



Narratives of Change and Changing Narratives. A policy anthropological perspective on the ACP Group's transition to becoming the Organisation of ACP States

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The ACP's transition to 'Organisation of ACP States'



Brief History of the ACP

- What does becoming the OACPS mean? How does the ACP attribute meaning to the transition from ACP Group of States to an international organisation under the name of Organisation of ACP States?
- Tracing the discursive construction of meaning within this policy change through narrative analysis

1958 – first installment of the EDF
1975 – founding of ACP Group through Georgetown Agreement
2000 – Cotonou Agreement
2017 – Towards the ACP we want
2018 – ACP and EU negotiating mandates
2019 – Nairobi Declaration
2020 – Revised Georgetown Agreement



Understanding the transition as policy change within European development cooperation

The anthropological lens on policy:
Policy as discursive formation and discursively embedded. Ascription of meaning in policy documents, by policy makers and through language.

Postcolonial understanding of worlding and re-worlding:
Reintegrating the moment of change in the larger scale politics of the development cooperation from a non-development vantagepoint



Narrative as Methodological Framework

Operationalisation through the study of policy narratives is twofold insightful:

1. The transition as a policy change
 - Narrative policy analysis as the investigation of the scenarios and argumentation of which policies are based (cf. Roe 1994)
 - Policy change as moment for emergence of new narratives
2. The transition as moment of identity construction
 - Narratives as stories of self-understanding of the narrator, discursive self-construction, narrative identity
 - New identity to be narrated



Data, Field and Method for Policy Narratives

- Nonlocal fieldsite (cf. Feldman 2011) as multi-modal assemblage and political field (cf. Adam and Vonderau 2014)

Documents and text-based material	Agreements and key policy documents Negotiating directives Press statements Political speeches Position papers
Field Notes	From 12.05.2020 to 06.08.2020
Audio-visual material	Recordings of speeches Recordings of parliamentary debates Audio-visual material on the OACPS' Youtube channel under the title 'Direct from the OACPS'
Interviews	3 Narrative, unstructured to semi-structured interviews of approximately 100 minutes with policy practitioners in Brussels



Coding with MAXQDA

- Grounded open coding of all material (interviews, policy documents, position papers, press statements, ..)

The screenshot displays the MAXQDA software interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with icons for 'Liste der codierten Segmente', 'Logbuch', 'Teamwork', 'Projekte zusammenführen', 'Projekt speichern unter', 'Projekt anonymisiert speichern', 'Projekt aus aktivierten Dokumenten', 'Externe Dateien', and 'Daten archivieren'. Below this is a document browser showing 'Dokument-Browser: Towards the ACP we want - Version 1 May 2017 (Seite 7/35)'. The main area is divided into two panes. The left pane, titled 'More mature cooperation', shows a list of coded segments with their corresponding codes and colors. The right pane shows the text of the document, with sections 'f. An effective Global Player' and 'g. Enhanced identity and visibility' visible. The list of coded segments includes:

- ..ACP is often not heard
- ..Becoming (influential) global player
- ..So far ACP is not global player
- ..Need for transformation
- Overcoming Narrative
- ..Principles: unity and solidarity
- ..Seek internal agreement
- ..Collective action
- ..Gain influence in global policy
- ..Collective action
- ..International recognition as international o
- ..ACP as collective voice
- ..Cooperation with other groupings
- ..ACP group historically restrictive role

The right pane shows the following text:

f. An effective Global Player

24. On notable occasions the ACP Group's collective voice has been heard and it has been able to have real impact, for instance in the WTO and more recently in the UNFCCC³. This though has not been a consistent pattern. The reality is that as currently structured and operating, the ACP Group is not in a position to play an effective and wide-ranging international role. Strategic changes are required to enable the ACP Group to become an effective global player.

25. ACP actions and policies should continue to be guided by the principles of unity and solidarity which have served the Group well in the past. For international influence to be real and meaningful, it needs a firm and sustainable foundation. This can be channelled through the collective political authority of its 79 members and by carefully and skilfully selecting the most appropriate matters for joint action, and having done so, seeking internal agreement on the aims and strategy to be pursued.

g. Enhanced identity and visibility

26. The ACP Group needs to be recognised by its own Members and the global community as a distinct international organisation to which their Governments are committed; and through which, when they decide, they will act collectively in pursuit of their shared interests as well as in supporting or opposing the positions of others. However, in those instances where the most favourable outcomes are likely from working via the ACP Group, then it should be the chosen vehicle. In addition, ACP countries can often find that different groupings and alliances could well be complementary and help contribute to achieving their goals.

