

# **Between Securitisation and Solidarity**

*Institutional Logics and  
the Migration-Development Nexus in  
ActionAid Denmark's Implementation of  
the Danish-Arab Partnership Programme*

Aalborg University

Marie Buchholt Jessen (202030963)

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## **Abstract**

This thesis investigates how, and to what extent, Mellempfolkeligt Samvirke/ActionAid Denmark (AADK) mediates between Danida's institutional logic and its own institutional logic in the implementation of the Danish-Arab Partnership Programme (DAPP). The study is situated within the migration-development nexus and examines how development cooperation increasingly functions as a tool for migration management.

The study applies Bacchi's "What is the Problem Represented to be" (WPR) approach, institutional logics theory, and the concept of brokerage to trace how discursive problem representations at the strategic level are translated into development practices. The analysis demonstrates that Danida and AADK articulate distinct institutional logics. Danida's strategic framework embeds development cooperation within a securitised migration-development nexus, where development aid is justified as a means of curbing migration. In contrast, AADK articulates a solidarity- and rights-based institutional logic that frames displacement as a structural injustice rooted in global inequality.

The findings show that, despite these divergences, cooperation within DAPP is enabled by shared assumptions, particularly the focus on young people as agents of change. These shared assumptions function as epistemic links that allow divergent institutional logics to coexist within a single development programme. The analysis further demonstrates that AADK plays a brokering role in mediating donor priorities into practice. Through practices of translation, AADK re-frames Danida's migration-related objectives into a development project centred on youth empowerment and employability. While Danida's securitised logic remains present at the strategic level, AADK selectively foregrounds elements of its own institutional logic in implementation. The study shows how institutional logics do not travel linearly from strategy to practice but are actively mediated through intermediary practices within donor-NGO relationships. By highlighting NGOs' role as brokers operating under structural constraints, the study demonstrates how development programmes are shaped through mediation within transnational political environments marked by securitisation and externalisation agendas.

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## Introduction

As a small but economically prosperous and democratically stable Northern European country, Denmark has long been an active participant in international politics and development agendas. Through its foreign and development policy, Denmark seeks to position itself as a responsible global partner while simultaneously advancing strategic interests. To do so, international cooperation is often pursued through multilateral institutions, but Denmark also engages in bilateral partnerships with individual states, particularly in regions deemed strategically significant. One such partnership was formalised in December 2024, when the Danish Prime Minister, Mette Frederiksen, and the Egyptian President, Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, signed a joint declaration on a strategic partnership between the Kingdom of Denmark and the Arab Republic of Egypt during an official state visit to Denmark. The declaration outlines three central areas of cooperation, one of which concerns migration. It outlines the partnership's intention to:

*“Support Egypt’s successful efforts in combating illegal migration, by addressing its root causes, for example through supporting the Egyptian Government’s development efforts (...).”<sup>1</sup>*

With this declaration, migration and development in Egypt are formally articulated as matters of Danish political concern. Furthermore, the declaration reflects a broader tendency within Danish and European foreign policy to frame migration management as a development issue, thereby binding migration control to development assistance.

While the declaration was presented by the two governments as a successful diplomatic achievement, media coverage in Denmark focused less on the partnership itself and more on Egypt's domestic political situation. Abdel Fattah al-Sisi has been widely criticised by international human rights organisations for authoritarian governance, repression of political opponents, and systematic human rights violations. This sparked a debate in Denmark concerning whether Denmark should cooperate with authoritarian regimes in pursuit of foreign policy objectives. According to the Danish government, cooperation with less democratic states is considered necessary in order to address contemporary global challenges, including what is framed as irregular or illegal migration.

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<sup>1</sup> Statsministeriet, ‘Joint Declaration on the Strategic Partnership between the Arab Republic of Egypt and the Kingdom of Denmark’, 5

Within this policy logic, development assistance is presented as a key instrument for addressing the ‘root causes’ of migration. This approach is not unique to Denmark, but reflects a broader trend within the European Union, where partnerships with countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region increasingly combine development cooperation with migration management objectives. In these collaborations, development aid from the Global North to the Global South functions as a central policy tool.

The growing use of development aid as a mechanism of migration management places independent non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in a particularly complex position. Many NGOs involved in development and humanitarian work are grounded in a human rights-based approach. Simultaneously, they increasingly operate within policy frameworks shaped by state interests in border control and migration prevention. When institutional donors seek to address migration through development cooperation, they often rely on NGOs to implement the programmes in practice. NGOs thus become intermediaries between donor priorities and local contexts, operating within political frameworks that may not fully align with their own organisational values.

This study examines the migration-development nexus as promoted by institutional donors and experienced by NGOs operating within it. The empirical focus of the study is the NGO Mellemløst Samvirke/ActionAid Denmark (AADK) and its collaboration with the Danish International Development Agency (Danida). The study investigates AADK’s role as an implementing partner within the Danish-Arab Partnership Programme (DAPP), a development programme fully funded by Danida and implemented in Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, and Jordan. These countries are characterised by Danida as key transit and host countries for migrants in the MENA region.

The current phase of DAPP (2022-2027) is embedded in contemporary Danish foreign and development policy and reflects the increasing integration of migration-related objectives into development programming. Within DAPP, AADK functions as an implementing consortium partner in Morocco, where it collaborates with Moroccan-based civil society organisations (CSOs). Through its role, AADK occupies a central position between donor priorities, organisational values, and local partners.

By situating AADK’s implementation of DAPP within the broader context of Danish development aid directed toward migration management in the MENA region, this study examines how

NGOs navigate competing expectations and institutional logics. This leads to the central research question guiding this study:

**How, and to what extent, does AADK mediate between Danida's institutional logic and its own institutional logic in the implementation of DAPP?**

The research question directs attention to the values and rationalities that constitute the institutional logics shaping Danida and AADK. By focusing on mediation as the interaction between these actors, the study seeks to examine how institutional logics intersect and overlap in practice. Mediation is understood as a process of translation and brokerage through which institutional logics are interpreted and operationalised. Furthermore, the research question directs attention to the implementation of the concrete development programme DAPP. While this study takes the form of an empirical case study of AADK's implementation of DAPP, the analysis is situated within a broader transnational context of development cooperation.

The following chapters outline the theoretical framework and methodological approaches used to address this research question. This is followed by an outline of the analysis, which is structured around three analytical chapters, each examining different elements of institutional logics, power relations, and mediation in development cooperation.

## **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework of the study primarily draws on the institutional logics perspective developed by Thornton and Ocasio (1999, 2008), which conceptualises institutional logics as socially constructed belief systems that structure attention, behaviour, and decision-making. This framework enables the study to examine Danida's and AADK's core values, priorities, and assumptions articulated in their strategic frameworks. Institutional logics are thereby used to identify the rationalities that the individual actors bring into the collaboration on DAPP.

This framework is supplemented by Durand and Thornton's (2018) contribution to institutional logics, which shifts analytical attention from logics as relatively stable structures to how multiple logics are actively combined and enacted within a collaborative development programme. This

perspective is particularly relevant for analysing development programmes, where donor priorities, organisational values, and implementation contexts intersect. Rather than assuming a direct transmission of donor strategies into practice, this approach highlights how actors navigate between multiple logics when implementing policy.

To examine how institutional logics are mediated in practice, the chapter introduces brokerage as an analytical concept. Brokerage provides a lens for examining AADK's role as an intermediary actor that translates and selectively operationalises donor priorities in practice. While institutional logics identify the underlying rationalities of the relevant actors, brokerage allows the analysis to examine how these rationalities are mediated through processes of translation and prioritisation.

The chapter furthermore situates the study within a broader transnational context of development cooperation in the MENA region. AADK's implementation of DAPP is understood as taking place within a political environment shaped by European migration governance, securitisation, and externalisation agendas embedded in the migration-development nexus. This contextualisation is necessary to fully address the research question, as the mediation of institutional logics occurs not only within organisational interactions but also within wider political and geopolitical structures.

### **A Definition of Institutional Logics**

Thornton and Ocasio's work (1999, 2008) is an influential approach to institutional logics that highlights the structural, normative, and symbolic dimensions of institutions as central for understanding organisational rationalities.<sup>2</sup> Their study is situated within organisational theory which draws on sociology, psychology, and management studies to analyse how organisations are structured and how they behave.

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<sup>2</sup> Thornton and Ocasio, 'Institutional Logics', 99.

Thornton and Ocasio (1999, 2008) build on Friedland and Alford's (1991) foundational critique of early neo-institutional theory.<sup>3</sup> These institutional approaches emphasised organisational isomorphism which suggested that organisations operating in similar environments tend to adopt similar structures and practices (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Meyer and Rowan, 1997).<sup>4</sup> Subsequent empirical studies, however, demonstrated the limits of this perspective by showing that organisations may respond differently to similar institutional pressures. Rather than focusing primarily on external environments, these studies highlight the importance of underlying institutional logics in shaping organisational decision-making and behaviour.<sup>5</sup> Since then, institutional logics have developed into a central framework within organisational theory for analysing how multiple, and sometimes competing, rationalities coexist within and across organisations. Within this scholarly discussion, Thornton and Ocasio (1999, 2008) advance the argument that institutional logics structure how actors perceive problems, prioritise solutions, and make strategic choices.

Drawing on the extensive literature, Thornton and Ocasio (1999, 2008) define institutional logics as:

*“The socially constructed, historical patterns of material practices, assumptions, values, beliefs, and rules by which individuals produce and reproduce their material subsistence, organise time and space, and provide meaning to their social reality.”*<sup>6</sup>

Despite variations across definitions in the literature, institutional logics research shares a common meta-theoretical commitment to understanding how institutions shape stability and change in organisational life.<sup>7</sup> As Thornton and Ocasio (1999, 2008) explain:

*“To understand individual and organisational behavior, it must be located in a social and institutional context, and this institutional context both regularises behavior and provides opportunity for agency and change.”*<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Durand and Thornton, 'Categorizing Institutional Logics, Institutionalizing Categories', 633.

<sup>4</sup> Thornton and Ocasio, 'Institutional Logics', 100.

<sup>5</sup> Durand and Thornton, 'Categorizing Institutional Logics, Institutionalizing Categories', 633.

<sup>6</sup> Thornton and Ocasio, 'Institutional Logics', 101.

<sup>7</sup> Thornton and Ocasio, 'Institutional Logics', 103.

<sup>8</sup> Thornton and Ocasio, 'Institutional Logics', 101-2.

Institutional logics are thereby deemed capable of both enabling and restricting the agency of an actor.

Building on this foundation, Thornton and Ocasio (1999, 2008) conceptualise institutional logics as operating through three mutually reinforcing dimensions. These consist of a structural dimension, which includes formal rules, roles, and routines, a normative dimension, which encompasses values and ideas about appropriate behaviour, and a symbolic dimension, referring to the meanings, narratives, and interpretive frames through which actors make sense of their social reality.<sup>9</sup> Together, these dimensions shape organisational attention, priorities, and decision-making.

This study applies Thornton and Ocasio's (1999, 2008) definition of institutional logics and their three-dimensional framework. It examines Danida and AADK's institutional logics through their structural, normative, and symbolic dimensions in order to identify the values and rationalities that guide their engagement in DAPP.

### **Navigating Multiple Logics**

Durand and Thornton (2018) extend the theoretical framework of institutional logics by focusing on how multiple logics are enacted, combined, and negotiated in practice. This perspective is particularly relevant for this study, as the collaborative programme of DAPP is shaped by the interaction of multiple institutional logics. These multiple logics arise both from the collaboration between donor and NGO and from the coexistence of different institutional logics within each actor.

Building on Thornton and Ocasio's (1999, 2008) definition of institutional logics, Durand and Thornton (2018) extend the framework by examining how actors engage, combine, and activate logics in practice. While Thornton and Ocasio (1999, 2008) focus on how institutional logics shape attention and organisational behaviour, Durand and Thornton (2018) shift the analytical focus to how actors apply these logics in concrete decision-making.<sup>10</sup> As Durand and Thornton (2018) argue:

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<sup>9</sup> Thornton and Ocasio, 'Institutional Logics', 101.

<sup>10</sup> Durand and Thornton, 'Categorizing Institutional Logics, Institutionalizing Categories', 631.

*“Organisational decisions, however, may not depend on differences in one institutional logic versus another but instead on the effects of a constellation of institutional logics.”*<sup>11</sup>

Durand and Thornton (2018) argue that institutional logics do not automatically determine behaviour. Instead, actors selectively activate particular logics in response to situational demands and constraints.<sup>12</sup>

Durand and Thornton (2018) draw on existing research that examines how organizations navigate challenges created by conflicting institutional logics (Besharow and Smith, 2014; Battilana and Dorado, 2010).<sup>13</sup> The presence of multiple and potentially conflicting institutional logics within a single organisation aligns with Thornton and Ocasio’s (1999, 2008) argument that logics simultaneously constrain and enable organisational action.<sup>14</sup> In an empirical case study, Pache and Santos (2013) show that when a non-profit organisation adopted too much of a commercial logic, it risked losing legitimacy by contradicting expectations within a social-welfare field. To compensate, the organisation incorporated visible elements of the social-welfare logic to signal mission alignment and restore legitimacy while retaining useful commercial practices internally.<sup>15</sup> The active selection of elements from multiple logics thereby allowed the organisation to strengthen its messaging and maintain legitimacy. This example illustrates that organisational actors do not passively follow a single institutional logic. Instead, they selectively draw on different logics to navigate competing expectations.

Applying Durand and Thornton’s (2018) framework to the empirical case of AADK’s engagement in DAPP directs analytical attention to how different logics align or coincide within the collaboration. The analysis looks for instances where donor priorities and organisational values reinforce one another, as well as moments where they diverge or require mediation.

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<sup>11</sup> Durand and Thornton, ‘Categorizing Institutional Logics, Institutionalizing Categories’, 634.

<sup>12</sup> Durand and Thornton, ‘Categorizing Institutional Logics, Institutionalizing Categories’, 634.

<sup>13</sup> Durand and Thornton, ‘Categorizing Institutional Logics, Institutionalizing Categories’, 634.

<sup>14</sup> Thornton and Ocasio, ‘Institutional Logics’, 101.

<sup>15</sup> Durand and Thornton, ‘Categorizing Institutional Logics, Institutionalizing Categories’, 634.

A common critique of the institutional logic framework concerns its tendency to produce relatively static representations of organisations.<sup>16</sup> To address this critique, the study incorporates Durand and Thornton's (2018) perspective, which shifts attention from institutional logics as static structures to how they are enacted and combined in practice. The critique is, however, still relevant, as this study identifies logics through formal strategic documents. When institutional logics are deduced from policy texts alone, there is a risk of portraying logics as stable and internally coherent while overlooking how they are interpreted in practice. The study is attentive to this limitation.

The institutional logics of Danida and AADK are understood as articulations of formalised organisational rationalities, rather than reflections of everyday practice. To allow for a more dynamic understanding of institutional logics, the analysis draws on the concept of brokerage to understand how institutional logics are mediated in practice. The application of brokerage is relevant to this study as it forefronts actions of translation within development cooperation.

### **Mediation as Brokerage**

The theoretical framework of institutional logics provides the foundation for identifying the values and rationalities that shape Danida's and AADK's engagement in DAPP. However, while institutional logics are useful for analysing what rationalities actors bring into a collaboration, they are less suited to explaining how these rationalities are mediated and enacted in practice within a concrete development programme. To address this gap, the study introduces brokerage as an analytical concept to examine the process of mediation.

The relevance of brokerage emerged inductively during the analysis, as the empirical material showed that the interaction between Danida's and AADK's institutional logics could not be understood through strategic documents alone. Brokerage is employed to conceptualise AADK's role as an intermediary actor operating between donor priorities, organisational values, and local implementation contexts. Drawing on empirical studies of brokerage in development cooperation, the concept highlights how intermediary organisations translate and selectively adapt donor agendas in practice. Brokerage thus directs analytical attention to processes of mediation rather

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<sup>16</sup> Ponte and Pesci, 'Institutional Logics and Organizational Change', 893.

than assuming a direct transmission of donor strategies into project implementation. The application of brokerage will follow the definition by Hönke and Müller (2018).

