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# Diplomarbeit

Titel der Diplomarbeit

“EU Election Observation Missions:  
Anthropology’s Role(s).

Uncovering Ethnographic Spaces in the Intersection between  
International Electoral Principles and Social Locations.”

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## **List of Abbreviations**

**AAA:** American Anthropological Association  
**ACE:** Electoral Knowledge Network  
**AoR:** Area of Responsibility  
**ANFREL:** Asian Network for Free Elections  
**AU:** African Union  
**CO:** Chief Observer  
**CEDAW:** Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women  
**CIS:** Commonwealth of Independent States  
**COE:** Council of Europe  
**CSCE:** Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe  
**CWS:** Commonwealth Secretariat  
**DCO:** Deputy Chief Observer  
**EAT:** Electoral Assessment Team  
**EC:** European Commission  
**ECOWAS:** Economic Community Of West African States  
**EEAS:** European External Action Service  
**EEM:** Electoral Expert Mission  
**EIDHR:** European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights  
**EISA:** Electoral Institute for the Sustainability of Democracy in Africa  
**EMB:** Election Management Body  
**ENEMO:** European Network of Election Monitoring Organizations  
**EU:** European Union  
**EU EOM:** European Union Election Observation Mission  
**ICCPR:** International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights  
**ICERD:** International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination  
**IDEA:** International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance  
**IFES:** International Foundation for Electoral Systems  
**IDPs:** Internally Displaced Persons/People  
**IRI:** International Republican Institute  
**LSTO:** Local Short-Term Observer  
**LTO:** Long-Term Observer  
**MoU:** Memorandum of Understanding  
**NDI:** National Democratic Institute  
**NEEDS:** Network for Enhanced Electoral and Democratic Support  
**NGO:** Non-Governmental Organisation  
**NHC:** Norwegian Helsinki Committee

**OAS:** Organisation of American States  
**ODIHR:** Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights  
**OSCE:** Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe  
**SADC:** South African Development Community  
**STO:** Short-Term Observer  
**TCC:** The Carter Center  
**ToR:** Terms of Reference  
**UDHR:** Universal Declaration of Human Rights  
**UN:** United Nations  
**UNESCO:** United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

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First of all I'd like to express special thanks to all my interviewees. Special regards go to Michael Lidauer, who was my first point of reference, since he is currently conducting research on a similar topic. He shared his literature and personal insights into the topic and was thus a valuable source of information. Kimberley Coles was a mine of knowledge and I thank her especially for the scholarly advice and insights she shared. Her publications on the topic served as a basis and inspiration for my thesis. I would also like to recognise Andreas Jordan, Renate Korber, Paul Grohma and Hanne Bang for their time, energy, and helpfulness. Furthermore I'd like to acknowledge participants and trainers in the Specialisation Course in Stadtschlaining for their interesting debates on the topic, insights and inspiration.

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# 1 Introduction

Wearily smiling around at the expectant faces of relatives and friends I often found myself encountered with the same, reiterative queries:

Why anthropology? What can you do with it in professional life?

Since all throughout my degree my way of answering these questions had been some sort of mumbling about certain methods and ways to look at a problem, thus highly inconcrete, I decided to dedicate my thesis to precisely those brainteasers, to be able to answer them as astutely as possible in the future. The approach I was planning was a rather selfish and practical one - how can I study anthropology in the practical arena? I found myself inspired by works such as Richard Fox and Les Field's edited volume "Anthropology Put to Work" (2007) and the domain of applied anthropology. The aim is to help me position myself more easily in the professional world, acknowledging the anthropological knowledge - or conceptual epistemology - on the one hand, and the technology - or methodology - on the other, that I have learnt during my degree.

It dawned on me while reading the newspaper one April morning. International election observers had entered Sudan, where the first democratic national elections were being held in over 20 years (cf. BBC World Service 2010). According to the final report of the election observation mission the electoral process suffered "from confusion, deficiencies in the electoral framework and during the campaign" (EU EOM Sudan 26.04.2010). Election observers had to be removed from Darfur due to increased fighting and security risks. The election results took quite a while to be released, namely Omar al-Bashirs re-election, despite an arrest warrant for war crimes by the International Criminal Court (ICC), with reports that several opposition parties had not taken part in the polls (cf. BBC World Service 26.04.2010). Tensions dominated the country, since a large part of the population did not trust the results. The elections were largely believed to be rigged. Months on, South Sudan's referendum in January 2011, six years after it was promised in the 2005 peace agreement, again pushed Sudan into the focus of international election observers and the so-called 'international community'. I found myself troubled by the following questions: What role had the election observers played? What and how had they observed?

Elections very much dominate and alter public images of certain sites and identities. They offer an opportunity for civil society to take part in government. Elections structure the life of a country and its people(s). How do election observers as actors position

themselves? What influences and variables affect their work? European Union election observers go into countries that are not part of the EU and usually with an extensive geographical distance from the countries of their departure. Their main tasks are to observe and interview different people involved in the electoral process - which resemble those of an anthropologist conducting research. What are the similarities and differences between their methodologies? Moreover, it is astonishing to see how many anthropologists, former pupils of the Viennese anthropology department for example, have become election observers for the OSCE, EU and other international or regional organisations doing election observation. It seems to be a field that is very attractive for anthropologists. How do anthropologists use the methodologies and theoretical knowledge acquired in their degrees in this practical field of work? The overall aim of this thesis is to balance historical and structural dimensions inherent in EU Election Observation Missions (EU EOMs) with those that highlight the agency of election observers, using contemporary anthropologists and their studies and practices as role models.

This leads to the general research question of the thesis:

What role does anthropological technique and knowledge play and is likely to play in EU EOMs?

This mirrors the main title: EU Election Observation Missions: Anthropology's Role(s).

Methodologically speaking this topic requires a look at theory and practice. The first half of my thesis will therefore establish a theoretical basis for the methodological second half. Like anthropology, election observation is a dynamic field which is constantly adjusting itself to new global circumstances. Initially I will look at current theoretical and methodological debates in anthropology which are relevant to the topic of election observation. Democracy and human rights, as manifested in international customary law, form the basis of international election observation. Elections compose a large part of today's international notion of 'democracy building'. Anthropological contributions to the topics of democracy and human rights by Julia Paley, Carol Greenhouse et al., Kirsten Hastrup, Mark Goodale and Jane Cowan give valuable insights into the study of international election observation.

Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson and their theory on space serve as an inspiration for the quest to 'uncover ethnographic spaces' as mentioned in the thesis subtitle:

"Uncovering Ethnographic Spaces in the Intersection between International Electoral Principles and Social Locations."

I hope to uncover the unique arenas of interaction created by election observation missions, and the way these missions position themselves in (imagined) spaces. The ‘intersection’ is not a one-way junction, but a web of imaginings and practices. Moreover, I wish to explore gaps where international election principles meet their different imaginings and conceptions. I wish to find out whether these gaps are one of the possible realms where ethnographic methodology and theory are put to work. This is where the first section of this thesis takes off.

Bertrand et al. (2007) give an insight into the history of the secret ballot and voting and the aspect of technique and performance of elections. After discussing their approach, I shall then examine current debates concerning electronic voting, specifically the observation of internet voting.

An exploration of international election observation, its development and its principles will then follow. Finally the section will be concluded by an examination of anthropologists that have specifically conducted research on elections and election observation, such as Mukulika Banerjee and Kimberley Coles, the latter especially serving as an inspiration for this study.

As many readers will realize, this section is a humble patchwork of theories that seemed best suited to develop the topic; more questions will be raised than answered, but hopefully the topics discussed will be done justice.

The second half of my thesis will then outline the results of my venture at fieldwork.

## 1.1 Fieldwork and Participant Observation

“Fieldwork (...) helps define anthropology as a discipline in both senses of the word, constructing a space of possibilities while at the same time drawing the lines that confine that space.” (Gupta/Ferguson 1997: 2)

The term fieldwork was introduced by the zoologist Alfred C. Haddon, whose famous Torres Straits exhibition has been chisled into anthropology’s history, especially the British one. Then, fieldwork was still very much connected to the natural sciences. It was Bronislaw Malinowski’s institutional talent, in particular, that moulded participant observation, previously criticized by less empirically inclined anthropologists like Alfred R. Radcliffe-Brown, into *the* method of anthropology per se (cf. Gupta/Ferguson 1997: 6)<sup>1</sup>.

My thesis will be composed of two central methodologies: participant observation and interviews. Although I had hoped to be able to analyse three countries specifically and the

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<sup>1</sup>Marc Augé and John-Paul Colley also underline Franz Boas’ contribution to the notion of “fieldwork” in Boas’ study among West Coast “Indians” in 1886 in the United States (cf. Augé/Colley 2006: 81).

election observation missions conducted there, the limited scope of the thesis finally did not permit to add another section. Grounded Theory has served as an inspiration, but due to the scope of the thesis, I was not able to use the method fully. Nevertheless, the thesis has structured itself around my findings and data analysis, as Grounded Theory dictates. Moreover I mainly tried to conduct theoretical research to complement it with my research, to create a dynamic research process.

The EU has very strict policy guidelines on participating in an election observation mission. I was neither able to join a mission as a researcher, nor as an election observer, since I have not had enough practical experience in election observation. Endless applications for EU Election Observation Missions were unfortunately not fruitful. Therefore, I was forced to resort to ‘armchair anthropology’, in other words, I was not able to go into ‘the field’. However, I made the field come to me and became as active as I could. I conducted several interviews with election observers that had studied anthropology and received a research grant from the University of Vienna to participate in a ‘Specialisation Course on Election Observation and Assistance’ in the province of Burgenland in Austria to gain an insight into how election observers are trained. This was my participant observation, which helped me deepen my knowledge on the field of election observation in practice.

“Participant observation continues to be a major part of positioned anthropological method, but it is ceasing to be fetishized: talking to and living with the members of a community are increasingly taking place alongside reading newspapers, analyzing government documents, observing the activities of governing elites, and tracking the internal logic of transnational development agencies and cooperations” (Gupta/Ferguson 1997: 37)

Today, there is a general trend away from anthropological ‘rapport’ towards ‘collaboration’. The myth that anthropologists ‘go native’ and become one with a certain tribe, in order to formulate their experiences into scientific texts, is long dissolved. Collaborative research, however, can very much enhance the results of fieldwork (cf. Field/Fox 2007: 8).

In my thesis I tried to absorb as much about the topic in question as possible, reading EU reports about missions, newspaper articles and literature on the topic. During the election observation course I was able to gain a unique insight into the types of topics election observers are expected to know before going on a mission. This complemented and enhanced the knowledge I had already gained from literature and interviews I had previously conducted, as well as improved the interviews that were to come.

During the course, all participants and trainers were aware that I was writing my thesis

on the topic. I actively participated in the course, but always intended to keep a watchful eye over the debates going on; I wrote several pages of notes. Does attending a course count as participant observation?

I was not in ‘the field’ in the strict sense of the word (the issue of ‘the field’ will be discussed in 2.1). However, participating in a training course was as close as I could get to the topic and I do feel that I gained a deep understanding of the world of election observation. My observations were centered around the following questions:

What knowledge is circulated to aspiring observers, or observers that have already conducted several missions? How much country knowledge is required?

What interview and observational techniques are taught?

All these questions are central to my thesis, into which I gained an invaluable insight during the course. It was also fascinating to experience the excitement of learning about going into the field as an election observer. Several members of the group and the trainers shared their experiences from missions which demonstrated the range of different situations that can occur during a mission.

## 1.2 Interviews

The interviews were generally semi-structured. They varied depending on the information disclosed by the interviewees. The topics discussed however were quite similar, so that the analysis and comparison were straightforward. I decided against using a computer programme, such as ‘Atlas.ti’, since I found that doing it ‘the old way’, i.e. laying out all the interviews in front of me and coding and colouring possible topics in question gave me more creative insights. Furthermore, due to the limited scope of the thesis, I only have 7 interviews and thus it was manageable to gain an overview of the different interview partners.

My first interview was very early on into my thesis and thus helped to structure the general topic and the interviews thereafter. I tried to gender balance my interviewees as far as possible, thus I interviewed four women and three men. Some of the interviewees wanted to be kept anonymous, because the EU has special provisions on the information disclosed about their missions. I did not want to risk anyone’s future career opportunities, so to keep the empirical section homogenous, I have kept all interviewees anonymous. However in the acknowledgement section I do mention those interviewees that agreed to being named, especially because they were an invaluable source of information and a great help in the entire thesis.

A weak-point of the thesis is the distribution of my interviewees. Four of them are Austrians who had graduated with degrees from the Viennese Social and Cultural Anthropology Department. It was not possible for me to travel to meet other anthropologists working as election observers, apart from those that I met at the Specialisation Course. This creates a bias in the types of answers, mirroring the teachings of anthropology in Vienna which must be taken into account. My selection of interviewees was generally random. It was hard to arrange interviews with many, since they were often away on missions. I was unable to interview two potential interviewees due to this problem.

One interviewee is from Denmark, who also has an anthropological background. I made an exception with one election observer from France, who did not study anthropology, but conducts cultural awareness trainings for election observers, thus giving interesting insights into training procedures.

Another exceptional interview I conducted was with Kimberley Coles in Salzburg, who had worked as an election observer in Bosnia Herzegovina. This had not been with the EU, however her knowledge of the topic in general is very important, since she has published various articles and books on election observation and the connection to anthropology. She gave me scholarly advice on how to structure the topic.

My interview partners were all experienced election observers who have been on several missions with the EU and OSCE all over the world. They have worked as short term observers (STOs), long term observers (LTOs) and some even on the Core Team of a mission.

My main areas of interest in the interviews were:

- How do anthropologists experience being election observers?
- Where do they see conflicts, problems, successes and failures?
- How do anthropologists use the tools and theories they studied in their degrees in their occupations as election observers?

The empirical section is a combination of analyses about the insights gained through the interviews, the Election Observation course and my observations thereof, and also newspaper articles and literature published on the topic.

## Part I

# Theoretical Section: An Anthropological Study of Election Observation

Anthropology and election observation are constantly adapting to their surroundings, be it political changes, situational changes, changes in the environment, changes caused by globalisation. In its history anthropology has repeatedly questioned the very ground it stands upon, a unique strategy to bridge alterations in its research subjects, objects and motives. To study election observation anthropologically, some key questions need to be acknowledged first:

Where do leading anthropologists see anthropology today? Do they see any trends in the future of the discipline? What current methodological developments are there?

## 2 Past and Current Debates in Anthropology

“The field appears to be a thing of shreds and patches, of individuals and small coteries pursuing disjunctive investigations and talking mainly to themselves. We do not even hear stirring arguments anymore.” (Ortner 1984: 126).

In 1984 Sherry Ortner wrote an article for the *Journal of Comparative Studies in Society and History* criticising anthropology’s then gloomy, fragmented state. However, she sees this as a process of ‘liminality’ (certainly- which other term could be better used by an anthropologist to describe a period of transition?) towards a better order. 26 years later, anthropology seems to again be in a similar position. The 2009 conference by the American Anthropological Association entitled ‘The End of Anthropology’ solicited anthropologists on their opinion about anthropology’s current status. Does anthropology suffer from ‘epistemological hypochondria’ (Geertz cited by Comaroff 2010: 525) as Clifford Geertz once put it, or are these recurrent phases of auto-critique a survival strategy?

### The anthropological illness

Anthropology has come a long way, having gone through several transitions in its history. Especially for the topic in question, historical paradigms and paradigm shifts give an insight into current methodological and theoretical developments. They also explain current fears and worries concerning the future of the discipline of anthropology.

During the first two decades of the 20th century anthropology was dictated by imperial purposes and shifted towards becoming a field of national traditions which continued to sport colonial endeavours. The foci of study were either ‘exotic’ societies and cultures or studies of national ‘culture’.

“The main national traditions had gradually emerged under these conditions and interacted with them, being promoted by influential ‘founding fathers’ in the respective centers of cultural relativism in the United States, of the Durkheimian School in France, of British functionalism, of Soviet ‘ethnography’, of German diffusionism, and so forth” (Gingrich 2010: 554).

These national traditions dictated anthropological study well into the post-World War II years. Partly responsive to the political upheavals of the time, anthropology went through four phases of self-critique and examination from the 1960s to the end of the 20th Century. The neo-Marxist, feminist, postmodern and postcolonial critiques dominated the discipline, slowly but surely leaving the national traditions behind. These periods questioned the very foundations of anthropology, its mode of study, its object of inquiry and its writing methodology (cf. Gingrich 2010: 555). Far from being unequalled phases, anthropology is constantly challenging its premises, methodologies, theories and its role in the public eye. But rather than breaking, theorists are arguing that this is what embodies anthropology and gives it its strength in comparison to other disciplines. In response to the question posed above, even if it is suffering from a rare disciplinary disorder, anthropology seems to have developed an unparalleled survival strategy.

### An illuminated present

Today anthropology is developing towards a transnational and global field of study. Not only are the topics of inquiry becoming more global in nature (such as transnationalism, human rights and democratic developments which include international election observation) but also the cooperations between departments across national borders are strengthening (cf. Comaroff 2010: 525).

Anthropology is in transition. The ‘End of Anthropology’ conference was thus not interpreted as the end of a discipline but rather as the end of an era, highlighting new developments in the field. Rather than the gloomy outlook Ortner criticised in 1984, discourses on the discipline today seems more bright. Leading anthropologists have commented on their impressions on anthropology’s status quo, on its methodological as well as epistemological whereabouts:

“The discipline ought to be understood as a praxis: a mode of producing knowledge based on a few closely interrelated epistemic operations that lay the foundation for its diverse forms of theory work, mandate its research techniques, and chart its empirical coordinates. They belong, I stress, to the domain of Methodology” (Comaroff 2010: 530).

Comaroff suggests to let various praxes produce the theory. He names different dimensions of praxis, or techniques of knowledge production, that are essential to the self-reflexive discourse necessary for changing and adapting the discipline to its new era.

First, seeing macrotopics in local processes and looking critically behind the scene is important. This connects to anthropologists’ ability to read behind terms such as ‘democracy’, ‘rights’ and so on. For Comaroff anthropology is not anthropology without this critical eye (cf. Comaroff 2010: 530).

Second, the mapping of “being- and- becoming”, thus, a study of how and why certain dimensions of society are established is key. He also comments that the magic is looking for the contradiction, the counterintuitive and the paradox to uncover social truths of everyday life (cf. Comaroff 2010: 530f.).

Third, “spatiotemporalization”; positioning a subject matter in the “here-and-there” and “the then-and-now” (Comaroff 2010: 532) in proportion to the analytical object of study. In other words, one must try to stay embedded in past and current occurrences, as well as stay aware of local, regional and global developments (Comaroff 2010: 532f.).

Comaroff terms anthropology an “in/discipline” that urges other social sciences to question suggested ‘established’ domains that threaten to become stagnant and out of date (cf. Comaroff 2010: 533-534).

Another important dimension is comparative analysis, as commented by Gingrich (2010; 2002), which could be characterised as a fourth and final bullet point but which also plays a role in each issue. Comparison is not only a fundamental human cognitive activity, but also the core of scientific study (cf. Gingrich/Fox 2002: 10f.). Comparison helps establish the link between ethnographic experience and global social issues:

“We must, at the same time that we make comparisons across place and time,

conserve some of the ethnographic richness, the *context*, (...) of the cultural beliefs and behaviours we study". (Fox/Gingrich 2002: 11).

The aim is to use anthropology's comparative consciousness as a connector between horizontal local lives and vertical global ideas. This, in a nutshell, is how election observation can be studied anthropologically. Especially international principles and their impact locally is an area that is gaining increased attention in anthropological work worldwide. International election observers are the local embodiment of their organisations' international principles (see Coles 2007; 2008). They are sent into the field on a mission to observe and gain an overall impression of the electoral process in a certain area. The methodological tools to approach 'the field' are thus of paramount importance.

## 2.1 'The Field'

Gupta and Ferguson argue that even though fieldwork is a primary constituent of anthropological knowledge construction<sup>2</sup>, few anthropologists have actually set about exploring 'the field', namely how 'the field' itself is defined<sup>3</sup>.

In their book they study the 'field' as a site, method and location. They explore how 'the field' developed into being a cornerstone of anthropology, in what way it structures anthropological practice and the implications of this (cf. Gupta/Ferguson 1997: 4).

Even today, 'the field' automatically brings images to mind of a local site far away from 'home'. Gupta and Ferguson argue that anthropologists should look beyond pre-defined notions of the 'field' as defined by geographical means. They opt for 'location work', since 'real fieldwork' is often dangerously tied to imaginings of far away places, resulting in "some fields being more equal than others" (cf. Gupta/Ferguson 1997: 13, also cf. Amit 1999: 3ff.), touching on George Orwell's famous quote in *Animal Farm*. They contest

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<sup>2</sup>In this sense it is also important to note Marc Augé and Jean-Paul Colley's emphasis on non-fieldwork: "While it is not unreasonable to regard field research as the primary condition for anthropological work, it should not be seen as offering a complete answer. Everyone who attempts to answer the question 'What is humanity?' is practising anthropology in one way or the other. A long list of thinkers, from Kant to Todorov, have things to say on the subject without ever having done any fieldwork. Marcel Mauss was not a field man either, but through his erudition and his brilliant intuition he has exercised, and still exercises, a lasting influence on the ideas of anthropology" (Augé/Colley 2006: 94). Furthermore, it should be underlined that the history of anthropology very much operates without fieldwork, since it would be impossible to conduct participant observation if the time period being studied is situated very far back in history. This is indicated in the important volumes on the history of anthropology by Kuklick (2007) or Stocking (1992) in the Further Reading list.

<sup>3</sup>Gupta/Ferguson name a few exceptions to this, such as Stocking (1992), Kuklick (1991) and Vincent (1990), see Further Reading list. Vered Amit's edited volume on 'constructing the field' (Amit 1999) is also an important case in point.

that anthropologists need to become more critical when mapping 'difference', which is often taken for granted, calling this common mistake a "hierarchy of purity" of field sites (cf. Gupta/Ferguson 1997: 13).

Many anthropologists that have conducted research in 'the field' often deem it an initiation into the professional world. This is very reminiscent of election observers, who recall their first ever mission like something sacred, a gateway that they had to pass-which is inherently true, since the EU is generally reluctant to take on election observers without any 'field' experience. The idea of the 'field' in international election observation very much overlaps with Gupta and Ferguson's, and also Amit's (cf. Amit 1999: 4) critique of equating the field with 'not home' and with otherness. In international election observation, 'the field' is chosen by organisations that have certain preferences, or 'priority countries', as in the case of the EU. In anthropology such institutional decisions are also apparent, especially where funding is concerned in specific areas of research.