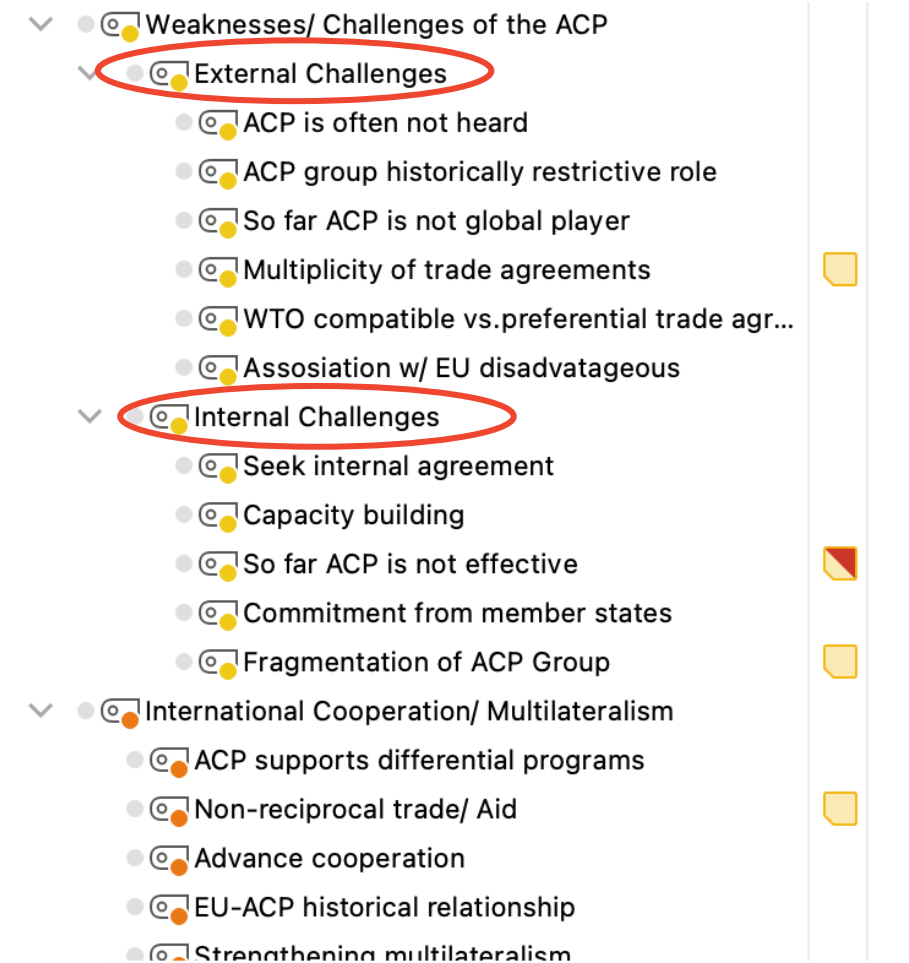
STRUCTURAL, INSTITUTIONAL AND GOVERNANCE REFORMS

a. Organisational innovations

27. As the ACP Group develops into its role of as an influential player, it would at the same time be outgrowing its institutional framework, which was designed for a more restricted role. For the Group to satisfactorily and meaningfully expand its