Within this study, mediation is understood not merely as coordination between actors but as a process of translation, in which institutional logics are interpreted and operationalised in specific contexts. The main empirical study through which translation is understood is by Merry (2006). Applying brokerage as an analytical lens allows the analysis to explore how AADK seeks to bring elements of its own institutional logic into DAPP, which aspects are priorities, and which are downplayed in response to donor expectations and structural constraints.

### **Development Cooperation in a Transnational Context**

While this study takes AADK's implementation of DAPP as its empirical case, the analysis is situated within a broader transnational context of development cooperation between the Global North and the Global South. AADK's implementation of DAPP does not take place in isolation but unfolds within a wider field shaped by global inequalities, donor priorities, and European migration and development policies. DAPP is therefore treated as an empirical entry point for examining how broader political dynamics are enacted through development cooperation in practice. Situating AADK and DAPP within this context supports the study's research question by enabling an analysis of how institutional logics are mediated within a concrete development programme operating in a politically charged environment.

In the analysis of Danida's strategic framework, the term externalisation is introduced as an analytical descriptor to contextualise how migration-related priorities are embedded within development policy. Drawing on empirical research of European migration governance, externalisation is used to situate Danida's strategy within broader dynamics of securitisation and the migration-development nexus. DAPP is not treated as a migration control initiative but is analysed as a development programme operating within a policy environment where development aid is increasingly linked to migration management objectives. This broader context is analytically important, as it shapes the institutional conditions under which development interventions are designed and justified.

The geographical focus of DAPP reflects this intersection between development aid and migration management. According to the strategic framework of DAPP, strengthening collaboration with North Africa is linked to a Danish policy priority of ensuring stability along EU's external borders:

*“North Africa constitutes a particular Danish priority of ensuring stability along the EU's southern border. As North Africa is seen as a bulwark against migration, Denmark is committed to strengthening bilateral relations with this region.”<sup>17</sup>*

This foreign policy context influences the strategic framing of DAPP and the space in which AADK operates as an implementing partner.

In examining AADK's institutional logics, empirical studies on donor-NGO relations and transnational NGOs are applied to contextualise the organisational conditions under which AADK operates. As a transnational NGO, AADK occupies an intermediary position within a transnational social field where political agendas, development norms, and organisational values intersect. By situating AADK's implementation of DAPP within this broader transnational context, the study acknowledges that development cooperation cannot be fully understood through the application of institutional logics alone. Rather, institutional logics are analysed in relation to wider political dynamics that condition how development aid is operationalised. This contextualisation lays the groundwork for the subsequent analysis of how institutional logics are not only articulated at the strategic level but are also mediated and translated in practice within contemporary development cooperation in the MENA region.

### **Analytical guiding questions**

Based on the research question and the theoretical framework outlined above, the study is guided by the following analytical questions:

1. How are key development challenges and appropriate responses discursively represented in Danida's and AADK's strategic frameworks?
2. Which institutional logics are articulated through these problem representations?
3. How do Danida and AADK's institutional logics converge or diverge?

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<sup>17</sup> Department for Middle East and North Africa. Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Danish Arab Partnership Programme 2022-2027. Strategic Framework Document', 9.

4. How are these institutional logics mediated in the practical implementation of DAPP?
5. What role does AADK play as a broker in translating and prioritising institutional logics in a context shaped by donor expectations and transnational development policies?

Together, these questions structure the analytical progression from discursive problem representations to institutional logics, and finally to their mediation in practice.

## **Methodology**

This chapter outlines the methodological approach applied in this study. It accounts for the selection of empirical material, the application of Bacchi's critical policy analysis "What Is the Problem Represented to Be?" (WPR), and the use of a semi-structured interview. The section further explains how the methodological choices align with the theoretical framework of institutional logics.

## **Strategic Frameworks**

The primary empirical data of this study consist of the strategic frameworks of Danida and AADK: "The World We Share", Denmark's Strategy for Development Cooperation (2021-2025) and "A Decade of Activism", Strategy for ActionAid Denmark/Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke (2023-2027). The strategic frameworks constitute the actors' official articulations of values and priorities within development cooperation. The frameworks thereby provide a suitable empirical basis for identifying their respective institutional logics at the strategic level. These documents make it possible to identify which rationalities Danida and AADK bring into the collaboration on DAPP. The strategic frameworks serve as the foundational empirical material for analysing how multiple institutional logics are translated and prioritised in the implementation of DAPP.

The specific strategies were selected as this study examines the partnership between Danida and AADK in the implementation of the current phase of the Danish-Arab Partnership Programme (DAPP). Understanding the strategic points of departure of both the institutional donor and the implementing partner is deemed analytically necessary. AADK has cooperated with Danida on DAPP since 2006, and the current programme phase was initiated in 2022. The selected strategies correspond directly to this programme period. DAPP 2022-2027 is rooted in Danida's 2021-

2025 strategy, while AADK's current implementation of DAPP is guided by its organisational strategy covering 2023-2027.

Both Danida's and AADK's strategic frameworks are analysed through the WPR approach in order to understand the institutional logic of the donor and the implementing partner, respectively. This study, however, places greater analytical emphasis on AADK as the implementing organisation. AADK is more directly involved in the everyday implementation of DAPP and in mediating between donor priorities and the specific context in Morocco. Some empirical materials, such as the interview, which are used for the analysis of how the institutional logics are mediated in practice, are therefore mainly reflecting AADK's implementation of DAPP. While the analysis addresses both key actors in the partnership, the study ultimately leans towards an in-depth case study of AADK's role within the donor-NGO relationship underpinning DAPP.

The two main strategies of Danida and AADK are analysed using the WPR approach. This analysis enables a detailed understanding of Danida's and AADK's self-narrative and long-term strategic goals. This study, furthermore, seeks to move beyond the strategic level and examine how these strategies are enacted in practice. To bridge the gap between strategy and implementation, the study therefore incorporates additional empirical material closer to practice which provides empirical insights into how strategic priorities are transformed into programme implementation.

### **Bacchi's WPR approach**

This study applies Bacchi's 'What Is the Problem Represented to Be' (WPR) approach to critically examine the strategic frameworks of Danida and AADK. These strategic frameworks are treated as policy documents, as they formally guide strategic priorities for the two actors collaborating in the implementation of DAPP.

Bacchi's WPR approach is grounded in a critical constructivist and post-structuralist understanding of social reality. From this perspective, policies do not neutrally describe social problems, but actively produce understandings of social problems through language. Problem representations in a policy reflect specific normative assumptions, values, and ways of understanding the world. Language is treated as a constitutive force that shapes how problems are prioritised.

The central premise of the WPR approach is that policies do not merely respond to pre-existing problems but actively construct representations of what is considered to be the ‘problem’.<sup>18</sup> The WPR approach understands policies as discursive practices that produce specific understandings of social reality. Applying this approach involves identifying problem representations embedded within policies in order to uncover the underlying assumptions, presuppositions, and values that shape them. From this perspective, policy problems are understood as subjective and historically situated.<sup>19</sup>

The purpose of applying the WPR approach to the strategic frameworks of Danida and AADK is to analyse how each actor represents key global challenges and to identify the development priorities and normative commitments embedded in these representations. From this, the study examines how different understandings of development are discursively constructed at the strategic level.

The WPR approach structurally unpacks representations of ‘problems’ with six guiding questions.

- 1) What is the ‘problem’ represented to be in a specific policy?
- 2) What presuppositions or assumptions underpin this representation of the ‘problem’?
- 3) How has this representation of the ‘problem’ come about?
- 4) What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? Where are the silences? Can the ‘problem’ be thought of differently?
- 5) What effects are produced by this representation of the ‘problem’?
- 6) How/where has this representation of the ‘problem’ been produced, disseminated and defended? How has it been (or could it be) questioned, disrupted and replaced?<sup>20</sup>

When applying the WPR approach to this study, the strategic frameworks of Danida and AADK are analysed using the relevant analytical questions proposed by Bacchi. The WPR approach is not followed exhaustively. Instead, Bacchi’s analytical questions function as a springboard for

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<sup>18</sup> Bacchi, ‘Introducing the ‘What’s the Problem Represented to be?’’, 427.

<sup>19</sup> Riemann, ‘Studying Problematizations’, 152

<sup>20</sup> Bacchi, ‘Introducing the ‘What’s the Problem Represented to be?’’, 427-28.

examining Danida's and AADK's problem representations.

Particular attention is paid to how global challenges and appropriate responses are represented, and how ideal forms of engagement within development cooperation are constructed. As the two strategies belong to the institutional donor and the implementing partner of DAPP, the analysis focuses specifically on elements relevant to the programme. For example, "The World We Share" articulates two overarching objectives for Denmark's global development engagement. One of these is related to poverty reduction, preventing conflict, displacement, and irregular migration. The other is related to climate change. As the former is more directly relevant to DAPP, this objective is examined in greater detail. This selective focus ensures analytical depth while maintaining relevance to the empirical case.

The strategic frameworks of Danida and AADK are analysed comparatively. The comparative element of the analysis allows the study to identify where the two actors' problem representations, priorities, and underlying values converge or diverge in relation to their collaboration on DAPP.

### **WPR and Institutional Logics**

The WPR approach and the institutional logics framework are analytically complementary. WPR identifies how Danida and AADK discursively construct social problems in their strategic frameworks, revealing the actors' priorities, assumptions, and worldviews. Institutional logics provide a lens for interpreting these discursive constructions as broader organising principles that shape decision-making and programme implementation. In other words, WPR shows how problems are represented at the strategic level, while institutional logics explain why these representations matter for organisational behaviour in practice. While the institutional logics framework is not primarily focused on discourse, it highlights how meaning is embedded in structural arrangements, normative commitments, and symbolic practices within organisations.

The strategic frameworks of Danida and AADK function as formalised organisational self-narratives and therefore offer a valuable site for analysing institutional logics. The discursive problem representations identified through the WPR approach are treated as indicators of the actors' underlying rationalities. Although the WPR approach is rooted in poststructuralist assumptions and

institutional logics are traditionally more rooted in organisational tradition, the two approaches are considered complementary. While the WPR approach captures how meanings are constructed, institutional logics situates these meanings within patterned organisational values and priorities.

By combining WPR, institutional logics, and context-relevant empirical data, the study can trace the relationship between discursive problem representations, organisational values, and practical decision-making. This combination supports the study's research question by enabling an analysis of both how institutional logics are articulated in policy discourse and how they are mediated on the practical level of development cooperation.

### **Language and Terminology**

As this study identifies institutional logics through discursive problem representations, particular attention is paid to language and terminology. From a constructivist perspective, language is not neutral but carries assumptions and connotations. This attention is particularly relevant in studies of development cooperation, where certain terminology may reproduce specific problem representations or power relations. This study therefore seeks to use language carefully and intentionally.

While the study strives for analytical neutrality, it is recognised that complete neutrality is unattainable. The researcher's own social position and interpretive framework inevitably shape the analysis to a certain extent. To mitigate this influence, the study aims to use terminology that does not assign characteristics to actors involved in DAPP beyond those identified through the analysis. However, when analysing the discursive constructions of the specific actors, their terminology is reproduced in order to accurately reflect their problem representations. For example, the analysis utilises terms such as 'target group' and 'constituencies' when these are used by Danida or AADK, as these terms are analytically relevant to understanding the actors' institutional logics. When the study itself refers to individuals participating in the projects of DAPP without adopting the perspective of a specific actor, the term 'rights-holders' is used. This choice avoids presupposing a particular level of agency or dependency to the people involved in DAPP in Morocco.

The study makes use of broadly established terms within development research, such as ‘development’ and ‘Global North/Global South’. While these terms do indeed carry historical and normative connotations, they are retained within the study. This choice has been made as the terms are widely used across the main empirical material. Their use is therefore not intended to privilege a particular actor’s worldview but to maintain conceptual consistency. Similarly, the term ‘local partners’ are used to describe the supporting civil society organisations and NGOs collaborating with AADK on the implementation of DAPP. These local partners are locally rooted in the Moroccan context.

### **Connecting Strategies to Practice**

This study recognises the limitations of relying on strategic documents alone. Organisational practices may diverge from formal narratives, and actors may interpret and enact institutional logics differently in practice. To address this, the WPR approach is complemented by empirical material closer to practice.

The analysis is supported by secondary empirical material, including the DAPP 2022-2027 Strategic Framework Document, the Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship (YEE) Programme Document, and the Theory of Change (ToC) for the Youth Inclusion and Employment Project (YIEP) in Morocco. These documents provide detailed insights into programme objectives, outcomes, and contextual considerations relevant to AADK’s implementation of DAPP.

While institutional logics can be identified through strategic documents, such materials provide only a partial view of how organisational rationalities are enacted in the context of concrete programmes. To address this gap, the study also includes a semi-structured interview with the programme manager employed by AADK and responsible for overseeing the organisation’s implementation of DAPP in Morocco.

The interview is treated as representing AADK’s organisational perspective rather than the personal views of the individual interviewee, and the interviewee is therefore anonymised throughout the study. The interview contributes to the research question by providing insights into how the institutional logics identified at the strategic level are mediated in practice. The interview complements the policy analysis by illuminating how strategic rationalities are translated into practical decisions within programme implementation.

The empirical material from the interview was analysed through thematic coding, focusing on how donor priorities, organisational values, and contextual considerations shape the implementation of DAPP. Through this process, several key themes emerged, including youth, project framing, MEAL frameworks, and the role of local partners. These themes are analysed in the final analytical chapter as empirical indicators of how Danida's and AADK's institutional logics are mediated in the implementation of DAPP.

Importantly, the interview is analysed alongside additional empirical material, including project documents, Theory of Change frameworks, and the researcher's contextual understanding of the programme. This combination of sources allows the study to move beyond a purely policy-based analysis and examine how institutional logics are enacted in practice.

### **Outline of Analysis**

This study addresses the research question and its associated analytical guiding questions through three clearly structured analytical chapters. The theoretical framework and methodological approach outlined above provide the analytical tools necessary for examining how institutional logics are mediated within DAPP. Across the analytical chapters, the empirical case of AADK's implementation of DAPP is situated within broader tendencies in development cooperation, with particular attention to the migration-development nexus shaping Danish development aid to the MENA region. The analysis draws on strategic documents, interview material, and relevant scholarly research to contextualise the study.

The first analytical chapter applies Bacchi's WPR approach to analyse the strategic frameworks of Danida and AADK. This chapter addresses the first analytical guiding question by examining how development challenges and appropriate responses are discursively represented at the strategic level. Through this analysis, the chapter identifies the underlying assumptions, values, and problem representations that form the basis of Danida's and AADK's institutional logics.

The second analytical chapter situates these strategic problem representations within broader political and organisational contexts. The chapter draws on empirical research on externalisation

within foreign and development policy, as well as on donor-NGO relations in development cooperation. By contextualising Danida's and AADK's strategies within these scholarly debates, the chapter addresses the second and third analytical guiding questions. It examines how the institutional logics of the donor and the implementing organisation can be defined based on their strategic frameworks, and how these logics diverge and interact within an asymmetric donor-NGO relationship.

The third and final analytical chapter focuses on the implementation of DAPP in Morocco. This chapter introduces brokerage as an analytical lens for examining how Danida's and AADK's institutional logics are mediated in practice. Drawing on scholarly research, brokerage is situated within the field of development cooperation, with particular emphasis on translation as a key intermediary practice. Through an analysis of programme implementation, the chapter addresses the fourth and fifth analytical guiding questions by examining how institutional logics are translated in practice by analysing AADK's role as a broker within DAPP.

The conclusion reflects on the findings of the empirical case study and returns explicitly to the research question. It situates AADK's implementation of DAPP within broader research on contemporary development cooperation embedded in the migration-development nexus and discusses the implications of the study's findings for understanding donor-NGO relations in Danish development cooperation.

## **Chapter 1 - WPR Analyses of Danida and AADK**

The first analytical chapter examines the strategic frameworks of Danida and AADK. This chapter addresses the first analytical guiding question by examining how key development challenges and appropriate responses are discursively represented in Danida's and AADK's strategic frameworks. By analysing how problems and solutions are constructed at the strategic level, the chapter identifies the underlying assumptions, values, and priorities. Together, these constitute each actor's institutional logic.