#### Local contexts

The two theorists also question the common view that anthropology belongs to the domain of the 'local', which discusses 'the field' in terms of location. The image of the local is often connected to a small community or village. They criticise that this does not take new developments into account, specifically following decolonization, where existing localities and borders were altered. Clinging on to old notions of the 'local' emanates in the exclusion of other knowledges that may be crucial<sup>4</sup>. They ask: "Why is it that, for example, local politics is so anthropological, whereas national or international politics is not?" (Gupta/Ferguson 1997: 15). Here too there is a clear hierarchy of topics that are discussed; nevertheless, in recent years there have been more anthropological studies of institutions such as in the domain of institutional and organisational anthropology which should not be forgotten<sup>5</sup>.

Regarding the 'local', anthropologists are often seen as the only ones that can 'get the facts right'. This is an extremely dangerous assumption, since in many cases local

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<sup>4</sup>In the subtitle of this thesis, there is a reference to social locations. This is not to be seen as a dichotomy to global currents. Social locations in this sense means webs of meanings and practices that interact with international democracy promoters and their principles. This will be discussed in more detail in the subchapter 3.2 in reference to spaces.

<sup>5</sup>See for example Bellier, Irene; Wilson, Thomas M. (2000), or Verlot, Marc (2001) in the Further Reading list.

people, intellectuals and specialists are more successful at collecting certain data (cf. Gupta/Ferguson 1997: 24). As in election observation, the election observer very much relies on local drivers, interpreters and interlocutors to maneuver him/herself in a mapped area.

#### ‘The field’ as method

Generally an ethnography combines a 12-month stay in a village with an analysis of historical background. “This development, (is) the ultimate triumph of a version of the hegemonic “Malinowskian” practice of “the field” (...).” (Gupta/Ferguson 1997: 25). Gupta and Ferguson make the reader aware that there are different methodologies in the so-called ‘peripheries’ of anthropology, namely not the US or central European countries. Conceptions of what ‘the field’ is may differ, which can offer new and rich insights into ethnography. It is therefore crucial to resort to “comparing different fields of knowledge that such different practices and conventions open up” (Gupta/Ferguson 1997: 27), which again highlights the importance of anthropology’s comparative consciousness (see Gingrich 2002).

The exploration of ‘the field’ needs to shift to “multiple social and political sites and locations” (Gupta/Ferguson 1997: 37), which also includes an openness to other fieldwork practices. Gupta and Ferguson call for a rethinking of ‘the field’ where specific attention is given to locations and especially how these shift and alter. This way anthropology can co-exist with different kinds of knowledge to adapt itself to the present (cf. Gupta/Ferguson 1997: 39-40; cf. Marc Augé/Jean-Paul Colley 2006: 75).

In terms of election observation it is interesting to see how anthropologists maneuver, use and create methodologies they’ve taken from their anthropology degree in new institutional rules and settings (section II).

“In recent years, anthropologists have been more inclined to depart from conventions of archetypical fieldwork as they have taken on research projects not easily approached via traditional models of immersion within a community” (Gupta/Ferguson 1997: 32).

The domain of ‘applied anthropology’ and studies of working anthropologists show how these insights have been implemented in practice.

## 2.2 Anthropology Put to Work

Anthropologists are becoming increasingly involved in the professional world as consultants, sources of advice on ‘problems for society’ such as new technologies, for big development organisations or companies involved in economic enterprises. There are various ethical dimensions to be countered in the domain of applied anthropology, since there may be clashes of interest regarding certain challenges, especially in consultative positions. The case of the Human Terrain Teams where the US army employed various anthropologists in Afghanistan ended in disaster when three social scientists lost their lives (see AAA Commission Final Report on Human Terrain System, 2009).

Augé and Colleyn also draw attention to the dimension of time:

“In general, decision-makers demand ‘instant science’ to help them adjust their choices to the very short term. A priori, this time constraint is in contradiction with the slow impregnation of methods practised by anthropologists. However, a large number of studies show that this is a challenge worth taking up.”  
(Augé/Colleyn 2006: 73)

Decision-makers are generally starting to realise that short-term aims and effects are not sustainable. The European Union has prolonged the length of EU EOMs in recent years (see chapter 7.1.7 where the issue of time constraint will be discussed in more detail). Sustainability is the buzzword in most international organisations, calling on anthropologists to collect evidence and insights into ‘local’ worlds. Anthropology is responding to this, for instance in the form of the Society for Applied Anthropology.

Les W. Field and Richard G. Fox discuss how anthropology is put to ‘work’, in the sense of what anthropologists envisioned themselves doing or what they did and how anthropology’s ‘legitimacy in society’ offers the possibility of these jobs (cf. Field/Fox 2007: 2). Historically speaking, anthropologists have already had experience in interdisciplinary collaborations in the service of the welfare state, in international development projects, especially during the Great Depression and after WWII (cf. Field/Fox 2007: 3). In mid-20th Century little ‘applied anthropology’ was carried out, especially leading up to the postmodern critique and the question of representation, where the ethical issues involved in applied anthropology just seemed too grave. Field and Fox see the gap between applied and basic research as illegitimate, since most anthropologists conducting basic research are in the public eye which makes their job, in a sense, ‘applied’ too. Changes in anthropology have occurred already, a wide array of young anthropologists are applying the tools they learnt during their degree in their professional careers. According to Fox and Field, one young anthropologist suggests that:

“... anthropologists have a strong, multisided role to play when they work with other kinds of professionals, and (...) their attention to work process as well as final product is one of their specific contributions” (Field/Fox 2007: 12).

Field and Fox term this a ‘new reflexivity’, which is based on collaboration, as already mentioned above (see Field/Fox 2002). This of course also brings its dangers, especially when being reminded of the fact that there is not one anthropological toolkit. This thesis examines to what extent election observers with an anthropological background use the knowledge acquired during their university studies in practice. The aim is to find ways of using anthropological theory and technique in international election observation and how to tackle certain constraints such as policy and time.

International election observation is very much based on human rights and democracy, two terms that have been widely discussed in anthropology.

### 3 Anthropological Debates on Human Rights and Democracy

Elections are guided by the international rights system and are an expression of international customary law. They are embedded in ‘democracy’ and ‘human rights’.

“With the end of the cold war, democracy and human rights seem to have become the organizing principle of a new international order, whose protracted birth might not be over yet.” (Guilhot 2005: 1)

This era was marked by the “Washington Consensus”, a set of practices and reforms favoured by international financial institutions (such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund) for the promotion of neoliberal policies especially designated for “developing countries”. The 1980s and especially 1990s saw an increase in reform packages and policies, which has been widely criticised, especially since the outbreak of the financial crisis in 2008. These developments were connected to an increase in human rights and democracy promotion programmes after the cold war. International election observation plays an important role in the ‘international order’ Guilhot describes in his book “The Democracy Makers” (2005).

Election observation missions, a relatively new occurrence, are on the increase. Different foundational international rights documents have anchored elections into their fundamental principles, which form the basis for international election observation. The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), a legally non-binding document, has

been accepted by all members of the United Nations and includes provisions that “now have the status of customary international law” (European Commission 2008: 18). In article 21, paragraphs 1 and 3 are dedicated specifically to elections:

(1) Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.

(3) The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.

(UDHR 1948: URL 1)

Moreover articles 19 and 20 state the right to freedom of opinion and expression and the right to peaceful assembly and association (cf. UDHR 1948: URL 1).

Article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) from 1966 which is a legally binding document for the signatories adds the dimension of the right to be elected which was not mentioned in the UDHR. Articles 19, 21 and 22 also mention, as in the UDHR, the right to freedom of expression, the right to peaceful assembly and the right to freedom of association with others. The ICCPR is the source of reference most countries use (cf. European Commission 2008b: 16-18).

Article 5 of the UN Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) from 1966 prohibits racial discrimination in all its forms regarding political rights, in particular the right to vote and to stand for elections. Finally CEDAW, the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women from 1979 promotes the elimination of “discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country”, again specifically mentioning voting and the right to stand for elections. There are a variety of other treaties which have been signed by regional bodies that also include similar principles (cf. European Commission 2008b: 19; and see European Commission 2008a).

Thus, when summarising these political rights and fundamental freedoms, elections should include:

the right to equal vote, the right to participation, freedom of expression, the right to stand for elections, the right to equal and universal suffrage, freedom of association, freedom to peaceful assembly, right to an effective legal remedy, freedom from discrimination. These are the basic international standards for elections which were summarised in the 2005 Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation which will be discussed

in chapter 5.2.

The language of law says little about what happens in practice. Important anthropological contributions have been made in the study of ‘democracy’ and ‘human rights’ which are vital to the study of election observation. As a result, this section will first look at anthropological approaches towards ‘democracy’ and then towards ‘human rights’ to move away from their abstract nature and towards their link to anthropology and practice.

### 3.1 Anthropology and Democracy

“Democracy” in international contemporary politics, in democracy movements of the 1970s and 1980s and since the end of the Cold War, is seen as the answer to many problems - among them as a pacifying factor that can prevent wars. This hope is echoed by many, not only in the Western hemisphere. Few political ideologies oppose the principles of democracy per se. Democracy has become the leading notion of many states (cf. Ray 1997: 2).

“Democracy is assumed to be reflected in such government characteristics as competitive elections, selection of governmental executives by election, the openness of executive recruitment, and parity between the legislative and executive branches of government.” (Ray 1997: 2f.)

These dimensions describe the way international politics approaches and defines democratic principles promoted by international organisations worldwide. Elections are a core element of these democratic principles, but, as Kofi Annan once put it: “while democracy must be more than free elections, it is also true... that it cannot be less” (Annan cited by Binder/Pippan 2008: 7; also see Coles 2008). In recent years the intervention of international actors in the promotion of democracy has rapidly increased, amounting to industry-like scopes: “This shift is both noticeable in terms of overall international engagement in democratization processes and the degree of influence that international actors appear to have over outcomes.” (Legler, et. al. 2007: 3). Kimberley Coles as well as Nicolas Guilhot assign this shift to an array of factors:

“The internationalization of democracy in the 1990s was made possible in part through the mapping of emancipatory values and human rights onto democracy; however, Guilhot argues that the newest push for democratic political systems was tightly connected and entirely subordinated to the imposition of neoliberal economic orthodoxy” (Guilhot 2005: 192-93 as cited by Coles 2007: 16)

Democracy promotion has become an industry. The upsurge in election observation missions is linked to the rise of democracy promotion; elections are top-funded and promoted by the so-called ‘international community’ (cf. Coles 2007: 11;15). Coles argues that an election is similar to a laboratory- it “can be productively analyzed as a site that creates democratic knowledge and authority.” (Coles 2004: 553).

#### Networks of meaning

In anthropology, democracy has seen a deficit in its study- it crops up constantly in analyses of human rights, globalization, power, the state- but there has been little work on democracy as such. Julia Paley uncovered this fact following a personal survey conducted at the AAA conference in 2001 (cf. Paley 2002: 470). In recent years though she has noticed an upsurge in interest:

“.. as anthropologists doing fieldwork in Eastern Europe, Africa, Latin America, and elsewhere have witnessed regime transitions in the places they study, democracy has emerged as a salient theme. Anthropologists’ ethnographic method, their relationships with people outside of formal and elite political institutions, and their attention to alternative world views have led them to look beyond official political transitions to the local meanings, circulating discourses, multiple contestations, and changing forms of power accompanying the installation of new political regimes.” (Paley 2002: 470)

In 2005 a team of political anthropologists gathered in Santa Fe at the School for Advanced Research to engage in anthropological conversation about “democracy”. Rather than intending to find a single definition of democracy and a set of democratic standards, the authors of the book set about determining what different notions of democracy there are in different localities and to understand the way in which “democracy is conceptualized in public discourse and practice” (Paley 2008: 4). ‘Democracy’ is characterised by an open-ended construction and the anthropological approach to democracy is delineated by an “analytical openness” (cf. Paley 2008: 4-6). Especially the phrase “democracy” encumbers various terms such as ‘democratic’, ‘democratization’, ‘democracy promotion’, ‘systems of democracy’, indicating the analytical struggles associated with the expression (cf. Paley 2002: 471).

Nevertheless, in some cases it can be of value to narrow down certain terms, to set boundaries to other meanings on a conceptual level. It also demonstrates that democracy has a large linguistic component which should not be ignored. Aihwa Ong (1997)<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>See Further Reading list

indicates that different democracy meanings are inherent in state discourses and national self-understandings, as well. Hence, different democracy understandings are not unique to citizens. She explains that in parts of Asia democracy is not so much connected to individual rights than to collective welfare rights for citizens, embodied in state provision (cf. Paley 2002: 475). This connects to Ong's theory of "multiple modernities", which counters the idea of one 'western' form of modernity imposed upon the 'rest' (Ong 1999: 36).

Fernando Coronil (1997)<sup>7</sup> talks about how in Venezuela the different meanings of democracy went from universal suffrage to material benefits in public works projects during the military dictatorship. Many military dictatorships legitimate themselves through democracy, or access power by using democratic practices (cf. Paley 2002: 476f.). A wide array of anthropological studies have been carried out surrounding military dictatorships, especially concerning Latin American countries. Paley mentions KB Warren (2000)<sup>8</sup>, Deborah Poole and Gerardo Rénique (1992)<sup>9</sup>, Diane Nelson (1999)<sup>10</sup>, Jennifer Schirmer (1998)<sup>11</sup> etc. (cf. Paley 2002: 476-477).

Democracy transitions, manifestations and enactments are thus neither unilateral nor linear processes: "...democracy is not a single condition that countries do or do not have, but rather a set of processes unevenly enacted over time." (Paley 2002: 479).

On a practical level Paley argues that the explorations of different meanings of democracy help to contrast existent norms and hegemonic ideas of the term:

"Foreign policy makers and those engaged in promoting democracy internationally identify characteristics needed for a political system to be labeled a democracy and apply those criteria to countries worldwide. They maintain that programs and political systems can be replicated in vastly varying circumstances, for example, by implementing democracy promotion projects in one region and then using the knowledge gained to expand them to others. In activities such as these, a common vocabulary becomes available to everyone from policy makers, to researchers, to non-governmental actors, to media. Explicit in setting forth criteria, it gains effectiveness by exerting a commonsensical grip on the social and political imagination." (Paley 2008: 4)

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<sup>7</sup>See Further Reading list.

<sup>8</sup>See Further Reading list.

<sup>9</sup>See Further Reading list.

<sup>10</sup>See Further Reading list.

<sup>11</sup>See Further Reading list.

Programme replicas

The OSCE's (Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe) Ten Fragile States Principles (2007) are like the Ten Commandments of peacebuilding.

1. Take context as the starting point
  2. Ensure all activities do no harm
  3. Focus on statebuilding as the central objective
  4. Prioritise prevention
  5. Recognise the links between political, security and development objectives
  6. Promote non discrimination as a basis for inclusive and stable societies
  7. Align with local priorities in different ways and in different contexts
  8. Agree on practical co-ordination mechanisms between international actors
  9. Act fast... but stay engaged long enough to give success a chance
  10. Avoid pockets of exclusion ("aid orphans")
- (URL 2)

The first point highlights the importance of the context; however especially regarding international intervention, development projects or international election observation, guidelines, principles and notions of best practice are already in place before the context of action has even been chosen. The reasons for this are often donor pressure issues, but also time restrictions. The fact that international institutions often replicate programmes in different regions leaves anthropologists with a methodological problem<sup>12</sup>. Anthropology is based on the knowledge of different societies in different regions that share a common humanity (cf. Hastrup 2002: 28). Where are international organisations, rights principles and singular definitions situated in this complex field of shared ground and boundaries of difference? The research team argues that it is precisely at this intersection that anthropology's expertise can be put into practice. The term 'temporalities' describes how to study situations which are constantly changing and are undergoing constant governmental revisions. For that reason, concentrating on the "different ways of lived meanings and practices" (Paley 2008: 17) is a helpful starting point for fieldwork. Anthropology can explore the different reactions of international democratic principles in different localities to explore their in/effectivity, especially with comparative techniques.

Paley adds that studying processes generating democracy go beyond the limit of any country.

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<sup>12</sup>This notion will be explored in chapter 4 referring to the work of Bertrand et al. (2007). They propose that international rights notions are designed to mould into different situations; this is their strength.

“Therefore, studying democracy ethnographically calls for fieldwork that can trace people and events beyond pre-set borders. The projects require not only linking agendas and institutions across regions but also taking as objects of study transnational agencies and networks themselves. Studying democracy may therefore involve engaging with an eclectic array of situations, including international regulatory systems, virtual communities, coalition politics, and international finance, among others.” (Paley 2008: 16-17)

Hence, anthropological methodology and technique need to be adapted to an array of new situations and transcend categories of the domestic and international, which echos many contemporary anthropologists such as Aihwa Ong, Ulf Hannerz and Thomas Hylland Eriksen.

Ideally, the study of international election observation is not only the study of a dynamic concept and its enactment but also requires flexibility in research areas, subjects and methods such as multi-sited fieldwork. As a starting point, focusing the lens on one small aspect of the field may give insights into the general framework that is often imitated in different countries. An anthropological study of the different effects the same programmes have in different areas could be of great use for anthropology as well as for international election observation.

These research insights connect to those in “Ethnography in Unstable Places”, a volume edited by Carol J. Greenhouse et al. (2002). The volume is an exploration of how social routines and understandings of society have been influenced by transformations of state power:

“... the specific context in which states are unmade or remade is one in which the structural tensions between globalization of capital and the rights of citizens expose critical gaps in states’ administrative fabric”. (Greenhouse et al. 2002: 2).

Rights of citizens, which interact with ideas of the state and elections, are tightly intertwined with different notions of democracy. At this point it is essential to transition towards the study of human rights.

### **3.2 Anthropology and Human Rights**

Anthropologists studying human rights were faced with a theoretical problem, or paradox: the ethnographic knowledge about local differences versus the awareness of a shared humanity between all human beings. Many anthropologists interpreted these two facts as

constant opposites for the most part of the 20th century; they underlie a general debate in anthropology between ‘cultural relativism’ and ‘universalism’ which came to influence anthropology’s stance on human rights for more than half a century (cf. Hastrup 2002: 29).

Human rights were only officially formulated after WWII. Even before then, however, the idea of civil rights and the like were apparent. Kirsten Hastrup goes as far as saying that anthropology itself, to a certain extent, was based on political philosophy’s idea of a universalised humanity which circulated in the late 19th century (cf. Hastrup 2002: 28). The early 20th century saw the American school of anthropology develop its theory of cultural relativism, headed by Franz Boas, which was mainly comprised of ideas on holistic, relatively autonomous cultural units, that were not comparable to each other, as they were “subject to independent causation” (Silverman 2005: 262). Although there were many differences among Boas’ students and the generations following him, the relativist legacy carried on after WWII, since many had set up anthropology departments and museums all over the country. Even today, Boas’ legacy continues with the four field approach<sup>13</sup> still being a central component of US American anthropology (cf. Silverman 2005: 263ff.)<sup>14</sup>.

### An uneasy relationship

In this scholarly milieu, it is not surprising that anthropology’s first reaction towards a declaration of universal human rights was one of denial and criticism. In 1947 the United Nations’ Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) asked Melville

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<sup>13</sup>The Four Field Approach is the study of four subfields in anthropology: archaeological, biological, cultural and linguistic anthropology.

<sup>14</sup>The 1970s controversy between Boas’ second generation student Margaret Mead and Derek Freeman is one of the most prominent examples of the cultural relativism debate. In her first fieldwork endeavor in Samoa, Margaret Mead had purported that Samoan teenage girls lived a stressfree adolescence, since their sexuality was not hindered by the many rules and norms American adolescents faced. She aimed at showing that people were not so much dependent on nature, but that “nurture” was more important. Mead thereafter became one of the most prominent fighters against racism, especially against Afroamericans in the southern United States. Her theory proved that it was not biology that determined cultural specificities, but upbringing, countering the then dominant biologicistic racial theories.

Derek Freeman, who spent most of his life in Samoa, launched an anti-Margaret Mead campaign years later after Mead’s death, claiming that she had tricked a whole nation. Samoan girls’ adolescence was far from being stress free. Freeman claimed that Mead had gone to Samoa with a fixed image of what she wanted to find out and thus manipulated her findings. Freeman claimed that Samoan adolescence was not really different from American adolescence, thus taking on a more universalist stance. Even though the debate was never really resolved, it shows the type of academic climate still inherent in the United States in the late 1970s (cf. BBC Tales from the Jungle 2006)

Herskovits, member of the AAA, to write a statement on the UN Commission of Human Rights, which was working on a draft that would become the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 (cf. Goodale 2006: 485). Herskovits' statement highlighted the necessity of respect towards cultural differences and denounced the attempt at any sort of "ideological imperialism". A few months later, Julian Steward and Homer G. Barnett ousted critique on the Herskovits' statement, but solely on the issue of epistemology, and not on the actual UDHR. An internal anthropological debate followed, and the UDHR issue was left aside (cf. Goodale 2006: 486-487).

Mark Goodale points out that for almost 40 years after the UDHR rejection, no title of the journal *American Anthropologist* included 'human rights', symbolic evidence that anthropology was "in exile from the most important debates over human rights theory and practice" (Goodale 2006: 487).

In summary the relationship between anthropology and human rights was first one of rejection, then one of exile<sup>15</sup> and from 1987 onwards, the third phase began, when anthropology began to engage more directly in human rights topics (cf. Goodale 2006: 487f.). In 1992 the AAA executive board established a Commission for Human Rights. In 1999 a "Declaration on Anthropology and Human Rights" was passed by the AAA, which demonstrated that "people and groups have a generic right to realize their capacity for culture" (Committee for Human Rights 1999 as cited by Goodale 2006: 489), to finally repudiate the 1947 statement. The Declaration was augmented in 2000 and 2005 (cf. Goodale 2006: 489). This relationship between human rights and anthropology was not unique to American anthropology, since it was transported to and influenced other countries.

As Hastrup highlights, anthropologists have now mostly agreed on the fact that humans are not subject to their nature but are 'flexible' and 'self-shaping'. Furthermore she argues that the local worlds of people are where anthropology's expertise lies and should lie (Hastrup 2002: 30). Anthropology's relationship with human rights and the cultural relativism debate are issues that must be learnt from when studying election observation, to avoid falling into the same trap once more.

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<sup>15</sup>Lévi-Strauss' statement on racism for the UNESCO, "Race and History" (1952) and lectures he held for UNESCO, however, should not be forgotten and are to be seen as an exception, see Further Reading list.

## Going beyond relativism vs. universalism

In the 1990s, anthropologists began to specifically study the relationship between human rights and anthropology. Susan Waltz (2002) released several articles countering common misgivings that the UDHR was a completely Western set of concepts. She meticulously describes which nation states and representatives helped shape which sentence in different clauses of the UDHR (cf. Waltz 2001).

Jane K. Cowan discusses the universalism - cultural relativism debate in “Culture and Rights” (2006) and in publications thereafter. For her, the simple distinction between universalist liberalism and cultural relativism is a mistake. The common contradiction between rights vs. culture is a fallacy, she argues.