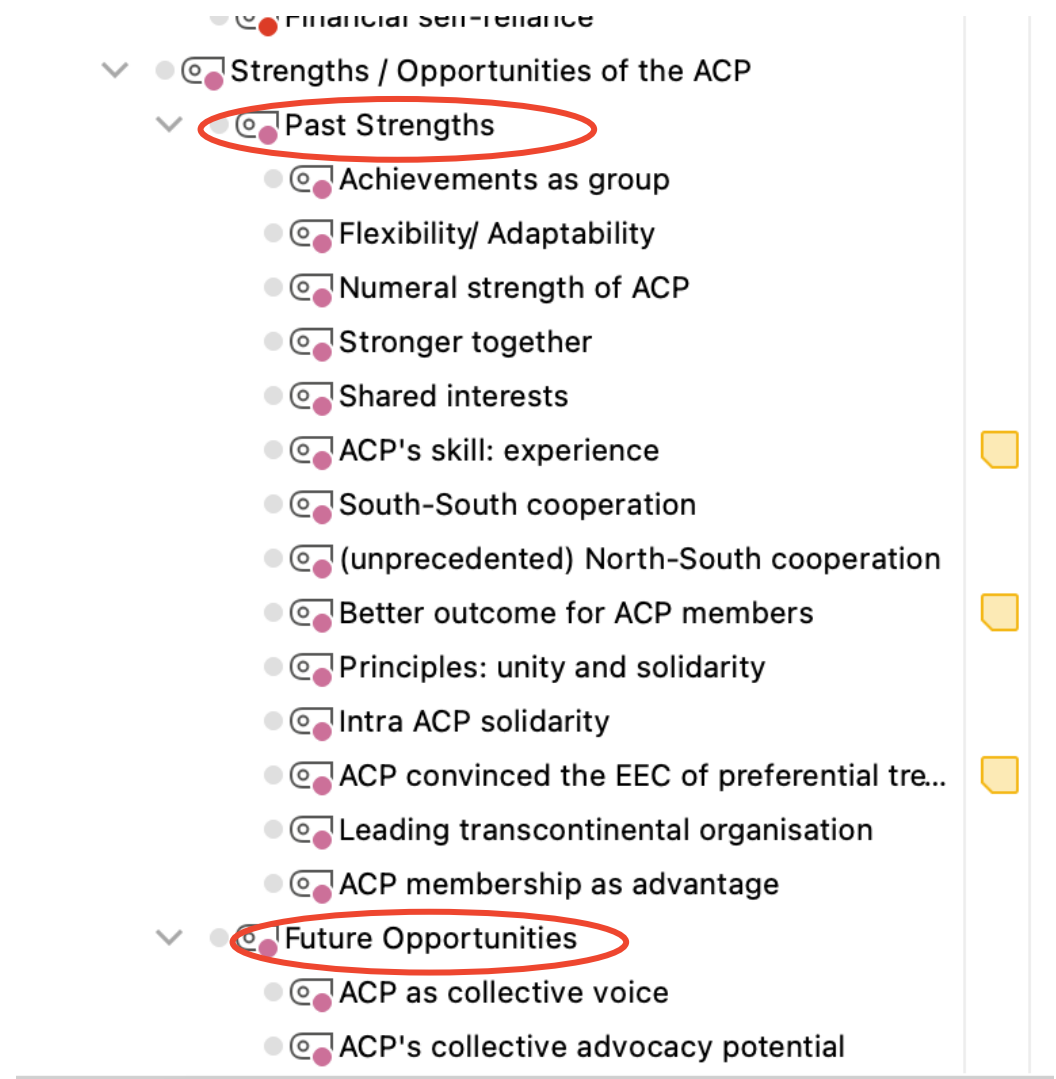
Coding with MAXQDA

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- Aggregating problem statements across the material