The chapter applies Bacchi's 'What is the problem represented to be?' (WPR) approach as an analytical framework. The analysis concentrates on how problems are represented, the underlying

assumptions, their historical and political geneses, and the silences and omissions embedded within the strategic frameworks of Danida and AADK. While the remaining questions of the WPR approach are not addressed explicitly, they inform the overall analytical perspective. The first section of the chapter analyses Danida’s strategic framework “The World We Share” (2021-2025). It examines how irregular migration and poverty are problematised and how development cooperation is positioned as a tool for addressing both humanitarian concerns and political priorities. Attention is paid to securitisation agendas and the migration-development nexus. The second section of the chapter analyses AADK’s organisational strategy “A Decade of Activism” (2023-2027). This analysis explores how AADK represents global challenges such as displacement, inequality, and discrimination. These representations are interpreted as grounded in a solidarity- and rights-based approach to development.

The final section of this chapter consists of a comparative analysis of the two strategic frameworks. The comparison identifies both points of convergence and divergence across the two strategies and in the actors’ approach to development cooperation. This comparison is relevant, as it reveals the underlying tensions and shared assumptions that shape the partnership between donor and implementing partner within DAPP.

### **The World We Share**

Danida’s overarching goal is:

*“To combat (...) poverty through promotion of human rights and economic growth.”*<sup>21</sup>

To do so, Danida engages in strategic partnerships with the private sector and independent organisations to implement global development projects. The thematic focus areas and objectives of Denmark’s development policy are laid out in strategy documents.

As this study examines how the institutional logics of Danida and AADK are mediated in the implementation of DAPP, Danida’s relevant strategic framework is analysed to identify the values and priorities of Danida. The strategic framework “The World We Share” (2022-2025) is analysed through the WPR approach.

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<sup>21</sup> ‘About Danida’.

## Problem Representations

The first objective of “The World We Share” is to prevent and combat poverty, inequality, and irregular migration. These issues are framed as interconnected global challenges to be addressed through development cooperation.<sup>22</sup> Discursively, irregular migration is positioned alongside conflict and disaster as a key policy concern. Irregular migration is understood as an unintended and unwanted outcome of structural poverty and inequality. Within the strategic framework, irregular migration is therefore represented both as a consequence of deeper structural problems and as a distinct problem requiring targeted intervention:

*“We will (...) focus our efforts on preventing and reducing poverty and inequality, fragility, conflict, gender discrimination and violence that leads to forced displacement and irregular migration.”<sup>23</sup>*

Through this representation, Danida articulates a dual policy objective. Development cooperation is tasked with addressing both the structural drivers of irregular migration and irregular migration itself. On the one hand, poverty reduction and the promotion of democracy are presented as necessary to counter inequality and repression. On the other hand, development cooperation is justified by the assumption that insufficient attention to global inequalities contributes to increased irregular migration. Danida’s development efforts thereby aim to address both the root causes of irregular migration and irregular migration as such:

*“Fighting poverty and creating new opportunities for people in regions of origin and in fragile countries helps to prevent irregular migration towards Europe.”<sup>24</sup>*

Irregular migration is problematised through the distinction between ‘regular’ and ‘irregular’ migration. The negative connotation of ‘irregular’ reinforces the framing of an evident problem. In Danida’s definition, ‘irregular’ migrants refer to persons who are not recognised as refugees or asylum seekers and thereby not entitled to protection under the UN Refugee Convention:

*“Persons who have not sought asylum or have had their asylum application rejected are not entitled to protection according to the Refugee Convention (...)”<sup>25</sup>*

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<sup>22</sup> ‘The World We Share. Denmark’s Strategy for Development Cooperation’, 7.

<sup>23</sup> ‘The World We Share. Denmark’s Strategy for Development Cooperation’, 22.

<sup>24</sup> ‘The World We Share. Denmark’s Strategy for Development Cooperation’, 19.

<sup>25</sup> ‘The World We Share. Denmark’s Strategy for Development Cooperation’, 23.

The strategy specifies that migration routes are being utilized by both refugees and irregular migrants, and the distinction between the two is important as only the former have a convention-based right to protection while fleeing. While the strategy recognises that ‘orderly’ migration has benefits, it does not elaborate on these.<sup>26</sup>

“The World We Share” contains three main arguments for why irregular migration constitutes a problem. From a humanitarian perspective, irregular migration is represented as a problem because it exposes individuals to smuggling, harassment, and death:

*“Irregular migration leads to, for example, trafficking in humans, forced labour as well as sexual and economic exploitation.”<sup>27</sup>*

Since the 2012 strategy for development cooperation, Danida has applied a human rights-based approach, which is grounded in the assumption that all individuals have inherent dignity and the right to a life in safety.<sup>28</sup> Within this framework, exposure to physical danger and exploitation is framed as unacceptable and thus constitutes a problem requiring remedial action.

In “The World We Share”, irregular migrants are, furthermore, portrayed as placing unsustainable pressure on asylum systems by making use of procedures intended for those in need of protection:

*“Orderly migration has benefits, but irregular migration undermines an international asylum system to the detriment of the world’s weakest and most vulnerable.”<sup>29</sup>*

By emphasising that many people arriving in Europe do not qualify for refugee status, the strategy problematises the actions of individuals perceived to be misusing the asylum system. As stated in “The World We Share”:

*“EU Member States invest considerable resources in processing the asylum applications from those who succeed in reaching Europe, many of whom are irregular migrants who, according to the Refugee Convention, are not in need of protection.”<sup>30</sup>*

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<sup>26</sup> ‘The World We Share. Denmark’s Strategy for Development Cooperation’, 23.

<sup>27</sup> ‘The World We Share. Denmark’s Strategy for Development Cooperation’, 23.

<sup>28</sup> UM-ENEN, ‘Lessons Learned on the Danish Human Rights-Based Approach’.

<sup>29</sup> ‘The World We Share. Denmark’s Strategy for Development Cooperation’, 23.

<sup>30</sup> ‘The World We Share. Denmark’s Strategy for Development Cooperation’, 20.

In “The World We Share”, the current asylum systems are represented as being under severe pressure, and irregular migrants are blamed rather than institutional or structural limitations. This reinforces the negative connotation associated with ‘irregular’ migration and constructs a moral distinction between those considered legitimate refugees and those who fall outside the scope of protection.

In addition to the risks which migrants face themselves and the pressure they put on asylum systems, Danida also represents migration as a potential security threat to the cohesion of receiving countries.

*“Europe may also experience an increased influx of migrants and refugees that will require us to improve our migration management system and which risks endangering the EU's and Denmark's cohesion.”<sup>31</sup>*

Within “The World We Share”, development interventions are justified both as a means to address the root causes of irregular migration and to mitigate irregular migration itself. The justification builds on the need to secure European stability against the perceived threat of a large influx of migrants. The strategy argues that resources currently spent processing asylum applications in Europe could be more effectively used to assist vulnerable people in countries and regions neighbouring crisis and conflict zones:

*“These resources [which states invest in processing asylum applications from those who succeeded in reaching Europe] could help more people better in countries and regions neighbouring crisis and conflict zones, regions of origin, where the majority of vulnerable refugees are located.”<sup>32</sup>*

Providing development assistance directly to fragile states in the Global South is represented as beneficial for multiple reasons. First, the funds address the root causes of migration in local contexts. Second, it is perceived as a way to reduce pressure on European migration management systems and protect Europe against large-scale migration. Development interventions are thereby

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<sup>31</sup> ‘The World We Share. Denmark’s Strategy for Development Cooperation’, 20.

<sup>32</sup> ‘The World We Share. Denmark’s Strategy for Development Cooperation’, 20.

represented as a tool to keep the problem of irregular migration at arm's length. The use of development interventions in this manner suggests an externalisation process. This interpretation is further discussed in the second analytical chapter of this study.

### Assumptions

The representation of irregular migration as a problem reflects underlying belief and assumptions, as explained through Bacchi's structural approach.

In "The World We Share", irregular migration to Europe is represented as an inherently negative phenomenon. It is portrayed as exposing vulnerable people to significant harm and simultaneously creating risks to European societies. The strategy further assumes that the current asylum system is unable to accommodate irregular arrivals adequately, as it already struggles to meet its protection obligations towards refugees. Within Danida's strategic framework, irregular migration emerges as a pressing challenge, with development cooperation positioned as a key tool to address it:

*"We will use development cooperation to prevent and fight (...) irregular migration."*<sup>33</sup>

A central assumption underlying this approach to development cooperation is that irregular migration is best addressed through interventions in the countries of origin. Funds are therefore directed toward these countries rather than toward strengthening asylum management systems within Europe. Fragile and crisis-affected societies are therefore targeted for development interventions:

*"Displacement and irregular migration stem from the inability of fragile and conflict-affected societies to provide their citizens prosperity, jobs, rights, democracy and security."*<sup>34</sup>

Danida's strategy attributes responsibility for irregular migration to states and societies that fail to provide security and economic opportunities to their citizens. Development aid is understood

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<sup>33</sup> 'The World We Share. Denmark's Strategy for Development Cooperation', 5-7.

<sup>34</sup> 'The World We Share. Denmark's Strategy for Development Cooperation', 19.

to address these gaps while simultaneously protecting European interests by reducing the pressure of migration.

Overall, “The World We Share” frames irregular migration primarily as an outcome of structural hardship in countries of origin, rather than as a search for opportunities abroad. By improving living conditions in fragile states, development interventions are assumed to decrease the incentives of migration. Development aid is thereby conceptualised not only as a humanitarian or poverty-reduction tool but also as a preventative measure.

### Historical and Political Geneses

To outline the historical and political geneses of “The World We Share”, the strategy will be analysed through Bacchi’s question of how the problem representations have come about. The geneses of the current Danish strategy for development cooperation are understood through a broader overview of Danida’s history and tendencies within development interventions in general.

### *Toward Participatory Development*

Denmark’s international development engagement originated with the signing of the UN Charter in 1945. Following two devastating world wars, the UN integrated international development into its main purposes. Supporting economic and democratic growth worldwide became a moral obligation for wealthy UN members.<sup>35</sup>

During the 1960s and 1970s, Danish development interventions became increasingly integrated into the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and became unified under Danish International Development Agency (Danida).<sup>36</sup> In the early years of Danida, the primary focus was on alleviating poverty while deliberately avoiding significant interference in the political processes of newly decolonised societies.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> ‘1960’erne – Udviklingsstøtte med Danmark som Rollemodel’

<sup>36</sup> ‘1970’erne – Mad, Vand og Sundhed: Basale Behov i Fokus’.

<sup>37</sup> Engberg-Pedersen and Fejerskov, ‘The Transformation of Danish Foreign Aid’, 138.

Globally, development interventions have historically been closely intertwined with the geopolitical environment. In the early days of the Cold War, international development interventions were deeply embedded in the dynamics of ongoing superpower competition. Development interventions led by the United States of America were particularly placed within a security paradigm.<sup>38</sup> Within this context, the discursive construction of ‘developing’ countries served to guide development towards norms and standards rooted in Western ideals of modernity.<sup>39</sup>

For Denmark, development interventions similarly evolved as a tool of foreign policy agendas, shifting from a non-interventionist approach to actively promoting certain ideological models abroad. This transformation aligned with domestic political objectives and broader foreign policy ambitions, reinforcing Denmark’s position as a recognised and credible actor within the Western bloc.<sup>40</sup>

As the global order gradually moved away from an exclusive binary ideological framework, renewed optimism about the potential of development aid occurred. Economic growth and democratic governance in the world’s poorest regions were now within reach.<sup>41</sup>

Further, international development began to move away from exclusively transferring Western institutional models, and development actors increasingly emphasised the importance of aligning interventions with existing values and practices in the countries of intervention.<sup>42</sup>

Denmark’s development interventions gradually embraced this approach, promoting participatory development and civil society engagement through partnerships with relevant NGOs and CSOs. This participatory approach is highlighted in the policy documents of Danida:

*“Experience shows that development co-operation is most effective when based on local ownership with leadership that is solidly embedded and can act in the local context and adapt to changes in this context.”*<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Beall et al., ‘Introductory Article’, 52.

<sup>39</sup> Beall et al., ‘Introductory Article’, 64.

<sup>40</sup> Engberg-Pedersen and Fejerskov, ‘The Transformation of Danish Foreign Aid’, 144.

<sup>41</sup> Beall et al., ‘Introductory Article’, 54.

<sup>42</sup> Bonacker et al., ‘Localization in Development Aid’, 3.

<sup>43</sup> Danida, ‘Bilateral Guidelines. Guidelines for Programmes, Projects, Country Strategic Frameworks & Hard Earmarked Multilateral Support. Version 2.2’, 14.

Development interventions within a participatory framework are not solely acts of altruism, but also long-term investments in politically stable and administratively competent countries. By partnering with foreign authorities and organisations, Denmark bridges development, diplomacy, and trade. These long-term bilateral relations strengthen Danish trade and financial interests.<sup>44</sup>

Development increasingly functions not solely as a tool for poverty eradication or human rights promotion, but also as a means of advancing Denmark's global partnerships and consolidating its credibility on the international stage.

While Danida emphasises participatory approaches and local ownership in its rhetoric, the design and implementation of development aid are simultaneously shaped by domestic and foreign policy priorities. This creates a potential tension between the discourse of empowering local actors and the strategic interests of the donor.

### *The International Threat*

In the aftermath of 9/11 and the subsequent 'War on Terror', securitisation agendas came to be positioned as a primary objective of global development.<sup>45</sup> Subsequently, Danida's development initiatives increasingly promoted inter-departmental cooperation, advancing the security agenda within Danish development efforts. Denmark's involvement in military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq further prompted Danida to align development spending with security objectives, directing aid into politically fragile states.<sup>46</sup> As a result, Danish development engagement increasingly focused on states whose fragility was perceived as a potential security threat to Denmark. This shift marked a move away from development aid centred on long-term bilateral economic and political partnerships, toward an approach more explicitly oriented towards safeguarding Danish interests from political instability abroad.<sup>47</sup>

The securitisation agenda within Danish development cooperation was formally articulated with the release of the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs' "Principles Governing Danish Develop-

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<sup>44</sup> Engberg-Pedersen and Fejerskov, 'The Transformation of Danish Foreign Aid', 145.

<sup>45</sup> Beall et al., 'Introductory Article', 53.

<sup>46</sup> Stepputat, 'Integrated National Approaches to International Operations', 7

<sup>47</sup> Beall et al., 'Introductory Article', 55.

ment Assistance for the Fight against the New Terrorism” (2004). These principles explicitly directed development assistance toward fighting global terrorism. These principles mark a clear shift in the framing of development as a security tool.<sup>48</sup>

In parallel with broader securitisation trends in global development policy, migration increasingly came to be regarded as a potential threat to European countries. Within this logic, development engagement in fragile and conflict-affected countries was presented as a means of addressing the root causes of migration. The inter-departmental dimension of development as a tool to prevent migration emerged alongside an increasingly restrictive political climate on migration in Europe following 2001.<sup>49</sup>

The focus on preventing migration through development aid grew exponentially during the significantly increased arrival of refugees and migrants into Europe in 2015. In response, the European Commission explicitly emphasised the need to integrate migration prevention objectives into development cooperation policies.<sup>50</sup> The staging of the migration-development nexus as a necessary tool to curb unwanted migration towards Europe had already gained political traction in Denmark. As early as 1995, then Danish Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen used the threat of migration as an argument to increase foreign aid:

*“If you do not help the third world (...) then you will have these poor people in our society.”*<sup>51</sup>

This brief overview of the historical and political geneses underlying “The World We Share” illustrates the justification of development assistance. Rather than being legitimised primarily through poverty reduction or the promotion of certain values, development came to be justified by its assumed capacity to address the root causes of unwanted migration and thereby serve political and security interests.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Beall et al., ‘Introductory Article’, 57.

<sup>49</sup> Sørensen, ‘Coherence and Contradictions in Danish Migration-Development Policy and Practice’, 67.

<sup>50</sup> Gazzotti et al., ‘A “European” Externalisation Strategy?’, 69.

<sup>51</sup> De Haas, ‘Turning the Tide?’, 826-27

<sup>52</sup> Stambøl, ‘Borders as Penal Transplants’, 484.

