POLICY COHERENCE FOR DEVELOPMENT IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

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Abstract

Policy Coherence for Development (PCD) is a crucial aspect of the European Union's (EU) global development approach, with implications for the institution's reputation and credibility. According to Article 208 of the Treaty on the Functioning of The European Union (TFEU), the member states of the EU have a treaty obligation to monitor how its policies impact developing countries and must work to avoid these policies contradicting the objectives of its development policies. However, despite its significance, PCD has faced challenges in implementation, particularly in the context of EU-Africa trade relations. This thesis investigates the reasons behind the lack of progress in PCD and its reflection on EU-Africa trade relations. The research question guiding this study is: *"Why has policy coherence for development failed to make headway, and how is this reflected in EU-Africa trade relations?"*

This research sheds light on the political, economic, and structural obstacles that impede policy coherence for development and sustainable development. The study employs the theoretical frameworks of liberal intergovernmentalism and constructivism to provide new insights into the challenges faced by the EU in achieving PCD. The findings of this study highlight the need for improved coordination, cooperation, and alignment of policies. This research emphasizes the importance of achieving better PCD and enhancing EU-Africa trade relations. Despite the EU's efforts to promote PCD, progress has been slow. The lack of shared understanding, clear targets, and political commitment, coupled with diverging preferences and interests among member states, have hindered the advancement of PCD.

Additionally, the emergence of Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (PCSD) has further complicated the landscape. The study emphasizes the need for better clarification and a shared understanding of both concepts. Moreover, the EU's approach to Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) has also been a point of contention, as it conflicts with the principles of PCD and perpetuates inequality. The thesis suggests that the EU should reconsider its approach to EPAs and address the concerns of African, Caribbean, and Pacific (ACP) countries to achieve greater coherence. Further research should explore challenges in other policy areas and investigate how they hinder policy coherence for development. Clearer guidelines and a distinction between PCD and PCSD are necessary to ensure effective coordination and cooperation.

List of Abbreviations

DAC	Development Assistance Committee
EC	European Commission
EEA	European Economic Arena
EP	European Parliament
EU	European Union
IR	International Relations
LDC	Least Developed Countries
OECD	Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development
PCD	Policy Coherence for Development
PCSD	Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
TFEU	Treaty on the Functioning of The European Union
WTO	World Trade Organization

Table of Content

1. Introduction

The concept of policy coherence for development (PCD) is a fundamental part of the European Union's (EU) approach to global development. Successful implementation of PCD is significant to assess the EU's reputation and credibility on the global stage (Lightfoot, 2013, p. 240). The purpose of PCD is to ensure that the EU's policies are coherent and complementary to its development objectives. On a supranational level, if the policies of the EU are not coherent, a consequence hereof is that the institution loses its legitimacy and credibility in the international arena, as this may undermine the ability and legitimacy of the administration that is responsible for designing and implementing the public policies (Horký-Hluchán, 2022, p. 13).With Article 208 of the Treaty on the Functioning of The European Union (TFEU), the member states of the EU have a treaty obligation to monitor how its policies impact developing countries and must work to avoid these policies contradicting the objectives of its development policies. The main objectives primarily include reducing and eradicating poverty in the long term (European Union, 2008). The EU is commended for its extensive aid contributions, which account for more than half of the worldwide aid. However, the institution is also criticized for inconsistencies in its policies and its limited success in completely transforming some conflicting policies (Carbone & Keijzerb, 2016, p. 31; European Commission (d), nd). Several EU and national policies pose challenges to the development of the poorest nations in the world, such as in the areas of trade, health, agriculture, and fisheries (Jordan & Adelle, 2014; Carbone & Keijzerb, 2016; DIIS, 2009; Concord Danmark, 2013)

On the policy area of trade, the EU has sought to establish Economic Free Trade Agreements (EPAs) with six regional groupings in Africa (Central Africa, West Africa, Southern Africa Development Community, Eastern and Southern Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific). This agreement is a new European approach to development through trade to foster economic growth and sustainable development. However, this approach is criticized for perpetrating existing inequalities and undermining African regional integration (Chimanikire, 2019; Elgström, 2009). The EU's development policy toward Africa is considered one of the most crucial development policies of the Union, but external factors have strained this relationship over time (Babarinde, 2019). For this reason, policy coherence for development is necessary because it emphasizes the need for coordination and coherence between various policy areas to ensure that development policies are not undermined by policies in other sectors (European Commission, nd). In other words, implementing policy coherence for development

requires addressing power imbalances within the global economic system to ensure that the benefits of a Free Trade Agreement are distributed fairly. The relationship has also changed in scope and substance as the cooperation now extends beyond traditional tools of aid and trade but spans over new terrains such as good governance, peace, security, and combatting terrorism (Babarinde, 2019). However, while the relationship between the EU and Africa is described as a "partnership of equals," it is evident that it is still profoundly asymmetrical (La Rocco, 2019). The EU's development cooperation is positioned somewhere between its normative ideals and the realities of competing for emerging alternative frameworks (Babarinde, 2019).

Implementing PCD has proven to be a challenge, with authors like Carbone (2008) labeling PCD mission impossible and (Carbone, 2012; Horký-Hluchán, 2022) addressing the implementation challenges from both top-down and bottom-up perspectives. Carbone & Keijzerb (2016) also argue that the EU and the member states have paid lip service to the importance of PCD and have not been successful in translating commitments into more coherent national and supranational policies (Carbone & Keijzerb, 2016, p. 31), explaining why the concept has failed to make headway within the EU. A report commissioned by the European Parliament (EP) and requested by its Development Committee (DEVE) acknowledges the EU's leading role in promoting PCD. However, the report did not discover proof that the PCD has resulted in implementing targeted policies that affect developing nations (Horký-Hluchán, 2022, p. 2). Despite the political commitment and legal obligation of PCD, the concept has failed to make headway in practice (Carbone(A), 2008, p. 323). Hence, the EU and its member states have failed to translate political commitments into more coherent national and supranational policies resulting in a slow advancement of PCD. While the EU has successfully sought to raise awareness of PCD, it has failed to create mechanisms to promote it, as there is no official documentation that PCD has increased because of the EU's intentional policy (Horký-Hluchán, 2022, p. 2).

This introductory section highlights the significance of PCD in shaping the EU's. standing in the international community. Inconsistent policies within the EU may harm the institution's credibility and undermine the institution on the global stage. Therefore, this project will investigate why PCD has failed to make headway in Africa-EU relations. In connection with this, this study will explore this problem with a particular focus on trade and development in the context of EU-Africa relations, answering the research question below.

1.2 Research Question

Why has policy coherence for development failed to make headway, and how is this reflected in EU-Africa trade relations?

1.3 Thesis Relevance

This research aims to enhance the understanding of PCD and its impact on EU-Africa trade relations. By investigating the causes of why PCD has failed to make headway and how this is reflected in EU-Africa trade relations, the thesis addresses a gap in academic knowledge. It sheds light on the underlying political, economic, and structural factors which hinder policy coherence for development, and contributes to a deeper comprehension of the complexities and challenges in achieving policy coherence and furthering sustainable development. Through the lens of the theoretical frameworks of liberal intergovernmentalism and constructivism, this study contributes to the existing literature on the topic and offers new insights into the factors that have hindered the EU's efforts to achieve PCD. This study thus enriches and contributes to academic discussions and debates on international development, trade relations, and the role of actors such as the EU and African countries. It also offers a better understanding of the EU's challenges and limitations in its attempt to address global challenges and the broader discourse on global development and international relations, emphasizing the importance of coherence and coordination in addressing complex global challenges. The findings of this research can inform policymakers such as the EU and member states, and other practitioners working in the field of development and trade and provide insight into the need for improved coordination, cooperation, and alignment of policies to achieve better policy coherence for development and thereby enhance EU-Africa trade relations. Ultimately, the thesis's relevance lies in advancing knowledge and understanding of PCD and its impact on EU-Africa trade relations.

2. Policy Coherence for Development (PCD)

This chapter will provide an overview of the Policy Coherence for Development (PCD) concept, including its definition, historical development, and the various perspectives it has been viewed. Next, the related concept of Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (PCSD) will be introduced, which is crucial to understanding PCD in context.

The EU and its member states have all committed to PCD, which was introduced in the Treaty of Maastricht and further strengthened in the Treaty of Lisbon (European Commission, nd). Article 130v in the TFEU, known as the "coherence article," emphasizes that EU policies should take account of objectives concerned with development cooperation (European Union, 1992). This includes fostering sustainable economic and social development in developing countries. In scope, PCD is a concept that reaches several "hard" policies such as trade, agriculture, and fisheries (Acheampong, 1997, p. 1). This is evident in Article 208 of the TFEU, which states the following:

> *" Union development cooperation policy shall have as its primary objective the reduction and, in the long term, the eradication of poverty. The Union shall take account of the objectives of development cooperation in the policies that it implements which are likely to affect developing countries"* (European Union, 2008)

PCD emerged in the 1990s to shift responsibilities from aid agencies to other actors involved in policy areas that affect developing countries. The concept focuses on the interaction between foreign aid and other policies (Carbone, 2012, p. 161). This is also called horizontal coherence and is the alignment between EU development cooperation policies and other EU policies (Acheampong, 1997, p. 1). By adopting a PCD approach, the EU attempts to ensure that its policies towards developing countries are coherent and mutually reinforcing. In a world of structural inequalities between the global North and South, PCD can only be applied by aid donors to their policies and not by their partner countries who do not have an outward-oriented development policy (Horký-Hluchán, 2022, p. 8). Within the EU, it is the responsibility of the member states to set up their own PCD coordination mechanisms and to ensure PCD in their national policies. The European Commission (EC) ensures that development concerns are integrated across policies and organizations (Carbone M., 2012). Informal meetings are held twice a year on PCD, where contact points, practices, and PCD priorities are discussed. PCD

is generally promoted and coordinated across Commission services, such as the European External Action Service (EEAS), EU delegations, and other EU institutions (European Commission, nd). The Council of the EU and the European Parliament (EP) also commit to PCD. For example, the Foreign Affairs Council, the Committee of Permanent Representatives, and the Council's Working Party on Development Cooperation address PCD-related concerns as it is on their agendas. As for the EP, since 2019, the European Parliaments Development Committee has been a standing rapporteur for PCD and sets out its own PCD priorities in its resolutions on PCD reports. In addition, the committee manages parliamentary discussions on PCD and coordinates these with other committees (European Commission, nd).

