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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Framing gender-based violence in multi-level contexts: a networked approach to studying adoption of the Istanbul Convention

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International institutions are an essential driving force of contemporary policies to combat gender-based violence but remain toothless if political actors do not implement them in domestic policies. How can scholars conceptualise the transposition of international gender-based violence norms into domestic policies? I argue that discourse network analysis provides a powerful conceptual and methodological extension of critical frame analysis to understand how frames shape the meaning of gender-based violence norms in multi-level institutional contexts. Frames' normative and cognitive network structure invites combining discourse network and frame analysis techniques that locate frames' power in their ability to connect different institutional spheres temporally and spatially. I outline a multi-level research agenda that traces the framing processes of international norms and their domestic implementation through gender-based violence policies in the Council of Europe's Istanbul Convention. This agenda includes avenues to study how complex transnational policy frameworks like the Istanbul Convention play out in domestic policy implementation.

Key words framing • translation • implementation • critical frame analysis • networks • Istanbul Convention

Key messages

- The article situates gender policy implementation in a multi-level institutional context.
- The article understands frames as normative and cognitive networks of discourse actors.
- The article suggests combining discourse network analysis with critical frame analysis.
- The Istanbul Convention is a rich and crucial case to study framing and implementation in multi-level contexts.

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Introduction

Gender-based violence is a global problem. Although men accounted for more than 80 per cent of all types of intentional homicide in recent years, women accounted for about 64 per cent of all people killed by their intimate partner or family members (UNODC, 2019: 24). Despite variation in the scale of gender-based male violence against women across regions and countries, no society is free from such violence and trends remain appallingly stable (UNODC, 2019: 25–82). Women worldwide continue to suffer a diverse spectrum of gender-based harm that is not unique to certain regions or political regimes (True, 2012; EU, 2014; Dobash and Dobash, 2015; OSCE, 2019).

International political attention has increasingly addressed this global problem over recent decades. International law and conventions like the United Nations' (UN's) Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Council of Europe's Istanbul Convention[1] are crucial hallmarks in changing international discourses and national policies (Krizsán et al, 2018; Krizsán and Roggeband, 2021). Existing research on gender-based violence policies highlights that such international instruments influence domestic implementation (Htun and Weldon, 2012; Forest and Lombardo, 2012). International and domestic levels are not separate, but intergovernmental agreements and other types of policies require actors to translate ideas into domestic solutions (Merry, 2006).

In addition, the existing literature identifies cognitive frames as central elements that shape policy ideas on the international level (Choudhry, 2016). They are crucial for facilitating translations between actors and institutions at different levels (Bacchi, 1999; Ciccia and Lombardo, 2019). However, methodological applications for this type of research remain scarce in the literature on the implementation of gender policies (see Engeli and Mazur, 2018; Ciccia and Lombardo, 2019). Thus, this article aims to sketch a conceptual and methodological framework to study the translation and implementation of the international framing process in domestic discourses. What are useful concepts and methods to explore how framings of international gender-based violence norms translate into domestic discourses during their implementation?

I argue in this article that the network structure of cognitive frames yields a powerful institutional dynamic to study the implementation of international gender policies in local contexts. Cognitive frames are schemata of interpretations that identify social problems with institutional solutions based on collectively shared background knowledge (see Snow and Benford, 1988; Rein and Schön, 1993). They emerge in discursive networks that enable political actors to legitimise normative ideas and meaning across different institutional spheres temporally and spatially. Exploring the networked nature of these framing processes is central to understanding how international discourses and policies shape local laws and programmes.

I propose a combination of a critical frame analysis (CFA) framework (Verloo, 2007; Lombardo et al, 2009b) and a discourse network analysis (DNA) methodology (Leifeld, 2016; 2020). Combining both analytical frameworks generates a powerful toolbox for exploring networked framing processes between international discourses and local implementation. Using CFA and DNA in tandem yields at least two insightful extensions. First, the network quality of frames extends the CFA-based argument that different actors can be expected to hold multiple meanings of the same social reality. Different clusters of densely connected frames provide a framework to explore this proposition empirically. Second, combing CFA and DNA provides a

methodological approach to exploring actor–structure interactions. Political actors emerge as agents through their political use of certain normative meanings expressed in framing processes. At the same time, the meaning of these frames becomes reified through the discourse of actors at different political levels.