## Silences

The fourth question of Bacchi's WPR approach seeks to identify the omissions embedded within the problem representations. By examining these 'silences', the approach highlights issues that are rendered non-problematic within "The World We Share".

"The World We Share" outlines several proposed solutions to the represented problem of irregular migration, all of which focus on mitigating its presumed root causes. Irregular migration is represented as a problem as it places severe pressure on European asylum systems. However, the strategy does not propose concrete measures aimed at reforming or expanding the capacity of these systems.

Furthermore, the strategy does not address how security-driven approaches to migration management may affect the rights of migrants and asylum seekers. Potential tensions between migration control and individuals' right to movement remain unexplored. Throughout the strategy, emphasis is explicitly placed on preventing migration rather than securing safe movement.

"The World We Share" also largely omits forms of migration that fall outside the categorisation of refugee and irregular migrant. Legal migration channels such as labour migration, family reunification, and temporary protection receive little attention.

While the strategy explicitly problematises the dangers associated with irregular migration, it does not engage with the possibility of expanding safe and legal pathways. This omission underlines the strategy's strong emphasis on providing support within countries of origin prior to individuals attempting to reach European borders.

Within Danida's representations, irregular migration is to be addressed primarily through development interventions aimed at mitigating its assumed root causes. In doing so, the strategy reinforces the migration–development nexus that underpins contemporary Danish development cooperation. What remains unaddressed, however, is whether migration management objectives in fact should be embedded within development policies. Historically, Danida has shifted from constituting a primarily humanitarian and development-oriented donor to an actor increasingly involved in migration regulation. On the one hand, Danida now finances development initiatives intended to alleviate the structural conditions leading to migration. On the other hand, Denmark

simultaneously provides financial and technical support to strengthen border management in the EU's southern neighbouring countries.<sup>53</sup>

While these approaches are not contradictory, the absence of reflection on these dual roles illustrates how securitisation has become a normalised dimension of Danish development cooperation. The omissions in “The World We Share” indicate that both the migration–development nexus and securitisation agendas remain firmly embedded in Danish development cooperation.

## **A Decade of Activism**

To clarify the values which AADK brings into DAPP, the organisation's 2023–2027 strategy, “A Decade of Activism”, is analysed through Bacchi's WPR approach. This approach guides the examination of AADK's problem representations, underlying assumptions, historical origin, and strategic silences. This analysis forms the basis for the comparative assessment of how AADK's representations of challenges and appropriate responses align with or diverge from those of Danida.

### Problem Representations

“A Decade of Activism” forms the strategic basis of all current AADK projects across various donors and stakeholders. The overall vision of AADK is to create:

*“A just and sustainable world where all people live freely and with dignity, free from poverty and oppression.”*<sup>54</sup>

AADK explicitly identifies polarization, discrimination, democratic crises, and growing inequality as global challenges that require intervention. Responsibility for addressing these challenges, according to AADK, rests with the global community. The strategy emphasises that societal problems are most effectively solved when people act together at both local and global levels:

*“We can help create the broad coalitions of change that can bring about lasting change.”*<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Stambøl, ‘Borders as Penal Transplants’, 48.

<sup>54</sup> ActionAid Denmark/Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke, ‘A Decade of Activism, Strategy for ActionAid Denmark/Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke 2023-27’, 3.

<sup>55</sup> ActionAid Denmark/Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke, ‘A Decade of Activism, Strategy for ActionAid Denmark/Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke 2023-27’, 5.

AADK argues that countries of the Global North often turn inward rather than engaging as part of a global collective:

*“We see Denmark and Europe increasingly closing in on themselves, while climate change and other crises are displacing more and more people from their homes.”*<sup>56</sup>

Within this representation, displaced people appear as passive subjects shaped by forces beyond their control. At the same time, Denmark and Europe are described as acting without sufficient solidarity and criticised for turning inward in a time of global crises.

AADK further assumes that it is the responsibility of Denmark and other wealthy nations to actively engage in addressing global inequality and mitigating the root causes of displacement. “A Decade of Activism” argues:

*“The richest countries and the richest within countries, primarily in the global North, are historically responsible for the climate crisis and must contribute more to financing a just transition.”*<sup>57</sup>

While speaking specifically of the climate crisis, this reflects an underlying assumption that wealthy states are historically and financially accountable for some global crises, and therefore have a duty to support justice and resilience beyond their borders.

AADK’s strategy explicitly represents displacement as a problem, by framing it as an injustice:

*“We focus on young people who (...) are hard-hit by poverty, discrimination, war, displacement or other injustices.”*<sup>58</sup>

To counter the root causes of displacement, AADK commits to strengthening response mechanisms and to:

*“(...) ensure people a dignified life by addressing the root causes of exclusion, discrimination and the perpetuation of poverty.”*<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> ActionAid Denmark/Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke, ‘A Decade of Activism, Strategy for ActionAid Denmark/Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke 2023-27’, 5.

<sup>57</sup> ActionAid Denmark/Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke, ‘A Decade of Activism, Strategy for ActionAid Denmark/Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke 2023-27’, 15.

<sup>58</sup> ActionAid Denmark/Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke, ‘A Decade of Activism, Strategy for ActionAid Denmark/Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke 2023-27’, 7.

<sup>59</sup> ActionAid Denmark/Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke, ‘A Decade of Activism, Strategy for ActionAid Denmark/Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke 2023-27’, 6.

The federation of ActionAid International, of which AADK is a member, operates through a human rights-based approach. Within the federation, poverty is understood not merely as a lack of resources but as a manifestation of human rights violations.<sup>60</sup> Consequently, “A Decade of Activism” represents displacement as problematic primarily because it is understood as an injustice. In the strategy, displacement is linked to broader structural challenges such as poverty, discrimination, and climate vulnerability. According to AADK, the response to the problem of displacement should focus on addressing these underlying causes rather than viewing displacement as an isolated issue.

### *Discrimination in a National Context*

In “A Decade of Activism”, AADK does not distinguish between displaced individuals, refugees, or migrants. While the arrival of refugees and migrants in Denmark is not represented as a problem, AADK depicts the current asylum system as flawed:

*“At the regional level, a refugee and asylum system based on humanitarian values and solidarity must be ensured to secure dignity and better integration of new citizens.”<sup>61</sup>*

“A Decade of Activism” criticises the existing system as falling short of ensuring dignity and integration - values the system ideally should be based upon according to AADK.

AADK articulates a positive attitude towards individuals who are undergoing asylum processes. This attitude is discursively constructed by framing these individuals as “*new citizens*”. Although these individuals technically hold refugee or asylum-seeker status, AADK represents them as prospective citizens with a legitimate place in society.

This representation is reinforced through the organisation’s domestic efforts to combat discrimination:

*“In Denmark we have strong focus on fighting discrimination against refugees, asylum seekers, Greenlanders, residents of the so-called vulnerable housing areas, and not least people with a Muslim or Jewish background.”<sup>62</sup>*

According to “A Decade of Activism”:

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<sup>60</sup> ActionAid, ‘Human Rights-Based Approaches to Poverty Eradication and Development’, 1.

<sup>61</sup> ActionAid Denmark/Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke, ‘A Decade of Activism, Strategy for ActionAid Denmark/Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke 2023-27’, 13.

<sup>62</sup> ActionAid Denmark/Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke, ‘A Decade of Activism, Strategy for ActionAid Denmark/Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke 2023-27’, 12.

*“We [AADK] see diversity as a source of strength (...) Diversity makes us stronger.”*<sup>63</sup>

To combat discrimination, polarization, and racism within Denmark, AADK defines its role as one of challenging and reshaping the prevailing public narrative.

*“We want to create networks and alliances, support citizen groups and tell authentic stories, all of which must challenge and change the prevailing narrative.”*<sup>64</sup>

The strategy thereby identifies the dominant narrative on refugees and migrants as an obstacle to establishing a more solidarity-based asylum system. It can thus be argued that, beyond criticising the current asylum system, AADK also problematises the discursive framing of refugees and migrants in Denmark as a societal problem.

### Assumptions

AADK represents the main global problems as the presence of injustices that contribute to displacement, and asylum systems lacking solidarity. These problem representations are further examined through the question of Bacchi’s approach uncovering underlying assumptions.

In pursuing its vision of globally just and sustainable societies, “A Decade of Activism” identifies young people as the primary agents of change and AADK places particular emphasis on expanding their opportunities and strengthening their leadership.

*“Young people are our primary constituency and are at the center of our work. It is young people we see as the most important agents of change in terms of creating fair and sustainable development (...)”*<sup>65</sup>

“A Decade of Activism” further emphasises AADK’s commitment to supporting especially young women:

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<sup>63</sup> ActionAid Denmark/Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke, ‘A Decade of Activism, Strategy for ActionAid Denmark/Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke 2023-27’, 11.

<sup>64</sup> ActionAid Denmark/Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke, ‘A Decade of Activism, Strategy for ActionAid Denmark/Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke 2023-27’, 13.

<sup>65</sup> ActionAid Denmark/Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke, ‘A Decade of Activism, Strategy for ActionAid Denmark/Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke 2023-27’, 7.

*“We have a particular focus on strengthening leadership and activism of young women.”<sup>66</sup>*

The rationale behind promoting change and resilience through youth-organising is to ensure sustainable development that is less dependent on continual international funding:

*“We will strengthen local organizations, networks, and movements because it is far more sustainable and just to help build up local resources than to build up external resources that need to be flown in from outside.”<sup>67</sup>*

The focus on local organisations rests on a broader development-sector assumption that communities are both willing and prepared to participate in democratic reform and resilience-building initiatives. AADK therefore presumes not only the existence of local networks and movements, but also their willingness and capability to collaborate with a foreign NGO.

AADK’s strategic framework explicitly represents displacement as a problem, underpinned by the assumption that displacement is always forced and driven by injustices such as poverty or conflict. Displaced individuals are positioned as actors with limited agency, who are forced into displacement by structural injustices.

The strategy does not engage with voluntary or opportunity-driven forms of mobility. AADK assumes that if adequate support and resources are provided, young people will prefer to stay and work toward improving conditions within their societies rather than to seek new opportunities across borders. The strategic framework of AADK assumes that young people are both willing and able to contribute to this development, and that the development is in line with AADK’s values and the goal of creating a just and sustainable world free from oppression.

AADK further assumes that young people, with adequate support:

*“can address problems and secure the future of their society (...)”<sup>68</sup>*

This assumption emphasises the agency and empowerment of the young people, who are ex-

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<sup>66</sup> ActionAid Denmark/Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke, ‘A Decade of Activism, Strategy for ActionAid Denmark/Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke 2023-27’, 7.

<sup>67</sup> ActionAid Denmark/Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke, ‘A Decade of Activism, Strategy for ActionAid Denmark/Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke 2023-27’, 7.

<sup>68</sup> ActionAid Denmark/Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke, ‘A Decade of Activism, Strategy for ActionAid Denmark/Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke 2023-27’, 7.

pected to benefit from societal transformation. However, this can also be interpreted as reproducing a widespread assumption of development initiatives. In “A Decade of Activism”, societies in the Global South are represented as currently lacking the resources and capacities needed to address structural inequalities. Young people are framed as capable of securing change if they receive resources and support from actors in the Global North. In this way, the strategic framework of AADK both foregrounds youth agency but also reinforces an asymmetric power relation between the Global North and South. Development actors are assumed to be ultimately responsible for enabling change.

### Historical and Political Geneses

Moving from the assumptions within “A Decade of Activism”, the analysis turns to the third question of Bacchi’s analytical approach which examines the historical and political geneses of the strategy’s problem representation.

The focus on combating discrimination within “A Decade of Activism” can be traced back to the organisation’s historical foundation, in which advocacy for refugees’ rights played a central role. The precursor of AADK was established amid the demand for humanitarian relief that arose during the Second World War. With the aim of promoting peaceful reconciliation, rebuilding war-torn Europe, and fostering cross-border cooperation, Danish civil society actors joined forces to create the activist group “Friends of Peace Relief Work”.<sup>69</sup> The organisation’s first humanitarian intervention took place in Denmark in 1945. After the war, approximately 250,000 German refugees in Denmark were placed in camps under inhumane conditions. Driven by the belief that everyone deserves to be treated with dignity, the organisation provided this group with basic humanitarian assistance. In doing so, the organisation went against the main public opinion and the political reluctance to support German citizens.<sup>70</sup> To this day, the values of the organisation are still grounded in the belief:

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<sup>69</sup> ‘Our History – Mellempfolkeligt Samvirke’.

<sup>70</sup> ‘Our History – Mellempfolkeligt Samvirke’.

*“(...) that one should act on one’s moral convictions no matter political and social mores.”<sup>71</sup>*

From its history, AADK has adopted a self-narrative of normative commitment to solidarity and anti-discrimination.

Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke has been engaged in global development work since 1958 and continues this work today as part of the ActionAid federation.<sup>72</sup> The integration into the global federation must be understood in light of significant political and financial changes in Danish development cooperation in the early 2000s. Following 2001, Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke experienced substantial reduction in public funding, including a decrease of approximately ten percent in the support from Danida.<sup>73</sup> By 2006, Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke was operating with approximately 70 percent of the funding which the organisation received in 2001.<sup>74</sup> This drop in funding is to be understood in the context of the broader shift in Danish development policy, where funding became increasingly tied to strategic priorities such as security and migration.

The organisational transformation from Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke to ActionAid Denmark provided the organisation with access to a transnational network and alternative funding channels. Joining the ActionAid federation can therefore be interpreted as a strategic organisational decision to ensure the survival of the organisation within an increasingly politicised development landscape. However, AADK is still highly dependent on Danida as its main institutional donor. Under Danida’s Strategic Partnership Agreement, AADK accepted 139.9 million DKK in 2024.<sup>75</sup> Furthermore, AADK received 8 million DKK in 2024 from the Danish-Arab Partnership Programme (DAPP), corresponding to 22% of total received international funding in 2024.<sup>76</sup>

The transformation from Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke to AADK can be seen as an example of how

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<sup>71</sup> ActionAid Denmark/Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke, ‘A Decade of Activism, Strategy for ActionAid Denmark/Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke 2023-27’, 11.

<sup>72</sup> ‘Our History – Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke’.

<sup>73</sup> Redaktionen, MS-evalueringen (2).

<sup>74</sup> Kristeligt Dagblad, ‘Færre skal sendes ud’.

<sup>75</sup> Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke/ActionAid Denmark, ‘Danida Strategic Partnership 2024 – Results Report’, 6.

<sup>76</sup> Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke/ActionAid Denmark, ‘Annual Report 2024’, 17.

NGOs are jointly shaped by their own normative commitments and structural constraints stemming from donor dependency and shifting political priorities.

### **Comparison and Sub-Conclusion**

The WPR analyses of Danida's and AADK's main strategic documents provide insights into the values of each actor within DAPP and their respective approaches to development cooperation.

A comparison of the WPR analyses of "The World We Share" and "A Decade of Activism" reveals both convergence and divergence in AADK's and Danida's strategic priorities.

The two strategies share a commitment to addressing displacement through its underlying root causes and to promote global stability. However, the two actors construct the role and purpose of development cooperation in fundamentally distinct ways.

Both strategies problematise forced displacement, yet the underlying logics differ significantly. Danida's representation is embedded in a securitised migration-development nexus, in which development cooperation is positioned as a means of addressing the perceived risks associated with migration towards Europe. AADK, in contrast, represents displacement primarily as a symptom of structural injustice. In this representation, the problem lies not primarily in migration flows but in the systemic failures and global inequalities that generate forced displacement.

Unlike the strategic frameworks of Danida, AADK does not represent migration as a threat against Danish and European social cohesion. Within AADK's strategy, the growing emphasis on national security agendas is instead portrayed as unsympathetic priorities in a time of global crises. To promote global solidarity, AADK advocates for a reform of current asylum systems to ensure dignity for all displaced people. Danida likewise articulates asylum systems to be under strain. However, Danida represents the solution as directing development initiatives toward countries of origin in an effort to curb migration flows.