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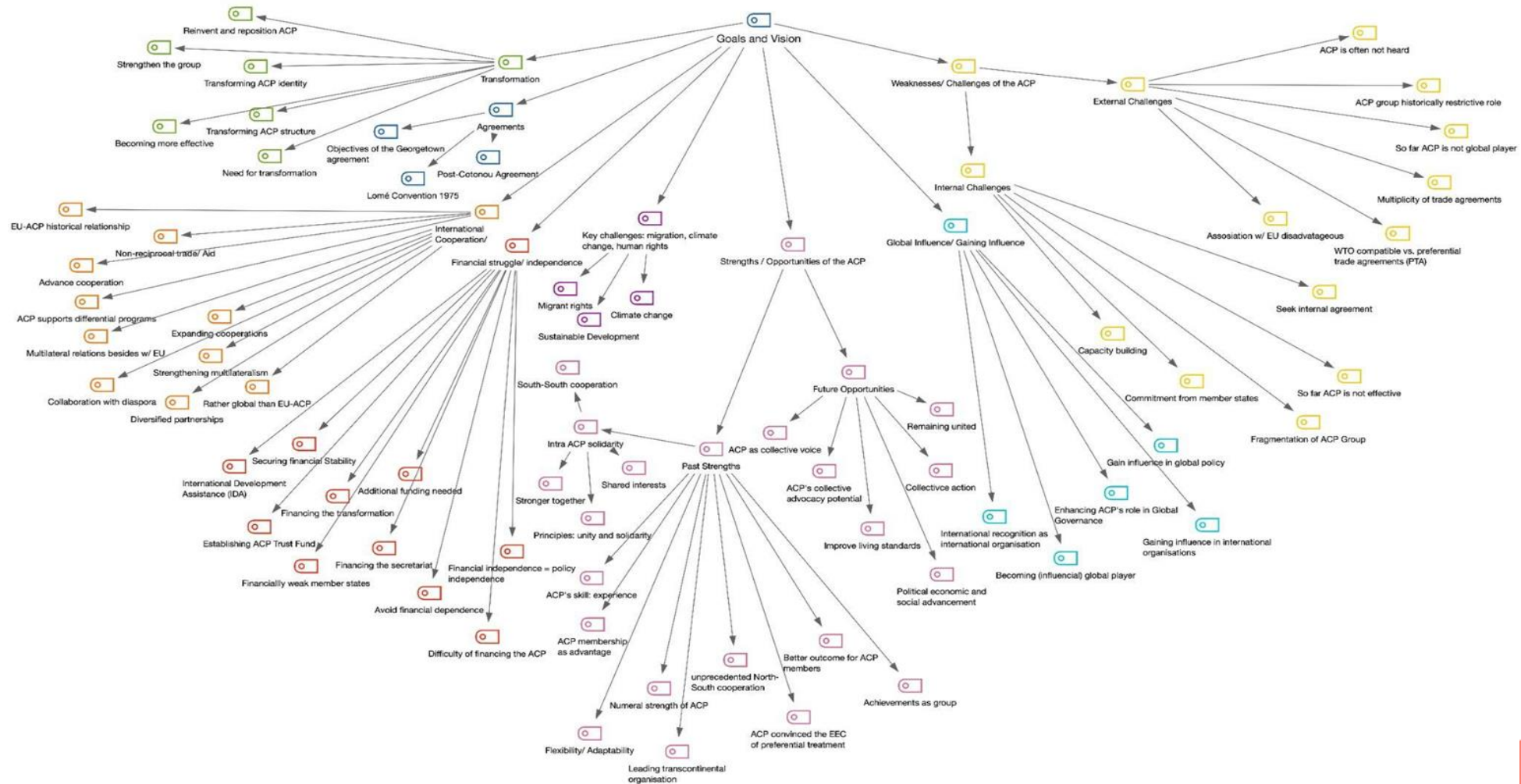
Analysing with MAXQDA

- Grounded open coding
- Aggregating problem statements across the material
- Visualising problem statements through Single-Case-Models (Code Hierarchies)



Analysing with MAXQDA

ACP Goals and Visions - Single-Case-Model (Code-Hierarchy)



