

# The Diffusion of Regionalism, Regional Institutions, Regional Governance

by

Thomas Risse

Freie Universität Berlin

[Thomas.risse@fu-berlin.de](mailto:Thomas.risse@fu-berlin.de)

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On May 29, 2014, in the midst of the Ukraine crisis, the presidents of Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Russia signed the agreement to build the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU).<sup>1</sup> The EEU has been showcased by Russian President Putin as an alternative to the European Union (EU; see chapter 11 Hancock/Libman). At the same time, the institutional design of the EEU with its planned common market and customs union resembles the EU to a large extent – with one exception: The EEU does not contain provisions to build supra-national institutions, it remains intergovernmental. Thus, the EEU represents a case of selective adoption of the EU model, of diffusion, but not convergence. As a result, it showcases what this chapter is about.

How can we explain the emergence of regional institutions across the globe? There are basically two stylized explanations for regional cooperation and integration: The dominant approaches to regionalism argue that regional cooperation and integration come about resulting from independent decision-making within one region or part of the world. E.g., functional theories of integration – such as neoliberal institutionalism (Keohane and Nye, 1977; Keohane, 1984; Zürn, 1992; Koremenos et al., 2001), neofunctionalism (Haas, 1958), or (liberal) intergovernmentalism (Hoffmann, 1966; Moravcsik, 1998) start from conflicts or collective action problems emanating from economic or security-related interdependencies within one region (Börzel, 2013; see chapter 4 Börzel, this volume). Regional trade or security arrangements are negotiated as solutions to these conflicts and problems. Constructivist as well as transactionalist approaches to regional integration (e.g. Deutsch et al., 1957; Adler and Barnett, 1998; Acharya, 2001; Acharya and Johnston, 2007b) focusing on communication and collective identities also concentrate on processes within one region in order to explain regionalism.

A second account emphasizes interdependencies *between* regions. Regional organizations do not exist in isolation from each other, but models of regional cooperation and integration spread across the globe (Jetschke and Lenz, 2013). The focus of this work is on the diffusion of policies and institutional models. The most far-reaching diffusion account stems from sociological institutionalism and claims that there are global scripts of what constitute legitimate institutions and that these scripts are emulated across the globe (Meyer, 1987; Powell and DiMaggio, 1991; Boli and Thomas, 1998). This chapter focuses on the diffusion of regionalism, regional organizations, and regional governance regime.

It should be stated at the outset, though, that the two accounts are not mutually exclusive. Functional explanations for regional cooperation and integration can be combined with diffu-

sion accounts with regard to institutional design. President Putin might have pushed for the establishment of the EEU to offer an alternative to the EU and EU association agreements in the Russian periphery (the functional account). The EEU's institutional design, however, selectively emulates EU institutions (the diffusion account). In the end, it is a question of emphasis and of the specific research question one wishes to answer, whether one focuses on independent or interdependent decision-making.

This chapter begins by conceptualizing diffusion in terms of initial stimuli, items of diffusion (that what is being diffused), mechanisms, and outcomes (for a similar attempt see Solingen, 2012; Klingler-Vidra and Schleifer, 2014). I distinguish between direct and indirect mechanisms of diffusion and also differentiate between adoption/convergence and adaptation/localization as diffusion outcomes. I then review the existing literature on the diffusion of regional organization (RO) focusing, first, on the diffusion of regionalism and regional orders, second, of institutional designs for regional organizations, and, third, of regional governance pertaining to specific policy areas. On the whole, the literature confirms that most ROs are created to solve regional conflicts or provide solutions for collective action problems (demand side). However, direct as well as indirect diffusion mechanisms account for the specific institutional designs of ROs and for the spread of policies among ROs (supply side). As to diffusion outcomes, different modes of adaptation and localization seem to prevail. I conclude with some remarks on avenues for future research.

### **Conceptualizing Diffusion: Stimuli, Mechanisms, and Outcomes**

Diffusion is a consequence of interdependence (Gilardi, 2013, 454; see also Jahn, 2006; Jahn, 2015; Solingen, 2012). If ROs emerge in complete isolation and independent from each other, there is no diffusion. I adopt Strang's classic definition of diffusion as "any process where prior adoption of a trait or practice in a population alters the probability of adoption for remaining nonadopters" (Strang, 1991, 325; see also Strang and Meyer, 1993; Gilardi, 2013; see Solingen, 2012; Börzel and Risse, 2012a for the following).

Several consequences follow from this conceptualization of diffusion. First, there has to be a stimulus of diffusion. As Klingler-Vidra and Schleifer point out, it makes a difference whether one envisions a single or multiple sources of diffusion processes (Klingler-Vidra and Schleifer, 2014). The EU, its institutions and policies would be a single source or stimulus, while there might be many in the case of diffusing Preferential Trade Agreements (PTAs; see chapter 16 Kim et al., this volume).

Second, we need to identify the object of diffusion processes, that what is being diffused. As Duina and Lenz argue, diffusion can occur with regard to problem definition, the framing of the problem, and the articulation of a specific solution (Duina and Lenz, 2014). In a similar vein, I distinguish between three such potential objects of diffusion pertaining to regionalism and regional organizations:

- the idea of regionalism itself, i.e. regional institutional building, regional cooperation or integration;
- institutional design features of specific – mostly formal - regional organizations (ROs);
- regional governance pertaining to specific policy areas including norms, rules, and decision-making procedures.