Thus, this research note aims to sketch a conceptual and methodological framework to explore the framing process from frame formation, over adoption, to implementation (Krook and True, 2012). To illustrate, I provide some examples and a schematic overview based on recent policies to fight gender-based violence in the context of the Istanbul Convention. This method is suitable for at least two strands of empirical application in future research: first, it enables exploring how different framing elements connect with each other to form clusters that emerge as larger frames (Winston, 2018); and, second, it helps to examine how various actors at different levels relate to these framing elements and potentially modify their content and meaning (Zimmermann, 2017).

The first section outlines my understanding of cognitive frames, translation processes and implementation as the three basic theoretical concepts of the framework. It argues that the political power of frames rests in their network abilities to connect political knowledge with societal problems, institutional solutions and different political actors. The second section builds on these networked notions of frames and outlines how researchers can connect CFA and DNA approaches. This section details a coding tree for different types of framing elements and highlights opportunities for analysing coded frames. The third section provides some illustrative examples for applying the framework using statements shaping the development of the Istanbul Convention. The convention is arguably one of the most progressive international instruments that combine a gender-equality perspective with a robust mandate for national policy implementation. The section outlines potential avenues to study how actors use frames in policy implementation processes at different institutional levels. The conclusion summarises my approach and highlights some guiding questions for future applications of the framework regarding the translation and implementation processes of gender-equality norms.

Framework: cognitive frames, translation and implementation

Gender-based violence is a global phenomenon entrenched in trans-societal patriarchal cultures and materialises in all communities and interpersonal relationships. Likewise, it can only be effectively tackled by involving national and local policies and programmes that are anchored in global discourses and transnational norms. In fact, many domestic gender-based policies emerge in interwoven processes that encompass all political and societal levels, and often emanate in, or are amplify through, international policies (Keck and Sikkink, 1998; Krook and True, 2012; Risse et al, 2013). Thus, it is crucial to explore how international policies translate and get implemented in local community settings (Zwingel, 2016; see also Zimmermann, 2017).

Cognitive frames are central to exploring this process. They are individually and collectively shared cognitive schemata of interpretations that enable political actors to identify and connect social problems with institutional solutions based on collectively shared background knowledge (see Snow and Benford, 1988; Rein and Schön, 1993). They render social phenomena as political problems in the first place and make solutions thinkable. In doing so, frames render certain empirical events meaningful

and blank out others, create shared understandings, and generate thinkable, legitimate social action. Frames' location in political background knowledge emphasises that they are not only normative beliefs of individual actors, but also collective knowledge resources and belief systems that constitute societies' shared epistemic fabric.

This characteristic makes cognitive frames prime institutional carriers of ideas in discourses and equips them with a unique ability to traverse institutional boundaries, such as organisations and administrative levels. Their political power is located not at specific levels of organisations, but within their ability to convincingly identify and connect societal problem perceptions with appropriate solutions across actors and institutional sites. In so doing, frames do not emerge as unitary discourse devices; rather, they are malleable cognitive and normative structures that shape actors' political thinking and enable agents to emerge as political actors in the first place in varying institutional sites.

I argue in this article that the frames of policies fighting gender-based violence are able to traverse institutional levels (for example, from international organisations to national parliaments and local authorities). This crucial translation ability makes frames prime institutional elements to explore how political actors adopt and evaluate the political ideas and meaning embedded in policies, and how these ideas eventually impact political communities, for example, via national legislation or local community programmes. Frames are thus uniquely suited to explore the interaction of these levels, as well as the outcomes of gender policies in practice, not only at local levels, but also along the way in international and national settings.

Frames' ability to traverse institutional boundaries, to change and to affect local communities rests in the concept of translation (Czarniawska and Sevón, 1996; Merry, 2006). A translation perspective posits that ideas and meaning do not spread without context; rather, political actors actively translate these ideas in settings with already predefined ideas, meanings, traditions and so on (Sahlin and Wedlin, 2008). Thus, we should expect that ideas and frames carrying the meanings of policies do not remain unchanged when actors implement them in new institutional contexts (Zwingel, 2016). Likewise, this translation is not automatic, but political and often subject to contestation about the new meaning in different settings (Wiener, 2014).

Implementation, in this sense, refers to the political processes that change and establish new laws, regulations, instruments and so on that guide the practices of actors directly mandated to address societal problems (Engeli and Mazur, 2018). In fighting gender-based violence, these actors can be administrative officials, police officers, teachers and civil society activists, to name but a few. This brief overview already highlights that the implementation of specifically framed policies is a complex process. Meanings change with different levels and actors, face political contestation, and will need to relate to predefined contexts (Verloo, 2005: 18).