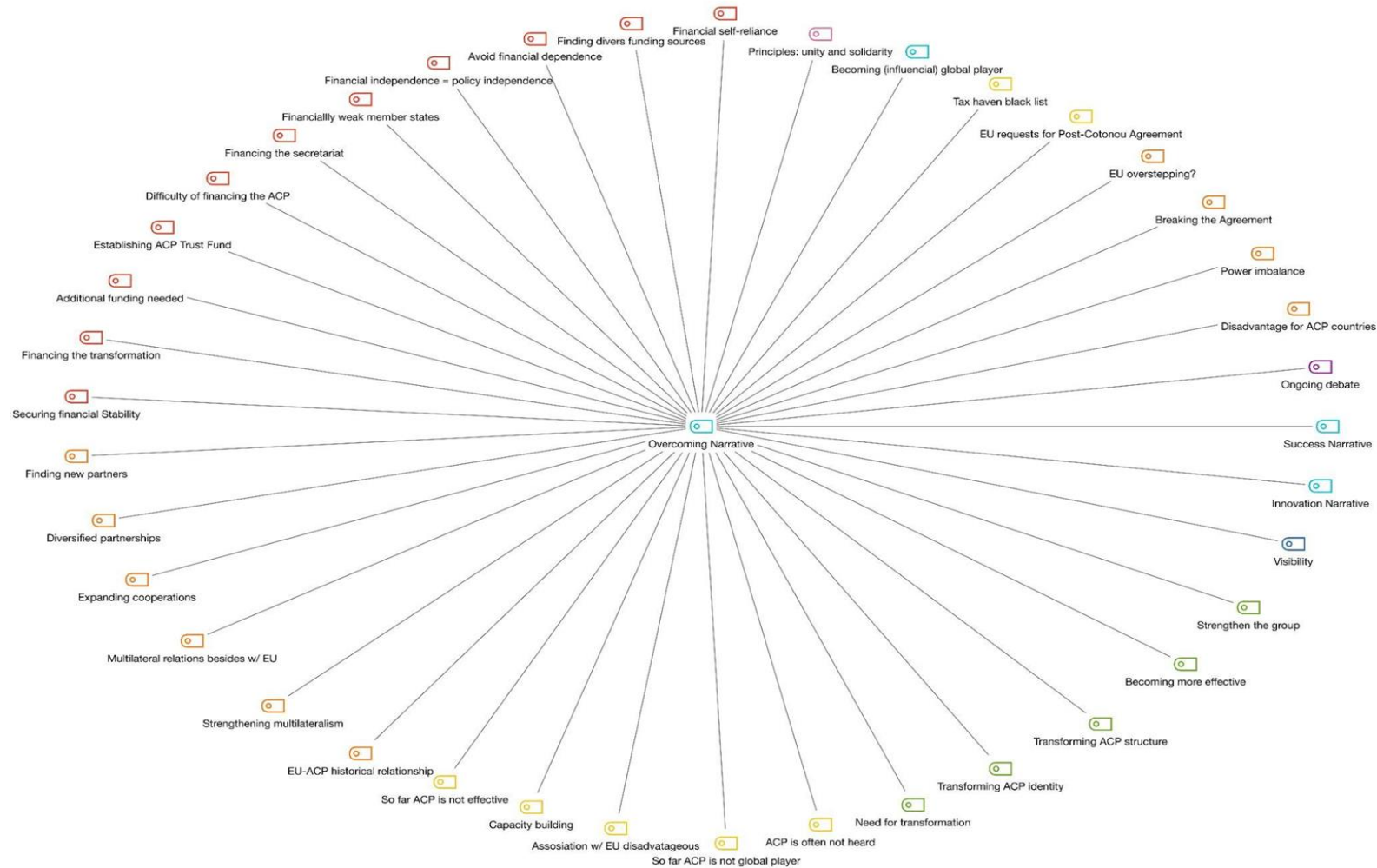
Analysing with MAXQDA

- Grounded open coding
- Aggregating problem statements across the material
- Visualising problem statements through Single-Case-Models (Code Hierarchies)
- Clustering narrative themes through Code-Relations-Browsers (Overlapping Codes)



Analysing with MAXQDA

Overcoming Narrative - Code Relations Browser (Overlapping Codes)



Reading Policy Narratives from the Field

- Different from many Grounded Theory approaches, narrative scholars seek to work with intact narratives rather than theorising components
- Three main narratives have emerged:

