

Weaving Country Ownership: How do Pacific regional organisations broker 'Country Ownership' under the Forum Compact on Development Cooperation?

The research problem:

'Country Ownership' was posited as essential for effective aid and development through the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness in 2005. As we move from the Millennium Development Goals to their successor, the Sustainable Development Goals, does 'Country Ownership' still matter? If so, for whom? This research explores the implementation of global aid effectiveness policy, re-crafted in the Pacific through the Forum Compact on Development Cooperation in 2009, to ask how the policy has been enacted in the Pacific and why Pacific countries make the choices they do.

The policy model:

Stone asserts that successful policy translation acknowledges the complexity of context and need for experimentalism where the role of a broker, often external, is key in spreading the 'soft stuff' of ideas, norms and standards, alongside the 'hard' policy tools, practices and institutions. In addition, Pal & Ireland assert, the broker also needs resources to link the 'soft stuff' to tools, practices and institutions. This research explores what motivates countries to accept the ideas, norms and standards on offer through such brokers. It argues that the dynamic between the broker and the country is critical to countries' acceptance, especially when seemingly diverse cultural norms may be in play.

Fieldwork:

The research draws on Interpretive Policy Analysis, using qualitative methods – interviews, document analysis, participant observation – to explore the values and norms that drive policy action on 'Country Ownership' under the Forum Compact. Five Interpretive communities were identified: country; regional organisations; development partners; independent consultants and evaluation teams. Field work is in progress in Fiji and Samoa; a third country, Kiribati, is proposed. A total of 29 formal interviews have been conducted. Further fieldwork is planned for late 2015. Analysis is proposed using Nvivo qualitative software. Additional field visits to discuss findings are proposed in 2016 prior to thesis submission.

References

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- Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2009, Cairns Compact on Strengthening Development Coordination in the Pacific, Annex B, Forum Communiqué, 40th PIF,
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Work in Progress:

Early analysis indicates that Samoa's experience affirms Stone and Pal & Ireland's claims and illustrates there can be multiple brokers whose roles vary over time. It extends the literature by revealing the importance of the broker's authority and credibility to the acceptance of ideas and norms. But importantly, it affirms Freeman's analysis, by suggesting that successful policy translation also requires a shift in power relations through a re-negotiation of ideas and norms between the broker and country, as an assertion of country ownership, rather than a top-down transmission of ideas and norms from broker to country. Samoa's experience highlights country agency, affirming that country ownership does matter for Samoa and raises questions for ongoing exploration: from where does the broker's authority emanate? Who does the broker represent? How is the link between values and norm acceptance demonstrated?