Third, diffusion relates to *processes*, not outcomes. For example, institutional or policy convergence is an outcome of diffusion, not the process itself. This is often overlooked in the literature using institutional convergence as an indicator of diffusion (on policy convergence see Holzinger et al., 2008). The opposite of diffusion is not the divergence of institutional models for ROs, but isolated and independent decision-making on regional cooperation and integration. Diffusion processes cannot be measured by concentrating on outcomes alone, but the connection and interaction among actors needs to be taken into account (see Jahn, 2015 for a detailed discussion).<sup>2</sup>

If diffusion of regionalism refers to processes by which region-building, regional institutional solutions, and policies are affected by prior choices and policies of other world regions, diffusion *mechanisms* assume center-stage. Building on Gilardi, 2013, Simmons et al., 2006, and Holzinger and Knill, 2008, I distinguish between two types of diffusion mechanisms and two logics of social action (see figure 1 below, following Börzel and Risse, 2012a; for similar distinctions with regard to Europeanization see Schimmelfennig, 2007): To begin with, ideas, policies, and institutions might diffuse through *direct* influence mechanisms. An agent of diffusion actively promotes certain policies or institutional models in her interactions with a receiving actor or group of actors. Moreover, diffusion also occurs through *indirect* mechanisms, whereby the action starts at the receiving end. For example, agents at a regional organization look for institutional designs in other regions to solve certain problems or to mimic the behaviour of their peers. Finally, I distinguish between the logic of consequences theorized by various rational choice models, on the one hand, and the logics of appropriateness and of communicative rationality, on the other hand, as conceptualized by sociological institutionalism and various versions of social constructivism (on this distinction see March and Olsen, 1998).

**Figure 1: Diffusion Mechanisms**

	<i>Logic of Consequences</i>	<i>Logic of Appropriateness/Arguing</i>
<i>Direct Influence</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coercion</li> <li>• Positive Incentives and Negative Sanctions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Norms Socialization and Persuasion</li> </ul>
<i>Indirect Diffusion/Emulation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Competition</li> <li>• Lesson Drawing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Normative Emulation</li> <li>• Mimicry</li> </ul>

Sources: Börzel and Risse, 2009b; Börzel and Risse, 2012a

Let me go briefly through the various mechanisms. The first mechanism is often overlooked by scholars who define diffusion as voluntary responses to external stimuli, and concerns *physical or legal coercion*. Diffusion through imposition and the use of force might be extremely rare in the case of regionalism, while the enforcement of legal standards through inter-regional cooperation might occur more often. The EU's imposition of the 1999 Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe for the Western Balkans following the wars in post-Yugoslavia is a rare example of forced regional cooperation.

A second mechanism concerns diffusion through manipulating utility calculations by providing negative and positive incentives. It differs from coercion and imposition in that the receiving actors still have a choice (even a rather remote one in some cases). The promoters of institutional models can induce other actors into adopting their ideas by trying to change their utility functions. They offer rewards, e.g. in form of financial and technical assistance, or impose costs through sanctions or empowering domestic actors who push for the adoption of the institutional solution.

A third mechanism works through the logic of appropriateness and involves socialization and persuasion. Rather than maximizing their egoistic self-interest, actors seek to meet social expectations in a given situation. Closely related to socialization, persuasion is based on communicative rationality or the logic of arguing (Risse, 2000). It refers to situations in which actors try to persuade each other about the validity claims inherent in any causal or normative statement. Mechanisms of persuasion are at work in inter-regional cooperation when ROs try to convince their counterparts of the benefits of increased regional cooperation (Hänggi et al., 2006; Baert et al., 2014).

Diffusion processes do not require active promoters of ideas or institutional solutions. I distinguish four indirect mechanisms of emulation (see figure 1 above). *Competition* involves unilateral adjustments of behaviour toward “best practices.” Actors compete with each other over meeting certain performance criteria, e.g. creating employment or fostering economic growth to which they unilaterally adjust their behaviour accordingly (Elkins et al., 2006; Vogel, 1995; Busch et al., 2005).

*Lesson-drawing* resembles competition insofar as actors look to others for policies and rules that effectively solved similar problems elsewhere and are transferable into their own context (Meyer and Rowan, 1977; Dolowitz and Marsh, 2000). Lesson-drawing usually starts with actors who are faced with a particular political or economic problem requiring institutional change to solve it. They then look around for institutional solutions which are suitable to solve their problems.

Both lesson-drawing and competition are based on instrumental rationality, since they follow a functional logic. But actors may also emulate others for normative reasons, e.g. to increase their legitimacy (Polillo and Guillén, 2005). *Normative emulation* is based on the logic of appropriateness. For example, states might want to be members of an international community “in good standing” and, thus, seek regional cooperation to fight corruption, improve their human rights standards, or institute the rule of law. As a result, they look around for institutional solutions which they then emulate.

While normative emulation still involves an active search process by an RO or other regional actor, the last mechanism, *mimicry*, entails a rather passive “downloading” of policy ideas or institutional models. ROs might imitate others because the appropriateness is taken for granted (Meyer and Rowan, 1977; Haveman, 1993). Mimicry includes habitualized practices and should, therefore, lead to convergence with regard to policies or institutional designs (Klingler-Vidra and Schleifer, 2014, 9).

With the possible exception of mimicry, none of these diffusion mechanisms assumes that the agents at the receiving end of diffusion are simply passive recipients of these processes. This is obvious with regard to indirect diffusion mechanisms, but it is also relevant for the more direct influence mechanisms. The adoption of and adaptation to norms, rules, and institutional models into regional structures involve active processes of translation, interpretation, incorporation of new norms and rules into existing institutions, and also resistance to particu-

lar rules and regulations (see also Solingen, 2012, 634). Social learning as a process of acquiring and incorporating new norms and new understandings into one's belief systems, for example, involves active engagement, not passive "downloading" of some new rules and institutional "software." Amitav Acharya calls this "localization" processes (Acharya, 2004, 2009).