The underlying assumption of this solution is that if given appropriate economic and social opportunities, especially young people will prefer to stay in their home countries instead of seeking more prosperous lives abroad. This assumption is shared across the strategic frameworks examined. Both Danida and AADK assume that the prevention of displacement and migration can be obtained by supporting young people in countries of origin.

This shared assumption may be read as instrumental in enabling cooperation within DAPP. While the problem representations of Danida and AADK are quite divergent, DAPP is built upon the assumption that young people can act as primary agents of change if they receive adequate support from international development actors.

In the final analytical chapter of this study, the focus on young people across the examined strategic frameworks is further interpreted as an epistemic link.

The WPR analyses of “The World We Share” and “A Decade of Activism” constitute the main empirical foundation for identifying the institutional logics of Danida and AADK at the strategic level. As part of answering the research question, this chapter addressed the first analytical step by establishing the content and orientation of Danida’s and AADK’s institutional logics as they are articulated in policy discourses. In the following chapter, the problem representations identified through the WPR analyses are interpreted more explicitly through the institutional logics frameworks. This enables an analysis of how Danida’s and AADK’s institutional logics diverge and how they are mediated in the implementation of DAPP in Morocco.

## **Chapter 2 - Institutional Logics**

Building on the findings of the previous analytical chapter, this chapter examines how the problem representations identified in Danida’s and AADK’s strategic frameworks forms distinct institutional logics. The chapter thereby moves the analysis closer to answering the research question concerning how Danida’s and AADK’s institutional logics are mediated in the implementation of DAPP. The chapter addresses the analytical guiding questions of which institutional logics are articulated through Danida’s and AADK’s strategic problem representations and how these logics diverge or converge.

To situate these institutional logics within a broader political context, the chapter draws on empirical research on externalisation. Drawing on the previous chapter’s identification of securitisation agendas within Danida’s strategic framework, the chapter first examines the migration-development nexus through the term externalisation. This discussion draws on empirical studies by Cuttita (2022), Gazzotti et al. (2023), and Engberg-Pedersen and Fejerskov (2018), which conceptualise development cooperation as increasingly part of migration management.

The chapter then turns to AADK's positioning within donor-NGO relations. While the WPR analysis of AADK's strategic framework did not reveal similar securitisation or externalisation agendas, AADK remains structurally dependent on Danida as an institutional donor. To examine this relationship, the chapter applies empirical research on donor-NGO relations to analyse the power asymmetries and co-dependencies shaping the partnership. Drawing on studies by Goncharenko (2021) and Nair (2013), the chapter examines Danida as a donor with gatekeeping power and AADK as an implementing partner navigating both donor expectations and organisational autonomy. The chapter further identifies AADK as a transnational NGO operating within a transnational social field where development, border politics, and foreign policy objectives intersect.

### **Externalisation and 'Soft' Externalisation**

Danida's strategic framework "The World We Share" has been situated within the historical context of strengthening securitisation agendas following 9/11 and the subsequent 'War on Terror'. The historical and political context surrounding "The World We Share" illustrates how migration gradually came to be regarded as a threat to European countries. Danish development cooperation has since operated within a migration-development nexus, in which the assumed root causes of migration are addressed through development initiatives directed from the Global North to the Global South. This focus is evident in "The World We Share", where the main proposed solution to the represented problem of irregular migration is to:

*"(...) tackle the root causes."<sup>77</sup>*

Besides allocating development funds to address the assumed root causes of migration, Danida also channels resources toward strengthening border management in Europe's southern neighbouring countries. The Strategic Framework Document for Danish-Arab Partnership Programme 2022-2027 outlines how the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs engages in the MENA region through several modalities, including DAPP. Although DAPP is not formally linked to the initiatives of strengthening border management, the strategic framework notes that DAPP:

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<sup>77</sup> 'The World We Share. Denmark's Strategy for Development Cooperation', 7.

*“(...) will contribute to furthering Danish efforts where it makes sense and is practicable to do so.”<sup>78</sup>*

A part of the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ engagement in the MENA region is funding an integrated border management system in Tunisia. Denmark currently supports the establishment of a training centre and provides educational materials and plans for Tunisian border authorities.<sup>79</sup> The strategic framework of DAPP also highlights Denmark’s contribution to the Multi Trust Fund for Migration and notes that Denmark:

*“(...) provides support to the International Labour Organisation’s regional project on modernising apprenticeships, development of skills for green transitions, and addressing challenges linked to migration in Africa, which includes Morocco.”<sup>80</sup>*

Within the DAPP strategic framework, these Danish initiatives are represented as positive interventions. They are described as efforts to “*address challenges*” and to “*modernise*” training. Such formulations carry positive connotations of progress and improvement.

Danida’s explicit problematisation of migration flows to Europe articulates a strong emphasis on securing Europe’s external borders through the migration-development nexus. In “The World We Share”, the response to a struggling European asylum system is represented as preventing migration both before it occurs and before migration flows reach Europe.

In the studies of Cuttita (2022), migration control through development falls within the definition of border externalisation:

*“Border externalisation includes the whole range of activities that states directly carry out (...) outside their own territorial boundaries, with the aim of preventing or limiting unwanted immigration into their territories. This goes beyond border control (...) also*

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<sup>78</sup> Department for Middle East and North Africa. Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ‘Danish Arab Partnership Programme 2022-2027. Strategic Framework Document’, 11.

<sup>79</sup> Department for Middle East and North Africa. Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ‘Danish Arab Partnership Programme 2022-2027. Strategic Framework Document’, 11.

<sup>80</sup> Department for Middle East and North Africa. Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ‘Danish Arab Partnership Programme 2022-2027. Strategic Framework Document’, 11.

*include improving living conditions in countries of transit and origin (...) as this is supposed to reduce the factors urging people to embark on irregular journeys to Europe.*"<sup>81</sup>

Cuttita (2022) differentiates between externalisation as activities directly related to border control and 'soft' externalisation practiced through development aid.<sup>82</sup>

The Danish engagement in Tunisian border management points to an externalisation effort.

Danida's strategic framework, which prioritises preventing migration by improving the economic prospects in countries of origin, falls within Cuttita's (2022) categorisation of soft externalisation.

Lemberg-Pedersen et al. (2021) similarly notes the broad range of externalisation practices. According to their empirical study, externalisation policies range from European-funded pull-back practices in Liberia to current Danish and British initiatives involving the detention of asylum seekers on foreign territories.<sup>83</sup> Lemberg-Pedersen et al. (2021) highlight that these forms of externalisation have attracted criticism from human rights organisations, particularly when Denmark engages in partnerships with repressive regimes to secure its own borders against migration flows.<sup>84</sup> Denmark's strategic partnership with Egypt, entered into in 2024, constitutes a further example.

Gazzotti et al. (2023) support Cuttita's (2022) definition of externalisation as relevant for examining development agendas. Gazzotti et al. (2023) further ties border externalisation together with development, when stating that:

*"Chief amongst the instruments adopted by Global Northern states to further their border externalisation strategy is development aid."*<sup>85</sup>

When analysing development efforts directed toward the Global South, Gazzotti et al. (2023) do not distinguish between 'soft' and other forms of externalisation. Development initiatives from the Global North with the objective of strengthening its external borders are all viewed as strategies of externalisation.

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<sup>81</sup> Cuttitta, 'Over Land and Sea', 2.

<sup>82</sup> Cuttitta, 'Over Land and Sea', 1.

<sup>83</sup> Lemberg-Pedersen et al., 'Denmark's New Externalisation Law: Motives and Consequences', 37.

<sup>84</sup> Lemberg-Pedersen et al., 'Denmark's New Externalisation Law: Motives and Consequences', 37.

<sup>85</sup> Gazzotti et al., 'A "European" Externalisation Strategy?', 74.

## Externalisation and Foreign Policy Agendas

The historical and political geneses of Danida's current strategy for development cooperation bear witness to how development is far from static and to a high extent dependent on global politics. The migration-development nexus occasionally raises criticism amongst social scientists. The presumption that migration control should be channelled through development aid is particularly challenged. As articulated by Engberg-Pedersen and Fejerskov (2018), development is expected to follow everything from national and international priorities to commercial relations, military intervention, and migration control:

*“One thing is that it is highly questionable whether aid can serve all these purposes; another is that whenever one of these purposes and development may complement each other, development appears to be the secondary concern.”*<sup>86</sup>

Engberg-Pedersen and Fejerskov (2018) draw attention to how development aid has increasingly been linked to migration management through externalisation of European borders. Their analysis highlights a tension between development as a tool for promoting global prosperity and as a tool serving strategic foreign policy goals. While global development aid is framed as based on values such as human rights and global solidarity, Engberg-Pedersen and Fejerskov (2018) criticise how the actual priorities are shaped by broader foreign policy considerations.<sup>87</sup>

The migration-development nexus is particularly relevant for examining DAPP in Morocco. The 2006 Euro-African Dialogue on Migration and Development, held in Rabat, Morocco, is an intergovernmental forum bringing together countries of origin, transit, and destination along migration routes linking Central, West and Northern Africa with Europe.<sup>88</sup> The dialogue articulated that the management of migratory flows should be pursued through development projects targeting the root causes of migration, as in the case of the DAPP. This transnational process reflects both the continued securitisation of development aid within Global Northern countries and an institutionalised recognition of particularly 'soft' externalisation.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Engberg-Pedersen and Fejerskov, 'The Transformation of Danish Foreign Aid', 157.

<sup>87</sup> Engberg-Pedersen and Fejerskov, 'The Transformation of Danish Foreign Aid', 157.

<sup>88</sup> Gazzotti et al., 'A "European" Externalisation Strategy?', 75.

<sup>89</sup> Gazzotti et al., 'A "European" Externalisation Strategy?', 76.

As cooperation between state donors and NGOs is a common feature of development aid, NGOs constitute major actors in these transnational processes.

### **Donor-NGO Relations**

Danida's strategic framework for development cooperation is rooted in a migration-development nexus that centres around externalisation agendas. This strategy is operationalised through collaborations with independent partner organisations, which transform the strategic priorities into concrete implementation.

As an NGO, AADK operates independently of direct governmental control. However, the organisation is dependent on financial support to carry out its humanitarian and development programmes. As outlined above, AADK receives a substantial share of its funding from Danida and, as in the case of DAPP, implements development projects grounded in Danida's overall strategy for development cooperation. Funding from institutional donors such as Danida is often subject to specific requirements related to implementation, reporting, and due diligence.

AADK also receives funding from private donors including donating members. These contributions are typically unearmarked, granting the organisation a degree of discretion over how the funds are allocated. However, the use of these funds is obliged to align with AADK's overall values and thematic priorities. To its members, AADK is perceived as a trustworthy organisation that implements activities efficiently and in accordance with its publicly articulated values.

Maintaining this perception is essential for sustaining private donations and broader public legitimacy. Despite its financial dependence on Danida-funded projects, AADK actively seeks to emphasise its organisational autonomy. The ambition in "A Decade of Activism" to challenge prevailing narratives, combined with AADK's historical identity as an organisation that has contested dominant political positions, can be understood as signalling a degree of organisational independence. While operating within the donor-NGO relationship between Danida and AADK, the organisation must simultaneously balance the expectations of its members.

In the implementation of DAPP in Morocco, AADK and Danida are engaged in a partnership consisting of an institutional donor and an independent, strategic partner. Danida selects its strategic partners based on their capacity and strategic relevance to its development agenda. The

strategic partners are thereby selected based on their ability to realise Danida's strategy for development cooperation into action.<sup>90</sup> Aspirants are to submit a thorough application to Danida on which their eligibility is decided. Although the arrangement is formally described as a partnership, the application process reveals a significant power asymmetry. Danida here assumes the role of a gatekeeper with exclusive power to decide which organisations receive funding.

The relationship between AADK and Danida reflects the dynamics identified in Goncharenko's empirical research (2021), which highlights how donors frequently hold a dominant position of influence in donor-NGO relations. Goncharenko (2021) investigates power asymmetries and co-dependent partnerships between NGOs and their donors and conceptualises these partnerships as symbiotic relationships. NGOs and their institutional donors are prone to build these relationships due to their co-dependence. NGOs are dependent on external funding and the institutional donors are dependent on trustworthy partners who will promote and implement their missions and ideas.<sup>91</sup>

Although Danida and its independent partners are formally situated in a partnership, the framework of development interventions remain firmly anchored in the priorities articulated in Danida's strategy for development cooperation.

As Goncharenko (2021) notes, structural power asymmetry between donors and NGOs can indirectly encourage NGOs to adjust aspects of their organisational identity in order to align with donor expectations.<sup>92</sup> The comparative analysis of Danida's and AADK's strategic frameworks has demonstrated both areas of convergence and divergence in their underlying values and assumptions. DAPP in Morocco can be understood as a programme largely shaped by Danida's strategic priorities and implemented by AADK within this framework, despite certain tensions with AADK's own organisational values. The final analytical chapter of this study therefore examines how AADK's institutional values are reflected or constrained in the implementation of DAPP in Morocco.

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<sup>90</sup> Udenrigsministeriet, 'Strategiske Partnerskaber 2022-2026'.

<sup>91</sup> Goncharenko, 'The Multiplicity of Logics, Trust, and Interdependence in Donor-imposed Reporting Practices in the Nonprofit Sector', 125.

<sup>92</sup> Goncharenko, 'The Multiplicity of Logics, Trust, and Interdependence in Donor-imposed Reporting Practices in the Nonprofit Sector', 126.

The empirical study of Nair (2013) further elaborates on these power asymmetries by classifying donors as actors with hegemonic authority. According to Nair (2013), donors not only possess the power to legitimise and finance development interventions, but also exercise influence over their design and strategic orientation. Donor power thereby extends beyond mere financial gatekeeping and becomes embedded in the conceptual and operational foundations of development practice.<sup>93</sup>

The notion of gatekeeping is, however, multifaceted. While AADK is subjected to Danida's gatekeeping power, AADK itself also functions as a gatekeeper for the Moroccan-based partners supporting the implementation of DAPP. AADK's relationship with its supporting partners is examined in the final analytical chapter of this study.

The relationship between donors, NGOs, and supporting partners in the countries of operation are situated within a transnational social field. Understanding AADK as a transnational intermediary can help clarify its position within DAPP. AADK is understood as a transnational NGO as it simultaneously implements projects under Danida's strategic framework, maintains its own organisational identity, and is responsible for the implementation of context-responsive programmes.

### **Transnational NGO**

In the study of DAPP, AADK is understood as a transnational NGO, channelling Danish funds into global projects. In the empirical study of Gazzotti et al. (2023), such NGOs are situated within a transnational social field characterised by intersecting and sometimes conflicting dynamics.<sup>94</sup> NGOs occupy an in-between position within this field, as their activities stretch between the political priorities of the donor and collaboration with partners in countries of operation. In these partnerships, NGOs are entrusted with transforming donor funding into meaningful and context-responsive interventions.<sup>95</sup>

AADK thereby functions as a transnational intermediary between Danish development funding and communities engaged in development processes abroad. Danida relies on transnational

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<sup>93</sup> Nair, 'Governance, Representation and International Aid', 631.

<sup>94</sup> Gazzotti et al., 'A "European" Externalisation Strategy?', 72-73.

<sup>95</sup> Gazzotti et al., 'A "European" Externalisation Strategy?', 73.

NGOs that are not only organisationally robust but also recognised as trustworthy, internationally connected actors capable of managing complex partnerships and maintaining credible reputations across borders.

Danida's current strategy for development cooperation builds upon securitisation and externalisation priorities that shape the social field in which AADK operates. As Gazzotti et al. observes:

*"(...) development projects can be explored as a transnational social field where border politics, migratory regimes, and aid policy overlap and clash."*<sup>96</sup>

This perspective is relevant for the present study as it highlights how development interventions cannot be understood solely as acts of global altruism. Instead, they are embedded in broader political frameworks that reflect donor concerns and foreign policy agendas. For AADK, operating within DAPP means navigating a social field in which Danish foreign policy priorities intersect with the organisation's own strategic orientation.

The various applied empirical studies highlight how development cooperation is not implemented through a single, coherent logic. Development cooperation unfolds within a field constituted of multiple actors operating under different normative commitments and strategic priorities. NGOs such as AADK function as intermediaries within this field, transforming donor strategies into concrete project implementation while navigating their own organisational values and obligations toward partners in countries of operation.