Cowan sees four junctions which go beyond the mere dichotomy (cf. Cowan 2006: 9f.):

- 1) Rights versus culture. This notion has a long history, Cowan names enlightenment universalism and liberal individualism as the root of the opposition of the terms.
- 2) The right to culture. Culture is interpreted as a right in itself. This is often used by indigenous but also nationalist parties. It exemplifies the right to practice one’s culture in a free and respectful way.
- 3) Rights as culture. Rights are seen not only as a concept but are also defined as a social and ideational space, entailing ideas of the ‘self’, ‘sociality’ and agency. Human rights model the way in which the world is perceived.
- (4) Culture as analytic to rights. “Rights can be understood through methods of and orientations to cultural analysis in anthropology” (Cowan 2006: 10). One can advance on rights practice with the methods of cultural analysis. It means a general differentiation between object and method.

These four junctions are inherent in scholarly activity concerning the topic of human rights. Cowan warns that the way culture is defined in analyses should be taken into account. In international rights documents, rights are often associated with choice and detached from social relations. This ignores the social consequences, the effects “liberal choices” may have on an individuals’ social sphere (cf. Cowan 2006: 14). Furthermore, the common evolutionist belief that culture preexisted political structures causes many difficulties in implementing international development projects. The individual is more often than not seen as prior to society, instead of constituted and shaped by one or more societies. In the international rights discourse, culture is often put on a fixed pedestal (cf. Cowan 2006: 14-15)- as was the case in Elizabeth Povinellis (2002)<sup>16</sup> study of multi-

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<sup>16</sup>See Further Reading list.

culturalism in Australia and the aborigines. “Aboriginal culture” is often forged through structures of Euro-Australian images of aboriginal culture (cf. Cowan 2006: 17).

Marylin Strathern’s article (2004)<sup>17</sup> on a court case in Papua New Guinea is another example Cowan gives of a successful ethnographic study of human rights. A young woman was given in marriage to a clan as part of a compensation payment. An NGO got involved and deplored this causing a country-wide debate on traditional ‘bad’ and ‘good’ cultural traits. Strathern argues that personhood in Papua New Guinea is not constituted through the individual but through relations with others. The agent therefore is defined through his/her relations to others. In human rights law, agency is detached from kin or other relations, thus creating a sharp contrast. Cowan argues that Strathern’s findings go beyond the common blocks of universalism vs. relativism - she follows the agent as a marker instead (cf. Cowan 2006: 19).

For Strathern the distinction of ‘personhood’ in the model of human rights and the very different constitution of ‘personhood’ as a construction through social relations and different forms of personhood is crucial. She demonstrates that especially in the court case she studied in Papua New Guinea, the woman in question and her views and visualisation of herself should have played a more central role than just her right-to-exit. The right-to-exit culture would mean that culture is detached from social relations. Strathern puts social relations at the center, rather than ‘culture’ (cf. Cowan 2006: 18ff.).

“Slipping tangentially across the well-worn tracks between opposed positions - universalism versus cultural relativism, victim versus perpetrator, and individual versus society - Strathern evades the impasse and reframes the problem to address a 21st- century dilemma that we have barely begun to conceptualize. Something like this is what I (...) had in mind when suggesting that (...) culture could be analytic to rights.” (Cowan 2006: 20).

Additionally, one should not forget that human rights are designed to be broader to allow for interpretational space; it is just that this space should not be predetermined. Anthropology can work at bringing ‘subjectivity’ into rights claims.

An anthropology of human rights

Kirsten Hastrup incorporates similar arguments and advances Cowan’s and Strathern’s theories in her text. The language of law itself has a universalising tendency, neglecting social and cultural contexts. Clifford Geertz (1983)<sup>18</sup> also argues that human rights cases

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<sup>17</sup>See Further Reading list.

<sup>18</sup>See Further Reading list.

often ‘decontextualise’ events (cf. Hastrup 2002: 31f.). This mirrors the common critique of international election observation- missions that are transported from one country to another without really engaging with the given context beforehand. Experience and personal visualisations are left out of the equation which is reminiscent of Strathern’s argument above. Hastrup’s assertion to promote anthropology’s comparative consciousness completes the puzzle.

“The anthropological contribution to the study of human rights could be a recontextualisation of rights and violations within a comparative framework of local discourses and political contexts.” (Hastrup 2002: 36)<sup>19</sup>

Individuality itself presupposes an ‘other’ and thus Hastrup argues that with anthropology, human rights can be stopped being equated to an “essence of humanity” and rather be based on the fact that we are “imagineable to each other” and that we can “conjoin in a shared standard of justice from diverse rationales- that we are equally human beyond our diverse vocabularies”. (Hastrup 2002: 40).

Her idea is to add experience and life to the language of rights in order to be able to see the human factor in the generalistic human rights idea and to use anthropology’s comparative consciousness as the connector between local lives and global ideas (cf. Hastrup 2002: 39f.). The connection to international election observation can be drawn here by aiming to explore the way election values and procedures are imagined and lived in different localities, a ‘bottom-up approach’ in international rights jargon.

### Human rights spaces

Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson’s theory about spaces in their article “Beyond “Culture”: Space, Identity and the Politics of Difference” (1992) touches on this argument by discussing the way spaces are mapped. Their first example is the misconception about world maps. Countries are marked in different colours, giving the impression that each country is allocated to a culture, such as ‘Indian culture’ or ‘American culture’. They warn that “...space functions as a central organizing principle in the social sciences at the same time it disappears from analytical purview.” (Ferguson; Gupta 1992: 7). When studying human rights, or election observation in this case, it is important to be aware of the “assumed isomorphism” of space, place and culture. “We need to ask how to deal with cultural difference while abandoning received ideas of (localized) culture.” (Ferguson; Gupta 1992: 7).

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<sup>19</sup>Hastrup here refers to Wilson, Richard A. (1997). See Further Reading list.

son; Gupta 1992: 7).

They further argue that

“... challenging the ruptured landscape of independent nations and autonomous cultures raises the question of understanding social change and cultural transformation as situated within interconnected spaces.” (Gupta; Ferguson 1992: 8)

Spaces are not disconnected naturally, but interlocked by invisible hierarchies. This leads to Benedict Anderson’s (1983)<sup>20</sup> theory of “imagined communities”. The “here” and “there” become unclear, people’s relationships to places are altered (cf. Gupta; Ferguson 1992: 10). Ideas of cultures and ethnicities are more dominant, thus imagined communities become mapped to imagined places, to use Anderson’s words. Ever since Durkheim, “anthropology has known that the experience of space is always socially constructed” (Gupta; Ferguson 1992: 11).

These insights help to look behind terms such as ‘nation’, often used in election observation. Elections establish the power of an individual or party over a specific region or country. How these regions are mapped and visualised and how election observers approach different spaces within national boundaries is one important aspect to be explored (see chapter 9.1). In what way do imagined international human rights and election principles maneuver within differently imagined communities and imagined places?

The theory of spaces corresponds to the subtitle of this thesis: “uncovering ethnographic spaces in the intersection between international electoral principles and social locations”. Not solely a look at spaces and their construction, but also gaps where ethnographic approaches could be put into practice will be explored in this thesis.

The dimension of practice is discussed in Goodale’s “critical anthropology of human rights”:

“ I use human rights (...) broadly: the phrase captures the constellation of philosophical, practical, and phenomenological dimensions through which universal rights, rights believed to be entailed by a common human nature, are enacted, debated, practiced, violated, envisioned, and experienced. When I describe “human rights discourse” I am referring to the coteries of concepts, practices, and experiences through which human rights have meaning at different levels, levels which are prior to and go beyond the merely instrumental, or legal (...)” (Goodale 2006: 490)

The job of the anthropologist would be to trace how these developments take place. Apart from the ideational dimensions, the practical side of human rights practice and discourse

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<sup>20</sup>As cited by Gupta/Ferguson 1992. See Further Reading list.

must also be considered. Goodale names the combination of ideas and practices that make human rights the “political economy of human rights” (Goodale 2006: 497f.)<sup>21</sup>.

Accordingly, when adding election observation to the equation, it must be seen as more than its formal human rights framework. The awareness of different imaginings about election procedures and principles at different levels is an important point to consider. Also, the different human rights practices and the technicalities involved are an essential dimension which is often left out. Only including these aspects can election observation be studied anthropologically.

The aim is to find out in how far international bodies performing election observation consider different imaginings and adapt their rights apparatus. How do human rights practices create imaginings? It is equally important to find out how the election observer himself imagines his role and space in the election observation procedure, since he is in the crossroads, or more precisely, caught up in a web of different imaginings (see section II).

First of all though, delving into the history of voting, the secret ballot and elections is necessary to understand how ideas and practices have shaped notions of ‘elections’, ‘rights’ and ‘voting’ today.

## 4 A History of Voting and the Secret Ballot

What conceptions of voting and elections were there in different localities and how have these shaped the present? How did the secret ballot come about?

“Today the technology of the secret ballot is regarded as the self-evident tool of representative democracy. It underpins the globally dominant conception of voting as a universal and individual political act. At the core of this conception stands the idea - laid down in Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights - that secrecy is the *sine qua non* condition of free expression of the voters’ will.” (italics by author. Bertrand et al. (2007): 1).

In “Cultures of Voting. The Hidden History of the Secret Ballot” (2007) Romain Bertrand, Jean-Louis Briquet and Peter Pels argue that the association with voting and individual political freedom is a modern myth or misconception. Especially assumptions about secret

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<sup>21</sup>At this point, an awareness of the various citizenship theories of Aihwa Ong on “flexible citizenship” (1999); Katharyne Mitchell “cultural citizen” (1997); Will Kymlicka “Multicultural citizenship” (1996) among many others, is important; due to the limited scope of this study, these theories can unfortunately not be treated in more detail. See Further Reading list.

voting processes in Ancient Greece and forms of voting and ‘ballot boxes’ in second-century Rome feed the idea that secret voting connects to political individual freedom, which “modern Western representative democracy has finally managed to institutionalise” (cf. Bertrand et al. 2007: 1). Bertrand et al. counter this notion by presenting different “cultures of voting” in their book.

The first secret ballot, a voting list with all candidates and political parties, was introduced in Australia in 1837 thus deeming it the ‘Australian ballot’. In Britain it was inaugurated in 1872, in the US in 1896, in Germany in 1903 and in France in 1913. Closer examination shows that the secret ballot was not inextricably linked to individual political freedom at the time. In the southern United States for example the secret ballot cut out a large part of the lower class illiterate black vote, hereby restricting individual political freedom. The Australian ballot was not connected to the ideological debate of inaugurating political freedom for all (cf. Bertrand et al. 2007: 1-2).

In the former colonies the introduction of secret voting technologies rarely secured the link to individual political freedom in practice. In Benin for example, “clientistic selling and buying of votes” (Bertrand et al. 2007: 2) was more common than individual choice when voting. In late-colonial Tanganyika (part of today’s Tanzania) the secret ballot “seems to have led to corporate rather than individualised cultures of voting” (Bertrand et al. 2007: 2). Common assumptions of secret voting are remodelled as soon as they reach another social, political and economic context (Bertrand et al. 2007: 3).

Bertrand et al. stress that the study of the secret ballot is not intended to make a case of relativism, but that secret voting is in itself an “emanation of a culture of modernity” (Bertrand et al. 2007: 3)- or of ‘multiple modernities’, as mentioned above (Ong 1999: 36). Thus it is constituted by *technology* and *performance*, embedded in a variety of socio - historical circumstances.

*Technology* is configured as technique - which incorporates formulations in practice, and as technology - which is the system of social relationships around it (Bertrand et al. 2007: 8). It is not only a tool for enforcing state-citizen ideologies but also for acting against the form of political power.

*Performance* “locates the technology’s material manifestations in concrete relationships between producers of the act of voting and its audiences” (Bertrand et al. 2007: 11). This allows for various conceptions of an election for different audiences. Distinctive meanings and manifestations of secrecy are also a crucial factor - secrecy frequently raises suspicions of conspiracy and fraud within voters (cf. Bertrand et al. 2007: 13) - as well as in election observation institutions. An awareness of different notions of secrecy is therefore crucial.

In Uganda, for example, voting is conducted in an open space and the vote is usually cast in a basin in the ground. From a European perspective this may compromise notions of secrecy, but in Uganda the fact that voting is conducted in open space and not in a closed building like a school, for instance, builds trust and marginalises the possibility of fraud (see chapter 9)

The ideology of voting is often tallied as a transformation of a quantitative practice into a qualitative political opinion, transforming the medium into the message, to use Marshall McLuhans words. Bertrand et al. deem this the “fetishization of the secret ballot” (Bertrand et al. 2007: 5). The scholars remind us of the Foucaultian theory that

“*all* political technologies are forms of subjectivisation in a double sense: they subject the people targeted by their disciplinary regimes, but also allow these people to position themselves as subjects in sometimes subversive appropriations of technologies ‘from below’.” (Foucault 1978 and Bayart 1993 paraphrased by Bertrand et al. 2007: 6)

Accordingly, when studying voting and elections, one must consider that the secret ballot is neither a universal practice nor an a-cultural technology or representation of democracy. It is more fluid, moulding into different situations. For that precise reason, it has “relative autonomy” that makes it so suited to transfer. The authors thus use the term “cultures of voting” in plural to signify these fluidities (cf. Bertrand et al. 2007: 6f.). This gently leads us away from the cultural relativism debate. International rights are therefore not perceived as a static entity that ‘clashes’ with different societies, but as fluidities that mould to different situations.

This insight is extremely important for the study of election observation, to understand why certain technologies and principles are the standardised methodology. This helps to look at the issue from a different angle, rather than directly from the front, allowing for different perspectives and understandings to grow.

## 4.1 Controversies Surrounding New Voter Technologies

Recent debates and rejections regarding electronic voting (using electronic means to cast a vote) are important for the topic. Electronic voting includes optical scanning machines as used in Scotland or the Philippines, electronic voting machines, as used in Brazil, India and Venezuela, but also voting from a personal computer using the internet, which already exists in Norway, Switzerland and Estonia (cf. e-voting map 2010, Modern Democracy). The Council of Europe Committee of Ministers released a recommendation in 2004

(Rec(2004)11 URL 3) on “legal, operational and technical standards of e-voting”, as a response to low voter turn-outs and as a recognition of the increased use of modern technologies in every-day life in European Union member states. In the European Union Estonia uses the internet voting system as a complementary to paper-based voting on election day. Voters have the chance to cast their vote a week before election day at any time of day, as many times as they wish - the last vote will be counted. Voters alternatively also have the chance to go to the polling station on election day<sup>22</sup>.



Fig. 1: Cartoon

There have been many debates, especially regarding security and trust issues, as indicated in the cartoon above. How can e-voting guarantee the secrecy of the vote? How can the voter be identified in a safe but not too complicated way? Electronic encryption methods are very advanced, but seem little transparent for the average internet user. Some people also argue that the symbolic and ritual notion of election day, including the active participation in democracy, would be lost. One of my interviewees spoke about the lecturer that presented e-voting during the Election Observation and Assistance Course:

“He was trying to sell us a system to support his idea of how the world should work. And to me it was evident to mention: we are in the world together! He also didn’t want to talk about the symbolic ramifications of an election. I think to me it’s also important what happens between an election. And to me the election is just the test on how democracy works. It’s a multi-faceted thing, because the rulers need to know that the voters trust the system. It’s a back and forth thing and he forgot in a nerdy way about this, and thought that we can just vote at home with our laptops on the toilet.” (Interview 4)

<sup>22</sup>There is more Information on internet voting in Estonia on [www.e-voting.cc](http://www.e-voting.cc)

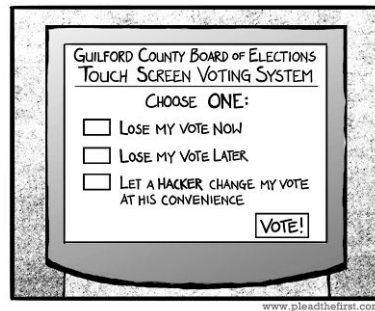


Fig. 2: Cartoon

Conversely, the demand for more flexibility in voting is increasing<sup>23</sup>.

This debate and the reactions to this new technology of voting are highly interesting and further developments should be closely monitored. In terms of international election observers, how can they observe internet voting procedures for instance? Currently some institutions are discussing how to successfully observe electronic voting machines, thus meaning that observation methods are changing and adapting to new technologies. Furthermore, from an anthropological point of view as outlined by Bertrand et al. (2007) it would be interesting to discover how electronic voting, specifically internet voting influences lived meanings and practices of voting and the secret ballot.

## 4.2 Anthropological Studies of Contemporary Elections and Voting Procedures

There is an increasing amount of ethnographic research on elections and voting procedures<sup>24</sup>. An example is Mukulika Banerjee's fieldwork in West Bengal in India, where there are some of the highest voter turnouts of the whole country, namely 80 percent. Banerjee's study is unique because she also analysed political behaviour in between elec-

<sup>23</sup>These debates were held during a lecture in the Specialisation Course on Election Observation and Assistance.

<sup>24</sup>Julia Paley named an extensive amount of anthropologists who have worked on elections. Formal electoral processes and their interaction with native traditions have been studied, for instance by West (1998) in Mozambique and by Apter (1987) among the Yoruba in Nigeria (cf. Paley 2002: 473). Moreover, there is research on the fact that some election officials have tried to "mould apparently traditional political structures to electoral reform." (Paley 2002: 474). This can sometimes be helpful, but also cause difficulties, for example allowing corrupt chiefs to incorporate themselves into the electoral structures, that weren't 'traditional' at all, or were not designed to be elected, but inherited their chieftom from ancestors. She also names Stanley Tambiah's (1996) connection of elections to an ethnicity of "blood and soil", which is used to mobilise the masses to vote, in worst cases leading to ethnic violence (Tambiah cited by Paley 2002: 477-478). Thus it shows that "what comes before transitions to democracy shapes what comes after them" (Paley 2002: 478).

tions (cf. Banerjee 2008: 63-64).

Election day in the two villages where Banerjee conducted her fieldwork was a big event. Men and women alike dressed up for the occasion. There was excitement in the air similar to the days before important festivals. In non-election periods there was a general reluctance to talk and engage with politics, which was seemingly reserved for election times. As a first general approach Banerjee asked the question: Why do people vote? Generally speaking voting is not rational, since a single vote never affects the outcome of an election. Why then do people continue to cast their ballots? And why does West Bengal counter the general trend of older democracies with a lower voter turnout? (cf. Banerjee 2008: 65). The villagers in West Bengal had little hope of material improvement when they voted. Banerjee attests that it is the symbolic nature of voting that is of importance: “an election is an elaborate way of embracing the status quo” (Banerjee 2008: 73).

The election moment gives each voter a symbolic identification with the system as a whole, which is a conception of elections as ritual. Coles criticises this notion of elections as ritual, since she thinks it overlooks the importance of electoral techniques and their significance in shaping perceptions (cf. Banerjee 2008: 74f.; Coles 2004: 553). Banerjee argues however, that the two views do not necessarily contradict each other. She names Michael Herzfield (1993)<sup>25</sup> and his view that bureaucratic rationality is similar to ritual systems in religions. From her fieldwork she saw that many people greatly appreciate the work of the Electoral Commission and see the democratic ‘process’ as something sacred.

“To them, voting contributed to clear-cut and legitimized electoral results, thereby helping achieve political stability and avoid vast expense of frequently repeated elections. Not bothering to cast a vote was condemned as careless and even criminal.” (Banerjee 2008: 76).

She adds that the “egalitarian mechanics” of voting gave many villagers pleasure. Regardless of class, caste or wealth, all voters received the black fingerprint and had to wait in line like everybody else. To vote meant to have symbolic as well as instrumental power (cf. Banerjee 2008: 77f.) She argues that elections are not rituals in a religious sense, but more like “sociocultural dances” in everyday life. Banerjee adds Durkheim’s concept of sacred individualism to her theory:

“This Durkheimian idea of sacred individualism is crucial (I would argue) to understanding elections as “sacred” expressions of citizenship. At their best, elections facilitate moments of political “anti-structure” and allow for different

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<sup>25</sup>See Further Reading list.

political imaginaries to be configured. They cast a fleeting shadow over the smug and corrupt, reminding them that *their* end could be nigh, wrought by an electorate that, despite its marginality during the preceding year, enjoys a festive and solemn moment of power and equality that holds out hope and succor for the next. It is ‘a ritual of thralldom’ to democracy and worthy of its sacred ceremonial.” (Banerjee 2008: 80-81)

Banerjee finally contends that as much as it is important to study elections per se as they are being carried out, it is equally important to study the time frames in between, to fully understand political motivations and electoral results (cf. Banerjee 2008: 93). Here she brings in an important dimension of time, which is one of the debates that surrounds international election observation.

Thomas Carothers, an expert in democracy promotion, explores the topic of election observation and criticises the over-emphasis of election day by international institutions such as the EU. Carothers urges for election observation missions to give equal weight to the time leading up to an election and following an election and especially to stay for a longer time period (cf. Carothers 1997: 22). This goes hand in hand with anthropology’s notion of fieldwork- that within a couple of weeks, an anthropologist is unable to understand what is going on in a society.

Elections structure a year and an election cycle a period of many years. They are a special time in a country’s life. Through observation missions elections have become international affairs, crossing the boundaries of space and time.

“Although elections remain largely national affairs, the processes far transcend countries’ limits, as do aid agencies’ democracy promotion programs, world courts, international conventions, indigenous movements’ coordinating bodies and more” (Paley 2008: 15).

## 5 An Anthropology of Election Observation

### 5.1 The Upsurge of International Election Observation

“International election observation is: the systematic, comprehensive and accurate gathering of information concerning the laws, processes and institutions related to the conduct of elections and other factors concerning the overall electoral environment; the impartial and professional analysis of such information; and the drawing of conclusions about the character of electoral processes based on the highest standards for accuracy of information and impartiality of

analysis. International election observation should, when possible, offer recommendations for improving the integrity and effectiveness of electoral and related processes, while not interfering in and thus hindering such processes. International election observation missions are: organized efforts of intergovernmental and international non-governmental organisations and associations to conduct international election observation” (UN Declaration of Principles 2005: 2, art. 4).

The beginnings of international election observation go as far back as 1857 when Austria, Prussia, Russia, Turkey, France and Britain observed a plebiscite in Wallachia and Moldavia. Election observation methodology has come a long way indicated by the above quote from the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation from 2005. After this first attempt at electoral observation, there were a few election observation missions post WWII, mainly in cases of disputed sovereignty. After 1989, however, an upsurge in democracy promotion activities also meant an increase in election observation missions and their gradual standardization in various declarations and treaties.

Why should elections be observed?