In essence, cognitive frames are crucial elements for shaping policies and can travel across institutional boundaries.[2] Frames can move freely independent from carriers and are prone to change (some of) their meaning when actors translate them into different settings. This translation process can be central to local implementation processes. Actors do not blindly adopt frames from their environment, but rather enrich them with local meanings and discourses when adopting, evaluating and practising them in their specific political and social contexts. Systematically identifying the network of frames and the actors that use them provides a fruitful approach to studying the implementation process of gender-equality policies.

The power of cognitive networks: combining critical frame and discourse analysis

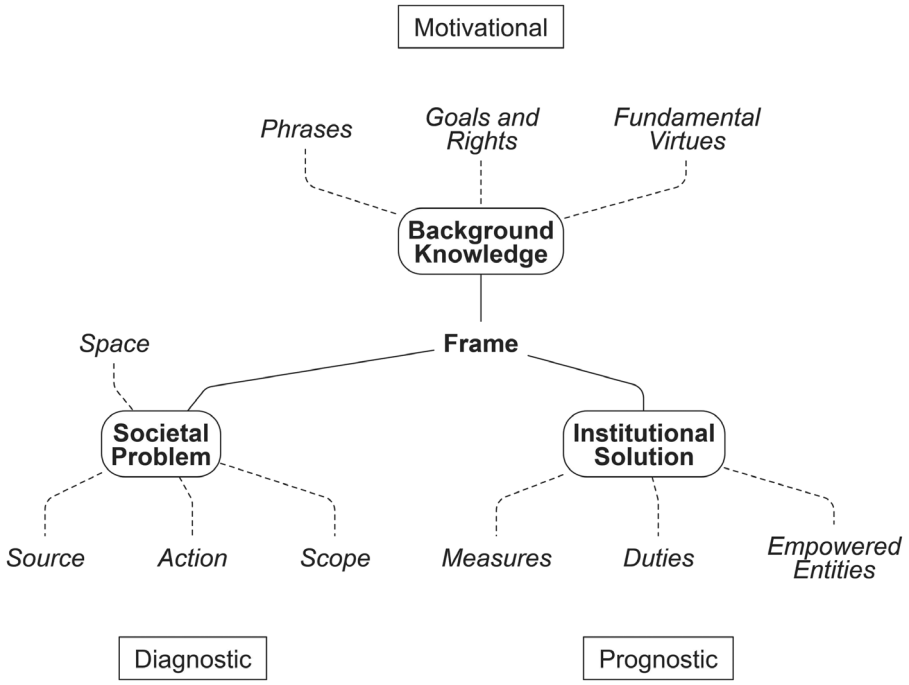
The political power of cognitive frames' networked structures rests in their ability to connect different reservoirs of meaning with different institutional spheres temporally and spatially (Verloo, 2005). This notion supports an understanding of frames' power as productive power: frames generate discourses, practices, conditions and webs of meaning that shape social realities (Barnett and Duvall, 2005: 55–7; Shepherd, 2008: 22–3). On the one hand, frames' networked nature connects political knowledge with identified societal problems and possible solutions. This enables actors to interpret and construct political meaning (see Goffman, 1974). It is a political power to value one interpretation over others and emphasise or devalue competing meaning systems. On the other hand, frames' network abilities enable meaning to connect different institutional sites, such as between international organisations, national governments and local authorities. In this case, political power is located not at specific organisations or political authorities, but within their ability to convincingly identify and connect societal problem perceptions with appropriate solutions across actors and institutional sites (see Bacchi, 1999; 2009).

My conceptual understanding of combing CFA and DNA builds on both dimensions. It connects well with insights from CFA that various political actors on different institutional levels can always hold multiple interpretations of the social and political world (Verloo, 2005: 18; Verloo and Lombardo, 2007: 22–4; Lombardo et al, 2009a). It also builds on the network approach of DNA that connects actors with their (normative) statements to analyse the emerging networks on the level of either actors, their statements (or frames) or both (Leifeld, 2016; see also Björnehed and Erikson, 2018). In this sense, the network thinking from a DNA perspective methodologically enriches the CFA's conceptual understanding of frames. Both approaches share the networked nature of frames that can connect actors and their discourses on several institutional levels.