Understanding AADK as an intermediary can support the analysis of the multiple institutional logics within DAPP and how these are mediated. The following section examines the institutional logics of Danida and AADK in detail, drawing on the WPR analyses of their main strategic frameworks.

### **Danida's Institutional Logic**

In the strategic framework "The World We Share", Danida explicitly articulates a commitment to democracy and human rights as foundational principles of its development cooperation. This is clearly expressed in the strategy's assertion that:

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<sup>96</sup> Gazzotti et al., 'A "European" Externalisation Strategy?', 85.

*“We maintain that human rights are universal and that no one must be left behind. We place human rights at heart of all our activities.”<sup>97</sup>*

Human rights are presented as a guiding value underpinning Danida’s development engagement. One of the strategy’s key objectives is to prevent poverty, which is framed as part of Denmark’s broader responsibility to contribute to global stability. This suggests an institutional logic grounded in universal values and moral obligations.

However, the WPR analysis also reveals that Danida’s human rights discourse is embedded within a more traditional development logic rooted in historical hierarchies between the Global North and the Global South. The strategy repeatedly constructs developing countries as lacking the capacity to address pressing challenges without foreign assistance. The strategic framework states:

*“Rich countries face major challenges achieving the goals on sustainable development and climate, whilst developing countries are not on track to achieve the social goals on poverty, hunger, education and health.”<sup>98</sup>*

Through such representations, development aid is framed as a necessary intervention by wealthier and more ‘developed’ countries. This logic is further reinforced when Danida is presented as a provider of expertise and leadership:

*“We will provide knowledge, networks and resources (...)”<sup>99</sup>*

These representations position Danida within a traditional development logic, where the Global North is seen as a source of solution and guidance for the Global South. As Levänen (2022) explains, a development logic reflects:

*“(...) the thinking of traditional development actors and the aid efforts of Western governments aiming to reduce poverty, increase good governance and address collective concerns such as social and ecological problems in developing countries.”<sup>100</sup>*

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<sup>97</sup> ‘The World We Share. Denmark’s Strategy for Development Cooperation’, 9.

<sup>98</sup> ‘The World We Share. Denmark’s Strategy for Development Cooperation’, 10.

<sup>99</sup> ‘The World We Share. Denmark’s Strategy for Development Cooperation’, 14.

<sup>100</sup> Levänen et al., ‘Bridging Divergent Institutional Logics through Intermediation Practices’, 4.

Beyond this development logic, the WPR analysis shows that Danida's strategic priorities are shaped by securitisation agendas. While poverty is represented as a global challenge, it is primarily problematised because of its link to displacement and irregular migration towards Europe. Migration, rather than poverty itself, emerges as the main problem. Development cooperation is justified as a means of preventing migration flows as these are perceived as a threat to European and Danish stability.

Danida's institutional logic is understood as composed of these overlapping and intersecting elements. Danida is influenced by a formally articulated human rights-based logic, embedded within a traditional development logic, and highly shaped by a security-oriented logic concerned with migration control.

### Dimensions

Applying the framework of Thornton and Ocasio (1999, 2008), Danida's institutional logic can be further unpacked through its structural, normative, and symbolic dimensions.

The structural dimension of Danida's institutional logic is shaped by its formal role as an institutional state-donor. Danida occupies a structurally dominant position in relation to its strategic partners, as it controls access to funding and defines the formal parameters of development cooperation through its strategic framework. Danida furthermore exists in a co-dependent relationship with its implementing partners. While Danida sets the strategic direction, it relies on NGOs to operationalise its policies into concrete development programmes.

This co-dependence creates an assumed structural tension, as Danida must simultaneously balance the political priorities of the Danish state with the practical realities and normative commitments of its partners. As a government actor, Danida is structurally bound by national foreign policy agendas. Its development strategy therefore does not reflect isolated development objectives but is shaped by broader state interests.

The normative dimension of Danida's institutional logic encompasses the values and moral obligations articulated in "The World We Share". Central among these is the stated commitment to human rights, democracy, and global responsibility. The strategy frames Denmark as having a

moral duty to contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and to support less resourced regions of the world.

However, this normative commitment is unevenly applied. While multilateral cooperation and global solidarity are emphasised in relation to development and climate goals, migration is framed differently. Migration outside the EU is predominantly constructed as a threat to social cohesion in both Denmark and the EU. An implicit normative assumption underpinning the strategy is that migration flows are inherently destabilising and should therefore be prevented.

The symbolic dimension of Danida's institutional logic is expressed through the language and representations of "The World We Share". Migration is predominantly discussed through a securitised lens. Although the strategy prioritises to mitigate the dangers which migrants face, migration is primarily constructed as a problem for Europe rather than as a right for individuals on the move.

This symbolic framing reinforces a predominant security-oriented logic and legitimises the use of development cooperation as a tool for migration prevention.

The three dimensions show how Danida's institutional logic is jointly shaped by how state authority, moral responsibility, and securitised problem representations interact. This interplay produces a development logic in which human rights-based development is increasingly oriented toward preventing irregular migration and safeguarding European external borders.

### **AADK's Institutional Logic**

The WPR analysis of "A Decade of Activism" illustrates that AADK's current strategic framework is underpinned by a normative commitment to global solidarity and human rights. Across its problem representations, AADK depicts global challenges such as displacement and poverty as structural injustices. The responsibility for addressing these injustices is placed upon the global community. AADK particularly targets wealthy countries in the Global North for failing to take responsibility for their historical involvement in ongoing global crises.

Solidarity suggests occupying a central position in AADK's institutional logic, as it is presented as a primary response to the problems identified in "A Decade of Activism". AADK's emphasis

on inclusion and anti-discrimination further reinforces solidarity as a key element of its institutional logic. Within the strategy, a human rights-based approach further emerges as a normative value of the organisation. AADK represents poverty as a violation of rights that ought to be addressed through global solidarity.

“A Decade of Activism” indicates that AADK operates within a solidarity- and rights-based institutional logic. However, the WPR analysis also reveals how this institutional logic intersects with elements of a more traditional development logic. While AADK presents its approach to development in terms of empowerment and participation, it can also be interpreted as resting on an assumption that societies in the Global South depend on foreign development actors for the resources and guidance needed to address structural challenges. Although AADK explicitly seeks to foster local ownership, the strategy nonetheless operates within a development tradition shaped by historical development practices.

AADK’s institutional logic can thus be understood as primarily solidarity- and rights-based. This logic is, however, embedded within a broader development framework.

### Dimensions

Following Thornton and Ocasio (1999, 2008), the structural dimension of institutional logics refers to the organisational procedures, compliance requirements, and funding structures of an organisation. Although AADK operates as an independent NGO, it is structurally tied to Danida through its reliance on institutional funding. This dependency subjects the organisation to a set of contractual obligations that for example specify eligible activities.

These donor-imposed structures materially shape AADK’s organisational practices. The structures do not merely serve administrative purposes but influence how staff allocate their time and which activities are prioritised. Because the strategic partnership with Danida requires a lengthy application process in which alignment with donor priorities must be demonstrated, these priorities are likely to become embedded in AADK’s everyday organisational practices.

The structural dimension of AADK emerges from AADK’s funding model. Had AADK operated under a different organisational structure such as a profit-based entity dependent on market transactions, its institutional logic would instead be shaped by market imperatives and competitive pressures rather than by donor compliance demands.

The structural dimension can constrain the organisation by dictating eligible activities, while simultaneously enabling its work by providing access to large institutional funding.

As demonstrated through the policy analysis of “A Decade of Activism”, AADK’s normative commitments are grounded in a solidarity- and rights-based approach. These values strongly influence AADK’s prioritisation of thematic agendas. Tracing back the organisation’s origin of supporting German refugees during a politically sensitive post-war period, AADK continues to uphold the principle that moral action should not be constrained by public opinion or political convenience. This normative dimension is reaffirmed in the strategy, where AADK presents itself as an actor willing to confront dominant public narratives and political tendencies.<sup>101</sup>

Broadening the perspective to a current example of AADK’s actions, the organisation in 2024, together with like-minded organisations, initiated a lawsuit against the Danish National Police and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for allegedly enabling the export of Danish arms components to Israeli fighter aircrafts.<sup>102</sup> In this particular case, AADK directly challenged the institutional donor of Danida, thereby breaking with the expectations typically associated with the structural dimension of its institutional logic. This intervention instead draws heavily on AADK’s normative commitments.

The normative dimension of AADK’s institutional logic manifests through its self-ascribed duty to challenge the status quo and advocate for rights-based, solidarity-driven approaches to development aid.

The symbolic dimension of AADK’s institutional logic becomes particularly visible in the analysis of “A Decade of Activism”. This dimension is expressed through the concepts and framings which the organisation uses to interpret and explain social realities. For example, AADK describes young people as its “*primary constituency*”.<sup>103</sup> This formulation supports a more empowering and participatory approach than the passive labels of ‘beneficiaries’ or ‘target groups’.

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<sup>101</sup> ActionAid Denmark/Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke, ‘A Decade of Activism, Strategy for ActionAid Denmark/Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke 2023-27’, 11.

<sup>102</sup> Ekeberg, ‘Et hul i dansk ret’.

<sup>103</sup> ActionAid Denmark/Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke, ‘A Decade of Activism, Strategy for ActionAid Denmark/Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke 2023-27’, 7.

Similarly, although the strategy represents displacement as a significant problem, it avoids negative connotation and securitised terminology such as ‘migration control’. These symbolic choices reinforce a solidarity-driven agenda and signal what kind of organisation AADK understands itself to be.

However, while AADK’s main strategy foregrounds a humanitarian and solidarity-based logic, the organisation simultaneously operates within elements of a development logic.

### **Sub-Conclusion**

This chapter has examined how Danida’s and AADK’s institutional logics are constituted and situated within the broader political and organisational context of contemporary development cooperation. The chapter addresses the second and third analytical guiding question concerning which institutional logics are articulated through the actors’ strategic problem representations, and how these logics diverge. By identifying these logics and the structural conditions under which they interact, the chapter moves the analysis closer to answering the overarching research question of how Danida’s and AADK’s institutional logics are mediated in the implementation of DAPP.

Drawing on empirical research on donor-NGO relations, the chapter has demonstrated that the partnership between Danida and AADK is characterised by structural power asymmetries. Although AADK is formally positioned as an independent strategic partner, its reliance on institutional funding places it in a structurally subordinate position to Danida. Danida’s role as an institutional donor grants it certain gatekeeper power as it shapes both the strategic direction and the operational parameters of Danish development cooperation. These asymmetries form an important condition for how institutional logics are mediated in practice.

By defining AADK as a transnational NGO, the chapter has further demonstrated how the organisation operates within a transnational social field, in which development aid, border politics, and foreign policy objectives overlap. Within this field, AADK occupies an intermediary position where the organisation translates donor priorities into interventions that are context-sensitive and meaningful for local partners and rights-holders.

Understanding AADK as a transnational intermediary further complements the analytical framework of brokerage, which is laid out in the following chapter. While the transnational perspective situates AADK within sometimes divergent priorities of the programmes' stakeholders, the brokerage approach enables a closer examination of how AADK actively mediates competing logics in practice.

The chapter has also identified distinct but intersecting institutional logics of Danida and AADK. Danida's institutional logic is shown to be composed of a formally articulated human rights-based logic, embedded within a traditional development logic. The institutional logic is shown to be strongly shaped by a security-oriented logic concerned with migration control and externalisation. These logics are reflected across Danida's structural position as a state donor, its normative commitments to global responsibility, and its symbolic framing of migration as a risk to European stability. These dimensions compose an institutional logic in which development cooperation is increasingly justified as a tool for preventing irregular migration.

AADK's institutional logic is primarily grounded in solidarity and human rights. AADK represents displacement and poverty as structural injustices rooted in global inequality and represents the solution to be based on global action. This solidarity-based logic is expressed through normative commitments to inclusion and rights advocacy. AADK's institutional logic is simultaneously embedded within a broader development framework shaped by donor funding structures and long-standing development vocabularies. This coexistence illustrates how AADK navigates tensions between its normative commitments and the structural constraints of donor-funded development cooperation.

This chapter establishes the analytical foundation for examining how institutional logics travel from strategy to implementation. By foregrounding externalisation, donor-NGO relations, and transnational NGO dynamics, the chapter clarifies the conditions under which Danida's and AADK's institutional logics interact. The following analytical chapter builds on this foundation by applying the concept of brokerage to the implementation of DAPP. The chapter examines how the institutional logics of Danida and AADK are mediated in practice.

### **Chapter 3 - The Implementation of DAPP**

The first two analytical chapters of this study situated the partnership between Danida and AADK within a donor-NGO relationship and examined the power asymmetries, transnational social field, and the institutional logics shaping the collaboration. These chapters established how Danida's and AADK's institutional logics are discursively constructed at the strategic level. To answer the research question on how these logics are mediated in practice, this chapter addresses the fourth and fifth analytical guiding questions. It examines how the institutional logics of Danida and AADK are mediated in the implementation of DAPP, with particular attention to AADK's role as a broker operating within donor expectations and transnational development policies.

To deepen the analysis of mediation processes in implementation, the chapter situates DAPP within scholarly research on brokerage in development cooperation. Brokerage is employed as an analytical lens to examine how AADK acts as an intermediary between its institutional donor and local supporting partners.

The chapter first introduces brokerage as defined by Hönke and Müller (2018), with emphasis on their actor-oriented approach to intermediaries. Brokerage is then situated within scholarly discussions on power asymmetries and epistemic distance in transnational development. Translation is examined as a key analytical tool for understanding how intermediaries navigate these dynamics. The main empirical study through which translation is understood is by Merry (2006).

The second main section of the chapter examines the movement from strategy to implementation in the context of DAPP in Morocco. Drawing on the interview with AADK's programme lead, this section analyses how themes such as young people, project framing, MEAL frameworks, and local partnerships reflect the institutional logics of Danida and AADK. Brokerage is applied as an analytical explanation for observed divergences and convergences between strategic objectives and implementation practices. The chapter thereby demonstrates how institutional logics are actively mediated within a cooperative development programme.

## **An Actor-Oriented Approach to Brokerage**

Brokerage is understood as an ongoing process through which epistemic gaps between donors, intermediaries, local partners, and rights-holders are negotiated in development programmes. Hönke and Müller (2018) describe brokerage as an activity synonymous with intermediation.<sup>104</sup> In their study, they review multiple approaches to brokerage, of which the actor-oriented approach is particularly relevant. The actor-oriented approach places analytical emphasis on brokers as situated actors with substantial agency, who actively negotiate roles and relationships across institutional boundaries. The actor-oriented approach of Hönke and Müller (2018) further contains a rationalist element. This element assumes that actors weigh the costs and benefits of entering brokerage relations and that decisions reflect strategic and rationalist considerations.<sup>105</sup>

The actor-oriented approach to brokerage is relevant for this study, as AADK is understood as a strategic actor who deliberately navigates between its own institutional logic and Danida's priorities within DAPP. The study assumes that AADK's mediating choices reflect conscious assessments of costs and benefits.

## **Brokerage in Development Cooperation**

The actor-oriented approach has grown out of the increasing presence of intermediaries in development aid.<sup>106</sup> Knodel (2021) observes how brokers strategically mediate between international donors and rights-holders in development programmes by transforming needs into development projects that fit donor expectations.<sup>107</sup> Conversely, brokers can also transform donor priorities into feasible development interventions. In this sense, brokerage involves making context-specific needs legible to donors and making donor requirements applicable for partners and rights-holders.

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<sup>104</sup> Hönke and Müller, 'Brokerage, Intermediation, Translation', 334.

<sup>105</sup> Hönke and Müller, 'Brokerage, Intermediation, Translation', 334.

<sup>106</sup> Hönke and Müller, 'Brokerage, Intermediation, Translation', 335.

<sup>107</sup> Knodel, 'NGO Brokers between Local Needs and Global Norms'. 2.