Election observation missions’ (EOMs) main aim is to detect electoral fraud and to prevent it. The presence of observers acts as a deterrent for fraudulent acts. Furthermore EOMs encourage citizens to vote and oppositional parties to register. Thus, confidence in democratic activities is promoted through international institutions and these demonstrate the interest of the international community in these democratic processes. The aim is to enhance understanding through sharing experiences. EOMs can also strengthen electoral standards and practices and encourage institutions to follow certain election procedures (cf. Carothers 1997: 18-19; Declaration of principles 2005: 2; Kelley 2010: 158; see European Commission 2008a).

“Since the end of the Cold War the idea that elections are a political right rather than a political option has gained considerable ground internationally” (Carothers 1997: 19). Today, several institutions are involved in international election observation, including intergovernmental organisations, international, regional and local NGOs and other actors. “The observation of elections has become a ‘standard tool’ across the world in support of democratisation” (Meyer-Resende 2006: 4)

Intergovernmental organisations include:

ODIHR/OSCE, EU, Council of Europe (COE), Organisation of American States (OAS), African Union (AU), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Southern African Development Community (SADC), Commonwealth Secretariat (CWS), Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

Nongovernmental organisations include:

International Republican Institute (IRI), National Democratic Institute (NDI), Carter Centre (TCC), European Network of Election Monitoring Organisations (ENEMO), Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL), Norwegian Helsinki Committee (NHC), Electoral Institute for the Sustainability of Democracy in Africa (EISA) (cf. Kelley 2009: 773, politics and norms; Carothers 1997: 17)<sup>26</sup>.

Most intergovernmental organisations primarily observe elections in their member states. The EU on the other hand explicitly observes elections outside its member states, following a ‘gentlemen’s agreement’ with the OSCE to avoid observation overlaps (cf. Binder/Pippan 2008: 4, cf. Carothers 1997: 17, cf. European Commission 2008: 7, 20). The EU sends EOMs under its own name, which is rather uncommon<sup>27</sup>. Election observation has become a large part of the EUs democracy promotion programme and foreign policy.

Furthermore, there are several research institutions that advise election organisations on election observation principles and provide electoral assistance, such as IDEA (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance), ERIS (Electoral Reform International Services), IFES (International Foundation for Electoral Systems), ACE (Electoral Knowledge Network, a network of several institutions) and NEEDS (Network for Enhanced Electoral and Democratic Support), among others. International election observation has grown into a huge industry.

From a legal perspective, there are several authorities that formalise election principles, such as the Constitution, the Electoral Law in the legislature, an International peace agreement, other legislative acts dealing with other aspects, rules and regulations in the government, instructions and directives by the Election Management Body (EMB), and codes of conduct for political parties, election officials and election observers. Election observers have to be aware of these guidelines in each country and must be very conscious of their organisations’ code of conduct and principles on election observation (cf. IDEA electoral guidelines URL 7).

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<sup>26</sup>There are many domestic non-partisan observer organisations and groups. Recent initiatives have been the Global Network for Domestic Election Monitors and a subsequent Declaration of Global Principles for Nonpartisan Election Observation and Monitoring by Citizen Organizations to unify and enhance domestic observer methodology and also to increase support from international observer groups (cf. NEEDS, URL 6)

<sup>27</sup>This also has implications for the credibility of EOMs, since even though the EOM is independent, it is tied to the EU. Meyer-Resende comments on this, stating that more coherence in internal and external EU policy regarding EU EOMs is needed (cf. Meyer-Resende 2006: 13). The US, for example, sends NGOs (IRI/NDI) to observe elections (cf. Meyer-Resende 2006: 1)

## 5.2 Principles of International Election Observation

“International election observation expresses the interest of the international community in the achievement of democratic elections, as part of democratic development, including respect for human rights and the rule of law. International election observation, which focuses on civic and political rights, is part of international human rights monitoring” (UN 2005: 1)

International election observation methodology, principles and guidelines have been developed in various documents, declarations and handbooks. The general human rights treaties and declarations outlined in chapter 3 (UDHR, ICCPR, CEDAW, ICERD) serve as a basis, but there are also several documents that explicitly deal with elections and observational methodologies. The 1990 Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe CSCE (former OSCE) Copenhagen Document was one of the first of these and emphasized more attention to elections, human rights, national minority rights and rule of law; specifically articles 6-8 directly refer to elections and paragraph 8 precisely refers to international election observation and its role in enhancing the electoral process (cf. CSCE 1990; cf. OSCE/ODIHR handbook 2005: 16). Thereupon the OSCE’s Office for Democratic Elections was founded to focus on elections and election observation and in 1992 the Office was renamed the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) to widen its mandate in order to include other democracy promotion activities. From 1990 onwards the OSCE/OSCE/ODIHR conducted an array of election observation missions in its member states. In 1996 ODIHR also released a handbook on election observation with more details on mission structure, methodology and proceedings which was referred to by many institutions (see OSCE/ODIHR 2005).

The first election observation mission by the EU was in 1993 to the Russian Federation. This was followed by an observation of the first post-apartheid elections in South Africa in 1994. Until 2000 there were a number of ad hoc election observation missions which were a combination of electoral, technical and financial assistance, as in Mozambique in 1994, 1998 and 1999, Palestine in 1996, Togo in 1998, Nicaragua in 1996, Paraguay in 1998, Cambodia in 1998, Nigeria in 1999 and Indonesia in 1999 (a programme coordinated with UNDP). It also lent assistance to the OSCE in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1996, 1997 and 1998 (cf. Communication 2000: 25ff.). There was general confusion about which of the former pillars of the EU coordinated what<sup>28</sup>; generally most missions were spontaneous

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<sup>28</sup>Formerly election observation missions were part of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) as part of the second pillar in the overall European Union framework set up in Maastricht 1993. Electoral assistance and sometimes observation fell under the first pillar too, ‘European Communities’ (as a

and there was no general methodology (cf. Communication 2000: 31-32).

The 2000 Communication of EU Election Assistance and Observation released by the European Commission was a milestone document that combined methodologies inherent in previous documents, declarations and took mission experience into account<sup>29</sup>. The importance of the observation of local and regional elections and of election procedures before and after election day and the necessity for more transparency of EU EOMs was underlined. It also outlined the idea of opening an 'Elections Desk' to coordinate all election observation missions (cf. Communication 2000: 11ff.). The 2000 Communication made sure that the three European Institutions- the Council of Ministers, the European Parliament and the Commission- work together. EU EOMs are comprised of long-term and short-term observers from member states, the European Parliament provides a chief observer and the Commission coordinates EU EOMs. The European Commission deals with: programming of EU EOMs; preparation and implementation; acts as a guardian of methodology; creates as a link to EU policy; established a bond to member states; trains observers (cf. European Commission 2008: 7). The European External Action Service (EEAS) which was set up following the Lisbon Treaty takes care of a part of election observation today which has been included since the Lisbon Treaty deals with the political aspects and policies (cf. URL 9).

Since the 2000 Communication on EU Election Assistance and Observation there have been 85 EU EOMs to Africa, Central Asia and South America (cf. lecture by EU representative at the Course). A handbook for EU Election Observation (2008b) was another important document completed by the European Commission and the Network for Enhanced Electoral and Democratic Support (NEEDS) which is the main organisation that conducts EU EOM trainings. It further specifies and updates methodology according to international standards and mission experience. The Compendium for International Standards for Elections (2008a), another EU document, summarises the general rights framework surrounding elections around the world.

The milestone document however was the 2005 Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation which brought international election observation into the UN framework. More than 20 organisations were involved in its making. It is designed to enhance

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community integration method). Since the Lisbon Treaty 2009 this three-pillars-system was abandoned, as the first pillar was the only one with legal personality. Now the EU as a whole is a legal personality (cf. URL 8).

<sup>29</sup>Lessons learnt from Bosnia in the 1990s very much influenced this methodology, as Coles (2008) has pointed out. Interviewee 1 mentioned that organisations have become more cautious and are propagating the non-interference clause, especially because mono-ethnic parties were strengthened through the involvement of international institutions following the war in Bosnia.

collaboration, transparency and professionalism in the international election observation community and has been endorsed by 36 organisations (see URL 10). The standard terminology to judge an election used to be ‘free and fair’. This has been abolished by most organisations, since there were no real criteria behind the terms. It was decided to judge elections by ‘international electoral standards’. This has also been abolished, however.

“A new development is the use of the word ‘principles’. Now EOMs don’t use ‘standards’, they use ‘principles’. ‘Principles’ is seen as something invented in Brussels, as an unreachable benchmark. ‘Principles’ is more neutral and allows for improvements” (Interview 3)

EU election terminology is an expression of the cognitive changes that are happening concerning election observation methodology. The principles of election observation will be discussed in more detail in chapter 8.

### 5.3 Anthropological Studies of Election Observation

“... an election is not solely or even primarily about participation. Analyzing the techniques of electoral and democratic government demonstrates that much of the work done is epistemological” (Coles 2007: 32)

Kimberley Coles is one of the few anthropologists who conducted research on election observation. Moreover, she has explored an area which has often been neglected: the construction of democracy through technique- specifically the techniques involved in elections and election observation. Coles argues that the agents in elections, human as well as non-human, create democratic practices which in turn produce social knowledge (cf. Coles 2007: 15). She further states that

“The relationships between content and context are important yet are understudied within the realms of purportedly acultural technical and bureaucratic processes” (Coles 2007: 18)

This reference to the content and context is particularly interesting for the topic in question. In her experience and fieldwork among election observers Coles realised that seemingly universal techniques were not so universal at all; international supervisors had to mediate between democratic principles and contextual circumstances, or ‘social locations’, in Bosnia, for example, and adjust them (cf. Coles 2007: 18-19).

The question would then be whether prior knowledge of a social location with its techniques, practices and social histories would be of use and whether election observers would

then observe electoral practices differently and in particular comprehend their roles in a more profound way. Electoral techniques are a valuable tool and gateway to understanding international electoral principles and their manifestations in practice. This study is an attempt at examining in what way election observers use observation and interviews to understand electoral techniques and practices.

Coles has studied the role of the election observer as a passive worker in democracy promotion. She recounts that many election observers do not see that they have a purpose or a ‘proper’ job: they are not unanimous about the utility of their work, thus marking a contradiction between the political importance given to election observers and their self-perceived role. Accordingly, a disjunction between foreign policy rhetoric and experience becomes visible. Observers are more often watchdogs at election stations to deter fraud. They rarely get involved in the election administrative work but are there as observers. Coles comes to the conclusion that it is the presence of “internationals” that is the key (cf. Coles 2008: 129ff.).

Based on her own experiences as an election observer in Bosnia Herzegovina she divides “presence” into three conceptual modes (Coles 2008: 129):

- 1) sheer presence; it describes the quantity of actual observers on behalf of an international organisation;
- 2) mere presence; it refers to their “just being there” physically apart from their role as observers;
- 3) peer presence; the conscious or unconscious attempt to display “proper” behaviour to Bosnian election officials (cf. Coles 2008: 129f.)

Election observers represent an international organisation. They are a political symbol. In EU terminology election observers help deter fraud through their presence, a presence that has to be “international”, i.e. not from the country where the election is being observed.

Coles describes a situation she experienced as an election observer in 1997. She observed a meeting between Serbs, Croats and Bosniacs who wanted to determine the ethnic distribution at a polling station. Her presence was later described as having helped to create a more pacified and constructive debate between two conflicting actors, just because she was an ‘international’ (cf. Coles 2005: 136).

Trust is built through rigid bureaucratic techniques, not through debate and confrontation. “Techne produces knowledge” (Coles 2004: 574). ‘Techne’ has social as well as political effects in areas of “democracy promotion” all over the planet.

“the technical aspects of organizing and operating an election to argue for a

more thorough acknowledgment of the social within the technical aspects of politics, especially in the exercise of democracy. The deployment of things and processes, such as invisible ink, ballots, polling, results forms, and voters, do not affect democracy and its possibilities so much as they articulate them.” (Coles 2004: 552).

To sum up, both her articles discuss similar dimensions of election observation that Bertrand et al. (2007) also discussed in their work on cultures of voting: performance and technique. Her insights are thus a key foundation of my study.

My interest lies in finding out how EU election observers feel positioned. In what way are election observers informed about the context? Is deeper knowledge a requirement? This would be below the performance aspect.

Concerning the technique aspect, my emphasis is on whether election observers see similarities and differences in ethnographic methods, as well as their theoretical basis from anthropology as a factor which influences their work.

## Part II

# Empirical Section

## 6 EU Election Observation Missions and their Observers

This section combines various aspects of research. I conducted seven empirical interviews with: five anthropologists/election observers; one election observer that conducts cultural awareness trainings; and an expert interview with Kimberley Coles.

The interviews are backed up by memos written all throughout the research process, insights from participant observation conducted at the ‘Specialisation Course on Election Observation and Assistance’, literature and newspaper articles on the topic. The different chapters are based on the insights given by my interviewees and are also designed to navigate the reader through the topic, to help him/her understand the workings of EU EOMs. Therefore, I will begin with discussions on conditions for deployment and then focus on variables that affect election observers in ‘the field’. The main aim herein is to discuss:

- How are EU EOMs set up? How does the EU choose the countries to be observed? What are the conditions for deployment?
- What factors influence election observers on an EU EOM?
- Where do they face challenges that affect their work?

Subsequently, observation and interview methodologies used by observers in relation to ethnographic methods and finally issues concerning ‘cultural’ context, or as the EU calls it- the ‘grey zone’, will be dealt with. These chapters will attend to the main thesis questions:

- What role does anthropological knowledge and technique play and is likely to play in EU EOMs?
- How relevant is a deeper awareness of the society in each respective area for EU EOMs?

- How do anthropologists use the tools acquired while studying in their subsequent work?

These questions mainly deal with election observation as performance and technique. The aim is to combine the EU framework and methodology for election observation with the individual experiences of election observers to uncover anthropology's (possible) role in EU EOMs and to demonstrate how election observers experience the 'intersection between international electoral principles and local contexts'.

### 6.1 The Structure of EU EOMs

"It's a weird, hierarchical world. At the apex is the chief observer, a European parliamentarian who acts as the mission's mouthpiece. Beneath sit the core team, made up of experts in areas such as security, election law and politics. In the middle, deployed across the country a month before election day, are a scattering of social anthropologists, NGO veterans and ageing hippies known as long-term observers (LTOs). At the bottom is an army of politically naive worker ants, the short-term observers (STOs)". (Sunday Times, 2008)

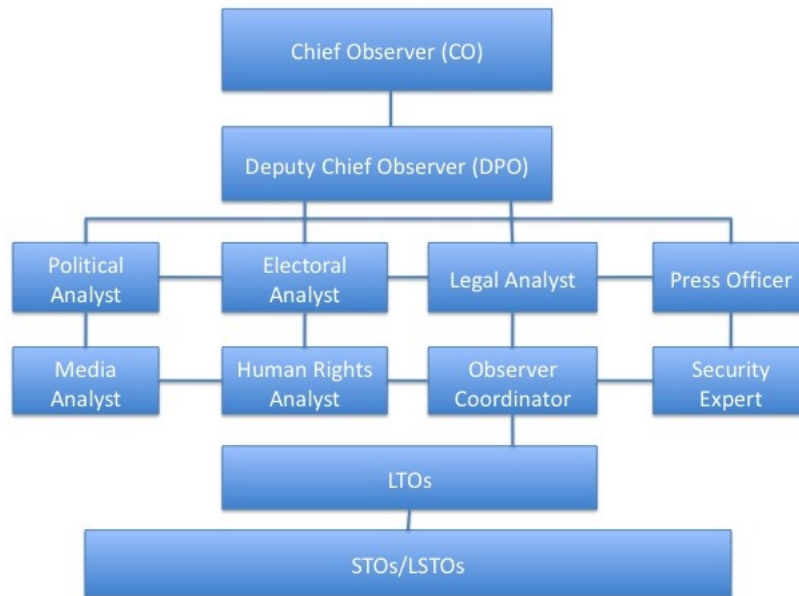


Fig. 3: The Structure of EU Election Observation Missions

In a very cynical tone a journalist for the Sunday Times describes his perception of the structure of EU EOMs in the above quote<sup>30</sup>. EU EOMs indeed have a clear, hierarchical

<sup>30</sup>The journalist who had been on two EU missions to Venezuela and Ecuador published a poignant and critical article for the Sunday Times in 2008. It created a big scandal among EU observers, one of

structure, which is indicated in illustration 3.

The Chief Observer (CO) is a member of the European Parliament. He/she functions as a representative of the mission and is not in the mission country all the time, just a couple of days at the beginning and to present the final report at a press conference at the end. He also generally manages the mission and makes sure it abides by international ‘principles and values’ (cf. European Commission 2008b: 117). He/she is appointed by Catherine Ashton who is the High Representative of the EEAS and is designed to give political accountability to the observer mission, but not compromise its impartiality. EU EOMs are designed to be independent and impartial<sup>31</sup>.

The Deputy Chief Observer (DCO) takes care of day-to-day mission management. He/she is in the country throughout the entire mission.

The Core Team is comprised of several members and is in a country for 66 days on average. Its size (6-14 members) and constituents vary depending on the size of the mission and the country. It is in direct contact with the CO and DCO and is in charge of the various observer reports and briefings for EU observers (European Commission 2008b: 116ff.) The Core Team is usually composed of an election analyst (assesses the work of election management bodies, the overall electoral process, the laws etc.), a legal analyst (determines the compliance of legal framework with international standards and implementation procedures, complaint mechanisms), a political analyst (evaluates political developments and campaigns, provides EU EOM with political background on politics, culture and history<sup>32</sup>), a human rights analyst (considers the human rights context and environment in the host country), a media analyst (looks at media and its role in the electoral process, freedom of speech, expression etc.), press and public outreach officer (develops strategies to keep the EU EOM visible, maintains contact with the press in the host country) and an observer coordinator (coordinates the LTOs, puts them into pairs of two, deploys them in different areas of responsibility) (cf. European Commission 2008b: 116ff.). Sometimes there is also a gender/minority analyst who assesses gender and minority rights. The security expert in the image is no longer part of the Core Team, as the function has been

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them actually sued the writer and was successful, because she found she had been unfairly described. The article also mentions a case of sexual harassment, where a male election observer was apparently harassing female mission members, which apparently was later confirmed.

<sup>31</sup>Nevertheless, as discussed in chapter 5, the fact that the EU sends missions under its own name and includes parliamentary members puts full impartiality into question. However, the EU decided to include members of the European Parliament to give EU EOMs more political weight and to show that the EU supports democratic elections, as part of its foreign policy of democracy promotion (discussed in a lecture during the Specialisation Course)

<sup>32</sup>See chapter 8.2

outsourced to implementing agencies, which will be explained in more detail 6.2.4.

The Long-Term Observers (LTOs) are in a country for about 49 days. LTOs work in teams of two and are deployed to an area of responsibility (AoR) in the country. They observe and assess electoral administration, regional political context, voter and candidate registration, the overall campaign, the role of the media, civil society in the electoral process, complaints and appeals, election day, results and post-election issues. LTOs conduct regular interviews with interlocutors to evaluate these areas and send weekly reports to the Core Team that document their progress. They deploy Short-Term Observers (STOs) within their AoR and brief them (cf. European Commission 2008b: 141).

STOs are in a country for 12 days on average and work in teams of two. They observe election day and are required to fill out various observation forms. They observe the election environment, implementation of voting procedures, enforcement of procedures for counting the votes, tabulation and publication of results (cf. European Commission 2008b: 150).

Local STOs (LSTOs) are deployed in some missions. They are members of a permanent EU Delegation in a country and carry out the same tasks as STOs. According to the observers I interviewed and spoke to during the Course an awareness of these structures is essential:

“It is important that everyone understands what roles the other members of the election observer team has; the sooner you understand the ‘*mécanique de haute précision*’<sup>33</sup>, the better. If you start questioning the work of the others, then it will undermine his/her job. Always reflect on yourself and be aware of your role in the mission as a whole” (Interview 3).

## 6.2 Pre-Deployment

### 6.2.1 Priority Countries and Budget

EU EOMs undergo various procedures before they are deployed. These are very much tied to political interests and relations with other countries.

Each year the Commission creates a ‘priority countries’ list to identify potential countries for EU EOMs in the subsequent year. Recommendations are received by the Council of Ministers (i.e. the member states) and the European Parliament. Usually the EU observes parliamentary and presidential elections, although there are cases where referendums and local elections are observed if it is a post-conflict peace initiative or they are an “important

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<sup>33</sup>Mechanics, the workings

indicator of democratic development” (European Commission 2008b: 93). Local elections are usually not observed unless there is a general election going on also.

The EU has general criteria for choosing priority countries which implies that the EU EOM would: improve the quality of the election; “complement and enhance” democratisation; underline the EU’s support; and act within a geographical balance, so as not to over-emphasise a certain region (cf. European Commission 2008b: 93).

“Elections come in waves, since in different countries there are different election cycles. There are countries with functional periods of 4 years, 5 years, sometimes even 6 years and therefore it changes. But it also depends on the political emphasis the EU has (...). There are more applications a year than there are capacities- in theory. In practice, it is often the case that a country does not come and say ‘please send us a mission’ but the EU communicates ‘please send us an invitation’.” (Interview 5)

Thus, in some cases the EU can put political pressure on a country to send an invitation, in other cases there is no need to do so (also Interview 1).

One of the most poignant critiques of EU EOMs is that observation missions per se observe fledgling democracies and not established democracies. In contrast, in established democracies issues of fraud can come up too, making them fall short of the ‘international standards’ international institutions judge others by. This creates a double standard (cf. Binder/Pippan 2008: 6). One such case is the disputed 2000 Bush-Gore presidential election where accusations of fraud remain pending. In the EU the media situation in Italy, for example, is also questionable. The EU however has no legislative power to assess its own member states (cf. Meyer-Resende 2006: 14). The OSCE/ODIHR is increasingly observing elections in its member states in Western Europe to overcome this critique. Interviewee 7 also suggested the EU set up a programme of exchange:

“Election observation should not, because it is happening largely in Africa, be seen as something exotic. It should be seen as equal to all political developments in the whole world. (...), it would be a sensible project to export democracy by bringing African election observers to Europe and they could alter their countries from within through their own energy and free will. If you already spend such large amounts of money, this could also be an aspect that should be considered.” (Interview 7)

At the moment, only certain elections are observed- those deemed of international interest. There are thus some elections that are popular and observed by a large number of observer organisations and others that are not observed at all. This indicates hidden structures,

interests and hierarchies, making some ‘elections more equal than others’ and diminishing the overall ‘universality’ of international election observation principles.

Illustration 4 indicates where the EU has sent EU EOMs since 1993 (excluding the ad hoc missions between 1994 and 2000).