The beginning of the 21 centuries marked a time for change with the introduction of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (Carbone M., 2012). The EU placed PCD high on its agenda with its 2005 European Consensus on Development, where it committed to "take account of the objectives of development cooperation in all policies that it implements which are likely to affect developing countries and that these policies support development objectives" (European Commission, 2006, p. 22). The EC proposed "coherence for development" in 12 policy areas: *trade, environment, climate change, security, agriculture, fisheries, the social dimension of globalization, employment and decent work, research and innovation, information society, transport, and energy*. These were incorporated into the European Consensus on Development in December 2005. However, in 2009 there was a proposal to concentrate on five global challenges instead of the 12 policy areas. The new areas were focused on: *intellectual property rights, food security, climate change, migration, and security*. This new focus is because the EU could more proactively contribute to reaching the MDGs. However, this new development received mixed reactions from those supporting a more focused approach and those believing this would downscale the initial goals (Carbone & Keijzerb, 2016, p. 32). Despite implementing these focus areas and placing PCD high on the agenda in the early 2000s, there has not been significant progress in translating commitments into practice (Carbone & Keijzerb, 2016; Carbone(A), 2008; Horký-Hluchán, 2022). Different factors may explain this development, such as applying the concept in practice due to its broad scope and lack of clear guidelines for implementation. Moreover, it is also possible that PCD remained a priority in theory, but its implementation was hindered by political obstacles or resistance from member states (Carbone & Keijzerb, 2016). This may have limited the EU's ability to achieve policy coherence. All these factors will be further explored in the analysis.

The EU has sought to raise awareness of policy coherence for development through the course of time and create mechanisms to promote it. However, there has been no official documented evidence that PCD has increased because of the EU's intentional policy. The EC also acknowledges this in the external evaluation report on PCD published in 2018 (Horký-Hluchán, 2022). PCD has been reaffirmed in the New European Consensus Agreement of 2017. The concept has a standalone chapter in this agreement but does not provide precise details on the commitment to PCD. In scope, it extends to the efforts of applying PCD across all policies and areas covered by the 2030 agenda. While there has been established mechanisms to promote PCD, the political commitment, and capacities to implement PCD across all policies have lagged behind the available technical and administrative mechanisms. This has restricted policy deliberation between diverse and equally legitimate values and interests, which can explain the limited PCD implementation (Horký-Hluchán, 2022).

PCD, in its nature, was compatible with the 1990s and early 2000s socio-economic agenda of international development. However, with the departure of the MDGs and the introduction of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the new focus on climate change, loss of biodiversity, and human-induced environmental degradation, there has been a rise in the prominence of sustainable development in the global agenda (Horký-Hluchán, 2022, p. 8). The 2030 agenda introduces a new perspective for PCD that aligns with the paradigm shift in development cooperation; therefore, the EC has adapted its approach to PCD following this development and ensuring that PCD remains relevant in the evolving policy framework. PCD is viewed as a critical element and vital to implementing the 2030 Agenda (European Commission, nd). This development will be further explored in the sub-chapter below, with the introduction of PCSD.

2.1 Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (PCSD)

PCSD was introduced in 2015 following the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Concord, 2013). The SDGs are a global commitment adopted by all members of the United Nations and are composed of holistic goals that apply both to the Global North and the Global South (Horký-Hluchán, 2022, p. 8). It is a universal concept that aims to ensure optimal use of available recourses across the world to balance economic, social, environmental, and political dimensions of sustainability, which offers an alternative cycle to the current, whereby the economic focus is given priority (Concord, 2013). These goals recognize that ending poverty and other forms of deprivation must go hand-in-hand with strategies that

improve health and education, reduce inequality, stimulate economic growth, address climate change, and preserve our oceans and forests (United Nations, n.d). Hence, all policies should work towards achieving the 2030 agenda to reduce poverty and inequality.

With the introduction of PCSD, the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) followed suit and moved away from its historically strong support and contribution to PCD in a European context. Internationally, PCD is only relevant to the EU, its member states, and some countries in the European Economic Arena (EEA). With the introduction of the 2030 Agenda, the EU has shifted its focus to PCD and regarded it as a crucial part of contributing to the SDGs. The emergence of PCSD has brought about a positive shift towards sustainable development on a global level, which has been a mixed blessing for PCD as a crucial part of the EU's external policy as it not only aligns with PCD but also reinforces the relevance and importance of PCD in the broader context of sustainable development (Horký-Hluchán, 2022). However, PCSD has not been incorporated into the EU's development policy. At the same time, PCD has not been considered an agenda that should be absorbed into the sustainable development policy. This concept has brought about a positive change and been a blessing for PCD, but it has also brought about more confusion. The EC has expressed regret that PCD has been partially or subsumed by PCSD, which allegedly was under the OECD's influence for some member states. A review of the EU's implementation by civil society suggests that member states of the EU are still in a state of confusion, which is reflected in the divergence of their approaches to placing policy coherence in PCD, PCSD, or SDG framework. It is important to note that PCD is a concept that has also been challenged by the negative shift towards self-interest in the international environment. From the understanding of PCD, the concept puts forth the interests of developing countries, and while these are often antagonistic or indifferent towards the interests of developed countries, increased geopolitical competition and related crisis which have hit the EU poses a threat to PCD (Horký-Hluchán, 2022, pp. 11-12).

This chapter has provided a brief overview of PCD and its historical development, including the various perspectives through which it has been viewed. Horizontal PCD will be the focus of this study, which is the interaction between non-aid-related policies and development objectives. Despite placing PCD high on the agenda in the early 2000s, more progress has yet to be noted, which can be explained by several factors that will be explored in the analysis. Finally, the chapter also introduces the related concept of PCSD, which is crucial to understanding the development of PCD and its adoption in recent years.

3. Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs)

This chapter briefly introduces the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) with the African, Caribbean, and Pacific countries (ACP). This chapter provides a general introduction to the agreement's contents and objective, as the analysis will focus on the EPAs from a macro-level perspective.

The EPAs shape the EU's trade policy towards Africa. It is a legally binding contract between the EU and individual African countries, where the EU seeks to combine aid and trade policies under this agreement. The EPAs bring mutual benefits to the EU and its partner countries. According to the EU's official discourse, the EPAs will help partner countries integrate with their regional neighbors and help them build institutional capacities and apply principles of good governance. The EU views closer integration of African countries and the region into the global economy as the best way to increase trade volume on the continent while fostering development at det same time (Söderbaum, 2013, pp. 29-30).

The EPAs were introduced in the Cotonou Agreement and reflect a departure from the traditional relations between the EU and ACP, introducing a new European approach to development through trade and trade as a substitute for aid. With The Cotonou Agreement, the reciprocal access changed, meaning that the ACP countries would be required to open their markets to EU imports and require liberalization in other areas, such as investment and services. Its purpose is to reduce and eventually eradicate poverty and other ACP countries' integration into the world economy (European Council , 2023). Upon signing the EPAs, the goal is that 80 percent of a country's market should be open to European goods and services within a decade. The EU is the biggest export market for African products, and the EU is also the most significant donor of aid (Chimanikire, 2019, pp. 53-54). According to the EU, the EPAs are unlike other bilateral trade negotiations because they are development-oriented and not determined by the EU's economic interests. As mentioned, the EU has sought to establish this agreement with six regional groupings of third-world countries: Central Africa, West Africa, Southern Africa Development Community, Eastern and Southern Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific (Elgström, 2009, p. 451). The EPAs require economic liberalization by the participating countries. However, the ACP secretariat was not directly involved in the negotiations, which means they were limited in their trade negotiation capacities (Farrell, 2013 , pp. 110-111). Some African nations have therefore been hesitant due to the anticipated losses in import duty revenue, the transition period for tariff liberalization, and the scope of countries

which proved contentious issues for African countries in the negotiation with the EC. The EU has been unwilling to make concessions, and the ACP countries have been unwilling to bear the anticipated financial losses of liberalization. There has thus been a difference in the expectations and perceptions of the two actors regarding this agreement (Farrell, 2013 , p. 110)

The EU does not always speak with a single voice when it comes to international trade policies, as it is often a complex matter and process that leads up to whatever trade policy occurs. In connection to this, a crucial aspect is related to the interplay of the EU member state's role in the Council and the EC. On the one hand, it is emphasized how the member states control and guide the EC. On the other hand, it is emphasized that the exclusive competence of the EC provides autonomy over the Council and, thereby, ample room for maneuvers (Söderbaum, 2013, p. 29). There is criticism in academia, among policymakers, and civil society against the EU's policy stance on the EPA negotiations. The EU has been criticized for its approach towards African regionalism and, in general, for undermining African regional integration and cooperation. This critique is based on the EUs attempt to insist on the negotiation of the EPAs with regional groupings that do not match Africa's existing regional economic trade schemes or regional organizations. This also conflicts with the EU's official policies whereby the partnership is described as "equal". If one of the countries did not agree to sign the EPAs, the outcome would be that the EU would then close its markets, and no preferential treatment would be given to that county. Therefore, most countries signed due to the pressures coming from the EU. In connection to this, it is essential to point out that analyses of EU-Africa relations have always been viewed from a Eurocentric perspective, which focuses on the good which comes out of the EPAs, since even after three decades of EU-Africa trade relations, there is still poverty within the African continent (Söderbaum, 2013, p. 30)

The EPAs require economic liberalization by the participating countries and seek to foster sustainable development and increase trade volume on the African continent. However, some African nations have hesitated due to anticipated losses and lack of negotiation power, which may prove contentious for African countries in negotiations with the EC. The EU has been criticized for its approach towards African regionalism, and most countries signed the agreement due to pressure from the EU. It is worth noting that analyses of EU-Africa relations have often been Eurocentric, focusing on the perceived benefits of EPAs while overlooking ongoing poverty within Africa.

4. Methodology

This chapter presents the methodological framework adopted for this project and is organized into several sections to provide a comprehensive overview. The first section outlines the research design, explaining how the research was conducted and the approaches used. The next chapter presents this study's empirical focus, followed by a section that outlines the structure of the analysis. Finally, the following chapter presents the data which forms the basis for this study's findings and analysis. This is followed by a section elaborating on the validity and reliability of this study. Finally, a section on the limitations of this study is also presented, highlighting the potential constraints and challenges encountered during the research process.