1 The Narrative of Innovation

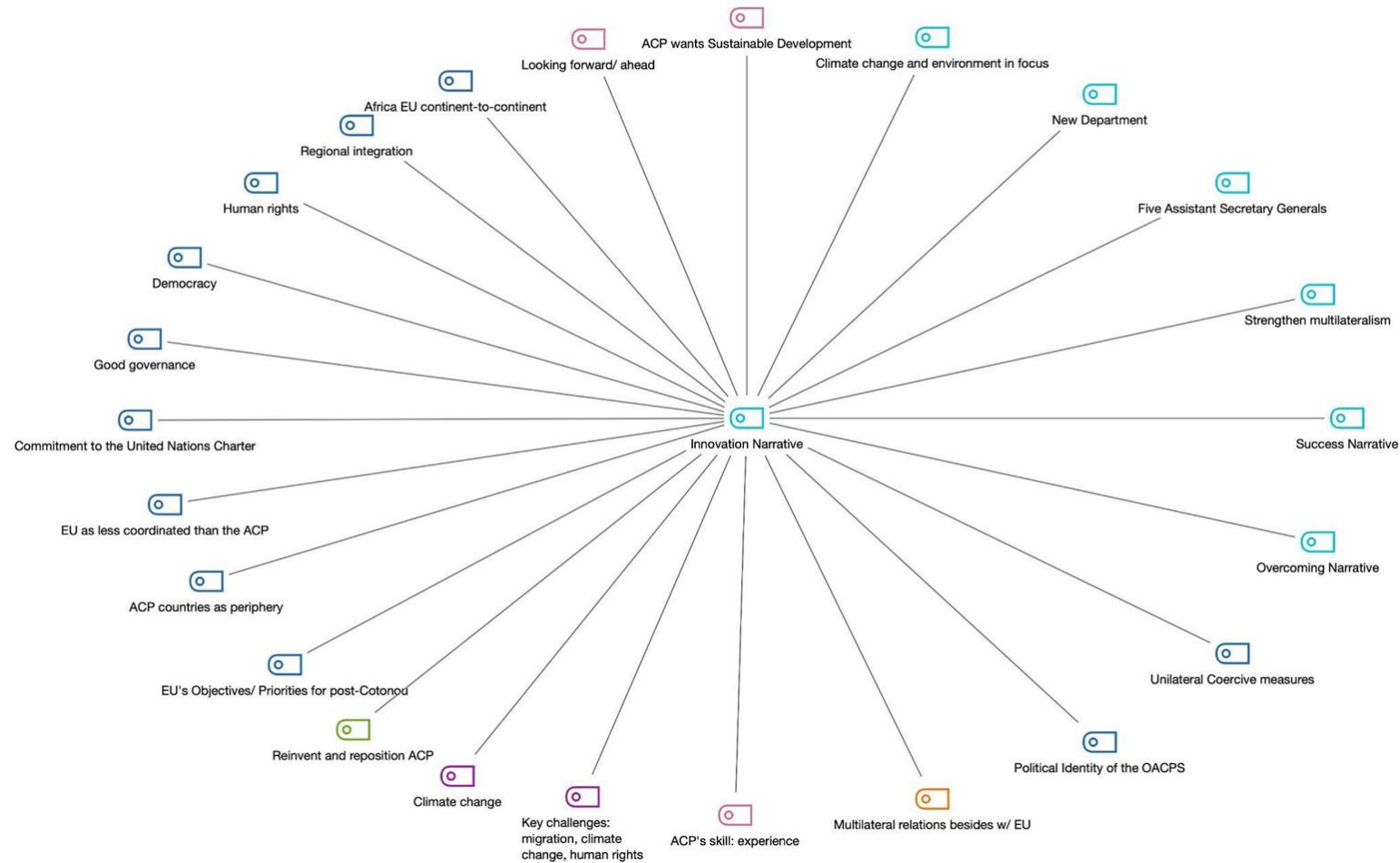
2 The Narrative of Overcoming

3 The Narrative of Success



The Narrative of Innovation

Innovation Narrative - Code Relations Browser (Overlapping Codes)