If we conceive of diffusion as active agentic processes, policy or norm adoption as well as institutional convergence are the least likely outcomes of diffusion processes (see also Klingler-Vidra and Schleifer, 2014, 9; Jahn, 2015). This might be surprising for those who measure diffusion via outcomes, but it follows logically from the conceptualization of diffusion processes above. Moreover, one would assume that convergence of institutional models and policies for ROs resulting from mimicry is likely to lead to behavioural "decoupling" (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991), that is, to non-compliance with institutional rules and to practices inconsistent with these norms and procedures.

We can distinguish three different types of diffusion *outcomes* (see figure 2 below).

**Figure 2: Diffusion Outcomes**

Adoption/convergence	Convergence of institutional models and policies in regional co-operation/integration
Adaptation/transformation	Differential adoption of institutional models and policies adjusting them to particular regional contexts; "localization"; "clustered convergence" of institutional models and policies in regional co-operation/integration
Resistance	Explicit rejection of particular institutional models and policies as inadequate or illegitimate; continued divergence of institutional models and policies in regional cooperation/integration

As mentioned above, *adoption/convergence* is only one and probably the least likely diffusion outcome. The more active regional actors graft the institutional models and policies and the more they adapt them to local circumstances, the more one would expect behavioural effects of these regional organizations. Adaptation or transformation then refers to a diffusion outcome localizing a particular policy or institutional model and adjusting it to regional circumstances. Selective adoption of regional models is also included here. Adaptation and transformation are the more likely, the more we find actors operating as "brokers" or "translators" between and within different regional contexts.

Finally, it sounds odd to treat resistance as a diffusion outcome. However, the definition of diffusion as interdependent decision-making above includes the explicit refusal to adopt a particular policy or institutional solution. I concede, however, that rejection as a diffusion outcome is hard to measure within quantitative diffusion research, since the non-adoption of policies or institutional models is indistinguishable from non-diffusion. Rather, we need to look at the discursive and communicative practices of actors in order to discern whether "diffusion as rejection" actually took place. Moreover, one must include the possibility of "firewalls" preventing the diffusion of institutional models, norms, and policies (Solingen, 2012).

Before I apply this conceptual framework to the diffusion of regionalism, regional institutions, and regional policies, several methodological remarks are in order (see also chapter 3 Levi-

Faur, this volume): First, since diffusion is a process, measuring it via outcomes, as much of the literature does (see, however, Jahn, 2006; Simmons et al., 2008; overview in Gilardi, 2013), is problematic. However, it is rather difficult to find valid indicators for the diffusion mechanisms mentioned above and to differentiate between them empirically.

Second, the distinction between exogenous and endogenous (internal to a region) sources of regionalism and of regional institution-building is orthogonal to the difference between independent and interdependent decision-making (see chapter 4 Börzel, this volume). Region-building might be triggered by forces of globalization (see chapter 5 Solingen, this volume), but without any diffusion effects from either the global level or from other regions.

Third, in an age of globalization, it is rather difficult to refute the “null hypothesis” of non-diffusion or of completely independent decision-making. It is very unlikely, for example, that ROs in the 21<sup>st</sup> century choose institutional designs completely independent from each other. E.g., the initial impetus for regional institution-building might result from some functional – economic or security – problem in a particular region. Diffusion effects might then occur when actors look around for appropriate institutional solutions. In other words, explaining regional institution-building might require combining functional with diffusion accounts. Therefore, a more plausible research strategy to explain regionalism, regional institutions and policies would be to determine the relative weight of independence and interdependence in order to delineate the explanatory power of diffusion effects (see e.g. Acharya and Johnston, 2007a; see also Duina and Lenz, 2014).

As I will show in the following, comparative regionalism has a long way to go to be able to assign the relative weight of endogenous factors as compared to diffusion effects. Therefore, I will mostly report from studies which explicitly examine diffusion as a cause of regional cooperation and integration. In other words, there is an inevitable selection bias in the following review.

## **The Diffusion of Regional Cooperation and Integration**

### ***A Global Spread of Regionalism?***

After World War II, there have been several waves of regionalism. Karns and Mingst distinguish between two waves of regionalism, the first occurring between the late 1940s and the 1960s with the creation of ROs such as the Council of Europe (CoE), NATO, the European Economic Community (EEC), the OAS, ASEAN, the OAU, and the Arab League. The second wave followed in the 1980s and – especially – after the end of the Cold War in the 1990s (Mercosur, NAFTA, SADC etc.; see Karns and Mingst, 2004, ch. 5; see also chapter 2 Söderbaum, this volume, and chapter 8-14, this volume). Particularly the latter “rise of regionalism” has been largely driven by the increase in bilateral Preferential Trade Agreements (PTAs) which in turn result partially from the growing number of states in the post-Soviet space and from the break-up of the Warsaw Pact (see Mansfield and Pevehouse, 2013, 593; Börzel, 2013, 508-510; also Mansfield and Milner, 1999, 601; Mansfield and Milner, 2012). Moreover, multilateral PTAs have also taken on new members frequently, much more so than bilateral PTAs (Mansfield and Pevehouse, 2013, 593).

Two diffusion-related arguments are being made in the literature to account for the rise in ROs, one pertaining to direct influence mechanisms, the other related to indirect mechanisms.

*Direct Influence on the World of Regions: The U.S. and the EU*

The probably most important account focusing on the U.S. role in the diffusion of regionalism since World War II is Katzenstein's *World of Regions* (Katzenstein, 2005; but see also Solingen, 1998). He argues that U.S. structural power large shaped the regional orders in Asia and Europe – via Japan and Germany. Today's regions are porous and, thus, subject to external influence. However, the interaction of U.S. power with regional forces led to two distinct regional orders, ethnic market capitalism in Asia and a legal institutional order centered around the EU in Europe. Katzenstein's book is about regionalism and regional orders, not particular institutions, and it is about the *long durée*, i.e. fifty years of history after World War II. At the same time, the outcome of U.S. diffusion is adaptation and transformation, neither convergence nor rejection. Last not least, this book deals with all four diffusion mechanisms – from imposition (U.S. occupation of Japan and Germany after 1945) to incentives (e.g. U.S. Marshall plan as an incentive for European integration) to socialization (into liberal norms) and persuasion.