4.1 Research Design

The project will be conducted using a qualitative approach and deductive reasoning. A qualitative approach in research refers to a set of methods and techniques used to collect, analyze, and interpret non-numerical data such as text, images, and observations. It aims to explore and understand social phenomena by examining the experiences, perspectives, and meanings of individuals and groups involved (Bryman, 2012, pp. 35-36, 23-24). For this project, the empirical data which will be analyzed and interpreted are texts in the form of secondary data. A strength of this approach is that it will allow a more in-depth understanding and exploration of why PCD has failed to make headway and how this is reflected in EU-Africa relations. It can provide rich insights into the complexity of PCD by focusing on the experiences, meanings, and perspectives of the individuals and groups involved. Another advantage of this approach is that it is flexible and allows the researcher to adjust their focus depending on emerging insights allowing for a revision of the research framework. However, a weakness of this approach is that the researcher's subjectivity is inherent in qualitative research meaning that one's perspectives and preconceived notions can influence one. In other words, the researcher can introduce their bias into their findings. Qualitative research can often be time- and resource-intensive, especially when the empirical data is primary, such as interviews and observations. This can, for example, limit the depth of the analysis. However, this weakness is not relevant to this study, as the empirical data is secondary and thus not as time and resource-intensive (Choy, 2014)

Deductive reasoning is a logical process that progresses from general ideas to specific conclusions. It is a reasoning process that works from the more general to the more specific and is also known as the "top-down" approach. It involves developing and testing a hypothesis

through observations and data collection to find support for or against it (Bryman, 2012, pp. 24-25). Instead of a set hypothesis, the theoretical framework for this study has helped establish theoretical expectations which can help answer the research question. These will be further elaborated on in the theory chapter, and like the hypotheses, the analysis will find support for or against these expectations. The strength of this approach is that it offers a logical and structured framework that allows a researcher to formulate hypotheses or theoretical expectations which guide the research (Bryman, 2012, p. 24). This contributes to a clear focus on the research questions throughout the study. In connection with this, a potential limitation of the approach is that it can limit or restrict exploring unexpected or unanticipated factors which can emerge during the research process overlooking important insights and or alternative frameworks that do not align with the predefined framework. However, as mentioned previously, working with a qualitative approach allows for flexibility, making it possible to adjust focus throughout a study.

This study investigates why PCD has failed to make headway within the EU in the context of EU-Africa relations, with a particular focus on trade and the EPAs. A qualitative approach with deductive reasoning can provide rich and in-depth insights into the complexity of PCD, why it has failed to make headway, and how this is reflected in EU-Africa relations.

4.2 Empirical Focus

For this project, the policy area which has been selected is trade. A criterion for selecting a policy area is that there needs to be sufficient data accessibility, as the empirical data for this research study is secondary. As mentioned, several policy areas have proven challenging for the EU's development objectives in Africa. Trade has been selected because it is one of the more debated areas that have previously been subject to research and case studies due to the importance of economic imperatives in policy decision-making (Söderbaum, 2013). Moreover, it has been selected because this study investigates the EPAs that account for trade and development objectives. This is a new approach where the EU tries to foster development and economic growth through trade liberalization (Elgström, 2009). Thus, it is a policy area that significantly impacts developing countries, as trade-related policies are closely linked to development goals such as poverty reduction, economic growth, and sustainability (European Commission, nd). Moreover, the EPAs in this connection are essential as these policies have been criticized for not being coherent with development objectives and for contributing to reinforcing systemic inequality, which goes against the principle of policy coherence for development (Elgström, 2009).

4.3 Structure of Analysis

The analysis follows the structure of the research question and has been divided into two sub-sections. First, the analysis structure is based on the theoretical framework. In the first part of the analysis, the framework addresses challenges and obstacles from a liberal intergovernmentalist lens and then from a constructivist lens. Conversely, the second part of the analysis reverses the order, starting with a constructivist viewpoint and then delving into the LI framework.

The first sub-section of the analysis focuses on the challenges and obstacles related to PCD. The sub-sections have been divided into four sections: *Resistance of Member States, Diverging beliefs and identities, The social construction of PCD, and PCD vs. PCSD*. This part of the analysis is concerned with the role of the member states and how their varying interests and motivation levels can explain the slow advancement of PCD from a liberal intergovernmentalist perspective. Through the constructivist framework, ideational factors will be analyzed concerning the challenges and obstacles identified. They will address the complex nature of PCD and the different interpretations by relevant actors (the EU and its member states). Finally, the last part of this sub-chapter in the analysis will investigate the interrelated concept of PCSD and how the emergence of this concept has influenced the progress of PCD.

The following sub-chapter of the analysis addresses the policy area of trade, more specifically, the EPAs in EU-Africa relations. This aims to investigate how the development of PCD is reflected in EU-Africa relations. This part of the analysis has also been divided into sub-sections: *The EU: Beliefs and Norms on the EPAs, and Critique of the EPAs: A competing reality, Member States and the EPAs.* Controversially to the first chapter, constructivism is applied to the first two sub-sections of this part of the analysis, which is followed by a sub-section analyzing the problem from a liberal intergovernmentalist perspective. This part of the analysis's second and third sub-section addresses the different perspectives of the EU and ACP countries, how they perceive the EPAs, and what this means for PCD. Following the analysis, the thesis will discuss the findings in relation to the theoretical expectations. Finally, the findings of this paper will be summarized and concluded in Chapter 8, answering the research question.

4.4 Data Selection

As stated earlier, the empirical data for this study consist of secondary data and therefore relies on publicly available documents. This data has been found using internet-based search engines

such as Google Scholar and Aalborg University Library. The keywords which have mainly been used in the search are policy coherence for development EU, failure of PCD, EU development policy, policy coherence and EPA reforms Africa, EU-Africa trade constraints, and EU-Africa inconsistent policies. The portfolio of data ranges from reports by the EU to journal articles, policy briefs, books, official websites, and other official documents. Reports by the EU have been given special attention in the analysis, as they entail data on PCD progress and monitoring and offer relevant insight on the topic. These include a workshop report on PCD by Horký-Hluchán (2022) and a questionnaire from member states (European Commission(e)) which provides insights into their structures and mechanisms to promote PCD. In addition, academic literature has provided rich insight into the different factors and obstacles regarding implementing and operationalizing PCD.

4.5 Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity are two terms that are used to evaluate the quality and trustworthiness of data. Reliability concerns the consistency and dependency of the research findings over time and across different contexts. In other words, a study's reliability demonstrates that the study's methods and analysis can be replicated or produce similar results when repeated by other researchers in different settings (Bryman, 2012). There are several ways in which a researcher can enhance the reliability of one's study. For example, it can be achieved through transparent research design and data collection. It can also be achieved by using multiple sources as data to confirm one's findings and to assess the consensus among these (Rose & Johnson, 2020). For this project, several secondary sources, some by the same authors, have been included in the study to answer the research question. As for the credibility of these sources, they include official reports, for example, by the EU, and academic articles published in different journals to enhance the reliability of this research.

On the other hand, the term validity concerns the degree to which research findings measure what they are intended to measure. This can be achieved using a straightforward research design, varied information, and thorough data analysis. This research accounts for validity using various reliable secondary data and is structured with a straightforward research design based on the theoretical framework selected and the theoretical expectations deduced. In a qualitative study, validity is given priority to ensure that the research findings accurately reflect the perspectives of those involved, which also helps establish credibility for a study (Rose & Johnson, 2020). In other words, the interpretations and conclusions derived from data must

represent the participants' perspectives, experiences, and meanings and the phenomenon under study. This study accounts for the different perspectives of the actors in focus to answer the research question. For example, the second part of the analysis accounts for the perspectives of both EU and ACP countries regarding their perceptions of the EPAs. The difference between these terms is that with validity, a researcher is concerned with the accuracy of the findings. In contrast, reliability concerns the researcher's approach and consistency (Rose & Johnson, 2020). Reliability and validity were primarily developed for quantitative research, and thus there is a discussion of aligning these terms with the qualitative paradigm (Golafshani, 2003; Rose & Johnson, 2020). However, these terms in the qualitative paradigm are conceptualized as trustworthiness and quality and are thus relevant.

4.6 Limitations

Regarding geographical limitations, this project is primarily concerned with EU-Africa relations. As this study is centered on PCD, a legal obligation for the EU, this project will focus on the EU instead of other international actors like the OECD or DAC, who have also sought to promote the PCD. Several other policy areas are relevant to include in this project which would allow for a more comprehensive and representative study, such as health, agriculture, and fisheries. This has not been possible due to the given limitations of this project in terms of scope and time constraints. While this policy area may also be interesting and relevant to investigate, the area of trade has been selected due to the close link between trade-related policies and development goals. However, this area is also investigated from a macro-level perspective and has no bilateral focus. As mentioned previously, a researcher needs to acknowledge the weaknesses of one's approach. Working qualitatively and with a deductive approach means that subjectivity is implied. A limitation of this research may be that bias can be reflected in this research and the findings. It is important to note that the researcher has sought to enhance the reliability and validity of this study to avoid bias and aim for objective data analysis. Working qualitatively with a deductive reasoning approach offers strengths such as in-depth understanding, flexibility, and a logical framework with theoretical expectations. By considering navigating the weaknesses and challenges of this approach, the research can comprehensively examine the research question.

5. Theory

The chapter presents the theoretical frameworks that have been selected for this study. These are liberal intergovernmentalism and constructivism. The theories will be applied to the empirical data to answer the research question and shed light on the complex challenges and dynamics of PCD and how the development hereof is reflected in the trade policy area in EU-Africa relations.

5.1 Liberal Intergovernmentalism (LI)

Liberal Intergovernmentalism (LI) is a theory of European integration, which according to one of the pioneers of the theory, Andrew Moravcsik, is also a "baseline theory" of European integration. The theory's three core assumptions are illustrated in Figure 1 below (Moravcsik, 2020).