The Narrative of Innovation

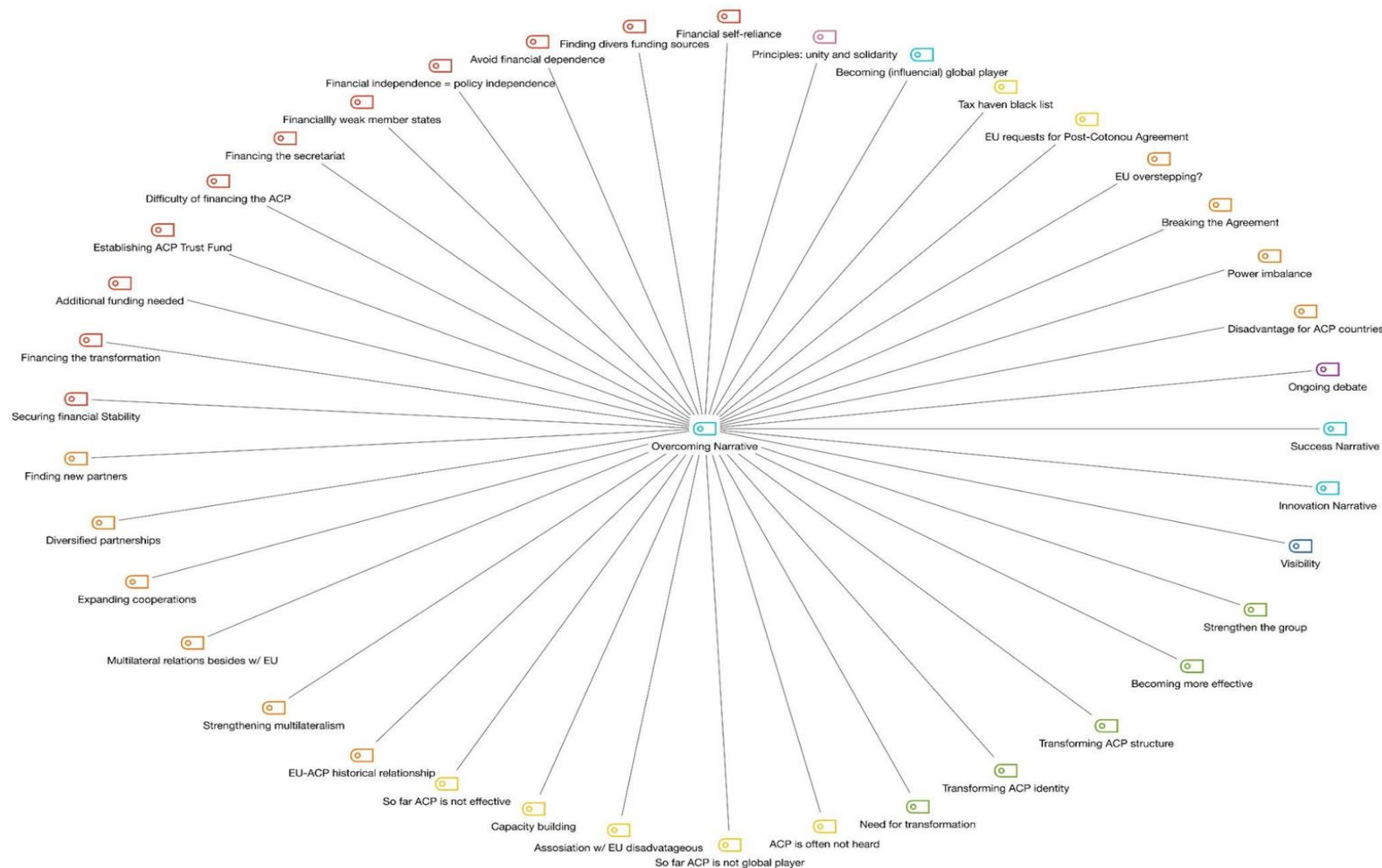
In this narrative the past and present that are constructed consist of a world facing different crises, with a leadership that has not been able to eliminate the threats, and an ACP Group that has collected experiences and built an awareness at the margins. In both of the emphasised problem areas — climate change and multilateralism —, the shortcomings of the past are located in the EU's sphere of responsibility. The creation of the Organisation of ACP States is then narrated as a moment of innovation, of taking initiative and of a transformation in global governance, with the OACPS taking on a global responsibility.

- Understanding the two areas of conflict that this narrative has highlighted as key markers of morality has revealed their capacity to function as benchmarks in a moral hierarchy.
- The concept of moral hierarchy itself has in turn been retraced as an intrinsic element of a Eurocentric modernity, positioning Europe as the measurement of morality and correspondingly as the primary embodiment of the modern.
- The calling into question of the moral pioneering position of Europe that has been established with the transition to OACPS within this narrative can thus be understood as challenging the Eurocentric trajectory of modernity, while even proposing a strategic alternative of indigenous knowledges.



The Narrative of Overcoming

Overcoming Narrative - Code Relations Browser (Overlapping Codes)