Fig. 4: Map of EU EOMs

The countries on the EU list for 2011 include Sudan, Niger, Chad, Nigeria, Uganda, Yemen, Nepal, Zambia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Peru (which was added following a request by the European Parliament), Nicaragua, Central African Republic (Election Assessment Team), Tunisia and possibly Egypt. The so-called “to be followed” or B-list includes Madagascar, Guatemala, Liberia, Mauretania, Zimbabwe and the Palestinian Authority (presented in a lecture during the course).

The budget for EU EOMs is generally an annual 38 million euros. The budget for Election Assistance by the EU is much higher- 500 million, where assistance teams are usually sent to African countries (cf. URL 12). The European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) which is independent from member states provides the annual budget for EU EOMs (cf. European Commission 2008b: 93). One lecturer during the course made a critical comment regarding the cost of elections:

“Elections should be ‘free and fair’, but they are definitely not free.”

### 6.2.2 Conditions for Deployment

The main condition for deployment is that the host country has issued an invitation.

Why would a country want to invite the EU to observe its elections?

A government may want to increase the legitimacy of its election process and the final results. Furthermore, an EOM can heighten a country's international standing, its image for stability and therefore its potential for foreign investments. Generally if a country does not invite election observers, it seems as though it has something to hide (cf. Meyer-Resende 2005: 5f; Interview 1).

A further prerequisite for deployment is that the host country has endorsed the major human rights treaties and declarations (as outlined in chapters 3 and 5.2), that it supports mechanisms of freedom of expression, that it protects freedom of assembly and movement, that it reinforces the freedom to participate in elections and that it backs freedom of access to media (cf. Communication 2000: 17).

The host country must be willing to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the EU to ensure these criteria are upheld. The MoU determines the role and responsibilities of the EU EOM and the host country. It ensures that EU observers are guaranteed indispensable freedoms such as freedom of movement, access to all political parties and persons involved in the electoral process and to all electoral bodies. The government or electoral authorities must not interfere in the missions' work, the security situation must be stable and observers should have the liberty to enter the country well before election day to observe political developments (cf. UN Declaration of Principles 2005: 4f.). The MoU is signed with the Foreign Ministry and a separate one is usually endorsed by the Election Management Body (EMB). The signing of MoUs can delay the deployment of EU EOMs if certain terms take longer to be negotiated.

If and when these criteria are met the EU first of all sends an exploratory mission of five to nine people some 4-6 months in advance of the election to see if a mission would be "useful, feasible and advisable". "Useful" means generally assessing whether the mission will assist the country, achieve positive results and also whether previous experience in the country was positive.

"Feasible" looks at the financial aspects- would the mission comply with the budget? One of the reasons that there has never been an EU EOM to India or Brasil is because the mere size of each country represents an obstacle to feasibility (cf. Interview 5).

"Advisable" assesses whether or not the mission would be instrumentalised by the government and whether it has a genuine interest in democracy (cf. European Commission

2008b: 94f.).

The mission then determines the Terms of Reference (ToR) which are based on the findings of the exploratory mission. These lay down the size, structure and budget of the EU EOM and the number of national staff that will be recruited. National staff can be recruited as Core Team assistants, interpreters, media monitors, LTO assistants, Core Team administrative support staff or as drivers (European Commission 2008b: 122f.).

The final decision to send an EU EOM is made by Catherine Ashton. The EU generally sends EOMs to observe elections, however if certain minimum requirements are not met but a mission in a country is still advisable in terms of political or other interests (seeing that the EU is a political treaty of various member states and their interests), an Electoral Assessment Team (EAT) or an Election Expert Mission (EEM) is sent. These are smaller teams of experts without LTOs or STOs.

### 6.2.3 Recruitment

Aspiring EU election observers must hold a European passport and apply via their respective foreign ministries, or *focal points*. Application is a gruelling process as I myself have already experienced. Previous mission experience is desired, or rather, a prerequisite. However it is difficult to gain these first experiences. Country experience can sometimes help and knowledge of languages are also of use, especially if there is a Spanish, French or Portuguese-speaking mission. The individual EU member states have slightly different recruitment procedures - for some observers it is easier, for others more difficult to get the chance to go on a mission. Most observers therefore usually start with an OSCE mission and then move on to EU missions. A certain number (which is agreed upon with the European Commission) of observers are selected by the Foreign Ministries and the names of these potential candidates are then passed on to the Commission, which selects the final candidates. Members of the Core Team are recruited by the Commission directly.

EU EOMs are comprised of a variety of different experts and fields of expertise, to combine various skills and competencies. There can be anthropologists, political scientists, lawyers, security and operations experts, members of the military, bureaucrats and financial technicians in an EU EOM. "If there were only anthropologists on a mission it would undermine the effectivity of a mission. If there were only lawyers on a mission, that would undermine the effectivity too." (Interview 5). However, this diversity also makes the job more difficult, since working together and establishing common ground

can be a challenge (Interview 7; see chapter 7.1.6 on teamwork).

#### 6.2.4 The Issue of Implementing Partners

The EU outsourced its logistical planning, financial and administrative implementation faculties to various *implementing partners*, IPs, (international agency) or *service providers*, SPs, (NGOs or private enterprises) in 2009 to save the amount of work and resources these areas require (cf. European Commission 2008b: 103).

The IPs/SPs take care of accommodation, travel - briefings, office equipment, communication equipment, transport, observers' kits and security. The IP/SPs for the EU are the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), the United Nations Operations (UN-OPS), the Icon Institute, the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ) or the transtec project management.

This outsourcing has come under heavy criticism, since the logistical side is sometimes badly planned and managed, especially because two roles in the Core Team- the security and operational expert, have been taken over by the IP/SPs. EOMs are uncoordinated from time to time "because two hands attached to the same body don't know what the other is doing" (Interview 5).

Occasionally, the implementing partners take over the pre-deployment trainings or travel briefings which have gained a bad reputation. They are seen as a waste of money and resources. Interviewee 5 described it as the worst mistake that EU EOMs ever made. He described that the IPs/SPs seem to earn a lot of money with the briefings and that they are often unnecessarily extended (He described the frustrating experience of having to go through a half-hearted First Aid training for several days which was of no real use). Now and again there is duplicity in these briefings and the in-country briefings given by the Core Team upon the arrival of the LTOs and STOs. Sometimes the briefings even contradict the in-country briefing and have little to do with the country where the mission is being deployed to. Interviewee 5 suggests replacing the pre-deployment briefings by an extra day of in-country briefings.

## 7 Variables that Influence Mission Experience and Results

There are various factors and variables that election observers have to be prepared for and that influence their work, such as the organisational framework, political interests, people dependency, required flexibility, the aspect of teamwork and time and money constraints. These are all interlinked and influence each other, thus are not to be seen as separate entities.

### 7.1 Working for the EU: “I am not election police. I am travelling democracy”.

“It is something different working for an organisation than being in a country alone and independently. You represent something and you are seen as a part of something with which you personally may not have that much in common. That takes some getting used to.” (Interview 7).

One of the main, obvious differences between anthropologists and election observers is that the latter travel with an organisation, institution or international agency and have a certain mandate to fulfil. They represent, and actually embody democracy (see Coles 2008). Election observers have a specific relation to their organisation and co-workers which affect their work, movement and experience of a mission.

Observers have to be very aware of their role in the mission and what they can and cannot do. Talking to the media, for example, is a sensitive issue. The task of dealing with the media is usually taken over by the press officer, but in some situations observers have to make a statement and there are specific guidelines they must follow. They must stay open, but must not make any judgements or statements regarding the conduct of the elections before the final report or preliminary statement have been released. Election observers are guided by their organisations’ rules, contracts and regulations.

One frustrating aspect of the job, as observer 6 explained, is the complete dependency on the organisation. He described the situation of an observation mission in Bangladesh. He had just arrived in Chittagong District and started to make contact with various interlocutors. However, a couple of days into the mission, the elections were called off, since there were additions to the voter register which amounted to 11 million voters. The mission was thus suspended. The election observers did not have the chance to say goodbye to the interlocutors, since they were supposed to leave discretely to avoid scandal.

“We were called back to the capital, there was a curfew so we were sitting in our hotel rooms for two days without knowing what was going on. (...) As soon as we were called away, it was in the media that the mission was suspended. But even in the short time of some days you establish some contacts that you enjoy and you can exchange and you at least want to say why you leave. We just had to take that flight though. It’s difficult, but it comes with the job. These are things you have to accept. It would not happen if you were there as an individual anthropologist but it happens if you are employed by the European Commission.” (Interview 6).

All of my interview partners were realistic about their occupation and very aware of the role they are expected to play in a mission. “I sometimes get the feeling LTOs think this is a career position. I mean, forget it. They are exaggerating their own position. Face it, no one is going to listen to you, you are just in the field” (Interview 4). These are the hidden power dynamics between observers and the institution. There is a certain interdependency - the organisation needs its observers to be good democratic subjects and reliable data collectors. The observers depend on the organisation in their movement, in what they do and how they do it.

However, as Coles pointed out from her own research, there are also power dynamics among observers themselves, namely between countries that are new to the European Union and longer standing members.

“ (...) You can see it (power dynamics) shifting. So in the early days of the EU with the Bulgarians or the Poles, they were always matched with a Western European in their team. And now they are matched with observers from newer countries like Slovenia and they’re considered more equal.” (Coles, Interview, 2011)

Therefore one could tentatively say that within a mission the country hierarchies between new member states and older ones is gradually dissolved over time.

Election observation missions are cases of learning by doing. Observers do have the power to criticise certain mission developments as in the evaluation forms at the end of the mission, which has an impact on the general workings of the mission. This is reflected in the change that EU missions have undergone since the first mission to the Russian Federation in 1993. The transition from ad hoc and spontaneous missions to a clear set methodology can be partly accredited to the experiences of observers themselves. Thus, as Coles commented, observers do have the power to change the institution from within, but at the same time are limited by this institution and the hidden power dynamics.

However, the issues concerning the EU as a political organ persist, which can have an

influence on the degree of criticism of the elections and election results in a country.

### 7.1.1 Differing Results

In the EU's past it has occurred that flawed elections were commended. In Cambodia in 1998 the EU generally deemed the election as 'democratic, free and fair', even though the NDI and IRI had seen serious flaws, especially due to a last minute change of rule and violence in the run up to the election (cf. Kelley 2010: 159). In Zimbabwe in 2000 there was a similar situation. The EU was more critical about the elections than other organisations but the overall election results were not questioned despite violence and voters' intimidation (cf. Kelley 2010: 161). My interviewees mentioned a similar situation in Nigeria in 1999, where observers witnessed a large amount of fraud in the run up to the elections, whereas the EU report commended the elections and Obasanjo's victory (see 7.2).

"This is one of the issues that make me most skeptical of the whole process. It is sometimes a legitimisation process of some rulers. You legitimise the government by saying the elections were OK, so the EU can continue making business with this government." (Interview 7)

Why does this happen? The EU is well aware of the critique of authorising corrupt regimes and states to the extent that sometimes it does not send EU EOMs where it may mean the legitimisation of undemocratic systems (cf. European Commission 2008b: 92ff.). The above cases show however, that there seem to be various reasons why flawed elections are sometimes overlooked. Power mechanisms, international politics, interest relations and pressures can influence the preliminary statement and final report. On the level of STOs or LTOs these mechanisms are not directly noticeable, although on one occasion interviewee 4 described how during a briefing before a mission began the feeling was transmitted that it was going to be an 'OK' election and that it should also be judged that way. In the end, the election was far from being acceptable. Due to an incident of violence on election day the mission could not ignore this. The higher in the mission's hierarchy an observer is, the more noticeable political influences become. The CO has the final say over the preliminary statement and final report and how mild or critical it will be.

An additional EU EOM problem is its lack of permanent mission staff- its COs, DCOs and observers change from mission to mission. Thus there is little overview of procedures in other missions and their reports, causing lack of coherence (cf. Meyer-Resende 2006:

13).

The EU is a political organ that is comprised of member states with respective interests of their own. Generally the degree of independence of the organisation (NGO or INGO) also determines the degree of criticism of the elections (cf. Kelley 2010: 164).

While some of my interviewees voiced concerns about this, for other observers it comes with the job. The diplomatic dimension is an integral part of election observation.

“Maybe it’s even good that the election observation mission does not really have an influence. Election observation is a tool and what is then done with this tool is a political decision. That is maybe not that bad, because otherwise you would be making your hands dirtier than they already are.” (Interview 5)

As studies have shown, levels of cheating can also influence the final report. If an election is obviously heavily flawed, the EOM is more likely to condemn it. This is linked to the fact that transnational organisations act both strategically and normatively: they are guided by the strategic interests of their member states but also abide by normative rules regarding elections and voting in international law (cf. Kelley 2009a: 770f.; 782, Kelley 2010: 165ff.).

“It is somewhat paradoxical that organisations like the EU tend to observe elections in countries in which they have some stake, either through foreign aid or political relations, because these are exactly the types of elections in which monitors face greater political constraints in formulating their assessments.” (Kelley 2010: 169)

The constraints and problems individual election observers face within these multidimensional webs of power, structure, guidelines and norms are many. The often purported strict impartiality and neutrality of election observers is ‘a myth’, Kelley criticises (cf. Kelley 2010: 168). The election observer has to be flexible enough and adapt him/herself to each new mission situation.

### 7.1.2 The Question of Follow-Up

During an election, the EU EOM avoids any interference whatsoever in the electoral process. Issuing the preliminary statement and final report are the times when the EU EOM has the chance to assess the overall election according to ‘international principles’. The EU EOM provides a list of recommendations for future elections. More often than not however, when a mission has taken place in a country before, the final report is almost equal to the exploratory mission report (which is made before the mission to

assess the general problematic areas) made an election cycle later (cf. Binder/Pippan 2008). There is no effective follow-up mechanism in the EU that specifically tackles the issues raised in the recommendations. Election observation organisations have the liberty to critique electoral procedures and mechanisms, but usually do not help in implementing the recommendations. The discrepancy in some cases between the findings of observers and of EU foreign policy rhetoric and actions is one of the main issues that is criticised in literature on election observation (cf. Meyer-Resende 2006, Kelley 2009a, Kelley 2010, Binder/Pippan 2008).

“While the methods and techniques of observing elections are well established, the linkage between the findings of observers and general political follow-up by the EU can be weak, in particular in cases where observers report significant flaws. The EU should be more coherent in these cases.” (Meyer-Resende 2006: abstract).

This not only questions the use of international election observation but also results in the loss of credibility of international institutions conducting election observation. There have been exceptional cases as in Belarus 2006 (OSCE mission), when the Council of Europe decided to impose a visa-ban and freeze assets of the Belarusian leadership. In general there has been little effort to create coherent follow-up measures, especially to fraudulent elections (cf. Binder/Pippan 2008: 6). This is due to the fact that the EU is dependent on its member states and their interests, as already mentioned above, but there are also other factors. If an election has been deemed as fraudulent, as in Rwanda (2003) and Nigeria (2003) and the EU has significant ties with that country as with Nigeria or does not want to upset the stability of the region (Rwanda), little will be done in EU foreign policy collaborations regarding the election flaws. In other cases, as in Malawi where there were mixed findings, the EU did incorporate the observer reports into its official dialogue with the country. It is difficult to criticize a country on its elections, since one cannot force a country to conduct re-elections. Besides, it would question the government that the EU is trying to dialogue with (cf. Meyer-Resende 2006: 11). Generally an election is very rarely deemed ‘not up to international principles’ since the exploratory mission beforehand decides how advisable a mission would be in the first place (Interview 5).

The preliminary statement and final report are a very sensitive issue, as some cases have demonstrated. They are presented by the CO of the mission in the respective country. There have been some instances where the CO was not welcomed back to the country to present the final report as in Ethiopia (2010) and in Ivory Coast (2010). In Ethiopia the government was not happy with the rather critical preliminary statement and did not

allow for the final report to be presented in its country. An entry ban was issued on the CO (Interview 5). In Ivory Coast there is still a civil war going on due to the disputed election results and the final report was presented in the ECOWAS headquarters instead (cf. lecture by EU representative at the course).

However, even though elections are a sensitive time in a country’s history, the EU needs to gain more coherence in its follow-up, otherwise EU EOMs would be led ad absurdum (cf. Binder/Pippan 2008). Moreover, insufficient criticism and follow up may cause heightened dissatisfaction with electoral results and may lead to the use of extra-legal means to overturn the results (cf. Meyer-Resende 2006: 13).

Five of my interviewees found it questionable that there are no follow-up mechanisms in place. Some observers, however, did not see this as part of their job since whatever is done with their findings is a political decision in the end ‘anyway’ (Interview 5, Interview 4).

### 7.1.3 Election Tourism?

Thomas Carothers (1997) is a further academic who has raised critique and whose predictions have turned out to be still relevant today. Carothers mentions the fact that a large amount of different organisations observe the same elections which can cause confusion, deeming it “electoral tourism” (Carothers 1997: 19).

Judith Kelley is an associate professor of public policy and political science at Duke University, who is running a Project on International Election Monitoring sponsored by the US National Science Foundation (see URL 13). The Project is exploring the topic of election observation, collecting election materials and case studies and comprising sets of data on the topic.

The existence of many organisations prevents some decisions being blocked for political reasons. Moreover, if organisations agree on results, this can enhance their legitimacy and the credibility of their results (cf. Kelley 2009a: 765f.). Conversely, more often than not they disagree. One product of the Project is Data on International Election Monitoring (DIEM)<sup>34</sup>, which indicates that from 600 observer missions to 385 elections, 22 percent of observer reports contradict each other. This disagreement can cause bias

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<sup>34</sup>In her article Judith Kelley (2009b) outlines the mechanisms of DIEM in detail. Via the overall summary statement at the beginning of an observer report- they have used 18 organisations- the dependent variable is determined. This is then ranked according to numbers. These results are then compared to the findings in the report and of other organisations during the same election. The problems in an election are also ranked and numbered, and from there an overall democracy score is created, which is compared to the country’s foreign aid, population and total trade.

and confusion, undermining the results (cf. Kelley 2009: 766). Observation missions should work together more closely and compare results to avoid an array of different institutions working parallel instead of together (cf. Carothers 1997: 19-20).

Interviewee 1 criticised the lack of coordination between the permanent EU delegations in a country and the mission. In Indonesia (2004) the EU EOM and the EU Delegation were not capable of exchanging knowledge, which lead to frustration.

Another area of lack of collaboration is that with non-partisan domestic observers, as Carothers points out (cf. Carothers 1997: 26). Non-partisan domestic observers are observer organisations that are not ‘internationals’. They are citizens of the country where they observe the elections. In recent years the number of domestic observer organisations has increased. However, this increase also causes confusion, as one of my interviewees commented. He said that it was problematic that many were using different methodologies. In Sri Lanka he had met domestic observers who had been to 38 polling stations in one day - they had rarely stayed in a polling station for more than two minutes, so also here there is a need to improve methodology, interviewee 5 commented. Nevertheless, the role of domestic observers can also be of great value, since they know their area very well and may have a better understanding of certain processes and happenings. They are there even when there is no election and thus have a better overview. The role of domestic observers could also be interesting for future research. How have domestic observer organisations contributed to the perception of elections and principles? Do they have different methods to EU observers and why?

Another critique regarding ‘election tourism’ was levelled at the observers themselves:

“There were a lot of holiday makers” (Interview 1).

The Sunday Times journalist also agrees with this: “An eminent British academic who has been on EU missions sums it up: “They like to have young people from different countries and form a fellowship between them. I did feel there was something funny going on, that this was less to do with the election than with a sense of creating Europeanness. It’s like a holiday camp to create loyalty to EU institutions” (Sunday Times, 2008, URL12).

Some observers stay on for holidays (interview 6). After a mission to Indonesia, almost half of the observers stayed on in Bali for a holiday. This is usually not tolerated by the EU, because you are no longer acting as a mission member but as a private individual and the interlocutors may not divide these two dimensions, which would in turn compromise mission impartiality (Interview 6).

However, it very much depends on the individual observer and his motivation which deter-

mines how he/she conducts his/her job. For all my interviewees being an election observer is hard work. There are hardly any days off, only few hours of sleep and sometimes harsh living and working conditions.

#### 7.1.4 People Dependency

“Missions are as different as the people that direct them. There are extremely engaged COs and DCOs, that really try to include everything, then there are others... you have to explain everything to them. And sometimes they’re not even interested. You can be confronted with everything.” (Interview 5)

The EU EOMs to Nigeria were subject to this discrepancy. In the EU EOM in 1999 the elections were generally deemed as ‘up to international standards’, even though many observers had observed fraud. The CO however did not regard these observations. In the years following that mission, there was a different CO who was much more critical.

“The observers that had been on the mission in 1999 had tears in their eyes, and said their honour had been restored within the observer community since the 1999 mission. They frenetically celebrated the new CO.” (Interview 5)

As the above quote suggests it is very important for observers that their observations are heard. They have been in an area for some time and have built up relationships to various interlocutors that they do not want to let down. Thus, if there were shortcomings in an election, they expect these to be included in the final report. The EU explanation for occasional discrepancies between observations and the reports is that the observations were not representative for the whole country, since LTOs only cover a certain AoR. If observations of fraud are not a consistent factor in the entire country, they cannot be included in the mission report. On the contrary, many of my interviewees revealed that the preliminary statement and final report depend on how willing the CO is to upset the winning party.

Another aspect is that the observations and results are influenced by the individual observer and his/her skills (cf. Interview 4). Thus, depending on how efficient, interested and motivated an observer is and how he/she analyses the data very much depends on the individual and his academic or professional background<sup>35</sup>.

Interviewees 3 and 6 suggested that EU EOMs need to standardise the aspect of people dependency because fundamental things are left to people’s decisions and the level of the

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<sup>35</sup>This aspect will be dealt with in more detail in chapters 8 and 9.

mission then very much relies on individual LTOs and the Core Team members. Conversely, interviewee 4 argued:

“Well, who are Chief Observers? They are diplomats. So it’s sort of the blaming the system for the way its constructed.” (Interview 4). Election observers are thus not unanimous on this issue. Some accept the system that missions are people dependent. Others criticised this aspect and think the selection of the observers on a mission should be more precise and careful.

### 7.1.5 Flexibility

“On missions for many of the departure dates you received the notification very late in difficult political circumstances. Especially in Bangladesh or in Uganda you were informed about a possible departure and return which might happen and might not. I have been out and stayed several weeks longer than expected and I have been out and stayed 6 weeks shorter than planned. All this can happen.” (Interview 6)

Election observers require a large amount of flexibility in their lives. Election observation is not deemed as a ‘job’ per se by the observers I interviewed, since it is not regular and stable enough. Interviewee 1 was set on calling it an ‘occupation’ instead of a job. It is an occupation model that excludes people that may need more stability in their lives, if they have a family for instance. Nevertheless, some election observers have managed to make it their main ‘job’ and make a living out of EU EOMs, as one of my interviewees for example. The question would then be: who has time to have this flexibility and who doesn’t? (this aspect was also discussed with Coles). This would be a question that future studies have to answer. It often depends on how willing the individual observer is to give this incredible amount of flexibility.

