of subnational authorities (as actors rather than passive recipients) in both Africa and Europe. However, in practice, the conditions are rather sobering in many African countries (without competitive politics) as national elites tend to adopt authoritarian approaches, close the space for alternative civil society voices or resist emancipatory movements from other state actors (at local, regional and continental levels). Also in Europe, there is growing recognition that the formal institutions face a “*democratic deficit*” and could gain a lot by opening up core policy processes to a wider set of actors. Effective changes in the rules of the game may ultimately depend on the power and capacity of these ‘other actors’ to gain a seat and exercise a meaningful influence on EU-Africa relations.

4) Opt for a strategic mix of result-oriented set of partnerships that ensure effective delivery

International cooperation in the 21st century is no longer about ‘North-South partnerships’ based on aid transfers. It is about ensuring global governance in a multipolar world and defending core interests through effective institutional frameworks. This also applies to EU-Africa relations. In practice this means being pragmatic by **looking for the most appropriate framework** –in terms of legitimacy, political traction and capacity for collective action- to do business with. It is important to stress that this scenario is *de facto* already largely reflected in the cooperation practices of both the EU and African actors. This is illustrated by the ongoing debate in the AU on how to rationalize the proliferation of partnerships (build up over time) that provide limited added value. At EU level, political action and funding have been increasingly oriented towards a shifting and diversified set of African partners and structures that can deliver (quickly) the expected outcomes.

⁶¹ This evolution has been brilliantly analysed by: Middelaar, L. 2017. *De nieuwe politiek van Europa* [English translation forthcoming].

⁶² See: Woolcock, S. 2012. European Union Economic Diplomacy. *The Role of the EU in External Economic Relations*. Global Finance Series. Ashgate.

⁶³ For more explanation see: Gaventa, J. 2007. *Participation and Citizenship: Exploring Power for Change*. Institute for Development Studies (IDS).

5) Rationalize policy frameworks and instruments

This political choice is not evident –as can be observed by the reluctance of key actors (both in the EU and Africa) to do away with an outlived, postcolonial policy framework like the ACP-EU relationship (see box 2 above). As a result, Europe may well maintain an overlapping set of policy frameworks that impede a move towards a truly modern and coherent partnership with Africa being “*treated as one*”. It furthermore remains to be seen whether the right set of interests and incentives will be in place for the EU to rationalize / harmonise the financing instruments towards Africa in the future **Multi-Annual Financial Framework** (MFF) for the EU budget post 2020. The task goes beyond overcoming the current fragmentation of financing instruments. Creative approaches will be needed to deal effectively with global challenges, integrate the EU’s own interests and engage coherently at multiple levels of governance (i.e. continental, regional, national and local) while associating all relevant institutional and non-state actors.

This is too important a battle to be left to generals at European level. It will be crucial for African actors to also unambiguously define how *they* see the future policy frameworks (i.e. Cotonou Agreement and JAES) and financing instruments regulating EU-Africa relations.

About ECDPM

The European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM) is an independent ‘think and do tank’ working on international cooperation and development policy in Europe and Africa.

Since 1986 our staff members provide research and analysis, advice and practical support to policymakers and practitioners across Europe and Africa – to make policies work for sustainable and inclusive global development.

Our main areas of work include:

- European external affairs
- African institutions
- Security and resilience
- Migration
- Sustainable food systems
- Finance, trade and investment
- Regional integration
- Private sector engagement

For more information please visit www.ecdpm.org

In addition to structural support by ECDPM’s institutional partners: The Netherlands, Belgium, Estonia, Finland, Ireland, Luxembourg, Sweden, Switzerland, Denmark and Austria, this publication also benefits from funding by UK aid from the Department for international Development (DFID), United Kingdom.

ISSN1571-7577

ecdpm

Making policies work

HEAD OFFICE
SIÈGE

Onze Lieve Vrouweplein 21
6211 HE Maastricht
The Netherlands *Pays Bas*
Tel +31 (0)43 350 29 00
Fax +31 (0)43 350 29 02

BRUSSELS OFFICE
BUREAU DE BRUXELLES

Rue Archimède 5
1000 Brussels *Bruxelles*
Belgium *Belgique*
Tel +32 (0)2 237 43 10
Fax +32 (0)2 237 43 19

info@ecdpm.org
www.ecdpm.org
KvK 41077447