To operationalise frames, I follow their networked nature as problem–solution–action schemata.[3] They contain a diagnostic (problem-identifying), a prognostic (problem-solving) and a motivational (action rationale) dimension (Snow and Benford, 1988). This operationalisation follows CFA's concept of frames (Verloo, 2005; 2007; see also Lombardo et al, 2009b). Figure 1 details the three central elements to identify frames: background knowledge, societal problems and institutional solutions. This tripartite nature guides research with several empirical questions, such as: 'What do actors mention to be the problem and what do they silence?'; 'What are their (implicit) assumptions, social norms and hierarchies in this problem construction?'; and 'Which solutions do actors extract from their problem representation and with what reasoning?' (Bacchi, 1999; 2009).

First, background knowledge represents actors' societal meaning and interpretations of norms that shape their normativity and moral value system (Searle, 1995). It provides social, political and normative rationales for identifying social problems and engaging in corrective action to ameliorate these identified problems. This background knowledge hosts several framing elements that can be identified and coded. 'Fundamental virtues' express basic beliefs about how societies work and what constitutes their power relations. Examples are human rights, justice, gender equality or how gender defines positionality, relationships and status in societies. Other

Figure 1: The three analytical dimensions of frames and their framing elements AQ1



elements include specific 'goals and rights' that are often mentioned together with these fundamental virtues, such as women's rights or the right to bodily integrity. In addition, actors often use short 'phrases' or linguistic signifiers to refer to specific norm interpretations or policies that emerge as frames. These phrases are valuable in coding frames' background knowledge. The term 'violence against women' constitutes such a phrase, for example, by triggering the violence frame as about the victim, not the oppressor.

Second, a frame's societal problem dimension helps actors to identify what constitutes a normative problem in society or what 'action' should be regarded as problematic and why. This problem dimension assembles a myriad of framing elements, such as the malicious action itself (for example, rape), its 'results' (the violation of human rights and bodily integrity) and the group of people concerned the most by this action (women or sexual minorities). Moreover, in some cases, this action's 'space' (public or private spaces) is another crucial framing element. Actors can generate a seemingly coherent image of the societal problem by selecting and relating these elements. They can also emphasise different problem configurations and transform the overall framing of a norm by emphasising elements differently or substituting one element for another (for example, changing between the private and the public sphere). Coding these framing elements provides researchers with ample analytical opportunities to operationalise normative problem configurations and explore the structure and transformation of actors' framing processes.

Third, frames provide actors with potential institutional solutions to confront identified societal problems. The central analytical elements of this dimension are 'measures' that actors envision to effectively address the problem and the actors tasked with providing

or applying these means. The group of actors can be distinguished as 'duty bearers' and 'empowered entities'. Duty bearers are directly responsible for providing solutions (for example, state or public institutions). In contrast, empowered entities shall contribute to society without explicit legal mandates, but with their ability to influence societies (for example, civil society actors, non-governmental organisations and the media).[4] The toolbox for envisioned measures can span a spectrum from criminalisation efforts (for example, changes in the penal code) and legislative measures (the establishment of women shelters), to public education and awareness-raising campaigns.

The DNA approach enriches the network among framing elements with an agentic notion. It helps uncover how actors (on different institutional levels) relate to frames and construct their discursive position. It does so by relating the network of framing elements in each statement with the specific actor, its institutional level and the point in time of the statement. The resulting network transforms from a one-mode network among framing elements to a two-mode network between actors on one level and frames on the other. The analytical power rests in the interactive dynamic between both levels. This mutual dynamic is particularly important when frames traverse institutional boundaries. Different institutional spheres constrain and empower diverse political actors. These conditions can translate the initial meaning of frames at one level into slightly different, contested meanings at other levels. Coding the actor–frame networks enables researchers to systematise and explore these meaning translations and potential contestations.

Several methods can help to analyse the emerging network, depending on both the number of actors and framing elements, and the size of the overall network. Researchers can explore small networks with schematic visualisations accompanied by brief case studies of vignettes of actor statements. This approach is particularly useful for explorative studies, reports on field notes or systematising an overview for a larger discourse network. A larger network with more than a dozen framing elements and/or actors integrates more easily with network programmes like Gephi. This computer-aided network analysis helps with visualising larger networks with one or two modes, and helps to identify clusters of framing elements and actors that might not be visible at first. This approach is particularly useful for analysing large corpora of formal statements and other document sources, including interviews and official documents.