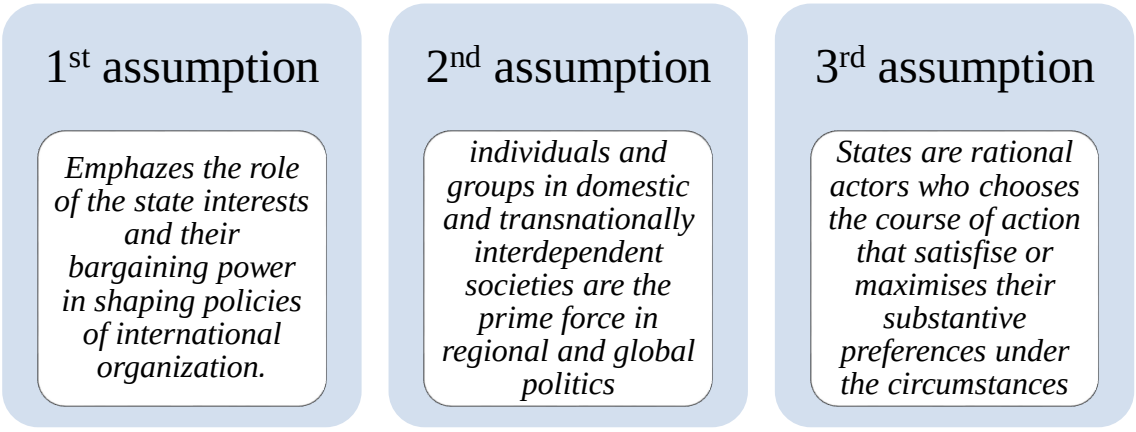

Figure 1 (own source)

The first assumption of the theory is associated with state preferences. The government of states acts in an "anarchical" context without a centralized authority to make and enforce political decisions. They are perceived as rational actors who aim to pursue national interests connected to domestic factors and are motivated primarily by economic interests (Kleine & Pollack, 2018, p. 1493). The theory emphasizes the role of state interests and bargaining in shaping the policies of international organizations, such as the EU (Moravcsik, 2020, p. 3). The second assumption is that individuals and groups in domestic and transnationally interdependent societies are the prime force in regional and global politics. In other words, it is a bottom-up theory and views foreign policy as goals of national governments and that these may vary as a response to the shifting pressure from domestic social groups. The third

assumption of the theory is that states are rational actors who, to their best ability, calculate alternative courses of action to choose the one that satisfies or maximizes their substantive preferences under the circumstances (Moravcsik, 2020, p. 43). Central to the understanding of this theory is the premise that rational individuals and private groups with autonomous and differentiated interests are the fundamental actors in the international arena. Therefore, pluralist interests are in constant competition for influence on the state as the "victor" of the domestic struggle gets to define the preference that the government of a nation will pursue in the interaction with other states. In other words, understanding state behavior and power will only be possible if one first understands what fundamental purpose each state seeks. These purposes are shaped by domestic interests (Kleine & Pollack, 2018, p. 1495). According to LI, international organizations are created to facilitate cooperation and coordination between states. Hence, member states within the EU are the key policymaking actors. Therefore, the EU is viewed as an intergovernmental organization where member states have significant control over policymaking processes. This means that member states negotiate and bargain with one another as they pursue their interests within the EU. Therefore, the EU's policy outcomes reflect the interests of the most powerful member states (Moravcsik, 2020, p. 3).

The theoretical perspective of LI is relevant for this thesis because it emphasizes the intergovernmental nature of the EU, which means that member states retain significant control over policymaking. Moreover, it suggests that the EU's trade policies are primarily driven by the economic interests of its member states. This has important implications for integrating development objectives into EU trade policy, as member states may be more concerned with securing economic benefits than promoting development objectives. This perspective explains why efforts to integrate development objectives across different policy areas have been slow and challenging. By looking into the bargaining power of different member states, it is possible to understand how EU policymaking reflects the interests of the most powerful member states and how this impacts PCD. Finally, LI provides a good theoretical perspective on the functioning of the EU's supranational institutions, as this theory suggests that it is the member states that retain significant control over policymaking rather than the EC or the EP (Moravcsik, 2020, pp. 12-13). By acknowledging the influence of member states on EU policymaking, it is possible to understand the member states' role in shaping EU policymaking. Finally, the theoretical perspective of LI provides a comprehensive and nuanced lens through which to explore the challenges and obstacles that contribute to the lack of progress in achieving PCD

within the EU as well as the complexities of the EU's trade policies, the power dynamics between member states and the interplay of economic interests and development objectives.

Constructivists have criticized LI for overlooking norms and rules on national preferences. They argue that national preferences are shaped by EU norms and identity-based movements rather than functional interests. Moreover, they also challenge the bargaining theory of LI, arguing that EU decision-making is more deliberative than LI suggests and, more importantly, that supranational actors like the EC and EP share influence with national governments. Historical institutionalists also criticize LI and argue that the theory fails to consider the dynamic nature of institutions and how they evolve (Kleine & Pollack, 2018). However, the strength of this theory for this study is that it allows the researcher to investigate the problem area by examining the role of the member states, who, according to this framework, are regarded as rational actors and key policymakers motivated by economic interests. Furthermore, as for the critique of this theory, this is not relevant to this thesis as the framework of LI is complemented by constructivism.

Based on the LI framework, the theoretical expectation which has been deduced in relation to this project is that the slow advancement of PCD, and evidently why it has failed to make headway, can be explained by the interests of the member states, as well as their resistance when it comes to implementing PCD.

5.2 Constructivism

Constructivism is one of the four major leading schools of IR theories. It is a relatively new paradigm that emerged in the 1980/90s (Behravesh, 2011, pp. 1-2). The theory holds that significant aspects of international relations are shaped by ideational factors and are centered around agents and structures in society. The theory focuses on social forces that prevail in a society, such as *ideas, knowledge, norms,* and *rules* (Baylis, 2014, p. 158). Within this theoretical paradigm, interests and identities are socially constructed, and ideational factors are collectively based on shared beliefs that construct the interests and identities of others. Central to the understanding of this theory is that the actions and behaviors of actors within the international system are not universal or static but are context-specific and subject to change (Behravesh, 2011, p. 2). The theory is attentive to how intersubjectively shared ideas shape behavior that constitutes the identities and interests of actors. Moreover, the actions of a state are not only shaped by political structures and power distribution but rather by ideational

structures by which states define themselves, such as who they are, what their goals are, and which role they believe they should play. The interaction between actors and how they learn and adapt to their environment also significantly shapes state action. (Copeland, 2006, p. 3). The goals of a state, be it either material or objective (economic development), immaterial or subjective (international recognition), are generated by the social corporate identity of a state and how they view themselves in relation to other actors in the international community (Behravesh, 2011, pp. 2-3).

Constructivism does not deny the existence of the material world but suggests that meaning and reality depend on ideas and interpretations by the actors in society (Behravesh, 2011, p. 2). Reality is not *something* that is out there and waits to be discovered. Instead, it is historically produced and culturally bound knowledge that allows us to understand, define, and make sense of the world. Knowledge in the form of symbols, rules, and concepts shapes how individuals construct and interpret their world (Baylis, 2014, p. 162). Certain behaviors, beliefs, and norms are constructed through various factors and circumstances. Despite being social creations, these constructs are perceived as an *objective reality*. In other words, the constructed reality appears to us as an objective reality coherent with *social facts*. There are things in this world that depend on human agreement and those who are not. For example, the ocean and oxygen exist independently of human agreement. Social facts are dependent on a human agreement, including human rights, money, and sovereignty. These social facts will only exist if human agreement exists, contributing to how we categorize the world and what we do (Baylis, 2014, pp. 158-159). A critique of this theory is that it emphasizes ideational factors and overlooks material and structural aspects of international relations. According to Palan (2000), the argument against constructivism is that it is empirically, and methodologically wrong, as ideational factors are not the principal force of order in the international system. Additionally, constructivism needs to pay more attention to the role of power, material interests, and economic factors in shaping international relations as it does not account for factors such as power disparities and geopolitical dynamics and how this shapes state behavior. Hence, the argument is that material factors and interests override ideational factors (Palan, 2000). However, regarding this critique, constructivism regards material interests, power, and economic factors as social constructions. In other words, international relations can only be understood if ideational factors are accounted for because these factors constitute social facts and, thus, *reality*. The strength of this framework for this study is that it allows for these factors to be examined when exploring the social phenomenon of PCD. Recognizing the importance

of economic factors, this theory is also complemented by LI. To summarize, how meaning is constructed and contested shapes the range of possible actions and outcomes in political processes. The impact of ideas is essential as it can function as a motor for change. In this context, *social construction* means that our identity shapes our interests and values, what is considered acceptable in society, and the means to achieve our interests (Behravesh, 2011, p. 2). This aspect of the theory is very relevant to understanding the complexity of PCD. It will provide helpful insights by investigating the problem in correlation to the different social actors and how they perceive, understand, and work with PCD.

The theoretical expectation for this framework is that the problem of implementing and advancing PCD can be explained by how the different member states and the EU understand PCD, i.e., the social construction of PCD, which depends on their respective interests, norms, and identities.

5.3 Contextualization of Theory to Research Question

This sub-section elaborates on the choice of theories and how the theory can help answer the research question. With the differences in their theoretical starting points, LI and constructivism both provide valuable insights into why PCD has failed to make headway and how this is reflected in EU-Africa relations. The two theories complement one another in this study, notably regarding *interests.* For example, the framework of LI addresses interests mainly in a rational context and further holds that interests are mainly guided and driven by economic factors. On the other hand, constructivism considers interest as an ideational factor connected to an actor's beliefs and identity.

LI has been selected for this study due to its applicability to studying the EU's policy coherence for development. First, it posits that the EU is primarily an intergovernmental organization in which member states retain significant control over policymaking. Next, it recognizes that states are rational actors primarily motivated by economic interests. One factor attributed to the slow progress and advancement of PCD in academia is concerned with the member states and their level of commitment to the concept (Carbone & Keijzerb, 2016). Thus, this theoretical lens can provide insights into how the EU balances its economic interests with its development objectives. The theoretical perspective of LI is, therefore, a helpful lens through which to explore the complexities of the EU's trade policies in relation to development objectives and

how the interests and motivations of member states may be a critical factor in explaining why PCD has made little progress leading to slow progress of the advancement of PCD. Therefore, the theoretical expectation deduced from this framework provides a lens through which the research question is examined.

Constructivism has been selected for this study due to its focus on ideational factors such as ideas, norms, and beliefs which shape social and political behavior. Factors which the LI framework overlooks. This theory provides a different perspective on the challenges and opportunities for achieving coherence in practice, as different actors in political processes may understand the concept differently, which is essential as this has an influence on political outcomes and behaviors. Thus, it is essential to investigate how the EU and member states understand PCD. This will be explored further in the analysis. By employing a constructivist approach, this study can look at member states and the EU as social actors driven by intangible elements such as norms, ideas, and values in policymaking. Moreover, this theory holds that meaning is constructed socially. The theoretical expectation for this theory is that the research question can be explained by how the different member states and the EU understand PCD, i.e., the social construction of PCD, which depends on their respective beliefs, norms, interests, and identities. Both expectations will therefore help guide the research and interpretation of the findings. The analysis will either find evidence to support these expectations or against them.

6. Analysis

The analysis has been divided into two chapters, each of which has been further divided into sub-sections. The first chapter addresses the challenges and obstacles related to PCD, which have been identified and will be analyzed in relation to the theoretical framework. The next chapter focuses on PCD in relation to the EPAs and the trade-development nexus in the context of EU-Africa relations.

6.1 PCD: Challenges and Obstacles

The challenges and obstacles identified concerning why PCD has failed to make headway will be presented in this chapter. The order of the sections will be structured based on the theoretical framework. The first section revolves around the resistance and interests of member states to which the LI framework will be applied. Other challenges and obstacles revolve around the understanding and social construction of PCD and PCSD, as well as the values and identities of the different member states, which will be addressed in relation to the constructivist framework.