While Katzenstein's account can be read as a social constructivist version of hegemonic stability theory – not so much driven by U.S. material power, but by its ideational resources -, Walter Mattli's work also focuses on the supply of regionalism by (regional) hegemons, from Prussia to the U.S. and nowadays Russia (Mattli, 1999). In contrast, Mansfield and Milner interpret the rise of PTAs as at least partially caused by declining U.S. (material) hegemony (Mansfield and Milner, 2012, ch. 3).

As second explanatory account for the world of regions – regional multi-purpose organizations in this case – focuses on the EU and its explicit attempts to foster regional cooperation and integration. Hettne and Ponjaert go as far as to posit that the U.S. and the EU promote two different world orders through inter-regionalism, one based on sovereignty and unilateralism (the U.S.), the other based on multilateralism (Hettne and Ponjaert, 2014).

The EU Commission has specific programs in place to foster regionalization across the globe (Pietrangeli, 2009). There are Regional Strategy Papers and Regional Indicative Programs in place for all regions of the Global South.<sup>3</sup> The EU does not promote its own institutional model of supranational integration (but see Bicci, 2006; Hurt, 2003), it advocates regional cooperation and integration going beyond mere free trade arrangements (FTA; see e.g. Farrell, 2007; Farrell, 2009; De Lombaerde and Schulz, 2009; Haastrup, 2013; Buzdugan, 2013). It does so through its various inter-regional arrangements with other ROs (see chapter 27 Ribeiro-Hoffmann, this volume; Hänggi et al., 2006; Baert et al., 2014).

The EU employs the full spectrum of direct influence mechanisms to promote regionalism – particularly incentives, norms sozialization and persuasion through political dialogue (see Haastrup, 2013 for EU-AU relations). In exceptional cases, the EU even imposes regional cooperation, e.g. the 1999 Stability Pact for the Western Balkans. Incentives include market access to the EU through European Partnership Agreements (EPA), but also development aid, and the like. In the case of the South African Development Community (SADC) and its dependence on EU financial assistance, an EU threat to withdraw funds almost amounted to imposition from the outside (Lenz, 2012, 163-164; Buzdugan, 2013). Moreover, the European Parliament (EP) has been a quite active promoter of regional integration and of the European model, mostly by employing persuasion as the main direct influence mechanism (see below).

The diffusion outcomes are harder to assess in this case. In particular, it is impossible to discern whether the rise and expansion of ROs in the Global South would have come about in

the absence of EU efforts to promote regionalism. The EU as a prime example of peace and prosperity might have a supportive effect on endogenous attempts toward regional cooperation and integration (Haastrup, 2013 calls the EU a “mentor” with regard to Sub-Saharan Africa, see also chapter 14 Hartmann, this volume). One counter-intuitive finding stands out, however: Inter-regional cooperation with the EU tends to strengthen regional cooperation among the EU’s weaker partners, simply as a way to increase their bargaining power vis-à-vis the Europeans. Moreover, as work on ASEAN and the Asia-Europe Meeting Process (ASEM) points out, inter-regional cooperation requires that the two regions themselves develop their own regionness including a regional identity (Hettne and Söderbaum, 2000). In this sense, “ASEM does indeed create a ‘regional’ space around which the states of East Asia may coalesce in a number of spheres” (Gilson, 2005, 309; see chapter 27 Ribeiro-Hoffmann, this volume).

Unfortunately, scholarly work on the diffusion of regionalism from one part of the world to another mostly focuses on the U.S., to the EU, and – to some degree – to Russia with regard to its periphery (see chapter 11 Hancock/Libman, this volume; Libman and Vinokurov, 2012; Wirminghaus, 2012). We know rather little about the effects of inter-regionalism in the Global South itself on region-building attempts in Africa, Asia, and Latin America (but see chapter 7 Acharya, this volume). This is strange, since diffusion research shows that policies and institutions spread particularly well among contiguous regions of the world (Simmons et al., 2008) and among like-minded actors. As a result, one would expect quite a lot more South-South diffusion of regionalism than is reflected in the scholarly literature.

#### *Emulation of Regionalism: Competition and Mimicry*

As to emulation mechanisms, there is strong evidence that PTAs and FTAs are contagious and that diffusion is at work here. As Mansfield and Milner argue, “PTAs often form in response to each other at a given point in time and that the decision by a country to enter one in a given year strongly affects the probability of other countries doing likewise in the same year” (Mansfield and Milner, 2012, 91; see also Baldwin and Jaimovich, 2012; Baccini and Dür, 2011; chapter 16 Kim et al., this volume). The statistics in these cases is mostly driven by bilateral PTAs. However, Jupille et al. also demonstrate that the likelihood that a state joins a Regional Trade Agreement (RTA; defined as a PTA among three or more contiguous states) increases with the number of RTAs in the system (Jupille et al., 2013). Mansfield and Pevehouse confirm that the same argument holds for the expansion of existing (and mostly multilateral) PTAs to new members indicating that diffusion is at work here (Mansfield and Pevehouse, 2013, 598).

The main reason for these diffusion effects of bi- and multilateral PTAs is competition. The more states join PTAs, the more other states fear loss of competitiveness if they do not join, too, and thus get preferential access to markets. Baccini and Dür claim that exporters facing trade diversion because they are excluded from a PTA are likely to push their governments into signing a PTA with the country where their exports are threatened (Baccini and Dür, 2011). Baccini and Dür also find some support for normative emulation or even mimicry which they measure via spatial cultural affinity such as a common language.