Hönke and Müller (2018) argue that brokerage is particularly important within development cooperation, as this field is characterised by significant epistemic distance.<sup>108</sup> Epistemic distance describes a gap between actors who operate within different knowledge systems and by different epistemologies. An intermediary link is therefore required to bridge this gap between actors involved in a joint development programme. An epistemic link is understood as common objectives and practices that all collaborative partners can refer to.<sup>109</sup>

The role of the broker can be described to help establish and maintain these epistemic links by enabling coordinated action and establishing common frames and objectives. However, as policy priorities, organisational identities, and donor agendas are likely to change over time, brokerage involves constant adjustment and is thereby an ongoing process. As stated by Hönke and Müller (2018), knowledge systems and power relations are not fixed but constantly evolving. Brokerage must be understood as an ongoing process of negotiation, translation, and adaptation. The fluid nature of development cooperation is reflected both in Danida's shifting political priorities and in the organisational changes that AADK has undertaken, which have been outlined in the WPR analyses.

In the case of DAPP, brokerage can be applied as a tool to analyse AADK's intermediary role between Danida and the actual development programmes. When acting as a broker, AADK reconciles Danish political priorities, its own organisational values, and the need to remain relevant in the specific contexts where its programmes are implemented. The role of brokering reflects the co-dependent nature of donor-NGO relations, as Danida relies on NGOs such as AADK to transform their policy into practice. NGOs correspondingly depend on donor resources to pursue their missions.

Brokers occupy a strategically important role and exercise considerable power over the actors whom they connect. As Hönke and Müller (2018) note, a broker's influence stems from the fact that stakeholders in development cannot obtain the resources or outcomes they seek without the

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<sup>108</sup> Hönke and Müller, 'Brokerage, Intermediation, Translation', 336.

<sup>109</sup> Hönke and Müller, 'Brokerage, Intermediation, Translation', 336.

broker's cooperation. In this sense, brokers often function as gatekeepers who grant other actors access to resources and contacts.<sup>110</sup>

AADK may be understood as having a gatekeeper role. As a broker, AADK translates Danida's political and strategic priorities into development interventions which also benefit its supporting partners in Morocco. AADK is thereby positioned between the institutional donor on one side and local partners and rights-holders on the other. In this position, AADK mediates expectations in both directions, and thereby performs its gatekeeping role. AADK functions as a gatekeeper of Danida's development aid, as Moroccan supporting partners cannot access funding without AADK's intermediary role. AADK's organisational capacity, international reputation, and long-standing relationships with Danida are essential for maintaining the flow of Danish development aid to partners and rights-holders in Morocco. Further, AADK is also responsible for ensuring that its supporting partners remain legible and credible within Danida's administrative and compliance framework.

### **Brokerage and Translation**

Hönke and Müller (2018) map three analytical practices to brokerage. Brokerage is described through the practices of translation, coordination, and alignment, all of which are relevant for understanding AADK's role in DAPP.<sup>111</sup> However, the most central practice to this study is translation. Within this, AADK continuously interprets Danida's political priorities into forms of implementation compatible with its own solidarity- and rights-based institutional logic.

Merry (2006) refines the understanding of brokerage by situating it within unequal power relations. Like Hönke and Müller (2018), Merry (2006) defines translation as a process carried out by intermediaries operating between global policy frameworks and local contexts.<sup>112</sup> NGOs involved in development cooperation play a critical role in mediating priorities as they circulate within a transnational field.

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<sup>110</sup> Hönke and Müller, 'Brokerage, Intermediation, Translation', 337.

<sup>111</sup> Hönke and Müller, 'Brokerage, Intermediation, Translation', 338.

<sup>112</sup> Merry, 'Transnational Human Rights and Local Activism', 42.

Merry (2006) understands translation as the adaptation of ideas such as human rights or Western development norms into practices that resonate within societies of implementation.<sup>113</sup> In the case of DAPP, AADK can be understood as a translator mediating between Danida's strategic priorities and the specific needs in the contexts of implementation. Merry (2006) emphasises that translation takes place within fields of power asymmetries, where intermediaries are constrained by donor expectations and funding requirements. Furthermore, intermediaries must continuously balance donor expectations with the expectations of supporting partners and the rights-holders involved in specific programmes.<sup>114</sup>

Within Merry's (2006) framework, AADK can be interpreted as shaping how Danida's strategic priorities are enacted in practice within DAPP in Morocco. AADK is, however, simultaneously constrained by the need to align strategically with its donor in order to continue implementing development programmes.

AADK also engages in brokerage practices of coordination and alignment as outlined by Hönke and Müller (2018). AADK engages in coordination by overseeing the planning, reporting, and resource flow between Danida and its local partners. Furthermore, AADK can also be seen to perform alignment practices when bridging conflicting interests among diverse stakeholders. The alignment practice requires the ability to coordinate perspectives and actions in order to direct collective efforts towards a common purpose.<sup>115</sup>

This study applies the above definition of brokers and translation to the design and implementation of DAPP. By examining these practices in the case of DAPP, the study examines how AADK mediates between donor expectations and context-specific realities to ensure that the programme remains relevant for all stakeholders.

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<sup>113</sup> Merry, 'Transnational Human Rights and Local Activism', 39.

<sup>114</sup> Merry, 'Transnational Human Rights and Local Activism', 40.

<sup>115</sup> Hönke and Müller, 'Brokerage, Intermediation, Translation', 339.

## From Strategy to Implementation

DAPP is the primary development programme of the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the MENA region. The programme is substantial and covers interventions in four countries and comprises two main programme areas. This study focuses exclusively on the Youth Employment & Entrepreneurship (YEE) programme implemented in Morocco. As this study examines AADK's cooperation with Danida under DAPP, it is both analytically relevant and sufficient to concentrate on the programme in which AADK acts as an implementing partner.

The YEE programme consists of three overlapping but separately implemented projects; Youth Inclusion & Employment Project (YIEP), Green Growth and Job Accelerator, and Sharaka Capital Investment Fund.<sup>116</sup> The YIEP is led by PlanBørnefonden, with AADK as the main implementing consortium partner. Together, the three projects contribute to the overarching objective of the YEE programme:

*“Increased employment of young people through entrepreneurship and enterprise development.”<sup>117</sup>*

This objective aligns with the broader strategic objective of DAPP 2022-2027:

*“Youth have better opportunities for employment and civic/human rights engagement - thus more likely to create a future in their own countries and less likely to migrate.”<sup>118</sup>*

The rationale underpinning DAPP is explicitly linked to broader Danish policy priorities, as reflected in the programme documentation:

*“By seeking to improve youth's general conditions in their home countries, DAPP is designed to address some of the root causes of youth migration towards Europe, which is a key policy priority for Denmark.”<sup>119</sup>*

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<sup>116</sup> ‘Om programmet’.

<sup>117</sup> Department for Middle East and North Africa. Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ‘Danish Arab Partnership Programme 2022-2027. Programme Document Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship’, 12.

<sup>118</sup> Department for Middle East and North Africa. Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ‘Danish Arab Partnership Programme 2022-2027. Strategic Framework Document’, 14.

<sup>119</sup> Department for Middle East and North Africa. Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ‘Danish Arab Partnership Programme 2022-2027. Strategic Framework Document’, 1.

The YEE programme operationalises DAPP's overall strategy by assuming that access to meaningful employment enables young people to build viable futures in their home countries and reduces incentives for migration. To analyse how AADK's institutional logic is manifested in the implementation of DAPP, this study focuses specifically on YIEP, as this project is directly managed by AADK in Morocco.

### Youth Focus

The analyses of Danida's and AADK's strategic frameworks highlight a shared focus on young people. This focus is furthermore replicated in the strategic framework of DAPP:

*“Recognising that a youth focus is key to ensuring better, more secure, and more prosperous lives in the MENA region, the new DAPP phase 2022-2027 adopts youth as its main target group.”<sup>120</sup>*

The argument for choosing young people as DAPP's primary target group is closely tied to the overall strategic objective, as improving the life ambitions of young people is assumed to address the problem of youth migration:

*“DAPP recognises youth as central to the demographics of migration.”<sup>121</sup>*

While both Danida's and DAPP's strategies frame youth as the primary 'target group' of their interventions, AADK refers to young people as its 'constituencies'. This distinction can be interpreted as signalling different underlying understandings of young people's roles in implementation. The term 'target group' implies passive beneficiaries, whereas 'constituencies' suggests active participation in development initiatives. By employing this term, AADK reinforces the symbolic dimension of its institutional logic. AADK frames itself as an organisation which empowers the people it encounters.

The term 'target group' can be interpreted as reflecting a development logic that follows a hierarchical power structure, in which beneficiaries are positioned below donors and implementing actors. Although Danida's strategic framework formally promotes empowerment and participation,

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<sup>120</sup> Department for Middle East and North Africa. Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Danish Arab Partnership Programme 2022-2027. Strategic Framework Document', 1.

<sup>121</sup> Department for Middle East and North Africa. Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Danish Arab Partnership Programme 2022-2027. Strategic Framework Document', 13.

this logic is not reflected in how youth are constructed as a ‘target group’.

If the use of ‘constituencies’ is assumed to stem from AADK’s solidarity- and rights-based logic, the interview with the AADK programme lead for DAPP provides insights into how this logic is reflected not only in AADK’s strategic framework but also in project implementation. The interviewee notably refrains from using passive framings of rights-holders involved in YIEP. Instead, the interviewee’s framing suggests a collaborative relationship:

*“[We are] working with young people (...), empowering young people (...)”<sup>122</sup>*

The construction of young people as active contributors, evident in both AADK’s official strategy and the programme lead’s definition of the project, may indicate a well-incorporated solidarity- and rights-based institutional logic that reaches beyond the strategic articulations of the organisation.

The emphasis on youth was particularly highlighted in the interview with the programme lead. When asked which thematic priorities AADK brings into YIEP, the interviewee pointed to the organisation’s focus on young people:

*“The main footprint [of AADK] is the access to youth, the access to working with young people (...) It is giving equal opportunities to young people, it is empowering young people.”<sup>123</sup>*

Given that Danida and DAPP also place strong emphasis on youth, this response could be interpreted as the programme lead mistakenly attributing an existing programme priority to AADK’s contribution to the project. However, the shared focus on youth can also be understood as an epistemic link between AADK and Danida. The youth focus can be interpreted as a common objective across the stakeholders of YIEP. It thereby constitutes a point of alignment that enables cooperation across actors with otherwise divergent agendas and strategic aims.

If youth is to be considered an epistemic link, it is, however, important to note that the justification for a strong youth focus differs across the strategic frameworks of Danida, AADK, and

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<sup>122</sup> Interview with AADK programme lead, October 2025.

<sup>123</sup> Interview with AADK programme lead, October 2025.

DAPP. Both AADK and Danida justify their focus on young people by referring to the unprecedented size of the global youth population.

“The World We Share”, for example, states:

*“The world’s largest generation of children and young people to date is an enormous resource for delivering sustainable and lasting change.”*<sup>124</sup>

Similarly, in “A Decade of Activism”, AADK highlights the transformative potential of young people:

*“It is young people we see as the most important agents of change in terms of creating fair and sustainable development.”*<sup>125</sup>

Here, young people are framed as active contributors whose participation in decision-making processes is essential for achieving sustainable development.

DAPP’s strategic framework on the other hand, links the justification for a youth focus more directly to the objective of curbing migration:

*“Denmark’s youth focus is tied to addressing the lack of prospects and opportunities - especially jobs - that cause young people to leave their home countries. Denmark seeks to improve the living conditions in the countries of origin and transfer, thus reducing the need for irregular migration, especially for young people.”*<sup>126</sup>

Here, young people are primarily framed in relation to migration management, rather than as potential drivers of change. According to the definition of Cuttita (2022), activities aiming at improving living conditions in countries of migration origin fall under the category of soft externalisation. While not handling activities directly related to border control, DAPP’s strategic framework nonetheless applies methods of externalisation.

This study situates AADK within a transnational social field characterised by intersecting and sometimes conflicting political and institutional dynamics. As highlighted by Gazzotti et al.,

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<sup>124</sup> ‘The World We Share. Denmark’s Strategy for Development Cooperation’, 15.

<sup>125</sup> ActionAid Denmark/Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke, ‘A Decade of Activism, Strategy for ActionAid Denmark/Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke 2023-27’, 7.

<sup>126</sup> Department for Middle East and North Africa. Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ‘Danish Arab Partnership Programme 2022-2027. Strategic Framework Document’, 9.

(2023) development cooperation unfolds in a field where donor priorities, border politics, migration management, and aid policies overlap. Within this field, transnational NGOs such as AADK occupy an in-between position, as they are simultaneously accountable to institutional donors, local partners, and rights-holders. As a transnational NGO, AADK is therefore not only responsible for implementing development programmes but also for navigating an evolving transnational context shaped by broader political frameworks and foreign policy agendas. This intermediary position becomes evident in the way youth are prioritised within both YIEP and DAPP. While AADK's own strategic framework emphasises young people as active agents of change, the justification for the programme's youth focus is shaped by a migration-development nexus. Although securitisation and externalisation are not articulated as part of AADK's institutional logic, these agendas nonetheless influence the conditions under which DAPP is implemented. Within YIEP, young people are positioned as empowered contributors. Simultaneously, they are framed as subjects of migration-prevention efforts. This dual framing illustrates how AADK's work is shaped by a transnational social field in which migration objectives intersect with organisational values.

While the emphasis on youth functions as a shared reference point across the strategic frameworks, the underlying rationales differ significantly. The focus on young people creates a common language through which Danida, AADK, and DAPP can align their interventions, even though youth is engaged to serve distinct strategic objectives within each framework.

While YIEP aligns with the broader objectives of the YEE programme, it places a stronger and more explicit focus on young women. According to the programme document of YIEP:

*“The unemployment rate of young women continues to exceed that of young men in the MENA region (...)”*<sup>127</sup>

This focus contrasts with DAPP's strategic framing, which primarily problematises migration through young men, while treating gender equality as a cross-cutting rather than central concern. The prioritisation of young women within YIEP thereby represents an addition to DAPP's overarching framework and suggests a reflection of AADK's normative commitment to gender equality and the empowerment of young women.

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<sup>127</sup> Department for Middle East and North Africa. Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Danish Arab Partnership Programme 2022-2027. Programme Document Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship', 2.

## The Framing of YIEP

The overall objective of DAPP is to enhance young people's opportunities to create a future for themselves in their home countries and, in doing so, reduce the need for migration. The project description of YIEP points back to the objective of DAPP:

*“With this intensified focus on creating a better life for young people, DAPP 2022-2027 is addressing one of the main concerns related to migration, as youth are the ones most likely to desire or actively try to emigrate.”*<sup>128</sup>

The focus on migration, however, is not framed as a central objective of YIEP by the AADK programme lead responsible for its implementation. In the interview, the project's outcomes are presented as solely focusing on youth employability and entrepreneurship. The programme lead explains that the overall strategic objective of DAPP is not foregrounded when YIEP is presented externally:

*“We don't say; ‘how can the improvement of the livelihood of young people, how supporting them and enhancing their employability, how enabling them to find a job and so on can support in fighting illegal migration to Europe’.”*<sup>129</sup>

The programme lead emphasises that AADK is transparent with its local partners regarding the end objective of the programme, as these partners have access to the DAPP strategic framework. Nevertheless, the interviewee maintains that YIEP is primarily framed around employability and entrepreneurship for young people with migration positioned as a secondary concern rather than the central narrative:

*“I don't put like a green headline: ‘It's all about fighting illegal immigration’.”*<sup>130</sup>

This case challenges the prevailing narrative of the programme. According to Danida's strategy, the represented problem of migration is to be addressed through development interventions. However, AADK's interpretation of the project does not explicitly reflect Danida's objective of addressing poverty as a means of preventing migration towards Europe. Rather, AADK focuses

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<sup>128</sup> Department for Middle East and North Africa. Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ‘Danish Arab Partnership Programme 2022-2027. Programme Document Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship’, 1.

<sup>129</sup> Interview with AADK programme lead, October 2025.

<sup>130</sup> Interview with AADK programme lead, October 2025.

on elevating youth out of poverty for the sake of protecting their right to prospect and dignified lives.

While Danida may favour projects and collaborations that more directly apply the migration-development nexus, Danida remains dependent on Danish NGOs to implement its development initiatives. This dependency creates space for negotiation in project design and framing. It can therefore be assumed that the framing of YIEP is adjusted to accommodate not only donor priorities but also the agendas and normative commitments of the implementing partner.

