

C14: Sustainable diplomacy between Africa and Europe: what knowledge capabilities should be developed?

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Convenors and introduction: Rob van Tulder and Ronny Reshef (Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University Rotterdam)

Papers from Siphamandla Zondi (University of Pretoria) and Samantha Ruppel (Goethe University, Frankfurt University).

Rob van Tulder opened the session by discussing what diplomacy is and its evolution towards sustainability. In Diplomacy 1.0, the actors were states that prioritized the national interest over local interests. In Diplomacy 2.0, economic diplomacy became important and public-private partnerships emerged to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Sustainable diplomacy is Diplomacy 3.0 with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) agenda and has initiated new ways of cooperation between states, firms, and civil society organisations. Sustainability in this context refers to a decolonization of diplomacy, where it is not about capacity-development but collaboration between equals. This can also be seen in that the focus in sustainable diplomacy is on collective growth, goals, and co-creation.

These same generations are applied to firms, which evolved from Firms 1.0 focused on trade, Firms 2.0 focused on global and multidomestic markets, to Firms 3.0 that are transnational and global. For example, Phillips has opened multiple Community Life Centres in the Congo to achieve SDG 3, ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.

Siphamandla Zondi of Pretoria University had 7 points on what characterized EU-Africa relations. The fundamental problem underlying these relations was the lack of convergence that meant partnerships were not cohesive. Substantive issues are prioritized over fundamental issues. To get to the root of issues, there is a need to “transcend old models of trade and production” Zondi stated. Thus, the question is what knowledge capabilities need to be developed for there to be a transition to ‘New Diplomacy’. Where can true convergence occur between Africa and the EU?

Samantha Ruppel of Goethe Universität researched knowledge and power imbalances that occur during global-local interactions. She researched the interactions between the German Civil Peace Service (CPS) and local civil society organisations in Kenya to find out whether

the theoretical concept of a 'local turn' could work in practice in such a context. Ruppel found that what happened in the field was different than described in academia. Most important was that locals had ownership in development, and that there is grassroots support for the activities being undertaken. Local interactions need to be taken more seriously, pointing to a need for a decolonization of mindsets and practices not only in academia. Ruppel took a reflective research approach reflected on her own role and inherent power relations she is a part of.

Sustainable diplomacy in practice is different than on paper, but as Zondi and Ruppel describe, there is room for improvement. Evolution towards sustainability and orientation towards achieving collective goals might be very clear on paper. Zondi focused on the macro-level, arguing that for EU-Africa relations to be truly sustainable, there is a need for convergence on fundamental issues. Ruppel researched the micro-level, describing the effect of power balances and imbalances at work between local and international civil society actors.

Key take-aways:

- Sustainable diplomacy has seen cooperation between differing constellations of states, firms, and civil society organizations with a mindset oriented towards achieving collective aims and co-creation between equals;
- EU-Africa relations should focus on convergence and building cohesive partnerships on what is fundamentally important, not substantively;
- In collaboration with international and local actors, locals need to be taken more seriously and power im(balances) should be considered.