6.1.1. Resistance of Member States

The lack of progress in advancing and promoting PCD has partially been attributed to most member states' resistance and lack of interest (Carbone & Keijzerb, 2016, p. 32). According to liberal intergovernmentalism, member states have different interests and preferences and cooperate when it is in their national interest to do so. This means that some member states may be more supportive of PCD than others, depending on how they perceive the costs and benefits of cooperation on this issue. Carbone (2012) argues that when it comes to PCD, the policies and political structures within a donor country may prove to be a challenge, as this involves various sub-systems to come to an agreement while they all have their interests. He further argues that when there is a clash between these political sub-systems, the needs of developing countries are subsumed by domestic interests (Carbone M., 2012). This statement is coherent with the second assumption of LI, which holds that domestic societies are the prime force in regional and global politics. Concerning the abovementioned, each member state also has its own mechanisms regarding PCD, which reflect the varying levels of commitment to PCD. A challenge, therefore, lies in the political structure of the member states and the mechanisms in place. In the questionnaire from 2018 (European Commission(e)), the member states were asked if they undertake ex-ante assessments of the impacts of domestic policies in

partner countries to take account of development objectives. Nine out of nineteen of them responded that they undertake these assessments, and this is illustrated in Figure 2 below:

Countries	Yes	No
Austria		x
Belgium	x	
Czech Republic		x
Denmark	x	
Finland		x
Estonia	x	
France		x
Germany	x	
Luxembourg		x
Greece		x
Ireland	x	
Italy	x	
Latvia		x
Malta		x
Portugal		x
Slovenia		x
Spain	x	
Sweden	x	
Netherlands	x	

Figure 2 (Source: own creation)

The countries who answered yes, have some mechanism to ensure that their policies undergo evaluations before implementation to assess them and their potential impact on partner countries by considering development goals and objectives. In the questionnaire, Belgium emphasized the importance of conducting ex-ante and ex-post assessments of national policies concerning PCD. From a LI perspective, states may carry out this ex-ante assessment if it interests them. Conflicting interests in donor countries can explain the lack of doing so, as conducting these assessments may uncover inconsistencies in implementing their policies. It

has already been established that the economic aspect is a priority for member states, and carrying out ex-ante assessments may lead to increased competition of pluralist interests. However, not carrying out these assessments will conflict with Article 208 of the TFEU. According to the report by the member states, all countries which responded (19/27) answered yes to having a political commitment to PCD (European Commission(e)). Ten countries have a political commitment to PCD but need mechanisms in play to ensure that a policy, before its adoption, takes account of development objectives in partner countries. In other words, the mechanisms of the different member states and their varying levels of commitment to PCD can explain why it has failed to make headway within the EU.

The resistance by member states can therefore be explained by clashes in political sub-systems, which results in member states opting for the course of action which satisfies or maximizes their substantive preferences. This is, for example, seen in the nexus of trade and development, where there is a divide between the perceptions of the member states. Some argue that the free trade approach is the best strategy for growth and development, and others prioritize the special needs of Least Developed Countries (LDCs). The diverging preferences of member states can be distinguished between the liberal and the protectionist countries. Member states such as Denmark, The Netherlands, Finland, and Sweden belong to the former, whereas the Mediterranean countries tend to belong to the latter (Söderbaum, 2013). In general, the EU is committed to free trade in its official rhetoric, which can also be reflected in the interests of the member states. The first assumption of the LI framework is relevant in this context as it holds that state interests and bargaining shape an international organization's policies. The lack of political commitment to PCD can be viewed from the perspective of the third assumption, whereby states will to their best ability, choose the outcome that satisfies or maximizes their substantive preferences under the circumstances and further aligns with the fact that states are rational actors primarily motivated by economic interests. Thus, in this context, there are two competing frameworks whereby the economic aspect is prioritized over development objectives, which is a challenge when implementing PCD. As mentioned earlier, the member states that advocate for a more development-friendly approach include the Nordic countries. However, despite the influence of the more development-friendly countries, the free trade position has remained dominant throughout negotiations (Söderbaum, 2013). This showcases how the economic aspect is prioritized by member states, who argue that it is possible to foster development and secure economic benefits simultaneously. This is also reflected in the EPA negotiations, where Mediterranean and Eastern countries have been

relatively uninterested in the negotiations and are more apt to follow the EC's proposals when their material self-interests are not at stake (Elgström, 2009).

The efforts of some member states trying to advance PCD has been described to *be in vain* (Carbone M., 2012). The member states who have sought to promote the PCD may have been concerned with promoting development objectives rather than securing economic benefits, whilst other member states may have been more concerned with securing economic benefits explaining the criticisms the member states have received for their lack of commitment to the principle. This is also reflected in the divide of member states regarding the EPAs, whereby some countries favor the more development-friendly approach, and others free trade in the context of development. The fact that eight member states did not respond to the questionnaire can be viewed as a lack of commitment to PCD. As the states have significant control over policymaking, these efforts, which are described to be *in vain,* can be explained by the bargaining power of different member states and their number, which is then reflected at *the EU level,* explaining why PCD has been difficult to promote. PCD cannot be successfully promoted and implemented if it is only a minority of member states that have a high commitment to PCD.

The intra-institutional dimension is also relevant in this connection, as there is a rotation of the presidency of the Council of the EU, which rotates every six months. During this period, the presidency chairs meetings at every level in the Council to ensure the continuity of the EU's work in the Council. The Lisbon Treaty introduced a system of "trios" where three member states work together and set long-term goals that the Council will address over 18 months. Each of the three countries then prepares its 6-month program (European Council, 2023). The goals and agendas of a member state are set through the work of the "trio" that identify and agree on a common set of goals, however, during each nation's presidency, they perform this role in relation to intergovernmentalist policies (Carbone M., 2012, p. 164). From a LI perspective, each member state will then, during this timeframe, aim to promote values and interests which are important to that nation, and as seen in this section, there are varying levels of commitments of PCD amongst member states. Each member state has its agenda and priorities, which are reflected in the goals and programs it developed during its presidency. Contrastingly, from a constructivist angle, the "trios" system reflects a normative understanding of cooperation and coordination among member states, whereby they work together to set common goals and agendas for the Council over 18 months. This system creates a framework for member states to interact with one another, negotiate and develop shared understandings, and coordinate their

actions within the EU. The institutional dimension also reflects and reinforces member states' diverse identities and interests. Moreover, member states may have different levels of commitment to certain policies, such as PCD, depending on how they perceive its relevance to their interests and identities. The following chapters will analyze the role of identities in relation to this problem and the social construction of PCD and PCSD.

6.1.2 Diverging Beliefs and Identities

It has been established that there is a divide in the member states regarding their stance on development and trade. This applies to the member states and the different EU institutions and will be elaborated on in this chapter. The difference in the member states stance regarding what they view as the best approach is liked to their identities, beliefs, norms, and how they seek to be perceived in the international arena. In the mid-2000s, when the EU shifted gear and placed PCD high on this agenda, this was owed to the inputs of the EC and like-minded member states who attempted to promote the concept. These member states include Denmark, Ireland, Sweden, and the Netherlands (Carbone & Keijzerb, 2016, p. 32). They are examples of countries that are more development-friendly and supportive of PCD. These countries believe that the LDCs' needs must be considered and are characterized as more *development-friendly* countries (Söderbaum, 2013). The political outcome, the increased focus on PCD at this time, can be explained by the shared understanding of the development-friendly countries and the EC. These countries have also questioned the EC's approach to free trade, which DG-Trade and like-minded member states have mainly promoted. They have emphasized the importance of considering the needs of LDCs and the goal of poverty reduction (Elgström, 2009). These like-minded countries, which have a shared understanding with DG-Trade, are more trade-oriented and believe it is possible to prioritize the economic aspect while furthering and advancing development. Their different beliefs are linked to these countries' identities and can therefore explain why they prioritize the economic aspect over development goals. Therefore, the belief of these actors can be considered *social facts*, which explains why these actors are keen to prioritize trade and the economic aspect.

The intra-institutional dimension of the EU is another important factor in explaining this problem. Regarding the EP, PCD remains a high priority for some EP committees but is not being taken seriously by others, such as the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice, and Home Affairs. The EC's Committee on Development has been active in introducing PCD into relevant initiatives, but still, this has not been enough to ensure the EC applies PCD to all relevant

impact assessments (Horký-Hluchán, 2022, p. 32). This can be explained by how the different EU bodies are driven by their corporate identity and beliefs. This also applies to the Directorate-Generals of the EC and is reflected in the negotiations of the EPAs where there have been territorial and ideological clashes, such as with DG Trade and DG DEVE on the negotiations of the EPAs. The clashes were territorial in the sense that they had different assumptions on the needs of developing countries, with DG Trade assuming this would be taken care of by development assistance (Carbone & Keijzerb, 2016). Here it is evident that there is a difference in opinion rooted in the identities and interests of the different EU institutions.

6.1.3 The Social Construction of PCD

As stated earlier, a key aspect of constructivism is that the way meaning is constructed and contested shapes the range of possible actions and outcomes in political processes. The social construction of PCD, meaning how different actors understand it, is important when investigating why PCD has failed to make headway. A challenge that has been identified in connection to this relates to the understanding of PCD (Horký-Hluchán, 2022).

In the 2018 external evaluation on PCD, which the EC commissioned, it was concluded that there was *no common understanding* of the EU's approach to the PCD and that there is an absence of clear targets and transparent monitoring. Similarly, in another evaluation commissioned by the member states of the EU, it appears that there is not a shared understanding of *what impact is sought through* the mechanisms associated with this concept (European Commission(e); Horký-Hluchán, 2022). Constructivism highlights the importance of shared understandings and meanings regarding political processes. This report suggests that the lack of shared understanding and clarity regarding the EUs approach to PCD leads to confusion and inconsistency, which hinders the promotion of PCD. The absence of clear targets and transparent monitoring can also reflect a lack of common consensus or conflicting norms and beliefs among EU member states and institutions. The lack of clarity and common understanding contrasts with Article 208 of the TFEU, a verbatim part of the EU's treaties since the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 (Horký-Hluchán, 2022, p. 13). The findings of these reports suggest that, despite the treaty obligation and the efforts made over the years to promote the concept, there are several factors associated with the complex nature of PCD which have made it difficult for EU institutions and member states to translate commitments into practice, here among lack of shared understanding and thus the social construction of PCD.