We also find South-South emulation of regionalism. The South African Development Coordination Conference, SADC’s predecessor, which was founded in 1980, was not only a reaction to Apartheid South Africa, but was also inspired by Latin America’s developmental structuralism, particularly Raul Prebisch and the Economic Commission for Latin America



(CEPAL; see chapter 9 Bianculli, this volume; quotes?).<sup>4</sup> Moreover and more recently, Brazil and MERCOSUR developed a competitive counter-model to the US-led diffusion of PTAs in Latin America as a result of which we now find two different patterns of PTA designs in Latin America (Quiliconi, 2014).

Jupille et al. (2013) advance the emulation-based explanation further, namely sociological institutionalism and world polity theory as put forward by John Meyer and his colleagues (see e.g. Meyer, 1987, Meyer et al., 1997). Jupille et al. argue that “regionalism” has become part of the global script constituting modern statehood, namely that legitimate members of the international community ought to belong to some RTA. The authors claim that this script is promoted by “epistemic communities” (Haas, 1992) and use “Google NGrams” (the use of the term “regionalism” in Google books) as a proxy. Jupille et al. show that the “regionalism” script correlates with the time-lagged rise in states joining RTAs in a statistically significant way. They also demonstrate that this correlation is particularly relevant for states in the global South which are in greater need for legitimacy than states in the global North (Jupille et al., 2013). The world polity argument, of course, emphasizes mimicry leading to decoupling and rather ineffective regional organizations.

Finally, there is one more diffusion story about the spread of regionalism, again emphasizing competition. In this case, however, the issue is competition between regions themselves. E.g., NAFTA can be regarded as a direct response to the EU’s single market (Duina, 2006; see chapter 8 Duina, this volume). Moreover, post-Soviet Russia has become a major region-builder in Eurasia (Libman and Vinokurov, 2012; see chapter 11 Hancock/Libman, this volume) in direct response to and competition with the EU. This has been partly an attempt to secure a sphere of influence in Russia’s “near abroad,” but also an effort to counter the EU’s attempt at democratic region-building with regionalism among (semi-) autocratic regimes.

In sum, particularly International Political Economy (IPE) approaches to regionalism emphasize indirect diffusion mechanisms with regard to PTAs (see chapter 16 Kim et al., this volume). However, most of this work focuses on “shallow” regionalism and the analyses are driven by the rise of bilateral PTAs. While there is strong reason to believe that the findings also pertain to multilateral regional arrangements, diffusion mechanisms and effects are under-researched with regard to regionalism per se. In addition, the “world of regions” is no longer driven by the U.S. and the EU (see above), but there is competition among and between regions as the Russian (and maybe Chinese) examples demonstrate. Last not least, as mentioned above, there is little work on South-South diffusion of regionalism and even less scholarship on emulation and mimicry within particular regions. However, it is hard to imagine that the sub-Saharan “spaghetti bowl” (Baldwin, 2006) or the Latin American and Asian “alphabet soups” of ROs (Acharya, 2010) came about without any diffusion mechanism at play.

So far, I have focused on the diffusion of regionalism and region-building as such. In the next section, I deal with the diffusion of specific institutional designs for ROs.

### ***Diffusion of Regional Institutional Designs***

If we assume autonomous decision-making rather than interdependence between regions, we should expect very little similarities in the institutional designs of regional organizations (RO) – unless regions are faced with exactly the same functional as well as collective action problems. In a globalized and interdependent world, however, such independence is rather

unlikely. Indeed, we can observe striking similarities in the institutional design of ROs across the globe. They do not all look alike, but they certainly form clusters (see Baccini et al., 2014 for trade agreements, Alter, 2012, 2014 for courts, see also chapters 16 Kim et al., and 17 Alter/Hooghe, both this volume).

Moreover, if we distinguish between scope or breadth or regional cooperation and integration (referring to the number of policy issues dealt with at the regional level), on the one hand, and level of depth of integration (concerning the degree of political authority of ROs over political issues delegated to them; see Börzel, 2013, 507, on these distinctions), we can observe an increase in both dimensions of delegation over time (see Börzel, 2013, 510-512, for the following). And this trend does not only concern the EU, but also other multi-purpose ROs such as the League of Arab States, ASEAN, ECOWAS, MERCOSUR, and even NAFTA. Not only have these ROs taken on new tasks, member states have also delegated ever more political authority to these ROs. Of course, none of these ROs matches the EU in terms of policy scope and level of supranationalism. But the EU no longer stands out as an institution “*sui generis*,” if it ever has (see chapter 23 Lenz/Marks, this volume).

How can this development be explained, and what does a diffusion perspective contribute?

### *Direct Influence Mechanisms*

There have, of course, been attempts by ROs such as the EU as well as global powers such as the U.S. to promote their preferred institutional models in other parts of the world, particularly the Global South. In a stylized version, the U.S. promotes rule-based Free Trade Areas (FTAs) without strong regional organizations (such as NAFTA), while the EU pushes supranationalism (Börzel and Risse, 2009a, 22; Duina, 2006). It is certainly true (see above) that particularly the EU promotes regional cooperation and integration, commands an entire toolbox of means to do so, and uses direct influence mechanisms to further these goals. Moreover, Baccini et al. show that PTAs with members who have close relations to the U.S. tend to adopt the NAFTA model (Baccini et al., 2014) which also might be due to some direct influence mechanism (see also chapter 8 Duina, this volume).

On the whole, however, it is not obvious that particularly the EU tries to export its particular institutional model of supranational integration and the same holds true for the U.S. which is far less active in promoting regionalism going beyond FTAs (see e.g. De Lombaerde and Schulz, 2009; Baert et al., 2014 for details on the EU; on the U.S. see Beeson, 2006). As I argue below, in most cases the EU reacts – positively, of course – to emulation attempts by ROs in the Global South.