In a nutshell, combing the networked notion of frames based on a CFA approach with the agentic networks of the DNA approach can offer many new insights for studying the development and implementation of gender policies. It takes account of frames' networked nature, as well as their ability to traverse and connect multiple, often nested, institutional levels. It also provides rich opportunities to include several methodological strands of discourse analysis and visualisation methods. I illustrate the application of such an analysis with framing processes on gender-based violence policies generated by different actors around the Istanbul Convention in the next section.

Studying frames and implementation: a new methodological toolbox

How can researchers apply this conceptual framework? In this section, I use examples from the early framing process of the Istanbul Convention to illustrate how the network of framing elements can be coded and analysed following the framework

developed earlier. In addition, I also sketch further potential applications to examine the implementation process of the convention's policies on the domestic and local levels.

Uncovering networked frames in policies combating gender-based violence

The discourse within the Council of Europe to create the Istanbul Convention was shaped by the interplay between two policy-framing processes that were 'not by any means mutually exclusive; indeed, they rightly constitute key elements of each other' (Choudhry, 2016: 417). The first framing uses a criminal-law perspective. It focuses on domestic violence, which actors have been de-gendering, and understands it as the predominant form of violence against women, which follows an individualistic and interpersonal logic (Krizsán and Popa, 2014). In contrast, the second gender-equality framing supports a society-oriented interpretation that problematises interpersonal violence in private and public spheres stemming from structural patterns of gender-based inequalities of society.

The gender-equality framing gained much support early on during the two-year-long transnational campaign that preceded the formalisation of the convention. The campaign's 'Blueprint' report in June 2006 argues that '[v]iolence against women is the result of an imbalance of power between women and men, leading to serious discrimination against women, both within society and the family' (EG-TFV, 2006: I). In particular, the task force leading the campaign framed its understanding of the policy problem by highlighting 'discriminatory traditions and attitudes as well as gender stereotypes' and '[l]ow income, unemployment and poverty' as major root causes and factors contributing to violence against women, including in the family and the domestic realm (EG-TFV, 2006: 5).

These statements provide supreme insights for coding networked frames. They coin the signatory 'phrase' of the gender-equality frame ('violence against women'), underlines the 'sources' in gender power imbalances, socio-economic conditions and gender stereotypes, and sees the 'results' in discrimination against women in a broad understanding of violent spaces (public and private).

At the end of the campaign, the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly (PACE) similarly argued in favour of the gender-equality frame. Some of its statements also provide detailed codes to further examine this frame. For example, it recommends that a convention should:

> encompass the gender dimension and address the specific nature of gender-based violence; [4.2.] cover the severest and most widespread forms of violence against women, in particular domestic violence against women (partners or former partners, cohabiting or not), sexual assaults (including rape and 'marital rape') and harassment, forced marriages, so-called 'honour crimes' and female genital mutilation. (PACE, 2008: 4.1, 4.2)

In addition, the drafting committee's rapporteur, Mr José Mendes Bota, concluded in his report:

> [t]he gender dimension of the violence inflicted on women was constantly highlighted throughout this campaign, for a very great majority of the victims of violence are women, a very great majority of the perpetrators are men,

> and domestic violence against women stems from an unequal relationship between women and men in societies still permeated by patriarchal attitudes. (PACE, 2008: 18)

His reference to patriarchal attitudes ('sources') and his broad framing of the problem that affects all women irrespective of public or private context ('space') underline the powerful connections of the gender-equality framing. It develops linkages between background knowledge about structural gender violence, the broad scope of problems not limited to intimate relationships and a comprehensive list of policy solutions that are not limited to criminal-law proceedings, but rather as much implicitly emphasise prevention and the fight against patriarchal structures in European societies.

At the end of the transnational campaign, the Task Force to Combat Violence against Women, including domestic violence (EG-TFV) (2008: 5) likewise supported this framing, arguing that the convention should be based on the insight that 'gender-based violence affects women disproportionately'. Its material 'scope' should include women of all ages and not be restricted to domestic violence, 'but should cover other forms of violence against women', as well as the 'four areas of prevention, protection of victims, prosecution of the offenders and provision of services' (EG-TFV, 2008: 5).

These examples highlight the society-centred understanding of the gender-equality framing. The sources of interpersonal violence are located not only at the individual level, but also at the structural-societal level based on gender-sensitive insights on power imbalances in societies. The related policy solutions ('measures') should accordingly address these societal dimensions and should not only be limited to the prosecution of (male) offenders.