According to Carbone (2008), it is important to identify the beholder's perspective when it comes to policy coherence. For example, the same decision may be coherent from a trade perspective but incoherent from a development perspective. Perfect coherence is unrealistic, and certain incoherence is inevitable in a pluralist political system. The absence of a basic understanding of PCD suggests that different actors have different interpretations and constructions of the concept. These different constructions may lead to divergent perceptions of what PCD entails and its goals, which may lead to a lack of political commitment to mobilize the concept. This divergence is evident in the member states responses to the EC's questionnaire from 2018. When asked about outstanding challenges relating to fostering policy coherence for sustainable development in partner countries/developing countries, Austria points out that adequate political will and the best procedures for PCD are not enough to ensure that it will be taken into consideration, instead technical know-how is needed in respective sectors such as trade to make an in-depth analysis of policy proposals (European Commission(e), p. 3). Belgium emphasizes how PCD/PCSD requires increased capacities for ex-ante and ex-post evaluations of policies in many areas and a strong political mandate of the PCSD agenda, as it will contribute to enabling changes in cases of found inconsistencies. Further, it emphasizes that this is particularly relevant to politically sensitive agendas (European Commission(e), p. 3). On a more general note, Estonia points out that it is a challenge to make coordination mechanisms work, both on a national level and an EU level (European Commission(e), p. 3). The different understandings and mechanisms in place in the different member states are a clear example of how vital a common understanding of PCD is, its mechanisms, and what goals are sought is important to its implementation. The absence of shared understandings and meanings means that it is difficult to identify clear targets and indicators to measure progress toward achieving these targets. Similarly, the lack of political will to effectively use institutional mechanisms can be attributed to the socially constructed nature of PCD. If actors in the EU and its member states do not share a common understanding of PCD, they may not see the value in investing political capital in its implementation. Academic studies also stress a mismatch between the institutional mechanisms to enhance PCD and the lack of political will to use them effectively (Carbone M., 2012). This can also be explained by the fact that the member states do not have a shared understanding of *what impact is sought through* the mechanisms which are associated with this concept meaning that the lack of a political will can be explained by the absence of a shared understanding of PCD according to Horký-Hluchán's assessment (2022).

6.1.4 PCD vs. PCSD

As mentioned previously, the European Consensus on Development was adopted in 2017 and is an overall response to the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, which also accounts for PCD. In the joint questionnaire from the member states, the EU clearly states that PCD is a crucial element to the strategy of achieving the SDGs but that it also offers an important contribution to the PCSD, which is embedded in the 2030 Agenda. In this report, it appears that the EU decided that with this new approach, all work and reporting on PCD should be integrated into the overall EC work related to the 2030 Agenda (Commission, 2018, p. 1). However, the emergence of PCSD has contributed to more confusion about PCD and the lack of clarity concerning this policy. Earlier, it was mentioned that PCSD may be a blessing for PCD, as it has been highlighted in connection to the 2030 Agenda. However, it is important to note that whilst PCD is viewed as a key element in the overall EU effort to implement the 2030 Agenda, the EU did not see PCSD as an agenda itself that is to be incorporated into the development policy. This is also in line with the perception of DG International Partnerships (INTPA) and their understanding of PCSD as *PCD in a sustainable development context* (Horký-Hluchán, 2022, pp. 10-11). According to this source, if PCD is viewed as complex, PCSD is more encompassing and complex. The confusion of the clarification between the two concepts has led to an exhaustion of policy capacities and, evidently, a delay in the implementation of PCD policies, which may, therefore, also explain the slow progress of its advancement.

The EC has expressed a regret that for some EU member states, PCD has been partially or totally subsumed by PCSD, which in connection to the other challenges related to the implementation, provides explanations as to why it has been difficult to advance PCD policies. In the questionnaire, the Czech Republic states that the political commitment to PCD is embedded in the country's *Development Cooperation Strategy of the Czech Republic 2018-2030* and in the *National Strategic Framework of the Czech Republic 2030,* which serves as the main 2030 agenda platform (European Commission(e)). In Denmark, PCD is embedded in the National Action Plan for Sustainable Development Goals, which encourages all actors in society to contribute *to the SDGs* and pledges to include an impact analysis for global development and developing countries with any new legislation and other efforts which are deemed relevant. The inter-ministerial working groups have been established as part of the action plan to monitor the plan's implementation and further posit that the ministry is responsible for the indicators that fall under its purview (European Commission(e)). Estonia

reports that the country has considerable experience in advancing PCD. However, the country references the strategy *Sustainable Estonia 21*, which serves as a framework to implement the SDGs. The country also refers to the *Sustainable Development Act of 1995* and the *Sustainable Development Strategy of 2005.* The responses by these three countries exemplify how the political commitment of PCD is incorporated into the more general approach toward the 2030 Agenda.

The 2030 agenda has contributed to a reaffirmation of PCD, as the EU intends that PCD should be integrated into the overall work related to PCD. However, a problem in this context is further confusion and lack of clarity between the two concepts, which are evidently interlinked. From a constructivist perspective, the problem of PCD being subsumed by PCSD can be seen as a result of the changing norms surrounding development and international cooperation. In this case, the emergence of the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda has created a new normative framework for development that emphasizes sustainable development and policy coherence. However, constructivists also acknowledge that ideas are not fixed and can change over time. Therefore, the confusion and lack of clarity around PCD and PCSD may reflect the ongoing contestation and negotiation over the meaning and significance of these ideas. Countries may interpret and apply these concepts differently, leading to divergent policy outcomes explaining why PCSD has subsumed PCD for some countries like Denmark and Estonia PCD. The new normative framework has shifted how development policies are conceptualized and implemented, and PCD has been incorporated into this new paradigm. Moreover, the problem of PCD and PCSD also contributes to the exhaustion of policy capacities and, evidently, a delay in implementing PCD. This could also lead to slow progress in achieving the SDGs. Earlier, it was established that while PCD is complex, PCSD is even more complex and all-encompassing. The fact that PCSD subsumes PCD for some member states can result from policymakers overlooking the importance of PCD and directing the focus on PCSD. In other words, it is important to maintain a clear distinction between PCD and PSCD to ensure that both concepts are adequately addressed in policy and implementation efforts.

From an LI perspective, the problem of PCD being subsumed by PCSD can be seen because of the interplay between domestic politics and international cooperation. In this case, the incorporation of PCD into the 2030 Agenda reflects a bargaining process among EU member states with different priorities and interests. Some member states may prioritize PCD to advance development in partner countries, while others may view PCSD as a way to achieve

environmental and sustainability objectives. LI emphasizes the importance of domestic institutions in shaping state preferences and behavior. Therefore, the subsuming of PCD by PCSD may reflect the influence of domestic actors, such as national governments or interest groups, who prioritize specific policy goals over others. From this standpoint, the slow progress in advancing PCD policies may reflect a lack of domestic support or institutional capacity to implement such policies effectively.

5.1.6 Summary

The lack of a shared understanding and clear targets for PCD has hindered progress and is a factor that explains why PCD has failed to make headway. Furthermore, lack of shared understanding and clear targets has also led to a lack of political commitment to mobilize the concept. The socially constructed nature of PCD has contributed to this, as there is an absence of a single basic understanding of PCD. This has led to divergent perceptions of what PCD entails, which makes it difficult to identify clear targets and indicators to measure progress toward achieving these targets. The lack of political will to use institutional mechanisms effectively can also be attributed to the socially constructed nature of PCD, as actors may not see the value in investing political capital in its implementation if they do not share a common understanding of PCD. Additionally, some member states engage more in PCD than others, depending on how they perceive the costs and benefits of cooperation on this issue.

The reason why PCD has failed to make headway can be explained by most member states' resistance and lack of interest. There is a divergence of member states' preferences, distinguished between liberal and protectionist countries, which can be explained by their different interests, values, and identities. Some member states have placed PCD at the heart of their international development policy and have set mechanisms to achieve it, which vary among countries. However, a problem is the lack of a common understanding of what is sought through these mechanisms. This is reflected in the slow progress of PCD, with only nine out of 19 member states undertaking ex-ante assessments of the impacts of domestic policies in partner countries to take account of development objectives.

The emergence of PCSD has contributed to confusion and lack of clarity surrounding PCD. The EU sees PCD as a key element in the overall effort to implement the 2030 Agenda but does not see PCSD as an agenda to be incorporated into development policy. The confusion and lack of clarity around PCD and PCSD may reflect the ongoing contestation and negotiation over the meaning and significance of these ideas. The subsuming of PCD by PCSD for some

member states could result from policymakers overlooking the importance of PCD and directing focus on PCSD. In summary, the lack of shared understanding, clear targets, and political commitment to PCD, combined with the socially constructed nature of the concept and member states' differing preferences and interests, have hindered the progress of PCD.

5.1 Policy Coherence for Development & the EPAs

This chapter examines PCD in the context of EU-Africa trade relations, focusing on the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs). The chapter analyzes the EU's beliefs and norms on the EPAs and how this relates to PCD. Next, it addresses criticisms of the EPA and how this offers a competing reality to the EU's beliefs and norms. Finally, the analysis addresses the member states' role in the EPA negotiations.

6.2.1 The EU: Beliefs and Norms on the EPAs

The EU views the EPA agreement to create sustainable economic growth and contribute to poverty reduction in ACP countries. The EU believes in the benefits of trade liberalization for development and has portrayed itself as a "*partner for development [and]… a promoter of norms"* (Hurt , Lee, & Lorenz-Carl, 2012, p. 73). This belief is coherent with PCD, where the goal is poverty reduction and coherence in non-aid policies. According to the EU, the EPAs are a means to strengthen competitiveness, expand industrialization, and improve export performance. They are also compatible with the framework set by the World Trade Organization (WTO). The emphasis here suggests that the EU's belief in the norms and rules of this institution is an essential aspect of the international system, which shapes the view of the EPAs as a legitimate trade agreement (The European Commission(f), n.d.).

The EPAs go beyond conventional free trade as they also account for development objectives of ACP countries. An important feature of the EPAs is the *Aid for Trade Initiative,* where trade policy and development cooperation reinforce one another. The EU seeks to support partner countries in preparing and implementing regional and bilateral trade through this initiative. The goal is to help these countries strengthen their trade policy capacity, enhance private sector development, and help small and medium enterprises (SMEs) become competitive in the global markets. This approach by the EU to the EPAs is driven by the institution's belief in the importance of trade as a tool for poverty reduction and to promote sustainable economic growth in ACP countries (The European Commission(f), n.d.).