Moreover, direct diffusion attempts by the EU and the U.S. often meet with resistance in the Global South, given the history of colonialism and economic dependency. As Amitav Acharya points out, the “ASEAN way” of non-intervention in internal affairs and of informal – “soft” – institutionalism largely originated in direct opposition to EU and U.S. efforts at pushing regional integration (Acharya, 2009; see chapter 12 Jetschke/Katada, this volume). The same holds true for Sub-Saharan Africa (see the origins of SADC as an anti-South African as well as anti-Western development community based on collective identity of struggles against colonialism and apartheid) as well as the Middle East (see Fawcett and Gandois, 2010; Fawcett and Hurrell, 1995).

The indirect diffusion of institutional models and scripts has been more successful as the following discussion shows.

### *Emulation of Regional Institutional Designs*

With regard to indirect diffusion mechanisms such as competition, lesson-drawing, as well as normative emulation and mimicry, there has been more quantitative as well as qualitative work to allow for at least tentative conclusions. Overall, these studies emphasize lesson-drawing as well as normative emulation, but also mimicry. With regard to diffusion outcomes, these mechanisms result mostly in adaptation/transformation, but also wholesale adoption of institutional models in few cases.

Unfortunately, most of the available work on diffusion of institutional designs focuses on diffusion from the Global North to the Global South. Studies on horizontal diffusion among regions in the Global South are extremely rare – except for Asian ROs. Acharya argues, for example, that ASEAN largely inspired the establishment of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in 1986 (Acharya, 2009, 108-109; see also Ahmed, 2013, ch. 8). The ASEAN+3 framework has also diffused ASEAN's institutional design to Northeast Asia. Last not least, the institutional design of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) has emulated ASEAN to some degree. In this sense, ASEAN has become a model for regional cooperation, if not integration, in the Asia-Pacific region (chapter 12 Jetschke/Katada, this volume).

With regard to PTAs, Baccini et al. show the emergence of three distinct clusters of similar institutional designs (Baccini et al., 2014). One PTA cluster consists of rather narrow agreements whereby the member agree on the reduction of tariffs with regard to some goods. The second cluster contains rule-base agreements without strong regional institutions modeled after NAFTA (see also Duina, 2006; chapter 8 Duina, this volume), while the third PTA cluster emulates the EU model. Baccini et al. find that more recent PTAs mostly resemble the NAFTA model, while EU type ROs are more common among PTAs with many member states (Baccini et al., 2014). Interestingly enough, EU style agreements do not seem to depend on strong interactions between the respective PTAs and the EU itself.

Moving toward qualitative research on the diffusion of RO institutional design, ASEAN represents a fascinating example of lesson-drawing and normative emulation leading to selective adaptation and transformation of institutional designs which originated elsewhere, particularly in Europe. Conventional wisdom has it that Southeast Asia explicitly rejected the “European way” developing its own “ASEAN way” (e.g. Acharya, 2009; Katzenstein, 2005; Murray, 2010; Khong and Nesadurai, 2007). To be fair, ASEAN has not yet embraced supranational decision-making in a substantial way and, thus, remains wedded to national sovereignty. However, more recent research shows that ASEAN member states have selectively emulated institutional models from the EU – even in cases in which ASEAN members explicitly argued that this was not the case (Jetschke, 2009, Jetschke and Murray, 2012; Jetschke, 2010; see also chapter 12 Jetschke/Katada, this volume). Prominent examples include the ASEAN Committee of Permanent Representatives (modeled after the EU COREPER; Murray and Moxon-Browne, 2013) and the ASEAN Charter.

In each of these cases, the initiative to emulate emerged from some cooperation problem in Asia itself, e.g. the Asian financial crisis. However, the selective adaptation of EU institutional design features followed a normative emulation rather than a rationalist lesson-drawing path, since the EU was considered a legitimate actor among ASEAN member states. Driven by this attempt at normative emulation, ASEAN members directly linked up with counterparts in the EU who then advised them as to particular institutional design issues (Jetschke and

Murray, 2012, 177). ASEM also became part of this diffusion process (Gilson, 2005; see also Gilson, 2002). In this case then, the desire to emulate European institutions triggered more direct influence mechanisms.

Similar normative emulation mechanisms have been at play in Sub-Saharan Africa as well as Latin America. As in the ASEAN story, the diffusion of EU institutional design models to the Global South started with cooperation problems in the regions themselves. In Sub-Sahara Africa, it was not so much collective action issues emanating from economic interdependence (there is very little, see chapter 14 Hartmann, this volume), but mostly security issues or – in the case of SADC - the necessity to cooperate among the front states facing apartheid South Africa. In contrast, region-building processes in Latin America were primarily driven by liberal market-oriented governments in Argentina and Brazil coming into power in the late 1980s.

As Lenz argues, both South African and South American governments faced two choices regarding institutional design, the NAFTA model supported by the U.S. and the EU model (Lenz, 2012). Both SADC and Mercosur emulated the EU common market design, not because of a lengthy rational learning process, but for reasons of legitimacy (and against U.S. pressure in the South American case; on Mercosur see also Duina, 2006; on SADC see Weiland, 2006). Similar emulation processes can be observed with regard to the East African Community (EAC), the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), and the Andean Community (CAN; on the EAC see Van Hoestenbergh et al., 2009, chapter 14 Hartmann, this volume; on WAEMU see Claeys and Sindzingre, 2003; on CAN see Bustamante and Giacalone, 2009; chapter 9 Bianculli, this volume). With regard to the latter, almost wholesale mimicry took place and CAN member states “downloaded” the EU’s design with regard to several institutions, particularly the Andean Court of Justice (see below).