In contrast, the criminal-law framing of the same preparation for the convention was mainly supported by the European Committee on Crime Problems (CDPC). The committee discussed its study in June 2008 in light of the flourishing debate within the Council of Europe and actively engaged with the contrasting gender-equality frame. During its deliberation, the committee members noted that they 'felt that it would be unfeasible to cover all the issues identified by the Task Force in one convention; the scope would be so wide as to make such a convention unworkable' (CDPC, 2008: 8). It argued in favour of limiting the scope 'to domestic violence or violence where there is a close/intimate relationship between the victim and the perpetrator'. The European Committee on Legal Co-operation (a neighbouring committee in the Council of Europe) followed a similar line of argument: if a convention on 'domestic violence' should be prepared, 'its scope of application should include all victims of domestic violence, including women, men, children, the elderly and the handicapped' (CDCJ, 2008: 2d).

In sum, both committees employed markers of the criminal-law framing in their internal reasoning. They used the signatory 'phrase' of 'domestic violence', which enlarges the personnel 'scope' of the possible convention by relating to intimate and private settings ('space'), but excludes violence in public spaces and principally relates to all members of the household, irrespective of power imbalances. In addition, the committees framed the envisioned policy solutions ('measures') from a criminal-law perspective that focuses on apprehending perpetrators of interpersonal violence. The 'source' of violence is (implicitly) located in the private and intimate nature of interpersonal relationships, which represents the main challenge for effective solutions from a criminal-law perspective. Societal, structural power imbalances are

de-emphasised and masked in this reasoning. These statements provide a few examples of different coding elements based on my proposed framework. I summarise the result of this coding in Figure 2.

Pathways for studying the implementation of policies fighting gender-based violence

The policy development discourse within the Council of Europe highlights that different institutional actors can support different policy framings and connect a diverse array of framing elements. This setting provides many opportunities for researchers investigating policy implementation processes. Crucially, we should expect framing processes to change when other actors in different institutional settings pick them up. My proposed framework in this article can capture these translation processes. In the remainder of this section, I sketch some potential avenues that future researchers might find fruitful to explore.

At least three main channels of translation are crucial: (1) intergovernmental connections between international organisations and member-state ministries and administrations; (2) parliamentary channels between the international assemblies and national parliaments; and (3) channels via transnational civil society organisations that are active within international organisations, on the national level or within local communities (or several of these). The Council of Europe and its relations with its member states are most likely cases for these translation channels. Each level usually hosts several actors that can modify and adapt the initial policy framing. Figure 3 sketches a simplified network model illustrating how different actor levels can relate to different framing elements and translate policies.

Actor Level 1 can relate to international institutions, including intergovernmental expert committees (for example, GREVIO, the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, in the case of the Council of Europe) and international bureaucracies. Some of these actors might share similar framings of a policy with actors on other levels, while diverging on other central elements (for example, the codified rights they relate to).

In this sense, Actor Level 2 can represent national ministerial authorities or members of parliament (MPs) that engage in national law-making. Many of these actors are central in translation processes between the international and local levels. Likewise, it is reasonable to expect these actors to frame policies differently and contest certain meanings. For example, suppose that social affairs ministries are primarily charged with developing a new bill implementing the Istanbul Convention. In that case, their ministerial experts could be more receptive to the gender-equality framing of the convention and intergovernmental experts than the criminal-law framing. On the contrary, justice ministries might be more prone to the developed criminal-law framing that provides more institutional anchoring within their profession than the gender-equality framing. Thus, different actors relate differently to an individual frame or clusters of framing elements.

Similarly, MPs can influence translation processes, including by drafting implementation bills, controlling ministerial proposals and advocating for certain policy interpretations among fellow lawmakers and their constituencies. Unlike the European Parliament, many parliamentary assemblies in international organisations are composed of national MPs, and many parliaments actively sustain relations with other legislatures (Giesen and Malang, 2022). MPs with these dual roles are prime legislative carriers of policy frames between the international and domestic levels.