According to the EU, a feature of the EPAs is that it is a *partnership of equals* and encourages a shift from aid to trade and investment to generate growth, jobs, and poverty reduction. The EU views the EPAs as *reciprocal* and *asymmetrical* as they open the EUs markets to EPA countries fully and immediately, meaning that EPA partners do not have to pay tariffs or duties on any of their exports to the EU. On the other hand, EPA partners partially open their markets to the EU (approx. 80 percent) and benefit from long transition periods to promote industrialization and strengthen their capacity for competitiveness. Emphasis is placed on norms such as a partnership of equals and asymmetry which is shaped by the belief that free trade will benefit all the parties involved. Free trade is a norm that the EU promotes in trade relations with ACP countries as the EU; the EPAs are thus perceived as a fair agreement that will benefit all parties in an equitable manner. These factors align with the EU's identity as a normative power. Ian Manners (2002) states that the EU's identity is grounded in its core values of *peace, liberty, the rule of law, democracy, human rights, social solidarity, anti-discrimination, sustainable development, and good governance.* This identity, derived from an "elite-driven, treaty-based, legal order," set the EU apart from traditional state actors prioritizing security-related concerns over ethical ones (Manners, 2002, pp. 242-243). The EU's beliefs and norms regarding trade liberalization and the EPAs align with the institution's corporate identity as a normative power that seeks to promote poverty reduction and sustainable development. Hence, the identity of the EU as a normative power shapes the interests and values of the institution, which reflects in the EPAs and the Aid for Trade Initiative. In other words, the EPAs can be viewed as a political outcome based on the beliefs, norms, and identity of the EU, and is, therefore, in the view of the EU, also a means to advance policy coherence for sustainable development as development objectives are considered in the nexus of trade. The EU considers the EPAs a positive agreement that aligns with its perception as a normative power and PCD. However, PCD has, due to several challenges and obstacles, failed to make headway, and the EU has also received criticism for its approach to the EPAs. Moreover, establishing the EPAs with ACP countries has been a challenging process. The following section will explore the reasons for the slow progress of PCD in connection to the difficulties faced by the EU in establishing the EPAs.

6.2.2 Critique of the EPAs: A Competing Reality

The EPAs are situated between trade and aid policy and, thereby, the co-existence of two competing normative frameworks. The EU recognizes that development cooperation now

extends beyond aid and, therefore, also requires coherence in non-aid policies. However, the EU has been criticized for its approach to the EPAs, as it has insisted on the negotiation, despite criticism of undermining African regional integration and cooperation by disregarding existing regional economic trade schemes and regional organizations. It has now been established that the EU considers the EPAs to be a positive initiative that is consistent with its identity as a normative power. Constructivism holds that *reality* depends on interpretations and ideas by the actors in society. Hence the beliefs and norms constructed by the EU regarding the EPAs construct a reality that appears to the EU as an objective reality. However, the *reality* of the EU, its norms, beliefs, and perception as a normative power, is challenged by criticism regarding the EPAs. As mentioned in chapter three, African countries were reluctant to sign the EPAs because they feared the implications of the anticipated financial losses. Moreover, as the ACP secretariat was not directly involved in the negotiations on the EPAs, these countries' negotiation capacities were also limited and contrasted with the EU's norm of an equal partnership.

The approach by DG Trade to the EPAs came as a surprise for many ACP countries, which were used to the more development-friendly and accommodative negotiation in DG Development (Söderbaum, 2013; Hurt , Lee, & Lorenz-Carl, 2012). DG Trade has been viewed as a negotiator that paid little attention to development concerns in opening the markets of developing countries to EU exports. With the broad formulations of the mandate of the EPAs, DG Trade had free reins in its conduct of the negotiations. According to Elgström (2009), the officials from DG Trade were able to use the directive in the internal debate to counter criticisms of the ways of handling the negotiations. An interviewee says: *We just do what we are required to do according to the mandate* (Elgström, 2009, p. 459), arguing that they were simply following the mandate. This way, DG Trade would argue that its actions were consistent with agreed-upon norms, and thus the mandate functioned as a policy commitment to which both the member states and the EC felt obliged to adhere. Furthermore, in the early stages of the negotiations, ACP negotiators described DG Trade as a *"tough, confrontational, 'mercantilist'* negotiator that... paid scant attention to development concerns" (Elgström, 2009, p. 455). This contrasts with the EU's norms on equality and a partnership for development, as well as the EU's promise that the EPAs are a development tool. Moreover, this perception of DG trade is also in contrast to the EU identity. This reflects the importance of the identities of the different actors, as DG Development was considered more *development friendly.* African states are dependent on the EU, as it is their biggest export market, and the EU is the biggest

contributor of aid. The fact that these countries, given their weak negotiating capacity, have resisted the completion of the EPAs signifies a problem with this agreement.

Constructivism can help explain this dynamic, as the theory is relevant in understanding how the beliefs and norms shape the behavior and interaction of actors. The EPAs were framed as trade negotiations, which favor free trade norms over development norms. This frame is reinforced by the actions and beliefs of the EC, particularly DG Trade, which has been a strong advocate for free trade principles. As for the more development-friendly countries, their position is influenced by their beliefs about what is considered a right and just approach. The Scandinavian countries and the Netherlands are EU member states who have advocated for development concerns over the years. Scandinavian countries have a long-standing experience as donors of foreign assistance to Africa and therefore view the EU's focus on the ACP countries as a natural continuation of his. However, Germany and the new member states do not have special attachments and would like to follow a more global approach. Spain and Portugal have a traditional focus on Latin America and Northern Africa. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, the Mediterranean and Eastern countries have been relatively uninterested in the EPA negotiations. They are, therefore, apt to follow the EC's proposals when their interests are not at stake (Elgström, 2009).

In other words, the institutionalized norms that the actors adhere to are according to their policy preferences that reflect their beliefs and what they deem important. With the EPA negotiations, it is evident that the EU favors free trade norms over development norms, to which the economic aspect dominates. Therefore, development-friendly countries must respond to this dominant norm with value priorities to justify their priorities. However, as noted previously, member states are reluctant to openly disagree if they face a clear EU majority. Therefore, the decision by like-minded countries to agree on the EPA mandate can be explained by their commitment to the consensus norm. The acceptance of the mandate by the *development-friendly* countries can be explained by the fact that they adhere to the consensus norm, as they are generally unwilling to openly disagree if the EU majority is clear. Despite the difference in their values and priorities, these countries also aimed to support DG Trade's objective of creating a more open trade regime and to avoid further demands from the more protectionist group, evidently leading them to accept the trade-focused approach of the mandate and not push for more development-friendly approach (Elgström, 2009; Hurt , Lee, & Lorenz-Carl, 2012). Thus, the critique against the EU and the EPAs suggests that this agreement does more harm than good, which is a social fact that is in opposition to that of the EU. In other

words, there are two opposing realities regarding the nature of the EPAs, which are linked to the different actors' identities, interests, norms, and beliefs.

6.2.3 Member States & the EPAs

Trade is an important domain when it comes to PCD, and according to the critique of the EU and the EPAs, this agreement reaffirms the asymmetrical relationship between the EU-ACP countries and perpetrates unequal exchange leading to little or no economic growth (Chimanikire, 2019). This conflicts with article 208 of the TFEU, where the purpose of PCD is to eradicate poverty in the long run. Moreover, this is also in contrast with the EU's beliefs and norms regarding the EPAs, as they reflect unequal exchange between ACP countries and the EU and, arguably, poverty. While the EU, on one front, argues that free trade will foster development and economic growth, the pressure from the EU has forced African countries to agree to relations that they otherwise would not have agreed to. This is also a reflection of the asymmetrical relationship between the two actors, as it was the EU who insisted that Africa should be divided into four sub-regions for EPA negotiations, which proved to be problematic because it divided Africa, which was supposed to integrate under one group, and as mentioned previously does not regard the existing trade mechanisms for regional integration and cooperation (Chimanikire, 2019). From a liberal intergovernmentalist perspective, norms and values which may drive the member states' approach to EPAs are not accounted for.

On the other hand, according to this theoretical perspective, the EPAs can be viewed as a rule or tactic used by the EU and its member states to further their selfish interests in a world where globalization and openness have become the primary tools for development (Chimanikire, 2019). This can be explained by the fact that member states, viewed as the key policymakers in the EU, are acting rationally by aiming to promote economic interests. This is mainly reflected in the fact that if one of the ACP countries did not agree to sign the EPAs, the outcome would be that the EU would close its markets, and no preferential treatment would be given to that county. Given this pressure, most countries decided to sign the agreement. This outcome can be viewed as a strategy by the member states and the EU to use its leverage to pressure ACP countries into signing the agreements. In other words, from this perspective, it can be argued that the member states act in their interests and negotiate with one another to choose the course of action that satisfies their preferences under the circumstances. Moreover, through this theoretical lens, the EPA negotiations result from the bargaining between the EU and ACP countries, where the EU, due to its negotiating power, aims to promote economic interests. On the other hand, the resistance from ACP countries to accept the EPAs can be

explained by this framework. Nevertheless, despite their disadvantage in the negotiations, they also seek to make a rational choice, protect their industries, and secure favorable terms of trade.

The EU has also insisted on including WTO's Most-Favored-Nation (MFN) clause in the agreement, which ensures that countries cannot discriminate between their trading partners (Chimanikire, 2019). The fact that the EU has insisted on including the MFN clause in the EPAs limits the possibilities for African countries to enter into other preferential agreements amongst themselves and with third parties such as China, Brazil, and other countries of the South. Not only does this limit African countries' ability to diversify their international and South-South relations, but it also increases the dependency on the EU and undermines South-South cooperation (Chimanikire, 2019). This also conflicts with the purpose of the EPAs, which purpose is also to further regional integration.

According to Elgström (2009), analyses from Kenya predict that the country will lose 15 percent in regional trade under the EPAs and have estimated that the trade of value-added goods will be worst hit. Moreover, the dependency on primary export will consequently rise. In addition, the EPAs will generate an increased defensiveness between countries and within regions, leading to tighter border controls and more burdensome restrictions for the private sector. Hence, the request to divide Africa into groups to negotiate the EPAs is unfavorable to Africa, as it does little to help the region coordinate its trade policies and foster regional integration. In connection with this, the EPAs create dependency, a situation favoring the EU and a disadvantage to ACP countries. It can therefore be argued that the EPAs perpetuate existing inequalities in the global system. This agreement can thus be seen to maintain the status quo, which perpetuates the dependency of the ACP countries on the EU. From an LI perspective, the domination of the trade domain and the MFN clause can be explained as a means for the EU member states to ensure that any favorable trade opportunities that occur with other international actors will also be extended to the EU. Overall, LI can provide insights into the actions and motivations of the EU and its member states in relation to trade negotiations with developing countries.

6.2.4 Summary

The EU views the EPAs to combine aid and trade policies under one agreement and reflects a departure from the traditional relations between the EU and ACP countries. The beliefs and norms introduced are coherent with how the EU would be presented in the international arena,

i.e., as a normative power. With the EPAs, the EU takes a new approach to development through trade as a substitute for aid. This is coherent with PCD, whose goal is poverty reduction and ensuring that non-aid policies account for development concerns. However, as introduced in this chapter, the EU has been criticized for its approach to the EPAs regarding the "equality" of the partnership and generally undermining African regional integration and cooperation by disregarding existing regional economic trade schemes and regional integration. This suggests that there are two competing realities when it comes to the EPA agreements and thus also regarding PCD and whether this agreement is, in fact, coherent with PCD. This will be addressed further in the next chapter.