As in the case of ASEAN, normative emulation was facilitated greatly by various European-Latin American as well as European-African epistemic communities of experts in regional integration, lawyers, and parliamentarians (Botto, 2009; Lenz, 2012, 164; Costa and Dri, 2014; Smis and Kingah, 2014; on epistemic communities in general see Haas, 1992). These transnational groupings served as agents of diffusion counseling ROs in the Global South and their member states.

Regional courts and dispute settlement systems are a particularly interesting example for the diffusion of institutional designs (see chapter 24 Alter/Hooghe, this volume). Alter has identified altogether 24 international (incl. regional) courts out of which 22 are “new style” courts with compulsory jurisdiction and/or access for supranational or private actors (Alter, 2014, ch. 3). Half of those “new style” courts represent institutional copies of the European Court of Justice (ECJ), eleven altogether (Alter, 2012). And the ECJ itself constitutes a partial diffusion from another and prior European court, the Court of Justice of the European Coal and Steel Community, as Duina and Lenz point out (Duina and Lenz, 2014). Prominent examples of ECJ diffusion include the Andean Tribunal of Justice and various African courts (see Lenz, 2012; Alter and Helfer, 2010; Saldias, 2010). While wholesale adoption of the ECJ has been rare (e.g. the Andean court), many ROs emulated its central features. In most cases, the initial impulse to establish ECJ style supranational courts resulted from some functional problems, e.g. the attempt to signal a commitment to market integration (Alter, 2012, 145). However, as in most other cases of diffusion of regional institutional design, transnational networks of judges, lawyers, and other epistemic communities stepped in counseling the RO on the design of the respective courts. In a few cases, the EU and the ECJ themselves advised the designer of the regional courts (e.g. Saldias, 2010).

Thus, we observe the gradual diffusion of courts and dispute settlement mechanisms attached to ROs around the globe. While regional economic cooperation and integration creates a functional demand for at least dispute settlement mechanisms, the institutional design of such arbitration as well as judicial institutions to third bodies is mostly due to emulation, both lesson-drawing and normative emulation. Finally, we also see the increasing diffusion of parliamentary bodies related to ROs, even in authoritarian contexts. As Lenz points out, this development is hard to explain by any functional account, but appears to represent normative emulation “all the way down” (Lenz, 2013; see also Rüländ and Bechle, 2014; for a different account see Dri, 2010). As is to be expected, wholesale adoption of institutional models, however, mostly leads to largely symbolic parliamentary bodies without any serious role in decision-making. In other words, “parliamentarization” reinforces intergovernmentalism in the end, as Rüländ and Bechle argue (Rüländ and Bechle, 2014).

In sum, emulation appears to be the primary mechanism in the diffusion of institutional designs of ROs that then triggers direct influence through persuasion and norms socialization via epistemic communities and other agents. Moreover, diffusion outcomes are mostly selective adaptation and transformation of institutional models, less so wholesale adoption (as with regional parliamentary bodies). The ASEAN CPR’s institutional design resembles, but is not identical to the EU’s COREPER (Murray and Moxon-Browne, 2013). Thus, localization matters hugely (Rüländ, 2014; on the concept see Acharya, 2004) – so does domestic politics. The latter is largely under-theorized in the literature on diffusion of regional institutions (but see Solingen, 1998; chapter 5 Solingen/Malnight, this volume).

Similar dynamics can be observed with regard to the diffusion of regional governance in particular issue areas.

### ***Diffusion of Regional Governance***

So far and with the exception of regional trade arrangements (see above), this chapter has concentrated on the diffusion of design features of formal regional institutions. I will now turn to the diffusion of regional regimes governing specific policy areas (see also chapters 15-22, this volume).

#### ***Direct Influence Mechanisms***

Once again, the EU seems to be the only regional organization which tries to diffuse particular governance regimes directly in its dealings with other ROs, mainly through the mechanisms of inter-regional cooperation (overviews in De Lombaerde and Schulz, 2009; Baert et al., 2014; Rigner and Söderbaum, 2010; Börzel and Risse, 2009a; see also chapter 27 Ribeiro-Hoffmann, this volume). E.g., the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA) of the EU with the various African, Caribbean, and Pacific (ACP) regional organizations in the framework of the Cotonou Agreement which have been concluded or are still being negotiated,<sup>5</sup> include provisions for human rights promotion and sustainable development. In addition, the EU seeks to promote good governance and regional security and stability in its dealings with other ROs (Börzel and van Hüllen, 2011; Börzel and Van Hüllen, 2015). And it has instituted migration clauses in its trade agreements with regional partners (Jurje and Lavenex, 2014; see also chapter 21 Givens, this volume). The diffusion mechanisms used in this context concern both positive incentives (i.e., foreign aid conditionality) and socialization as well as persuasion through political dialogue (see figure 1 above).

### *Emulation*

I have already dealt with the diffusion of institutional designs for PTAs where two global scripts emanating from the Global North compete, namely the NAFTA and the EU designs. In addition, the promotion of democracy, human rights, and good governance has become a global script which ROs increasingly try to foster with regard to their member states and in their external relations (see Börzel and Van Hüllen, 2015; Pevehouse, 2005; McMahon and Baker, 2006; Van der Vleuten and Ribeiro Hoffmann, 2010; see chapter 22 Pevehouse, this volume). The same holds true for gender rights (chapter 19 Van der Vleuten, this volume). While some of these provisions have been promoted by the EU, emulation is the main mechanism by which these governance regimes diffuse. While the script originated in the West, it has become global now as a result of which even ROs of authoritarian states such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization now adopt their own election monitoring.