On the mission itself observers also require flexibility in their work and observations. They may be notified at any point and time by the Core Team that they are to keep a special eye on one aspect, depending on the political developments that surround the mission.

### 7.1.6 Teamwork

Teamwork is another aspect that heavily influences mission experience. As explained by one of the trainers during the Course, an EU EOM observer can be confronted with four scenarios- the “Karmic Mission Lottery”:

- Option 1: great partner, great location
- Option 2: great location, bad partner
- Option 3: great partner, bad location
- Option 4: bad location, bad partner<sup>36</sup>

These four scenarios are all possible and mission experience heavily depends on who is part of your team. Long-term and short-term observers generally work in teams of two. Observers are usually paired according to different gender and nationality and similar age. The level of experience is also vital; an experienced observer will usually be paired with a less experienced one (lectures). On the one hand teamwork has its benefits, as responsibilities are shared. On the other hand some partners may not be easy to work with. Problems can occur when writing the reports, since two observers have to agree on one report, which can be problematic if there are different opinions on a certain topic. Some observers may be less willing to work, others too dominant. In some cases observers have even issued complaints and refused to work with their partners, but this is relatively uncommon.

In the Specialisation Course different scenarios of teamwork were played through to prepare aspiring election observers for the worst. These scenarios are possible and sometimes even common (from a Handout at the Specialisation Course):

Scenario 1 describes a partner with a military background who in a situation where shots are fired outside the polling station wants to stay on and see what will happen. Following the security guidelines, the remaining team mate would have to leave immediately with the mission vehicle and report the situation to the LTO coordinator.

Scenario 2 depicts a dominant partner, who hardly lets the second team mate do anything. “Although she is pleasant and wants you to learn the ropes she is quite bossy and never lets you have your say, even when you think that her analysis of the situation is flawed. Her experience of other countries is clouding her judgement of what is actually going on in this particular context. How do you deal with the situation?” (Handout, Specialisation Course)<sup>37</sup>. The aspiring election observers were advised to talk to her as politely as possible and to try to resolve the situation.

Scenario 3 delineates a ‘ladies’ man’. He is using the driver and mission vehicle to drive him and women to and from the hotel every evening. This could compromise the mission’s

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<sup>36</sup>A bad location was described as areas where there are harsh living conditions or areas of violence. A great location is one that was comfortable to live in, but was also very interesting in terms of the electoral environment and the interlocutors.

<sup>37</sup>This situation of where observers use experience from other countries in new contexts will be discussed in chapter 10.

impartiality and standing, so the observers are advised to talk to their partner immediately to stop it from going on. If the problem persists, it has to be reported.

Scenario 4 portrays a partner who is on a Spanish-speaking mission but does not have good command of the language. Instead of reporting this, the team is advised to split the tasks, so that both can do the work as efficiently as possible.

These scenarios demonstrate how election observers are expected to act. ‘Guidelines’ and ‘common sense’ dictate their actions. They are expected to be as efficient as possible when tackling a problem of teamwork. The aspect of teamwork can influence the entire mission experience as the ‘Karmic mission lottery’ suggests.

### 7.1.7 Time and Money

The most poignant and constant variables that influence election observers and their work are time and money. The main issues my interviewees mentioned were the lack of time and ineffective allocation of the budget. The time and money constraints are inextricably linked.

The EU has intended to increase mission length, especially to divert the focus away from election day (termed as e-day in election observation jargon). Past critique on the overemphasis of e-day, such as by Carothers (1997), has been incorporated in the 2005 Declaration, but the problem seems to persist. “(...) monitors still tend to focus mostly on formal legal problems and on obvious election-day fraud. Is this focus desirable? Are the problems on the day of the election more significant than those in the pre-election period?” (Kelley 2010: 169). Many of my interviewees commented that fraud usually happens in the run-up to an election, in the voter registration period. Furthermore, in order to make an assessment of the electoral process, build relationships with interlocutors, see the campaign happening and get sensitized to the environment it takes more than being there on election day (Interview 6).

In recent years the EU has devoted more attention to voter registration. A separate mission was sent to Sudan before the referendum in 2011 to observe voter registration. This was an important step, because especially in Sudan there was still a lot of confusion over who was eligible to take part in the Referendum, especially whether some ‘Southerners’ living in the North would be able to vote (Interview 6).

Notwithstanding, various cases such as the signing of the MoU, unstable political circumstances or restrictions by the host country can cause a mission to be deployed well under the usual guideline (cf. European Commission 2008b: 102) of 8-6 weeks of the arrival of the Core Team before e-day and of 5 weeks before e-day of the LTOs.

Interviewee 5 remarked that six weeks is a solid amount of time to complete the required work. All the same his best mission experience was in Haiti in 2005, when election day was postponed so often that the election observers ended up staying in the country for 3 months in total.

“You got below the surface in a way that would never have been possible in any other mission. You established contacts, got invited to religious chiefs, got to know the important people, and then it started to get extremely interesting. I mean, I know it is also a question of money. My personal opinion would be to do fewer missions but make them a little longer. If the six weeks would at least be adhered to, a lot would be improved.” (Interview 5).

Interviewee 7 also criticised the fact that budget money is spent on nice and expensive hotels upon arrival<sup>38</sup>. He agreed with interviewee 5 that the missions should be longer and less money should be spent on such luxuries. He also suggested that the per Diem allowance of observers be reduced and the overall mission length increased.

## 7.2 Preliminary Findings: Election Observers at Various Intersections

Election observers are at the intersection of various instances which are framed by their institution. There is an invisible social relationship of trust and expectation between the observer and the institution. Election observers must manoeuvre within the institutional framework which dictates methodology, principles, time, areas of movement and sometimes even results. With each new mission, election observers have to apply again. They are never sure when they will be chosen to go on a mission, how long they will stay for and also what invisible hierarchies and political relations of the EU will face them in the next country. One observer summarised what makes a good election observer in four points:

1. common sense
2. sensitivity, open eyes and ears
3. knowledge of election observation and electoral mechanisms
4. country-expertise

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<sup>38</sup>The Sunday Times journalist also described this: “Our destination is rather different: the Caracas Palace, an ugly icon of upmarket Altamira, the suburb where many of the wealthy elite live. The hotel is described in my Lonely Planet guide as being ‘set to provide some of the ultimate luxuries Altamira has to offer - at a price’. To be precise, \$160 a night. This isn’t what I was expecting. Democratic assistance, it seems, needs capacious hotel suites, deep carpets, an endless supply of Danish pastries, espresso machines, fridge-like air-con, white bathrobes, club sandwiches, saunas, hot tubs and swimming pools.” (Sunday Times, 2008)

He explained that ‘common sense’ is vital, since election observers may be confronted with unknown and difficult situations and have to tackle these in an efficient way. Observers should be polite, sensitive and aware of their surroundings and what is going on at all times. As a third point, he explained that prior knowledge of election observation and electoral mechanisms is also important. Fourthly, observers should have a good knowledge of the country they are stationed in.

In other words, observers are expected to be adaptable, flexible, hardworking, rule-abiding, accurate and effective, almost like super-human machines. These are the rules of the game and can exert a lot of pressure on observers, but it comes with the job and observers must take this into account when applying.

The institution on the other hand is expected to deal with the observers’ results as openly and honestly as possible. Any misgivings in this relationship can create tensions in missions. An observer’s mission experience very much depends on this relationship.

The relationships with co-workers are essential and represent the ‘social’ in a mission and also greatly influence mission experience.

Election observers have to be very aware of their space and role in a mission. Even though the individual election observer may be different, he is very much dominated by others in the mission, such as his team partner and observers that are higher up in the hierarchy. The higher up observers are in mission structure, the more they are faced with restraints and political motivations.

The missions are as different as the people on them. Their motivation or the lack thereof, their skills, competence and training again define the individual observer. In each mission there are new relations the observer has to build up and establish him/herself in, different challenges, a new environment, maybe new and adapted institutional guidelines. At the same time he/she has experiences from previous missions which he/she brings to the job. Therefore, even if mission structure and bureaucratic guidelines seem rigid, the social and the people within missions very much shape them and their identities as an ‘EU election observer’.

## 8 Comparing Methodologies of Observers

The next section will uncover how the ideational dimensions of international principles are moulded into methodology. What are the practices and discourse mechanisms? Do these change or are methodological EU guidelines transported directly from theory to practice? How do anthropologists apply their ethnographic tools in a new setting?

## 8.1 What Do Observers Observe?

“There are two essential things you must do before and during a mission: try to understand the electoral law and try to understand how it is implemented in your Area of Responsibility.” (Interview 3)

Illustration 5 of the electoral cycle has become the blueprint for most organisations involved in elections. It indicates that a country is more or less always in the election phase and depicts the different steps electoral authorities pass through. An EU EOM ideally comes into a country in the pre-election phase to cover the registration of voters, political parties and candidates. It stays until the results are published and reviews are being done. EU EOMs only observe a small area of the entire cycle. The rest of the cycle is usually taken care of by electoral assistance programmes, which help in planning procedures for the next elections and provide financial help. It is debatable whether an EU EOM which only covers a small area, really understands the entire electoral cycle of a country and can therefore assess it. However, as one observer contested to this question of length, an election is a unique time in a country’s life and therefore reveals structures that would usually be invisible.

EU observers (usually LTOs and Core Team members) also look at how candidate and voter lists are published. They consider the political context and the general legal framework (ie. legislation and the electoral system)<sup>39</sup>. Election administration, i.e. the work of the Election Management Body (EMB) is a further area under scrutiny<sup>40</sup>.

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<sup>39</sup>In the Election Observation and Assistance Course these areas were explored in more detail. An electoral system has three characteristics - the *ballot structure*, the *formula* that determines how the winner is selected - e.g. simple majority, absolute majority etc. and the *district size*, which indicates the number of candidates in each voting district. The choice of the electoral system can be very politicised or can cause public unrest, as for example the ‘hung parliament’ situation in the UK. It is important for observers to understand that there is no perfect electoral system. It must be simple enough so that every voter understands the basic structure of the system. “For international election observation to be an effective detector and deterrent of integrity problems, it needs to be adapted to the type of electoral system and election it is covering. An election in a post-conflict society requires a far different kind of observation from an election in a country adopting electoral reforms” (ACE electoral network, URL 15).

<sup>40</sup>The EMB is in charge of election management, which is determined by three variables: time, quality and cost. There are different types of EMB, such as *governmental*, where it is part of the Ministry of Interior, *independent* or *mixed*. The EMB oversees the general election management cycle.

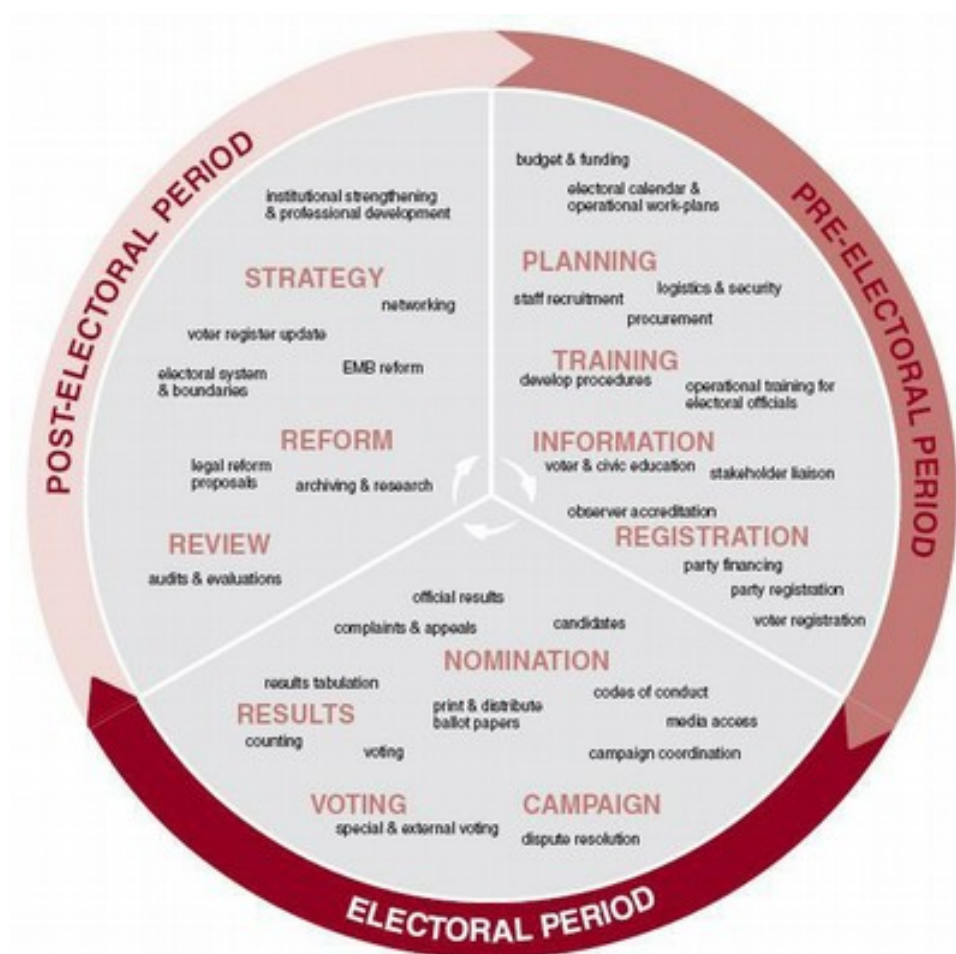


Fig. 5: The Electoral Cycle

Additional areas include: civic voter education; the election campaign as a whole; media environment; complaints and appeals procedures; human rights situation; the participation of women, minorities, persons with disability, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees; 'confidence' of civil society in the electoral system; voting and counting process (the right to a secret ballot); special voting procedures such as external voting, postal voting, early voting, mobile voting, out-of-country voting, electronic voting; tabulation and publication of results; post-election environment (cf. European Commission 2008b: 27-91).

These processes are then measured by:

- The degree of impartiality shown by the election administration;
- The degree of freedom of political parties and candidates to assemble and express their views;
- The fairness of access to state resources made available for the election;

- The degree of access for political parties and candidates to the media, in particular the state media;
  - The universal franchise afforded to voters;
  - Any other issue which concerns the democratic nature of the election e.g. campaign violence, rule of law, legislative framework;
  - The conduct of polling and counting of votes.
- (URL 16)

## 8.2 How Do Observers Collect their Data?

One of the main principles laid down in the 2005 Declaration is non-interference in the election process. An election observation mission “must be conducted on the basis of the highest standards for impartiality concerning national political competitors and must be free from any bilateral or multilateral considerations that could conflict with impartiality”. (UN 2005: 1).

Furthermore an “impartial and independent analysis of (...) information” (European Commission 2008b: 25; article 4) is essential, cooperation with the host country (art. 9) and openness in findings and visibility of work is highlighted. Election day is to be analysed in its context, thus not overemphasising its importance (article 5).

The Code of Conduct for International Election Observers was a supplement document attached to the 2005 Declaration of Principles. Therein different behavioural guidelines are set for election observers which they must sign before going on an EU EOM:

- Respect Sovereignty and International Human Rights
  - Respect the Laws of the Country and the Authority of Electoral Bodies
  - Respect the Integrity of the International Election Observation Mission
  - Maintain Strict Political Impartiality at all Times
  - Do not Obstruct Election Process
  - Provide Appropriate Identification
  - Maintain Accuracy of Observation and Professionalism in Drawing Conclusions
  - Refrain from Making Comments to the Public or the Media before the Mission Speaks
  - Cooperate with Other Election Observers
  - Maintain Proper Personal Behaviour
- (UN 2005)

The Code of Conduct influences the movement of EU observers. Especially the point “do not obstruct the election process” is an interesting one, since observers are not allowed to interfere in the work of election officials, but are allowed to make comments in certain

cases. Election observers thus only have a very thin line that defines what they are permitted to say and do and what they are not.

An EU EOM generally gathers information on the election and its conduct and of the wider democratic environment according to these international principles on elections. The results are recorded in regional reports by LTOs, which are summarised in the capital by the Core Team members in their respective section of expertise. The LTOs collect their data from observation and interviews and meetings with various ‘interlocutors’, ranging from civil society actors, political parties and other actors involved in the electoral process. STOs observe procedures in and around election day and record them in questionnaires with several questions. Observers must stay neutral and not lean towards one political side (European Commission 2008b: 23ff.).

As already mentioned in chapter 5.2, methodology concerning international principles of election observation has gone through cognitive changes, which is indicative through changes in terminology (from ‘free and fair’, to ‘up to international standards’ to ‘according to international principles’). Interviewees 5 and 1 mentioned, as Coles (2008) does in her article, that there has been a development from more qualitative holistic methods in missions, to more technocratic and quantitative methods, which was the reason for one of my interviewees to quit election observation.

These changes have had different bearings on EU methodology. While the quantitative side, especially in questionnaires, has been strengthened and increased, the EU is also becoming more sensitive in its judgement of elections and is trying to introduce more qualitative methods and assessment techniques. This methodological mix depends on the position of the observer in the EU EOM and the area of assessment.

### 8.2.1 Questionnaires

The EU’s intention to use qualitative and quantitative data collection methods becomes especially visible on election day. Observers are required to fill in various questionnaires. However, in between filling them in, observers are sometimes instructed to give qualitative reports via email during a 60 minute transmission window. They have to evaluate the following areas: 1) General atmosphere, 2) Smoothness of process (Competence of polling staff) 3) Any trends- especially if there is consistent fraud / intimidation / vote buying 4) Presence and performance of Party Agents 5) Turnout (absolute number) and percentage of Tendered Ballots<sup>41</sup> among them. The rest of the time observers, usually the STOs,

<sup>41</sup>Tendered Ballots are ballots cast by voters who were not on the voter register. The eligibility of the voter is checked in the outer envelope and if verified, the ballot is then passed on in another envelope to

busily fill out questionnaires. One interviewee commented that the data collection ‘mix’ is rather unsuccessful.

“Mix of methods is ‘state of the art’ at the moment, so they have tried to put in more qualitative questions into the questionnaires. I think in the final result, these few qualitative questions barely have an impact and definitely not a qualitative one. It seems of little use to put questions in, do a 10 minute interview with someone who is very intimidated by the whole situation and ask them about whether they had free access to the election and then leave again. And on the other hand, the quantitative side in the questionnaires has grown to unsurmountable lengths. I mean, if at least the weekly LTO reports were qualitative, which they usually are, but the mechanism in the Core Team to ensure that these reports are evaluated thoroughly is not apparent.”

(Interview 7)

There are three types of questionnaires: *opening*, to be filled out when a polling station opens; *polling*, to be filled out during the day in different polling stations; and *closing*, to be filled out when a polling station closes. Illustration 6 is an ‘opening’ form, which was handed out in the Election Observation and Assistance Course. This form is only composed of one page, but usually questionnaires, especially the ones that cover polling and closing are two pages long. The number of questions has been criticised by all my interviewees. In some missions, there were almost 60 questions on a questionnaire. Since observers stay in a polling station for approximately 30 minutes (minimum), but are expected to cover 10-15 polling stations a day, time is very limited. Ideally observers cover 2% of polling stations in a country. They are required to observe as well as fill out the forms which is a very difficult task, even in teams of two. Furthermore, if they have an interpreter this process can take even longer.

The questionnaires are usually configured by the electoral or legal expert on the Core Team. One observer explained that in a mission he was on, the questionnaire was not adapted to the context at all. There was a lot of reference to disabled people’s access to polling stations, although in this particular country other issues such as transparency and fraud were of more importance. Apparently the questionnaire had just been taken over without modifications by the electoral expert (Interview 5). Again, it very much depends on the electoral expert, his motivation and experience. On the whole, interviewee 5 suggested to shorten questionnaires to 25-30 questions, so that observers have more time to observe and take in the surroundings.

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the counting station.

Fig. 6: Opening Questionnaire for Election Day

### 8.2.2 Different Positions, Different Methods

According to an observer's hierarchical position, the methods he/she uses will change. The interviewees agreed on the fact that the LTO job is usually more qualitative in nature. Positions in the Core Team require a combination of methods, but also management skills and the ability to combine several different reports analytically. STOs, especially on e-day, are generally concerned with filling out questionnaires - their job is more quantitative in nature, which is connected to the limited amount of time they are in a country. Thus the various hierarchical levels in the mission team represent differing methodological tools. Working in the Core Team was described as being most stressful. Core Team members are in the capital of the country and assess the situation there. An observer who had operated as observers' coordinator said coordinators are usually confined to an office or hotel room where they manage and assist the different observers in the country. There is little opportunity to go outside and verify the information for oneself. Thus, the information that is received is processed and there is no way of telling how reliable it is (Interview 6). The observers I spoke to preferred the LTO-job, because it allows for more freedom and control over the flow of data. LTOs are on their own personal little "mission". They can plan their time as they wish.

"You go out there, you assess yourself, you have your interviews, you know where the information is coming from, you generate it to a certain level. You digest it with your partner into a report. And then you pass it on from there" (Interview 6).

To assess the general atmosphere of an election LTOs talk to voters in a café for instance, ask them whether they will vote, what their opinion of the election is etc. For the anthropologists I spoke to the contact to local people as an LTO was especially rewarding, but the expert meetings were just as interesting, since as an election observer one gains access to people and information one might not have as a researcher travelling privately (Interview 6). LTOs usually also have the job of the STO, as the heavily quantitative recording techniques on election day are the same.

## 8.3 Observational Techniques

"Election observers are using anthropological techniques of observing, of thick description, partly without knowing it." (Coles, 2011)

One of my observers, and also Kimberley Coles, explicitly pointed out the use of 'thick description', as configured by Clifford Geertz, when observing. Interviewee 5 pointed out

that thick description was his personal way of making sense of what was happening on a mission and was the prime tool he brought into election observation from his anthropology degree.

“I unconsciously brought Geertz’ theory into my job as an election observer. So, when I’m on the job, I try to make as many notes as possible. I write an incredible amount of notes on everything really, at meetings for example, so at the end of a mission I usually have a 120 page book full of notes. Especially if I don’t understand something I write it down. It’s practical, because sometimes while rereading the notes I understand certain things that I didn’t understand beforehand. (...) If I hadn’t written it down, this information would be lost.” (Interview 5)

Interviewee 5 also remarked that his anthropology degree had given him the “systematic curiosity” that is needed to be a good observer in an election observation mission. Like ethnographic knowledge, EU EOMs and their results very much rely on the observations of their observers in ‘the field’.

“Participant observation continues to be a major part of positioned anthropological method, but it is ceasing to be fetishized: talking to and living with the members of a community are increasingly taking place alongside reading newspapers, analyzing government documents, observing the activities of governing elites, and tracking the internal logic of transnational development agencies and cooperations” (Gupta/Ferguson 1997: 37).