The lack of emphasis on migration in the implemented project can further be understood through the lens of brokerage. From a brokerage perspective, AADK can be understood as having the capacity to shape project implementation to a certain extent. In this role, AADK translates the strategic objectives of Danida and DAPP into a project that is more compatible with its own organisational values and priorities. In this case, AADK can be seen as translating a donor priority of preventing migration into a focus on youth empowerment. Accordingly, YIEP is oriented toward empowering youth to effect change, rather than primarily toward discouraging mobility or preventing migration towards Europe.

This translation may also reflect contextual adaptation. If the donor's objective of preventing migration is to be rendered meaningful in the context of Moroccan youth, AADK, as the mediating implementing actor, can be understood as translating the donor's agenda into a project that responds directly to the needs and priorities of the young people targeted by the intervention. For the project to be effective and gain legitimacy among participants, it must offer tangible benefits to young people. If migration is understood as a response to limited economic opportunities, it cannot be prevented solely through enhanced border control but must involve the provision of viable alternatives. The project's focus on employability and entrepreneurship suggests addressing the structural drivers of migration rather than migration itself, thereby aligning donor objectives with meaningful and measurable outcomes for the project's young participants.

### MEAL Frameworks

In addition to the programme lead's reluctance to frame YIEP explicitly around migration, the project's monitoring and evaluation framework is likewise not centred on migration outcomes.

As the interviewee explains, the evaluation process focuses on employability-related indicators rather than on migration prevention:

*“When we are evaluated (...) they look at how many people have we enhanced employability for, how many people have secured jobs, how many people have started their own business. I don’t have a question that says: ‘how many people have we succeeded in preventing from migrating to Europe.’”<sup>131</sup>*

Although the overall strategic objective of DAPP is concerned with offering young people alternatives to migration, this is not part of the monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning (MEAL) framework of YIEP.

This omission may be explained by methodological difficulties. Measuring a counterfactual outcome, such as the prevention of migration, poses significant challenges. This may be part of why migration prevention is not translated into measurable indicators within the project’s evaluation framework. According to the interviewee, there is no available data indicating whether DAPP has succeeded in preventing migration, as AADK is not required to collect or report such data:

*“(...) If you ask me if DAPP has succeeded in [preventing migration], I have no evidence because we have nowhere in any of our MEAL framework: ‘can you give us numbers of people who did not migrate because of DAPP’.”<sup>132</sup>*

Beyond methodological concerns, the omission of migration-related indicators can also be interpreted as contextual adaptation. Counting how many young people have received training, improved their employability, or established businesses is both more feasible and directly relevant to the immediate circumstances faced by YIEP participants. In this sense, the MEAL framework reflects a translation of donor objectives into indicators that are measurable and meaningful in the actual context.

A cross-cutting assumption across Danida, AADK, and DAPP is that if young people are provided with sufficient opportunities, they will choose to remain in their home countries rather than migrate.

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<sup>131</sup> Interview with AADK programme lead, October 2025.

<sup>132</sup> Interview with AADK programme lead, October 2025.

According to the strategic framework of DAPP, young people in the MENA region are disproportionately affected by recent economic downturns, widespread disillusionment, and disappointment with the outcomes of the Arab uprisings.<sup>133</sup> The strategy draws on findings from the Arab Youth Survey (2020), which reports that in Morocco, 70% of young people between the ages of 18 and 29 express a desire to emigrate. According to the survey, 24% seek better economic opportunities, 16% wish to flee corruption, and 8% refer to political factors, including lack of individual freedom, as reasons to leave.<sup>134</sup>

DAPP uses these figures to justify a strong focus on job creation and economic opportunities, based on the assumption that improved financial conditions will reduce young people's motivation to migrate:

*“The younger generations are those who are most likely to emigrate, particularly due to the prevailing economic conditions and the lack of youth inclusion in their home countries, which is why DAPP has a strong focus on youth employment.”<sup>135</sup>*

While migration prevention is not directly measured, the programme lead expresses confidence that DAPP has the potential to contribute to curbing youth migration from the MENA region. As the interviewee explains:

*“If you are supporting young people, if they have all what they need in their country, they will just not go anywhere, they will be happy where they are.”<sup>136</sup>*

This assumption is based on the interviewee's reference to cultural factors in the Moroccan context:

*“We are a country where we have this nuclear family (...) There is still that sense of wanting to be home, wanting to take care of the parents and so on. We still have that part of our culture.”<sup>137</sup>*

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<sup>133</sup> Department for Middle East and North Africa. Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ‘Danish Arab Partnership Programme 2022-2027. Strategic Framework Document’, 2.

<sup>134</sup> Department for Middle East and North Africa. Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ‘Danish Arab Partnership Programme 2022-2027. Strategic Framework Document’, 5.

<sup>135</sup> Department for Middle East and North Africa. Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ‘Danish Arab Partnership Programme 2022-2027. Programme Document Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship’, 2.

<sup>136</sup> Interview with AADK programme lead, October 2025.

<sup>137</sup> Interview with AADK programme lead, October 2025.

While there are no indicators stating whether DAPP is achieving its stated objective of preventing migration, the assumption that the project has the potential to curb migration is supported by the programme lead of AADK. Measuring counterfactual outcomes such as migration prevention presents significant methodological challenges, which may partly explain the absence of such indicators in the project's evaluation framework. This omission can also be interpreted as a form of broker translation. By centring evaluation on employability and training provided to young people, AADK aligns project monitoring with its own values of empowerment and poverty eradication. This omission in the MEAL framework can thereby both be interpreted as indirect resistance to donor priorities as well as pragmatic adjustment to ensure the project's relevance in the specific context.

### Local Partners

AADK is the main implementing consortium partner of YIEP in Morocco, and all activities under the project are carried out in close collaboration with AADK's local, supporting partners based in Morocco. Within YIEP, AADK collaborates with three partners, the primary one being Alianza por la Solidaridad (Alianza).<sup>138</sup> AADK and its partners operate within a co-dependent relationship. AADK relies on these partners for local knowledge and engagement with the young people who are enrolled in the project. Conversely, the supporting partners depend on AADK to channel development funding from Danida.

According to the programme lead of AADK, the selection of supporting partners reflect AADK's organisational values. The broader analysis shows how Danida's agenda of curbing migration remains a key strategic objective of DAPP despite not aligning with the values and prioritisation of AADK. The interviewee instead finds that AADK's influence is more clearly visible in the choice of supporting partners in YIEP. As stated by the interviewee:

*“Alianza, they were chosen as they are a member of the ActionAid Federation and they work with youth and their values are the same values as AADK.”*<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> DAPP, 'Theory of Change (ToC): DAPP YIEP in Morocco', 4.

<sup>139</sup> Interview with AADK programme lead, October 2025.

When identifying long-term local partners for YIEP in Morocco, AADK thereby prioritised alignment with its own values over direct alignment with Danida's policy priorities or an explicit focus on curbing migration. This suggests that AADK acts as a rational actor and actively shapes the design and implementation of YIEP in ways that reflect its own solidarity- and rights-based institutional logic.

Alianza's organisational profile supports this interpretation. Like AADK, Alianza works to address global inequality and injustices through a human rights-based approach, grounded in the belief that lasting change emerges through collective action and community engagement.<sup>140</sup>

Within YIEP, Alianza is responsible for awareness-raising around available life-skills training and for providing training to young people seeking sustainable employment.<sup>141</sup> Notably, the description of Alianza's role does not include any explicit reference to preventing migration, despite migration control being central in DAPP's overarching strategic framework.

Moreover, Alianza's official policy on migration closely mirrors the problem representation found in AADK's "A Decade of Activism". Alianza considers migration to be an absolute right and the organisation approaches migration from a rights-based perspective. Similar to AADK, Alianza frames the European asylum system as structurally flawed and advocates for the development of safer pathways for migration.<sup>142</sup>

The inclusion of a key supporting partner that does not explicitly engage with migration prevention reinforces the programme lead's depiction of YIEP as a project that, in its actual implementation, places greater emphasis on employability, entrepreneurship, and youth empowerment than on migration control. This suggests that, through its role as an implementing actor, AADK translates donor priorities in ways that foreground elements aligned with its own institutional logic, while still operating within the broader framework of DAPP.

According to the interviewee, a defining characteristic of AADK's organisational focus is its commitment to global activism. This dimension, however, is not reflected in the implementation of DAPP in Morocco. As the interviewee explains:

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<sup>140</sup> 'Quiénes somos'.

<sup>141</sup> DAPP, 'Theory of Change (ToC): DAPP YIEP in Morocco', 6.

<sup>142</sup> 'Ciudadanía global y migraciones'.

*“I would say you don’t see the activism aspects of AADK very clearly, because DAPP is not about activism.”*<sup>143</sup>

Within this study, AADK is understood as a rational actor whose decision-making is shaped by its institutional logic and ongoing evaluations of costs and benefits. When AADK engages in collaborations whose thematic focus does not fully align with its core organisational identity, the decision to enter such collaborations can be understood as the outcome of a strategic assessment. In this assessment, perceived benefits are judged to outweigh potential costs. One such cost is the risk of alienating the organisation’s members and contributors, who may struggle to recognise AADK’s activist profile in a programme shaped by a migration–development nexus.

The absence of activism within DAPP can be interpreted as an indication of Danida’s dominant position within the donor-NGO relationship. As highlighted by Goncharenko (2021), structural power asymmetries between donors and NGOs can indirectly encourage NGOs to adjust elements of their organisational identity in order to align with donor expectations. In this case, AADK can be interpreted as strategically downplaying its activist orientation in the implementation of DAPP to remain compatible with Danida’s strategic priorities. AADK thereby minimises the normative and symbolic dimensions of its solidarity-based logic and relies more on its ability to work within a development logic.

Given Danida’s role as a gatekeeper of institutional development funding, AADK occupies a structurally subordinate position. In this position, AADK may not be capable of pushing for a strong activist agenda without risking funding or partnership continuity, as the thematic area of activism is not prioritised by Danida.

### **Sub-Conclusion**

This chapter has analysed the implementation of DAPP through the lens of brokerage, with particular attention to translation as a central intermediary practice. Drawing on Hönke and Müller’s (2018) actor-oriented approach and Merry’s (2006) definition of translation, the chapter has demonstrated how AADK operates as a broker situated between Danida’s strategic priorities and the contextual realities of programme implementation in Morocco. AADK’s role as a broker is

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<sup>143</sup> Interview with AADK programme lead, October 2025.

further interpreted as a gatekeeping function, through which it regulates local partners' access to institutional funding. Situating brokerage within the power asymmetries of development cooperation highlights the structurally unequal relationship between Danida and AADK, while also illustrating AADK's relative autonomy in shaping implementation practices.

Through practices of translation, AADK actively mediates Danida's focus on migration into a development programme that foregrounds youth empowerment and employability. This mediation is particularly visible in the framing of YIEP, the construction of young people as active contributors rather than migration risks, and the MEAL frameworks, which emphasise employability outcomes over migration prevention. These translation practices reflect AADK's solidarity- and rights-based institutional logic and demonstrate how donor priorities are reframed to align with local contexts and normative commitments.

While activism is not a visible component of AADK's contribution to DAPP, the interviewee suggests that AADK's influence on YIEP is most clearly expressed through the project's focus on youth and through the selection of supporting partners that share AADK's values.

The chapter shows how Danida's and AADK's institutional logics both diverge and converge within the framework of DAPP. While Danida's securitised migration-development logic remains present at the strategic level, it is partially rearticulated in the implementation of YIEP. Convergence is observed around shared assumptions concerning young people as agents of change and employability as a legitimate development objective.

AADK's role as a broker enables the coexistence of multiple institutional logics within a single development programme, as donor expectations are translated into a project that better aligns with the implementing partner's values. By examining brokerage in the implementation of DAPP, this chapter demonstrates how institutional logics travel from strategy to practice. It shows that development programmes are not simply the execution of donor strategies but are actively shaped through intermediary practices that mediate institutional logics in practice.

## **Conclusion**

This study set out to examine how, and to what extent, AADK mediates between Danida's institutional logic and its own institutional logic in the implementation of DAPP. The study is based

upon an empirical case study of AADK as an implementing partner of DAPP in Morocco. Through this, the study has analysed the institutional logics of both the donor and the implementing partner within DAPP. The study has analysed how these logics are articulated at the strategic level, how they interact within a donor-NGO relationship, and how they are mediated in practice within a development programme embedded in the migration-development nexus.

The analysis demonstrates that Danida and AADK articulate different problem representations and institutional logics at the strategic level. The two actors, however, both retain elements of traditional Global North-South development practices. Through the WPR analysis, Danida's strategic framework is shown to embed development cooperation within a securitised migration-development nexus. Within this nexus, development assistance is increasingly justified as a means of addressing the perceived risks associated with irregular migration towards Europe. In contrast, AADK's strategic framework represents displacement and poverty as symptoms of structural injustices rooted in global inequality. Within AADK's solidarity- and rights-based institutional logic, development cooperation is represented as a means of empowering rights-holders and addressing systemic failures rather than managing migration flows.

Despite their divergences, the study also identified important points of convergence that enable cooperation within DAPP. Both Danida and AADK share the assumption that displacement and migration can be addressed by improving social and economic opportunities, particularly for young people. This shared focus on youth functions as an epistemic link that allows actors with otherwise divergent institutional logics to align their interventions within a shared programme framework. DAPP is therefore built upon a combination of divergent rationales and shared assumptions, illustrating how development programmes can accommodate multiple institutional logics simultaneously.

By situating the partnership between Danida and AADK within existing research on donor-NGO relations and transnational development cooperation, the study has further shown that their institutional logics interact within a context marked by structural power asymmetries. Danida's role as an institutional donor grants it significant agenda-setting and gatekeeping power, while AADK's reliance on donor funding places it in a structurally subordinate position. However, the partnership can also be characterised as co-dependent, as Danida remains reliant on NGOs to

transform strategy into implementation.

Furthermore, the study has shown how AADK operates as a transnational NGO within a social field where development aid, border politics, and foreign policy objectives intersect. This intermediary position creates both constraints and opportunities for mediation.

The analysis of DAPP's implementation through the lens of brokerage demonstrates that AADK plays a central mediating role between Danida's strategic priorities and the contextual realities of programme implementation. Acting as a broker, AADK translates donor objectives into development interventions that are meaningful for local partners and rights-holders. This translation is visible in AADK's implementation of DAPP in Morocco, as the Youth Inclusion and Employment Project (YIEP) reframes Danida's migration-related priorities into an intervention that foregrounds youth empowerment and gender equality. The emphasis on employability within the MEAL framework further reflects AADK's solidarity- and rights-based institutional logic.

The study further shows that mediation does not entail a complete transformation of donor priorities. Danida's securitised migration-development logic remains present at the strategic level and shapes the overall objectives and funding conditions of DAPP. AADK's mediation therefore takes place within clear structural constraints. The organisation's broker role involves selectively foregrounding certain elements of its institutional logic while downplaying others, such as the thematic focus on activism. This ongoing process of prioritisation is vital to remain compatible with donor expectations. AADK's mediation is thereby both enabling and constrained, reflecting the broader power dynamics of institutional donor-funded development cooperation.

The findings of this study demonstrate that institutional logics do not travel linearly from strategy to implementation. Institutional logics are rather actively mediated through intermediary brokerage practices such as translation. DAPP is not simply the execution of Danida's strategic priorities, nor is it a direct expression of AADK's organisational values. Rather, it is the outcome of ongoing negotiations between multiple institutional logics within a transnational political environment shaped by migration management, securitisation, and externalisation agendas.

By examining how institutional logics are articulated on a strategic level and mediated in practice, this study contributes to broader debates on the role of NGOs in the migration-development nexus. It highlights how NGOs function as critical intermediaries who enable the implementation

of donor-funded programmes while, to a certain extent, shaping their content and orientation. The study emphasises the tensions inherent in this role, as NGOs must navigate competing expectations, power asymmetries, and normative commitments.

While the findings of this study are based on a single empirical case, they offer insights into wider dynamics of contemporary development cooperation, and the positioning of NGOs within the migration-development nexus.

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