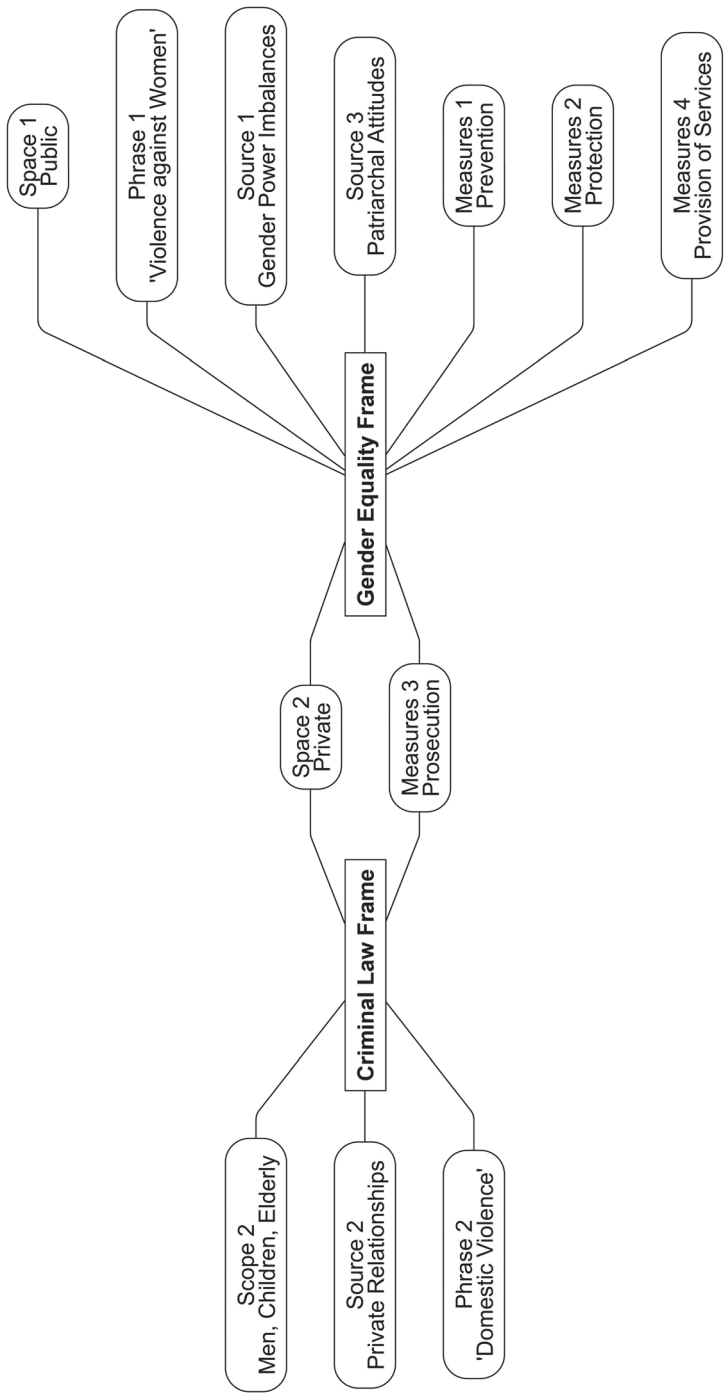
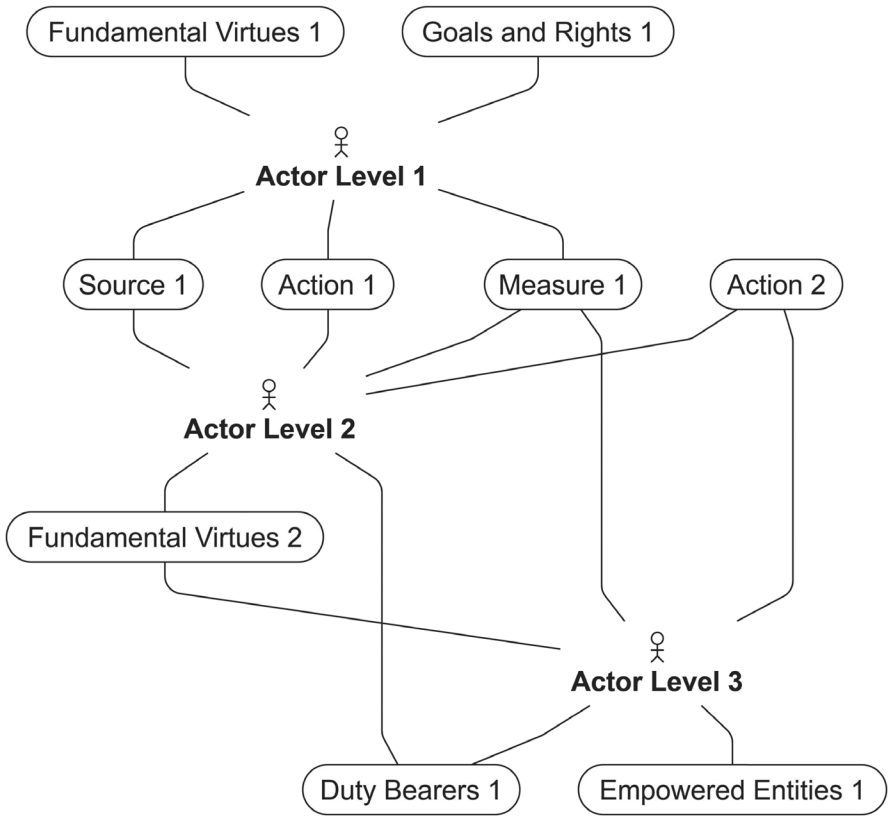