The tasks of LTOs very much coincide with what Gupta and Ferguson describe concerning fieldwork. Like an anthropologist, an election observer should not interfere in the electoral process, but participate in the sense that he/she grasps and participates in all local activities, goes to election rallies, monitors campaigns, talks to the electorate. Kathleen and Billie Dewalt (2002) attempt to summarise observer skills and emphasise the fact that self-observation and reflexivity are areas that must be explored, i.e. the different values and biases that the observer brings and also what impact he/she has on the research setting (cf. Dewalt/Dewalt 2002: 68). The issue of reflexivity was also described by my interviewees. The election observer that conducts cultural awareness trainings pointed out that aspiring election observers are encouraged to be self reflexive and self critical in their work. Conversely she mentioned that this was one of the areas where election observers had most problems. My other interviewees agreed on this fact too. Through their anthropology degrees they had learned to observe things without letting personal judgements cloud their view.

Another similarity in observational techniques is that both the Dewalts (cf. Dewalt/Dewalt 2002: 69ff.) and my interviewees stressed that observational techniques and the use of all sensory organs will improve over time.

“I would say I’m a different observer today than in my first mission as an STO. Then, I was very caught up in the tick tick tick; but now I know what to look for. For example there is an item in the form that asks: are there series of identical signatures in the voter register? I didn’t know what to look out for at the beginning, but now I know what it looks like and all I have to do is glance over the shoulder and I know.” (Interview 4)

Attending to detail is an important point mentioned by both Dewalts and the lecturers in the Course which includes ‘mapping the scene’- describing everything that is apparent in the social scene to understand the social relationships more effectively later. In the Specialisation Course we were asked to memorise 20 objects on a table and later on recount them from memory. The exercise was intended to sharpen the eye and to take in details (by memorising which objects there were) as well as generalities (such as the number of objects).

Conversation and interviews also include observation, namely where the conversations are held or how the interviewees react, as Dewalt specifies. During the Course we were asked to conduct role plays of interviews with interlocutors (discussed in more detail in the next chapter). They were advised to pay special attention to the body language of the interlocutor and the surrounding interview space as a factor that may give clues. Therefore, even though observational techniques are not explicitly borrowed from anthropology, there are many similarities in the way that anthropologists and election observers are taught how to observe in the ‘field’. Nevertheless, as observer 6 pointed out, it must not be forgotten that there are different schools and traditions, as there are different election observation training courses:

“There are moments when anthropologists do know a specific region, are trained to see institutions like this and are sensitized in a way that rituals can play a role in politics or that family structures do inform administrations and information of institutions and the like. These are the areas where an anthropological eye can contribute, the trainings that anthropologists usually receive can help in many of the qualitative assessments, interview situations that observers do as a matter of principle. Then there are specific areas that anthropologists might see better, where their eyes might be turned to rather than if you’re trained as a journalist, political scientist or a lawyer. But there is no general rule, because we’re all individuals and academic traditions vary” (Interview 6).

There are general tools acquired in the study of anthropology that can universally be applied in any occupation: participant observation was specifically named as key for election observation (Interview 5). Nevertheless, all agreed that it depends on how effectively the individual anthropologist and the individual election observer use the tools they have procured in practice. In chapter 9 the issue of whether knowledge of the cultural context influences observation will be discussed.

#### 8.4 Interviews with Interlocutors

“It is important to build up a large network of interlocutors to gather information that you can analyse and deliver to the Core Team. The quality of the network depends on the confidence relationships you create. (...) You are not here to judge. Observers often want to “give lectures” but this is a bad way of going about it. You are not here to give a speech, you are here to be impartial and get information, not to impose. ” (Interview 3).

The first source of information is always the driver and interpreter observers work and travel with, my interviewees explained. They are usually locals that have been employed by the mission and can be a valuable source of information.

Observers are then desired to get an overall impression of the election mechanisms and what civil society, political parties, election officials and journalist think about the election procedure. This is supposed to “build confidence in the electoral system” as stated frequently in the EU handbook.

Especially LTOs are required to build relationships with any stakeholders in the electoral process. They interview the same interlocutors frequently, thus building up a relationship of trust, as an anthropologist must also do when conducting fieldwork. My interviewees, coming from an anthropological background, said their degree very much influences the way they handle the interviews with interlocutors (Interview 7).

“One of my final questions is always: Do you have any questions for us? And I realised that a lot of my partners don’t do that but I get a lot of good answers and discussions from that question. We would get into discussions on democracy and how it is working in my home country, and comparing. It usually builds a more trustful relationship and makes us more equal.” (Interview 4).

Anthropologists as well as election observers’ main goal is to understand the point of view of the interview partner, listen and avoid inciteful questions. They then formulate this into reports. The EU sums it up as such:

“It is important that all EU observers are courteous, considerate and sensitive to local customs. Observers should try to maintain good relations with all interlocutors, including when meeting with negative reactions. No personal opinions on election-related issues are to be expressed at any time. EU observers should ensure their questions are neutral in tone and should pay particular attention to balance their meetings..” (European Commission 2008b: 124)

Interview techniques seem to overlap. Illustration 7 is an example of the recommended questions election observers ask political parties or candidates. For each interlocutor and on various subjects such as the candidate registration process or the work of the EMB, the EU has guidelines containing different sets of questions. These do not have to be followed and the election observer may add or take away questions if relevant (European Commission 2008b: 124ff.).

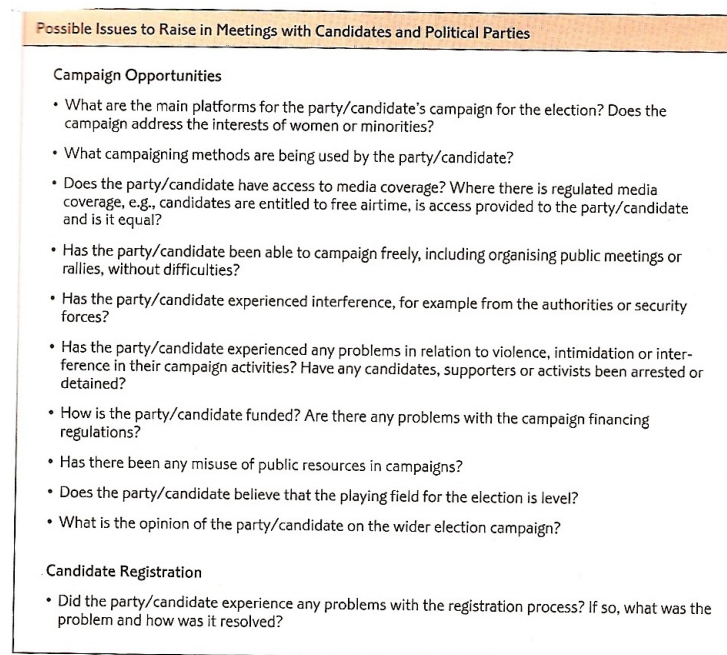


Fig. 7: Guideline of Questions to Raise in Meetings with Candidates and Political Parties

The questions are neutral and designed not to be guiding. However, there is a sense that the questions are designed to uncover ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ electoral practices. The political dimension of the job of the election observer also became clear during the course when we were supposed to conduct role-plays of interview situations.

The first role-play described an interview with a journalist. The journalist was rude, ordered the most expensive bottle of whiskey on the observer’s bill and immediately started

to record the situation, making wild allegations. The observer's first reaction should be to ask the journalist politely to turn off the recording device, since it could be used to quote phrases out of context. They should then leave if the situation does not calm down. The second role-play was an interview situation with a party representative. This representative became very angry and emotional when asked questions about where the ballot paper was stored and whether he thought the election was fair. The representative ended up threatening the observers. The observers should politely leave before it comes to threats. A threat has to be reported to the coordinator.

Another role-play depicted a meeting with a domestic observer that was seen by the other interlocutors as being unprofessional. The domestic observer asked the observers for money and help. In this kind of situation the observers must not make any promises and can not offer financial help or their resources, because this would compromise their impartiality.

The final role-play situation was with an election management body member, who was storing the ballot boxes and papers at her house, instead of at the required public sealed place. The observers were supposed to find out where the ballot papers were, in order to find out whether fraud was going on or not.

One lecturer described his situation in a Latinamerican country. The observers had heard rumours that the ruling party was bribing voters. There was a big queue outside a pharmacy. The observer decided to queue up as well and discovered that this was where the party chief was giving out money to bribe potential voters to vote for him. The interviews are very much aimed at uncovering the 'truth' and what is 'really' going on in the elections. This is probably one of the main differences in methodology between anthropologists and election observers. While anthropologists are trained to extract knowledge from the information disclosed by interview partners, election observers already have 'international principles' by which the answers of the interlocutors are then measured by. Kimberley Coles pointed out that there is a general trend towards more open forms of interviews and that methodology has evolved already.

"I think they've gone in many right directions; I think the quest for knowledge and realising that there is a not a single answer and that people don't always know the answers, is useful. Anthropology is comfortable with the nebulousness that other disciplines are not. " (Coles)

In EU EOMs there is still a sense of right and wrong answers, although certain aspects such as neutral questions and observation methodology are improving.

## 8.5 Preliminary Findings: Ethnographic Infiltration

Anthropological participant observation and interview methods seem to be slowly infiltrating EU mechanisms and methodology in election observation, until now in a primarily implicit way. Anthropologists working in such institutions apply those tools they learnt to their present work, indicating that these tools are adaptable to new research situations. In their respective teams, observers conduct small scale collaborative interdisciplinary research ventures and are thus exchanging methods and changing institutions from within. Social science methodology and the need for qualitative assessments is being recognised in EU EOM methodology, while at the same time quantitative methods are increasing, especially when processing the data.

Election observers are required to build social relations with the various stakeholders in an election. These relationships are very important for their job. Each observer team sets up its own network of relations in the local community it is stationed in, creating an exchange of knowledge and practices. One of my interviewees summarised her job as such:

“I think the first requirement is that you actually like people. You have to first of all be interested to listen to their way of seeing the world. I’m not here to change their system, because that would be an exaggeration of my role in the world. If I can change my interpreter’s point of view that would be good. If I can help some activists, that would be good. (...) The observer should have the interest as an observer, because it’s down to him to build public confidence on a local level.” (Interview 4)

Thus, observer teams all over a country set up their own networks of exchange. Anthropological research tools are being used in EU EOMs without real awareness or knowledge that they are being used. EU methodology has gone through a gradual process of change when dealing with data collection. At the same time, anthropological method also can learn from EU EOMs and their observers. Observers have access to people at different levels of society, that an anthropologist conducting research may not have that easily. Election observers are also trained to be extremely adaptable to new situations and to build deep relationships in a short period of time.

Nevertheless, the EU’s mechanism of ‘building confidence’ on a local level by creating relationships, especially through interview techniques has the added dimension of interest. The role-play situations and examples show that election observers must always keep in mind their mission mandate, role and their quest to uncover and prevent fraud. They must equally be careful when dealing with interlocutors and always remain professional.

The answers are judged according to international principles, there are ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ answers. Even though the interview and observational methods in anthropology and election observation may be similar, the way the answers are processed is the key difference. EU EOMs primarily focus on one thing: elections. This can pose a challenge but can also be very fruitful, as will be uncovered in the next chapter.

## 9 Local Context and International Principles

This section is the final step of the journey. First of all the different locations or spaces in missions will be uncovered. Where and how do election observers map and manoeuvre in unknown areas? Then the influence of ‘best practice’ and ‘contextual factors’ will be uncovered, touching on a debate reminiscent of the cultural relativism debate in anthropology and finally on the advantages of focusing on elections as a guideline will be discussed.

### 9.1 Spaces in EU EOMs

In Election Observation Missions space and location are mapped in four different ways according to physical and ideational lines:

- 1) the AoR, which is the district where the LTOs and STOs are deployed to;
- 2) the country, which is embodied by the capital, where the Core Team sits;
- 3) the ‘international’ space which is a combination of all the EU member states that are represented in the EU EOM and;
- 4) the EU itself as a supranational space.

1) Among mission members and the institution there are different rankings of AoRs. They are placed according to safety (which one is safer to send: an older or younger election observer, for example), security, difficulty (hot/cold or extreme weather conditions) or district (that is especially important for the election outcome, e.g., a ‘hot spot’). The AoRs the observers are sent to thus have different connotations in the mission. The AoR very much is linked to ideas of ‘the field’, as discussed by Gupta and Ferguson in chapter 4.2 LTOs have the chance to be out in “the field” and have relative autonomy and independence from the auspices of EU bureaucratic and technocratic mechanisms.

- 2) When in the country itself, the capital is usually the base of the more ‘important’

mission members. It is the place where observers first arrive and receive their briefing. Thus the capital city in a certain way embodies the country and the mission as a whole. It is the stronghold of the mission.

3) The observers in missions are ‘internationals’, or rather Europeans from different European countries. Each country, as pointed out earlier, also has its own standing and place, as for example the status of a ‘newer’ EU country is different to that of an ‘older’ EU country.

4) The countries that are chosen by the EU are guided by political, international and diplomatic interests. EU EOMs thus are mostly deployed to countries where the EU has an interest, be it a regard for stability, in future relations or a different strategic concern. This is because the EU itself is a supranational space.

These different mechanisms and interests affect the observers and also the results of the mission. These pre-defined spaces, or space-patterns in each mission make it challenging for observers to navigate in completely new places. Each observer has a distinct mission history, which will have given him/her different experiences and conceptions of EU EOMs and how to navigate in places. There may be pre-defined notions of ‘the field’, of what an area/country/region looks and is like. Different imaginings will meet each other within the mission environment.

Observers have the chance to compare previous experiences with new places, since these are mapped in a similar way in each EU EOM. In further research endeavours it would be interesting to analyse one single mission and investigate how these ‘spaces shift and alter’ (see Gupta/Ferguson 1992), what this means in terms of the lived meanings and practices of election principles in everyday lives and during election times.

## 9.2 The Grey Zone

According to the EU’s handbook EU EOMs assess whether elections are ‘up to international principles’ according to the international rights documents. However, they also judge them in terms of ‘contextual factors’, especially if an election is not up to international standards:

“The conduct of an election can be influenced by a range of contextual factors. In circumstances where international best practice has not been followed, an

EU EOM will consider whether there are mitigating or aggravating factors, thus placing those circumstances into context. These factors are often described as the ‘grey zone’.” (cf. European Commission 2008b: 21).

Examples of contextual factors to be considered:

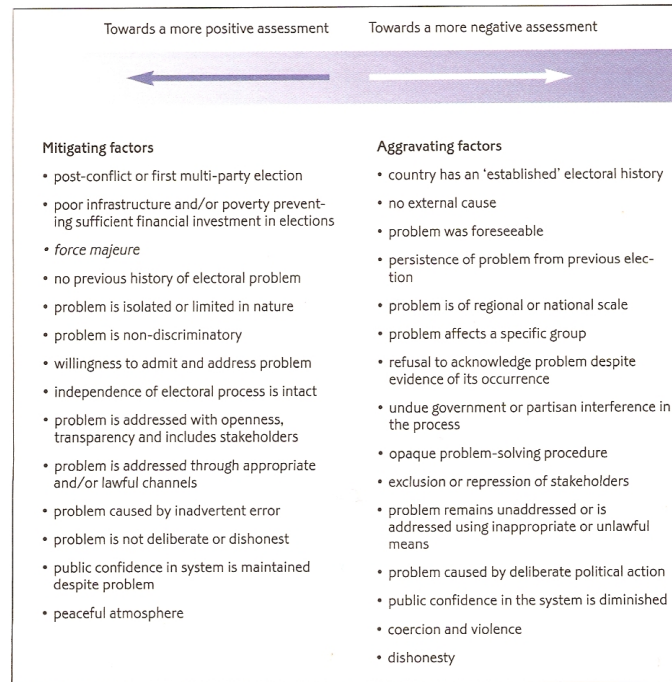


Fig. 8: Contextual Factors

There is no further explanation of these factors, for example what ‘force majeure’ may mean. The different areas are rather widely defined, making it unclear in how far these are really used as criteria. There is no reference to the social location, only in terms of ‘public confidence’. Social structure is disregarded or equated to ‘infrastructure’.

In the following chapter the ‘grey zone’ will be discussed to find out how observers themselves mediate between international principles, methodology and the social location. Furthermore, the issue of ‘best practice’ will be discussed. Generally ‘best practices’ are defined as electoral practices that are not inherent in international rights documents but have proven to work ‘internationally’. These include transparency, independence and impartiality of election administration, equal access of all parties and candidates, balanced coverage by the media, civic rights education, peaceful atmosphere (cf. European Commission 2008b: 15). Nevertheless there are also electoral practices that are country specific and affect observer’s observations.

### 9.2.1 “Contextual Factors”

“A broader shortcoming of most observation efforts is that they give little attention to the deeper political functions and contexts of elections. An implicit assumption of most observers is that elections are perforce a good thing. Yet the experience of the past several years shows that elections in countries attempting democratic transitions are sometimes problematic. Elections may fail as a capstone of a conflict-resolution effort and trigger a return to civil conflict, as occurred in Angola in 1992 and Burundi in 1993. They may be a means of legitimating the power of an entrenched undemocratic leader who is able to make elections turn out in his favor without using too much fraud, as in Kazakhstan in 1995 or Gabon in 1993. Or elections may be part of a longer-term power struggle for power that has little to do with democratic practices and outcomes, as in Pakistan in recent years.

In such situations, reporting on the technical conditions of the elections without confronting their deeper political function tells a dangerously incomplete story and risks legitimating undemocratic political processes. International election observation can thus end up feeding the broader tendency of the United States and Western countries to push elections almost reflexively as a short-term solution to political problems of all sorts in countries racked with chronic instability, civil conflict, and other woes.” (Carothers 1997: 20)

Carothers raises various issues here: first of all, the issue that sometimes an election observation mission can fuel conflict rather than prevent it or keep it at bay. The most recent example of this is Ivory Coast 2010, where misgivings on the rightful winner of the elections entrenched already apparent divides in the population and caused a civil war. There is no official analysis of the success or failure of election observation missions<sup>42</sup>. There are annual meetings of several observer organisations to discuss strategies but there is no summary of the actual outcomes of EU EOMs (discussed in lecture in the Course). On the contrary, as the DIEM study reveals, it is hard to judge the success and failure of an EOM and an election, since there are many factors and variables that can influence the outcome.

“There should instead be more conflict assessment at the outset of democratization processes and before elections as well as more in-depth analysis of the effects of electoral competition, elections systems etc. Elections cannot be treated as a mere technical exercise. Any technical issue can have tremendous political implications. As part of the pre-election analysis all EU institutions

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<sup>42</sup>One participant in the Course on Election Observation and Assistance was dismayed at the fact that there was no overall summary of the outcome of EU EOMs since the first mission, even though it was a case of tax money being spent.

should consider options as to how to respond to an election process that goes wrong.” (Meyer-Resende 2006: 13)

Carothers as well as Meyer-Resende link these problems to a lack of understanding of the political functions and contexts of the elections, which is a critique that an anthropologist may voice. It is dangerous to observe elections without properly analyzing whether a country is “ready” for elections or not. The over-emphasis of the technical aspects of elections can lead to big political upheavals. Interviewee 5 described how the role of the political expert is gradually changing: “In recent years I think the political expert in the Core Team has evolved into a political analyst. That’s a shame, because as an analyst you don’t have to know anything, you just analyse. I think that has led to a deterioration of the mission substance.” (Interview 5). Would deeper country knowledge and a more precise evaluation of pre-election processes enhance or change observations or is context irrelevant when analyzing election processes following generic international criteria?

### 9.2.2 A Debate Continued

There is an interesting paragraph in the preamble of the 2005 Declaration of Principles of International Election Observation which I used as a general question for my interviewees:

“Genuine democratic elections are a requisite condition for democratic governance, because they are the vehicle through which the people of a country freely express their will, on a basis established by law, as to who shall have the legitimacy to govern in their name and in their interests. Achieving genuine democratic elections is a part of establishing broader processes and institutions of democratic governance. Therefore, while all election processes should reflect universal principles for genuine democratic elections, no election can be separated from the political, cultural and historical context in which it takes place.” (UN 2005: 1)

In what way is the last sentence fulfilled? How does the EU strike the balance between the “political, cultural and historical context” and “international principles for genuine democratic elections”?

An election mission to post-conflict Mauretania triggered interviewee 6’s interest in studying election observation through an anthropological lens. He was deployed to a very small area and had the chance to observe the registration of voters. There was no census, and there were difficulties determining the ‘rightful’ citizens since many were semi-nomadic migrants. Depending on the season they would transmigrate from Mali, or Niger, into

Mauretania and back. A large part was illiterate and there were hardly any political parties and if so, they were constructed along tribal lines. Candidates were bringing illiterate voters to the polling stations on jeeps and there was a lot of fraud going on.

“You wonder what it means for the spirit or the development of democracy in a context, in a cultural environment like this. I had some doubts and the doubts did not just go away by an emphasis or strengthening of universal principles and standards.” (Interview 6)

Most of my interviewees found this issue troubling and difficult, since it is exactly herein where they, as anthropologists, are confronted with a debate similar to the cultural relativism debate that dominated anthropology for almost half a century (see chapter 3.2). How do anthropologists feel being inside the EU’s mechanism, being moved from country to country, without much prior country knowledge? One interviewee described the above paragraph as a ‘rubber paragraph’ that is there to strike a balance between critics of the EUs technocratic dominance and an awareness of the ‘political, cultural and historical context’. It is not really fulfilled in EU missions. I read the paragraph to one EU functionary who held a lecture at the course. He admitted that in general the context of a country, especially its ‘social or cultural’ context is not considered since the missions have another focus, namely the electoral process.

“It is very clear that most people in the electoral world are not on the cultural relativism side, most of the organisations are not; and most of the people socialised in these organisations are not. That does not mean that they are not culturally sensitive in their work, but of course there are people who are not too, I have seen many people who are not culturally sensitive, that is a lack of their personal awareness, a lack of training, lack of general principles in life, but yeah the majority of people working there are not culturally relativist (...) It needs much more thorough research on that question. If we did not have this thorough anthropological in-depth fieldwork on that question it’s very difficult to bring new elements into the debate- otherwise the debate remains a debate of principles. Those who stay culturally relativist then, usually are not the agents of such organisations and do not deploy such principles, do not have careers in such organisations. Then it would be really different camps but then all this would be a debate about human rights.” (Interview 6)

As interviewee 6 mentions in the above quote and the literature in 3.2 refers to, one must avoid keeping the debate on the level of principles and two fronts. It is advisable to look for factors and agents that cut sideways across the debate. Most electoral observers are not employed according to country knowledge and expertise, but for electoral experience

from previous observation missions.