The Narrative of Overcoming

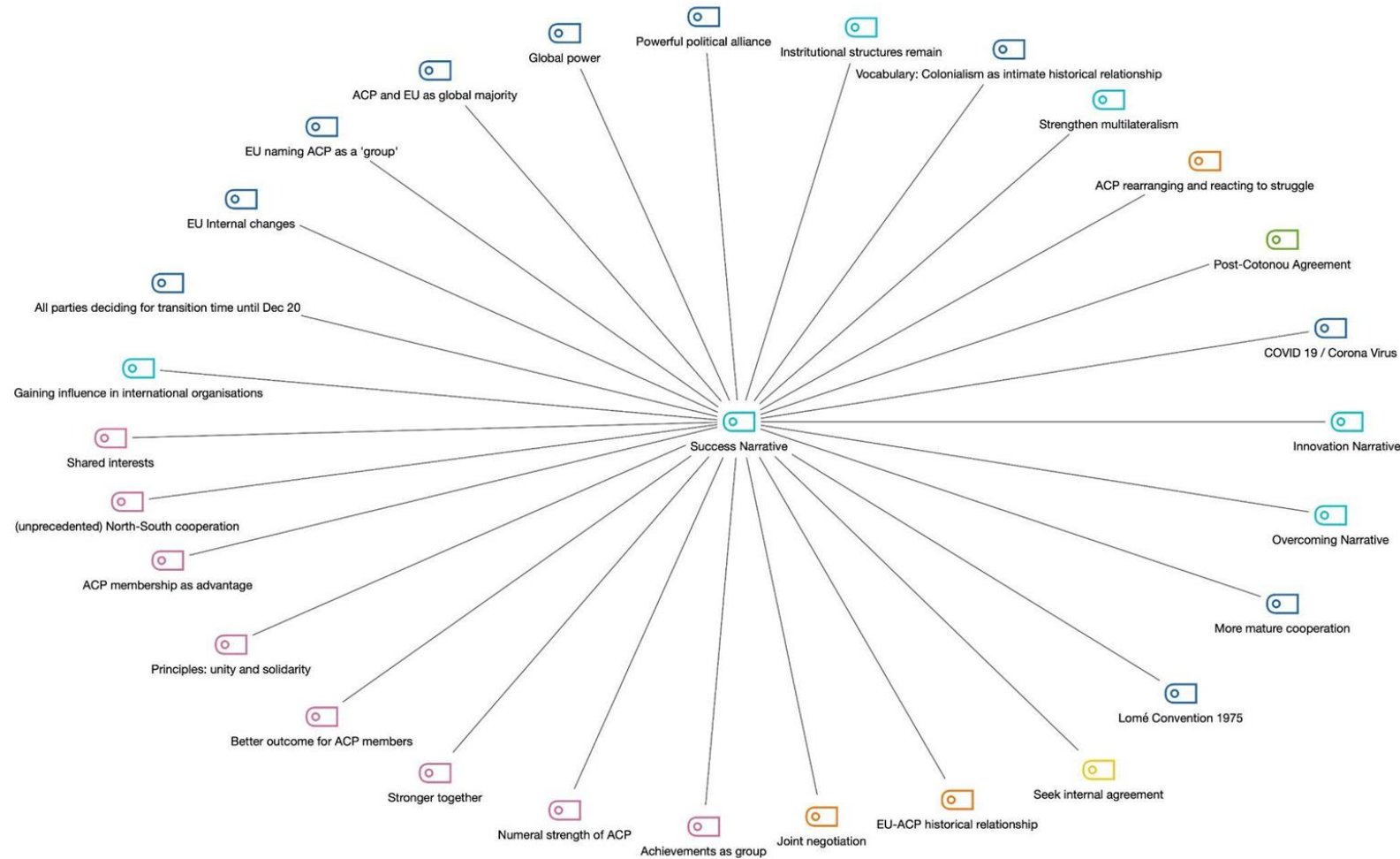
The two main areas of conflict identified in this narrative are the economic dependency and the political lack of influence and hence politically ineffective position. These will be transformed through the transition to an international organisation, because it entails the establishment of independent funding and the diversification of relations, thus resulting in the OACPS becoming a self-sustained player and gaining influence in the international arena. The transformation is therefore declared as a means of overcoming the disadvantageous position, with the OACPS emerging as economically and thus politically independent.

- The central theme within this narrative, overcoming a disadvantageous position in a political and economic world order, has thus surfaced first, in the aim of proving agency and becoming a visible global player, and secondly, in the strife to overcome financial dependency and economic insecurity.
- This consolidates the argument that the narrative of overcoming suggests the transition to OACPS as a decolonial initiative, showing evident parallels to the decolonial positions popularised during the decolonial era and echoing its rationalities.



The Narrative of Success

Success Narrative - Code Relations Browser (Overlapping Codes)



The Narrative of Success

This narrative emerges as a story of success. The historical — and historic — relationship to the EU, as well as the achievements for and with the ACP member states are positioned as justification for the cooperation's conservative proliferation. Nonetheless, it is not constructed as cautious or noncommittally, that the transition to an international organisation would entail a preservation of existing structures and values, but as necessary, offering the chance to manifest this form through a process of maturing.

- The ACP's narration of a successful, even glorious past, as well as the emphasis on unity and solidarity can be evaluated as strategies to establish legitimacy
- Besides an internal legitimacy this narrative also enables a legitimacy in the international fora, which is crucial for the claim of an eye-level position with the EU
- Comparable to the EU's publicly advocated perspective on ACP-EU relations, this narrative highlights past successes, future potential of the cooperation, as well as the value of solidarity, in form of regional integration



Bibliography included in this presentation

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