7. Discussion

The analysis outlined several obstacles and factors, which can explain why PCD has failed to make headway and how this is reflected in the EPAs. The two theories selected for this study are based on different fundamental principles but offer different explanations and perspectives regarding the problem area. This chaper will discuss how the different theoretical frameworks complement one another and offer valuable insights into these challenges. Next, the chapter will address and discuss the EPAs in connection to PCD and the two competing realities regarding the EPAs.

7.1 Theoretical Expectations - LI & Constructivism

The theoretical expectation from the LI framework is that PCD has failed to make headway due to the member states' interests and resistance when it comes to implementing PCD. As mentioned, this theory emphasizes the state's role as rational actors in decision-making. Unlike constructivism, this theory does not account for ideational factors such as beliefs, norms, and identity. Therefore, when looking at the problem from this theoretical lens and the analysis of this study, the failure of PCD can be attributed to both the resistance and lack of interest by member states. This is also reflected in the domain of trade and the EPAs, as the negotiation has primarily been dominated by the actors favoring free trade over development objectives. Hence, the member states can view the EPAs as a strategy to use its leverage to choose the course of action that best aligns with their preferences. The response by the ACP countries to the EPAs can thus also be explained by this theoretical framework, in the sense that the ACP countries have resisted and hesitated when it comes to the negotiation and adoption of this agreement, as it has not been favorable to the ACP countries in their view. These countries have not had much incentive to join the regional EPAs as they already have duty-free access to the EU and would meet several challenges by opening their markets to the EU, even with a long transition period, as they will experience a loss in tariff revenues given that they must reduce duties and imports from the EU. Moreover, their decision to agree to the EPAs is arguably also based on rationale, as they would not receive preferential treatment. Therefore, they agreed as this was the best decision given the circumstances. Therefore, not signing this agreement would also risk their preferential market access.

The theoretical expectation from the constructivist framework is that the social construction of PCD and ideological factors, such as the interests and identities of different actors, can explain

why PCD has failed to make headway. From this perspective, the political outcome of PCD can be explained by the beliefs, norms, and identity of the EU and its member states and can thus be attributed to the social construction of PCD. It is evident from the analysis that there is an absence of a shared understanding of PCD, which makes it difficult to identify clear targets and indicators to measure progress. Hence, one of the key challenges which explains why PCD has progressed slowly can be explained by the lack of a simple basic, and shared understanding by EU institutions and member states. Without this, it is not possible to have clear targets and transparent monitoring. This is also reflected in how member states, despite having mechanisms in place, were unsure of what goals were sought through them. Hence, a problem in this context relates to the socially constructed nature of PCD. Contrarily to the LI framework, the member states' resistance can be explained by the different actors' diverging interests, beliefs, and identities, which all influence their level of commitment and engagement with PCD. In addition, the emergence of PCSD has contributed to confusion and lack of clarity surrounding PCD, whereby for some member states, PCD has been subsumed by PCSD, leading to further difficulties in advancing PCD policies. The emergence of PCSD also explains the ongoing contestation and negotiation over the meaning and significance of both concepts. Moreover, the fact that PCD has been subsumed can be a result of policy markers overlooking the importance of PCD and directing focus on PCSD. Evidently, all these factors have hindered the progress of PCD.

The two theories selected for this study offer valuable insight into this study, and the analysis findings suggest that there is support for both theoretical expectations. While LI emphasizes the role of the member states and their resistance to implementing PCD from a rational perspective, constructivism emphasizes ideational factors. It highlights the importance of the social construction of PCD and the different norms, beliefs, and identities of the EU and member states which are crucial aspects to consider in understanding the problem of PCD failure. Both theories account for the *interests* of the actors, but from different angles. Hence, this study accounts for the actors' rational aspects and ideational factors like beliefs, identity, and norms. They also account for one another's critique, as constructivists criticize the LI framework for not considering ideational factors. Vice versa, the critique of constructivism is that it puts too much emphasis on ideational factors and does not account for power and economic factors.

7.2 EPAs & Competing Realities

Earlier, it was established that the EU is committed to free trade in its official rhetoric. From the EU's perspective, the promotion of the EPAs aligns with PCD. However, the trade domain dominates favored over development objectives which is a challenge that can explain the challenge of achieving policy coherence in the nexus between trade-development. This is mainly reflected in the criticisms of the EPAs and can also explain why PCD has failed to make headway and is coherent with the theoretical expectation of LI.

Based on the analysis of this research, there are two competing realities on the EPAs. This agreement is important because, given the perception of the EU, it is a means of achieving policy coherence in the nexus of trade-development. On the one hand, the EPAs are coherent with PCD and the EU's identity as a normative power. On the other hand, from the perspective of African countries and the criticisms of both the EPAs and the EU, this agreement is controversial and does not align with PCD even though it is to be viewed as combining aid and trade under a new umbrella, and to use the trade domain to further sustainable development in partner countries. Regarding the critique, from an LI perspective, the EU's focus on the economic aspect is simply due to the nature of member states who will seek to choose the course of action that coheres most with the country's interests, explaining their resistance regarding PCD. This supports the theoretical expectation of LI and is also a central factor that explains why PCD has not been a success within the EU. It is also an example of how pluralist interests are at play, and the "victor" in this context, which is trade liberalization, is that which best coheres with the interest of member states, also explaining why this stance shapes the EPAs.

Achieving complete and perfect policy coherence in a pluralist system is impossible, and with the EPAs, while the perception of the EU is that it is a positive initiative to foster economic growth and development, this is not shared by most ACP negotiators. Perfect policy coherence for development is impossible because multiple actors need to be considered, and these actors have different priorities, which, as seen in the context of PCD in the EU, thus leads to a lack of understanding and coordination in policymaking. This makes it more challenging to achieve PCD, especially if the objectives are not shared by all actors involved, which is evident from the first part of the analysis, which presents the challenge of the social construction of PCD and hinders the implementation of the concept. Whether the EPAs are good or not is, therefore, relative. However, with the critique presented in this paper, there is a competing reality to the EU's perception of this agreement, and it further challenges the identity of the EU as a normative power and, thus, the EU's position in the international arena. The

competing realities in the trade domain and the EPAs between the EU-ACP countries showcase how one policy area poses a challenge to achieving policy coherence for development and also explains why it has not been prioritized and made headway. According to Carbone (2008), achieving better PCD is not an easy task, but it is also not impossible. Instead, it requires a commitment at the highest political level. This means that the EU and its institutions, as well as the member states, must commit to PCD to further better coherence, but this does, first and foremost, require a shared understanding of the concept among all these actors.

8. Conclusion

The EU has successfully raised awareness of policy coherence for development and established mechanisms to promote it. However, despite raising awareness and having mechanisms in place, PCD has progressed slowly despite having been a treaty obligation since the Maastricht Treaty. Several factors can explain why PCD has failed to make headway, which is also coherent with the theoretical expectations set for this study. First, through the lens of constructivism, challenges, and obstacles which have hindered the progress of PCD are connected to the *social construction of PCD, the lack of a shared understanding of PCD,* as well as the *beliefs, norms, interests, and identity* of the EU, its member states and the different institutions. This has led to a lack of political commitment to mobilize the concept, as well as diverging preferences on what PCD entails. From an LI perspective, the failure of PCD can be explained by the resistance and lack of interest by member states, as well as their commitment to trade liberalization over development objectives. This is both a challenge and obstacle to PCD and is also reflected in the EPA agreement between the EU and ACP countries. Moreover, with two competing frameworks in a pluralist system, it is challenging to achieve PCD. As mentioned previously, it is possible to achieve better PCD; however, this will demand political commitment on the highest political level. This does not only concern the area of trade but also other policy areas which conflict with PCD. Both theoretical frameworks can explain the lack of political will and poor coordination of mechanisms. These challenges pose significant implications for the success of PCD and, thus, better policy coherence.

The emergence of PCSD has contributed further to the confusion and clarity regarding PCD. A key challenge in this context is that for most member states, PCD has been totally or partially subsumed by PCSD. This can be a result of policymakers overlooking the importance of PCD and directing focus to PCSD. Hence, there is a need for better clarity and a shared understanding of both concepts and the mechanisms which need to be in place to further them. In summary, the lack of shared understanding, clear targets, and political commitment to PCD, combined with the socially constructed nature of the concept and member states' differing preferences and interests, have hindered the progress of PCD. This policy plays a significant role in the EU's approach to global development, and its success an important in the assessment of the EU's reputation and credibility on the global stage. Whilst the EU reaffirms its commitment to PCD in the 2017 New European Consensus, it is mentioned implicitly. It does not present clear targets for its political commitment to PCD impacts which there is a need for to archive better policy coherence.

From the perspective of the EU, the EPAs are coherent with PCD and a means to establish better policy coherence, as it is a new approach that aims to combine trade and development under one agreement to foster economic growth and sustainable development. However, contrary to the EU's perception of the EPAs and PCD, the ACP countries and negotiators have not been satisfied with the negotiation process of the EPAs. According to the critique hereof, the EPAs contribute to fostering poverty and unequal exchange. The criticisms of the EPAs and the EU's approach to this agreement conflict with the EU's beliefs and norms on the agreement and suggest that there are two competing realities. The fact that the EPAs create dependency and poverty and perpetrate unequal exchange also conflicts with policy coherence for development. In the context of EU-Africa relations, the trade domain is particularly important, especially with the new approach of the EU to foster development through trade. The EU's insistence on these negotiations, which do not account for development objectives, can explain why the advancement of policy coherence for development has halted because the agreement is favorable to the EU and less favorable to ACP countries. The very nature of the EPAs from the criticisms point of view is not coherent with the PCD concept and the EU's perception of itself as a normative power. The EU should reconsider its approach to the EPAs and better account for the concerns of the ACP countries to create better coherence.

This study has focused on the overall challenges and obstacles to PCD and focused on the domain of trade. However, it is also essential to investigate other policy areas and to what degree they pose challenges to furthering PCD. Finally, to succeed, PCD must be differentiated from PCSD. All actors should have a shared understanding of the concept and what mechanisms are sought through it. PCD is considered complex, and PCSD is even more so. To avoid further PCD being lost in the 2030 framework, there should be clearer guidelines and a more significant distinction between the two interlinked concepts. Otherwise, it will make it difficult to coordinate and cooperate effectively, as each member state may prioritize its own interests over a common goal.

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