The different restraints that influence the election observers as mentioned above, such as time and money, inhibit their work. There is simply not enough time for election observers to have extensive training before a mission and it is down to the individual to personally conduct research on the area (Coles, 2011). When observers arrive in a country, they receive a briefing by the Core Team which is designed to fill them in on the essentials of country knowledge. Conversely, as mentioned before, these briefings are very people-dependent; this means that depending on who conducts the briefings and how seriously they take their job, they can vary (Interview 5).

As mentioned in the theoretical section (Cowan and Hastrup) ‘culture’ then becomes divided from political institutions, or is often seen as prior to political institutions, instead of an integral part thereof.

### 9.2.3 The Question of “Culture”

In human rights documents and treaties, as in the above quote from the declaration of principles, culture has become a hollow phrase. This connects to Kirsten Hastrup’s argument in chapter 3.2 which states that legal language is becoming increasingly empty and without substance. ‘Culture’, individual experiences, histories and practices are detached from social relations, politics and institutions.

Interviewee 6 mentioned that his experience was that ‘culture’ is becoming increasingly equated to conflict. People who have not been trained as anthropologists may have very differing perceptions of what ‘culture’ may mean, and also within the anthropological community there are many discrepancies in meaning. In Sudan there was little reference to the political and social structures, as described in Evans-Pritchard’s work on the region, but the main reason for difficulties in implementing political institutions was seen as a result of the conflict and civil war. This issue also caused the EU EOM to judge the elections and the implementation of international principles more mildly. ‘Culture’ is used as a token in documents, but is simultaneously avoided. In this area anthropological expertise could be put to work since it seems to be an area where many institutions do not dare to tread.

### 9.2.4 “Best Practice”: Does More Country Knowledge Change Observations?

In Kirgysztan an election observer (for the OSCE) entered a polling station. She noticed that the voting screen was turned the ‘wrong’ way. Instead of being set up for the

individual voter, inviting her or him to go behind the screen and cast his/her vote, it was turned so that the voter's back was visible and he/she voted at the front of the screen. Usually election observers would judge this as being malpractice. However, the observer decided to ask the election official in the polling station why the screen was in this position. He explained to her that they had been having problems with 'carousel voting', which means that voters are given a premarked ballot outside the polling station, take it out of their pocket inside and exchange it with a blank ballot paper, which is then handed back to whoever is trying to cheat outside. The screen was thus turned in this way so that election officials had view of the voters' pockets and could verify that no-one could take out a premarked ballot paper. She called other election observers and realised that the screens there were also turned in this manner.

In Uganda voting out in the open is standard practice. Voters cast their votes in a basin in the ground. A couple of years ago, there was an attempt at trying to move the polling stations inside schools. The election was therefore mistrusted by many since the polling stations were hidden. In Uganda transparency and the visibility of the polling station and voting practice are essential to build trust in the electoral process. Elections now take place outside again (Interview 7). Knowing various practices and having the patience to find out 'best practices' in different countries were essential in this case to judge the election fairly (Interview 3).

An example from Tajikistan (OSCE) shows that election observers can also face difficulties regarding differing voter practices. She was working as an LTO and advised the STOs that 'family voting'<sup>43</sup> is not acceptable. A Kazakh STO objected to this, explaining that in Kazakhstan there was also a long tradition of family voting so he had a different opinion on how 'fraudulent' this was. The LTO election observer responded that since Tajikistan wants to be in the OSCE 'club' it must abide by its rules (Interview 4). Difficulties can arise between prescribed rules and 'cultural sensitivity' and observers are caught in between. They are bound by certain rules and guidelines, which may sometimes be in conflict with local practices and traditions.

"The accusation most easily levelled at EU observers is that they apply European standards without understanding the context of a country. However, critical EU EOM findings have not been based on 'local' problems such as the lack of infrastructure, limited understanding of the polling process by officials or other problems inherent in any election process in transition countries, but rather on such issues as ballot box stuffing, manipulation at the level of result

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<sup>43</sup>When a family enters a voting booth and votes together or the head of a family comes to the polling station to vote for all members of the family.

aggregation, exclusion of political competitors by selective law-enforcement etc. Manipulation of this type usually requires bureaucratic-administrative skills which are independent of a given cultural context” (Meyer-Resende 2006: 9).

Meyer-Resende sees fraudulent practice as independent from cultural, social, political and historical contexts. Another interesting fact some observers commented on, is that in OSCE methodology there is no differentiation between deliberate and non-deliberate fraud. Thus even if voters make mistakes without intending to do so, the country will be judged negatively. The EU is more sensitive on this issue as indicated in the ‘mitigating factors’ in the image above. Meyer-Resende points this out in the 2002 EU EOM final report on Pakistan: “(...), the EU EOM concluded that polling day itself had gone relatively smoothly and that any shortcomings were the consequence of inadequate training and administrative arrangements rather than the consequences of intended abuse” (EU EOM final report Pakistan 2002, as cited by Meyer-Resende 2006: 7). ‘Local’ problems as he describes them equate infrastructure, limited understanding and general electoral problems. Social circumstances and structures are completely divided from these mechanisms, instead of being seen as an integral part. Lack of training of the voters and administrative bodies seems to be the cause of most electoral problems. As the above examples show, however, there has to be an awareness of different practices too. Observations of fraud or wrong practices may also be in the eye of the observer, and not of the beholder. In other words, sensitivity to context and developments concerning electoral practices may enhance observations and therefore results. There is a need for ethnographic research on the effects of electoral principles and practices and observational missions on the realm of the social.

One lecturer during the courses said there is a dilemma between the respect for human rights and ‘local customs’. She added that often ‘we’ (European cultural space) have values and these values are projected in an insensitive way without respecting local values. The difficulty as a ‘Westerner’ is to stay true to transnational values of democracy in certain areas where these are conflicting, which leads to a personal conflict. The issue is to find ways to promote these values and stay respectful to the context where you are operating. Observers are confronted with these issues, especially if they have been sensitized by their training as anthropologists.

In some situations observers themselves have solved this problem. They take country specificities, histories and traditions into account as ‘mitigating factors’. This connects with Coles’ observations that observers mediate between universal principles and social

locations and adjust them accordingly (cf. Coles 2007: 18-19).

“The Bhutan mission: It was the first elections ever, democratisation was taking place from above. The mission steered a course that, if seen objectively, was pretty soft. But I mean, they were the first elections. In that sense it is important to consider the relativity of each case. Theoretically, you treat all countries equally. Practically, there are things you have to consider.” (Interview 5).

The EU may have a methodological line, but the way observers cope with ‘difference’ and ‘similarity’ marks the way these methodologies and rights mechanisms come alive in practice and are altered.

“I found it also culturally interesting. Even if you are deployed to very different countries, and work in different cultural contexts, and different climatic contexts, different political contexts, the kind of questions you ask remain very much the same and the kind of things you look at and question as an election observer, stay in a certain range. Which is good if you do it several times, your eyes are getting sharper, and more focused on the things to see and thus you get more professional and that is good.” (Interview 6)

Knowing more about ‘contextual factors’ and ‘best practices’, but especially being open to learn about these can enhance observations. One example regarding gender was specifically striking.

“How gender-mainstreamed are LTOs? In how far do they notice gender imbalances? Their observations will be different depending on how sensitive they are to these issues.” (Interview 3).

To a certain degree, more knowledge on specific issues such as gender, minority rights in the country, nomadic structures and so on and how these affect electoral practices would enhance election observation work.

In election observation it is essential to stay open to ‘best practices’. Election observers have the task to discover these and have the chance to compare different practices in different areas. This connects to Bertrand et al. (2007), as outlined in the theoretical section. They spoke about voting and rights mechanisms moulding onto different situations. The cases shown above demonstrate that they are not static but fluid. The ideal election observer would not inherently focus on the rights and methods, but is able to adapt them. Like an anthropologist he/she should try and free his mind from biases and be self-reflexive.

The practices of election observers are very much different in practice than in theory. This

is what Kirsten Hastrup meant by giving ‘life’ to rights. Thus instead of terming ‘best practices’ and ‘contextual factors’ the ‘grey zone’ of election observation methodology, they seem to embody the actual essence.

### 9.3 Why Observe Elections? Looking Through a Different Lens

The interviewees found it intriguing that even though in their anthropological formation they were taught that a ‘proper’ study of a society needs long-term fieldwork, the work of election observation can give deep insights into an area.

“On a theoretical point I still question it. I found it troubling, because how can people that don’t know previous in-depth knowledge or thorough cultural awareness of a country they’ve never been to, go and assess? I have to say that I was socialised in it later and the possibility to get sensitized and get some experience for a short-term deployment duration are rewarding. And I found it more and more fascinating to see how much you actually can learn in a short, short but very intense period. (...), the difference is then that you’re not there as an anthropologist, you’re not there to pursue more traditional anthropological questions, you’re not there to observe in-depth lineage structures, public and private space, or the impact of tourism in a particular region over time, but you are there with this electoral focus and I am thrilled by the fact how much you can see with that focus. The only thing you do in this time in a very particular area, you look at the political and electoral process and my experience is that during election times, of course depending on country context, but principally during election times the political situation of a country, you see it with this focus under a lens. It’s coming out much bigger. It might be a bit distorted on the one or other end but you see things more clearly. That’s not a recipe for every country and every expertise you want to apply but in general I had that experience.” (Interview 6)

Elections are a particular time in a country and they were described as acting as a magnifying glass that uncovers a country. Interviewee 6 added that thorough ethnographic studies of particular contexts would be extremely relevant to see how universal principles on elections are taken up, practiced and changed through time. However, even in a short space of time and with a limited focus, the election observers I interviewed found that you do get a deep insight into processes.

For many observers it is exactly the fact that you get to know a country in an important time in its history that makes election observation so worthwhile to them. Countries are given the chance to improve their systems, in implementing democracy.

Extraordinary events can be just as indicative as every day events, my interviewees added.

“It’s a very interesting and rewarding thing to do. It allows you to have communication, exchange, with your colleagues, interlocutors, who might become friends at the end of the day in contexts you would otherwise never or not likely have access to. But to be able to meet people that you otherwise don’t easily find, also not as a researcher. I find that a privilege. After doing it a while you start to like - or dislike - but like, in my case, the technicalities; the more you know about the procedures behind the legal context you also develop an interest in that. It is a constant learning process. And I find it a fascinating process where societies to some extent transform. Just to be able to be part of that somewhere and see some of it is a really great opportunity to understand a little bit more how this world works. It may seem like a very narrow focus and narrow frame but also with my personal and research interest I think elections in general are an institution that have developed through time. There are different phases of the development and that will continue to change for some time. There are so many different social and political issues evolving around this constantly changing institution that you can actually see many things with such a focus.” (Interview 6)

Anthropology also needs to stay open to new fieldwork practices. Election observation is a new lens to look through, can give deep insights, access to people that a researcher may not be able to have. Election observers manoeuvre in an institution, in social relations, in social locations where they are faced with constraints, but that at the same time they have the freedom to explore and gain deep insights into an area on different levels. Whether or not these insights are finally published by the institution is more often than not a political decision.

## 10 Conclusion

“Ethnography is a mode of knowing that privileges experience - often going into the realm of the social that is not easily discernible within more formal protocols used by many other disciplines.” (Das, Poole 2004: 4)

This thesis intended to trace anthropological findings on topics concerning international election observation and to combine these with the experiences of election observers with an anthropological background across different places, sites and regions, to understand how they maneuver within EU EOMs. How do they use their anthropological knowledge and technique in EU EOMs?

Veena Das and Deborah Poole quite rightly suggest in the introduction of their anthology on “Anthropology in the Margins of the State” that anthropology’s biggest asset is to look beyond official protocols, documents and agreements to focus on their effects on people’s everyday lives. Kirsten Hastrup (2002) also supports this in her article. Her idea is to bring the factor of ‘experience’ into rights practices, which can be done with comparative consciousness. With the help of theoretical insights from anthropology regarding human rights and democracy, this factor was uncovered. Furthermore, it was considered that the secret ballot is not a universal practice nor acultural, but that it holds ‘relative autonomy’ making it suited to be transferred, as it moulds into different situations. So instead of judging the constant replication of programmes, this explains why certain voting procedures are moved from one country to another, leaving “cultural relativism” notions behind. An anthropological approach is not about finding the precise mechanism of how an election works best, but to look at the implications these programmes have and to go from there. Along these lines, elections and election observation were treated as both performance and technology. Like human rights, election observation is based on a set of international laws determined in international rights documents. An anthropological study of election observation discovers how exemplifications of agency are altered in new contexts. “The ethnographic focus is on peoples’ efforts to position themselves in highly unpredictable social circumstances” (cf. Greenhouse et al. 2002: 8).

In my thesis I focused on election observers with an anthropological background to uncover how they manoeuvre within an institution with predefined rights mechanisms in social locations unknown to them. Election observers are at the crossroads between the ideological principles of a set of laws, their enactment by a foreign body and their reception and redefinition in a social location. Thus, I tried to see what methods election observers use and how they use them to do their job. I intended to put the visualisations

and social relationships of election observers at the centre of my study.

Election observers are at the intersection of various instances. The institution they work in, the people they collaborate with, the locations they manoeuvre in and the networks of exchange relations they set up affect their work. They are in mechanisms of social exchange in many dimensions.

Election observers can change the way an institution works and have agency to a certain degree. This is reflected in how EU election observation methodology has changed over time and the increasing amount of ‘qualitative’ assessment that is being brought in. Anthropological participant observation and interview methods and how to approach ‘the field’ reflexively and without bias seem to be slowly infiltrating EU methodology in election observation. Anthropologists working in such institutions very much use the tools they learnt in their degrees in their work (such as ‘thick description’), indicating that these are adaptable to new research situations.

The relations election observers have with their co-workers are also of significance. With each new mission observers have to establish new social relations and a good working environment. Since the missions are very heterogenous, each team of two is a mini interdisciplinary collaboration where methods and knowledge are exchanged. Working together with a lawyer whose expertise may be on electoral laws thus can create a good symbiosis and working environment, as one of my interviewees mentioned. Each discipline and formation has different contributions and EU EOMs precisely intend to combine people from different backgrounds.

Election observers set up different social relationships and networks of exchange with their interlocutors. Local discourses have the chance to be heard internationally. This largely depends on whether or not these reach the final report or whether they are blocked for political reasons.

The settings election observers find themselves in vary. First of all there are the different spaces such as the AoRs, the capital and the mission spaces the observers move in. The EU calls the two ‘grey areas’ of methodology ‘contextual factors’ and ‘best practice’, in other words, the social locations, practices and discourses which ‘may’ influence methodology. Election observers can be faced with difficulties if institutional guidelines and local practices are in conflict with each other, demonstrating that concentrating on the overtly technical is not always useful and more knowledge of the social locations would be an asset to EU EOMs. There is a need for the ‘social’ to be explored. How do electoral principles and practices influence the social? A thorough ethnographic study over a longer

period of time in a social location and also across different areas could give important inputs to organisations that conduct election observation. It may help EU EOMs become more aware of the importance of social locations and their impact on electoral practice, including a re-consideration of the ‘grey area’ term.

Anthropology can also learn from election observation, especially the skill of creating deep relations with interlocutors and insights into the electoral process over a short period of time. Furthermore election observers have access to different people at all levels from government officials to civil society actors. They move in different social locations within the same type of mission structure, which would give valuable insights for comparative analyses. These are the spaces that could enhance anthropology and at the same time where anthropology could have a say.

Holistically speaking, anthropological technique and knowledge, just like the principles of electoral observation, have relative autonomy and can be of use and importance in a wide array of professions.

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## 12 Appendix

### 12.1 Interviews

#### **Interview 1**

Female, Austrian, anthropologist/election observer, September 2010

#### **Interview 2**

Kimberley Coles, January 2011

#### **Interview 3**

Female, French, election observer/cultural awareness trainer, March 2011

#### **Interview 4**

Female, Danish, anthropologist/election observer, March 2011

#### **Interview 5**

Male, Austrian, anthropologist/election observer, February 2011

#### **Interview 6**

Male, Austrian, anthropologist/election observer, March 2011

#### **Interview 7**

Male, Austrian, anthropologist/election observer, April 2011

## 12.2 Abstracts

### 12.2.1 Abstract (English)

In recent years international election observation has grown into a huge industry. A wide array of NGOs, international institutions and intergovernmental organisations, such as the European Union, practice election observation across the globe.

EU election observers go into countries that are not part of the EU and usually with a considerable geographical distance from the countries of their departure. Their main tasks are to observe the local situation and interview different interlocutors involved in the electoral process. Their methods quite resemble those of an anthropologist conducting research. What are the similarities and differences between their methods?

The aim is to uncover the ethnographic spaces in the intersection between international electoral principles and social locations:

What role does and could anthropological technique and knowledge play in EU Election Observation Missions (EU EOMs)?

This thesis traces anthropological findings on topics concerning international election observation such as human rights, democracy, a history of elections, the secret ballot, studies on elections and election observation and combines these with the experiences of election observers with an anthropological background across different places, sites and regions, to understand how they manoeuvre within EU EOMs.

Election observation is technique and performance, which are the technologies and techniques involved in election observation and their formulation in practice. Election observers work within the framework of the EU which influences these two factors, their movement, roles and tasks. However, on the level of technique and performance election observers demonstrate agency in changing the workings and practices of EU EOMs from within and influencing the web of interlocutors they come into contact with.

The realm of the ‘social’ is an area that is mostly disregarded in EU EOMs. This poses a problem for observers, since they must mediate between institutional guidelines, contextual factors and different ‘best practices’ in countries. The observers’ experiences and recommendations for improvement indicate that especially in the realm of the ‘social’ anthropological knowledge could give important insights. An exchange of knowledge could be very fruitful for EU EOMs as well as for social anthropology.

### 12.2.2 Abstract (German)

Die Zahl von internationalen Wahlbeobachtungsmissionen ist in den letzten Jahren stark angestiegen. Zahlreiche NGOs, internationale Institutionen und Interregierungsorganisationen, wie die Europäische Union, praktizieren Wahlbeobachtung in der ganzen Welt. EU WahlbeobachterInnen arbeiten in Ländern außerhalb der EU. Ihre Hauptaufgaben sind es, den Wahlprozess zu beobachten und verschiedene Interessensgruppen die an einer Wahl beteiligt sind, zu befragen. Diese ähneln jenen eines/r EthnologIn bei der Feldforschung. Welche Gemeinsamkeiten und Unterschiede gibt es zwischen ihren Methoden? Wie erleben WahlbeobachterInnen die Arbeit in EU Wahlbeobachtungsmissionen (EU EOMs)? Wie wenden WahlbeobachterInnen mit ethnologischen Hintergrund, diesen bei der Arbeit an?

Das Ziel der Arbeit ist es die ethnographischen Räume zu erkunden und festzustellen, wo anthropologische Methoden und Wissen bereits Ausdruck finden oder angewendet werden könnten. Im Besonderen am Schnittpunkt zwischen internationalen Wahlprinzipien und sozialen Räumen.

Diese Diplomarbeit behandelt die für die Wahlbeobachtung relevanten ethnologischen Überlegungen zu den Themen: ‘the field’, Menschenrechte, Demokratie, die Geschichte von Wahlen, die geheime Stimmabgabe, Wahlbeobachtung. Diese werden mit den praktischen Erfahrungen von WahlbeobachterInnen mit ethnologischem Hintergrund kombiniert, um zu verstehen wie sie sich in EU EOMs positionieren.

Wahlbeobachtung ist sowohl ‘technique’ als auch ‘performance’. Dies beruht auf der Grundlage, dass es bestimmte methodische Techniken gibt, die dann in der Praxis in angepasster Form Ausdruck finden.

WahlbeobachterInnen arbeiten für die EU, die ihre Bewegungsmöglichkeiten, Rollen und Aufgaben bestimmt. Jedoch demonstrieren sie auch selbst Handlungsfähigkeit indem sie die Praktiken und Techniken von EU EOMs beeinflussen. Zusätzlich bauen sie Netzwerke mit Interessensgruppen auf, die den Diskurs fördern.

Der Bereich des ‘Sozialen’ wird oft in EU EOMs ausgespart. Dieser Bereich ist allerdings von großer Bedeutung für WahlbeobachterInnen, da sie zwischen internationalen Wahlprinzipien, kontextuellen Faktoren und länderspezifischen Wahlpraktiken navigieren. Vor allem hier könnte ethnologisches Wissen eingesetzt werden und ein Austausch von Methoden und Wissen stattfinden.

## 12.3 CV

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**Date of Birth:** 24.07.1987

**Place of Birth:** Oxford, Great Britain

**Languages:**

German and English (bilingual), Spanish (fluent), French (Intermediate), Arabic (Basic)

**Education:**

2006- 2011

University of Vienna

Cultural and Social Anthropology

Qualification: Magister Degree (equivalent of BA+MA)

2006- 2010

University of Vienna

Institute for Romance Languages: Spanish

Qualification: Magister Degree (equivalent of BA+MA)

Awarded: First Honours Degree (German: mit Auszeichnung bestanden)

Thesis (written in Spanish): "A Recipe for Writing: The creative writing workshop of Jorge Eduardo Benavides"

2005- 2006

Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Spain

Various courses in:

- History of Journalism, Spanish Foreign Politics- Department of Journalism
- Classical Sketching. Department of Fine Arts
- Superior Spanish Course- Department of Spanish
- D.E.L.E Diploma Intermediate Level

2001- 2005

International School of Düsseldorf, International Baccalaureate

1993- 2001

European School of Culham, Oxfordshire, England

### **Trainings and Special Studies:**

14. March - 25. March 2011

Specialisation Course on Electoral Observation and Assistance, Austrian Study Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution, Stadtschlaining, Austria

27. February - 12. March 2011

Core Course- International Civilian Peacekeeping and Peace building Training, Austrian Study Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution, Stadtschlaining, Austria

April 2009

Three-week study tour to the United Nations, New York, and the World Bank & International Monetary Fund, Washington DC, US (organised by the Dept. of Political Science, Vienna University)

February 2008

Two week study tour to Mexico City to various political parties (PAN, PRI, PRD, Convergencia), the UNAM and COLMEX universities, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the Austrian embassy (organised by the Department for Political Sciences, Vienna University)

April 2004

Participation in Model United Nations in The Hague

### **Work Experience:**

June-July 2009

Institute for Peace Support and Conflict Management, Vienna, Austria

1- 31. August 2008

asylum coordination austria

1. May- 15. June 2007/1.May-15. June 2008

Austrian League for Human Rights;

other voluntary work regarding international conferences and translation (2007-2008) at the Austrian League for Human Rights

## **Publications**

January 2011

“*Public secrets* und Geheimnisse als Leitmotive der Komödien Calderóns: Freundschaft, Loyalität oder Liebe?” (“*Public secrets* and secrets as main motives in Calderóns comedies: friendship, loyalty or love?”) in: W. Aichinger; S. Kroll, *Laute Geheimnisse. Calderón de la Barca und die Chiffren des Barock*, Wien: Turia+Kant 2011, pp.159-194.

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