Figure 2: Illustrative network scheme of some coded framing elements

Figure 3: Illustrative schema of networked framing elements across three actor levels



The third channel encompasses transnationally active civil society organisations working on the international level but predominantly in their local communities. In a stylised sense, these can often be found at Actor Level 3 but can also be active at other levels. Regarding implementation processes, Article 9 of the Istanbul Convention, for example, explicitly supports and endorses the work of these non-governmental actors in the implementation of its policies. The diverse spectrum of activists and experts in civil society organisations provides many opportunities to observe modifications in framing processes. Different types of organisations working in different fields, such as women's rights, child rights or legal protection and support, can favour different framing elements. Moreover, large organisations with extensive previous policy knowledge might respond differently to specific policy frames enshrined in international and domestic documents than might small organisations 'on the ground' that find themselves in new norms and policy discourse with local clients and beneficiaries.

In sum, the diverse spectrum of actors involved in policy implementation processes and their work at different levels provide myriad pathways for frames to travel and change their meaning. Institutional actors can either be active on one or many levels, and are probably influenced by existing frames. Their influence can vary from ministerial and bureaucratic politics, to legislative work and supporting and protective activities with individual beneficiaries. Scholars can combine a CFA and a

DNA approach to examine the network between framing elements, identify clusters representing larger frames and follow networks between framing elements and actors to make sense of implementation processes.

Conclusion

Political actors must translate international conventions into domestic policies to make them effective for citizens. Frames are central cognitive and political devices shaping international policies and facilitating their domestic implementation. What are useful concepts and methods to explore how framings of international gender-based violence norms translate into local levels? I proposed to combine CFA with network thinking as conceptualised in DNA. These tools allow for tracing the framing processes of international policies and their implementation. Consequently, I suggested understanding frames as networked cognitive institutions that connect problem sets with policy solutions and political background knowledge. Institutional actors carry and disseminate these frames across institutional levels when developing and implementing new policies.

I use some examples from framing processes that led to the Istanbul Convention to illustrate the application of my proposed framework. This method suits exploring both how different framing elements connect to form a cluster that emerges as a larger frame and how various actors at different levels relate to these framing elements. Yet, potential cases, especially in research on gender-based violence policies, are not limited to the Council of Europe and its convention. Specifically, regarding policy practice and empowerment (Engeli and Mazur, 2018), scholars can explore differences in state-level policy preferences and interactions with existing local frames in implementation processes. How have parliamentarians and civil society representatives translated a specific framing into their national and local communities? Did they evoke different frames depending on institutional context, or did they reference and legitimate the existing international norm interpretation?

Finally, regarding gender transformation, future research can investigate how and to what extent international framing elements reach local, potentially peripheral, communities. Which actors or channels facilitate this connection? How do international gender-equality framings intersect with local meanings of gender? And under what conditions does this framing transform traditional gender roles?

Notes

[1] The Council of Europe's Istanbul Convention is formally called the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence.

[2] However, it should be noted that this does not exclude the possibility that some actors can be active on several institutional levels (such as international organisations and national political systems). These cases can provide additional analytical value for research applying a multi-level research agenda.

[3] The literature on social cognition commonly understands a schema as 'a cognitive structure that represents knowledge about a concept or type of stimulus, including its attributes and the relations among those attributes' (Fiske and Taylor, 1991: 98).

[4] Elliott (2011) also uses this distinction for coding the contents of international human rights regimes.

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Conflict of interest
The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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Michael Giesen is a post-doctoral researcher at the University of Potsdam, Germany. His research focuses on the designs of, and knowledge-production processes in, formal and informal international organisations. He mainly focuses on international human rights, gender-equality norms and environmental politics.

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