Emulation mechanisms include competition (democracy, human rights, and good governance clauses as means to invite trade and foreign direct investment), lesson drawing (to lock in democratic governance among RO member states, see Moravcsik, 2000; Pevehouse, 2005), and normative emulation (as a quest to gain global legitimacy as members of the international community “in good standing”; see McMahon and Baker, 2006). Stapel has shown through a quantitative study that there is not only isomorphism on a global level (mimicry, see DiMaggio and Powell, 1991), but that geographic contiguity of ROs matters, too (Stapel, 2014). He also demonstrates that functional needs (learning) explain the diffusion of democracy and good governance standards among ROs, while power asymmetries appear to hamper adoption. This is one of the first studies which does not adopt an EU-centric view of policy diffusion among ROs.

Once again, ASEAN constitutes a fascinating example of normative emulation, selective adaptation, and localization resulting from resistance Western pressures to incorporate human rights norms. As Manea argues, ASEAN transformed its collective identity as it selectively adapted to human rights norms (Manea, 2008, 2009; see also Katsumata, 2009).

Policy regime diffusion among ROs is not confined to the spread of human rights, democracy, and good governance standards, though. A very interesting example in the realm of security cooperation concerns the spread of military confidence building measures (CBM) which originated in the Conference (now Organization) for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) during the Cold War. CBMs have been adopted by ASEAN and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) as well as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the primary mechanism being mimicry (Katsumata, 2011; Acharya and Johnston, 2007a, 20; Acharya, 2009, ch. 5; see chapter 15 Kacowicz/Press-Barnathan, this volume). From ASEAN, these conflict management policies have spread to South Asia (Jetly, 2003). ASEAN also selectively adopted EU market regulation policies, the variation in outcomes can be explained by domestic politics (Pente, 2013). It also emulated the EU’s disaster management mechanism in response to the Indian Ocean tsunami 2004 (Pennisi di Floristella, 2014), while ASEAN’s adoption of HIV/AIDS norms diffused from the global level, namely UNAIDS (Collins, 2013).

The latter examples which include at least some cases of South-South and Global-South diffusion confirm, once again, the necessity to combine functional explanations with accounts assuming interdependent decision-making. To use the framework suggested by Duina and Lenz, problem identification usually originates within the region itself, while both framing and

solutions (scripts) can only be explained if one takes diffusion effects into account (Duina and Lenz, 2014). But even then, the result is not wholesale adoption of policy regimes, but their selective adaptation and transformation to adjust them to regional circumstances.

## Conclusions

This chapter attempted to provide an overview of the state of the art on the diffusion of models pertaining to regionalism, the institutional design of specific ROs, and to particular policy regimes adopted by ROs. The diffusion perspective assumes interdependent rather than independent decision-making, i.e., that choices by ROs are conditioned by previous choices made by other regional or international organizations. Such a focus on diffusion of regional institutional models and governance regimes has faced several difficulties.

First, the literature on comparative regionalism assumes independent decision-making most of the time concentrating on functional accounts (chapter 4 Börzel, this volume) and often overlooks diffusion mechanisms. Second, the quantitative literature on diffusion among regions - particularly on PTAs and FTAs - focuses on outcomes rather than processes as a result of which institutional and policy convergence rather than differential adaptation and transformation become the yardsticks.

Third, while qualitative work on diffusion in comparative regionalism rightly concentrates on mechanisms rather than outcomes, most empirical work is still rather Euro- and Western-centric (see chapter 7 Acharya, this volume). It follows that we know much more about the spread of Western (particularly EU) regionalism, institutional designs, and policy regimes across the globe than about South-South, intra-Asian, intra-African, or intra-Latin American diffusion processes. Yet, as the broader diffusion literature has demonstrated time and again, contiguity appears to be a major variable explaining diffusion processes.

It follows from these limitations that the degree of diffusion of models for regional institutions and policies is probably severely underestimated. At the same time, the studies discussed in this chapter suffer from a selection bias in favour of diffusion processes. The long and short of this is that we do not know at the moment how much regional cooperation and integration is primarily due to processes internal to the region or in response to globalization pressures (independent decision-making; see chapters 4 Börzel and 5 Solingen/Malnigh, this volume) and what role diffusion mechanisms play in comparison. As suggested above, however, functional accounts emphasizing independent decision-making and diffusion cannot be treated as dichotomous alternatives, but matters of degree.

Despite these limitations, the chapter yields some tentative conclusions: First, the diffusion of regionalism, institutional designs, and regional governance seems to be primarily driven by indirect mechanisms of emulation rather than by direct influence mechanisms (see figure 1 above). While particularly the EU tries to promote regionalism, institutional designs and regional policies, the effects appear to be limited, the more we leave the EU's neighbourhood. In fact, the EU as an institutional model of integration might be most attractive when it is not promoting any particular regional solution, but is simply going about its own business. This can be shown especially with regard to the one region that has self-identified mostly in terms of difference to Europe, namely Asia (see chapter 12 Jetschke/Katada, this volume).

Second, as far as emulation mechanisms are concerned, we can observe few examples of mimicry leading to institutional isomorphism. Competition, lesson drawing, and normative emulation seem to be the most important diffusion mechanisms by which particular institu-

tional models and policy regimes spread. In this context, ROs engage in a search processes for the best available institutional or policy solution (lesson-drawing) and also emulate those ROs which they consider normatively legitimate. This is where the “power of attraction” of the EU and of contiguous ROs plays a role.

Third, as to diffusion outcomes (see figure 2 above), we can rarely observe full-scale adoption or convergence around specific models of regional cooperation and integration. If convergence happens, decoupling between institutional rules and behavioural practices is the most likely result. This would explain why many ROs in Subsaharan Africa and in Latin America have so few behavioural consequences (see chapters 9 Bianculli and 14 Hartmann, this volume). The most likely outcome of diffusion with regard to regional cooperation and integration appears to be selective adaptation and transformation. Institutional models and policy regimes are mostly adjusted and “localized” (Acharya, 2004) into the particular regional contexts. Diffusion is an active process of translation and transformation, not a passive “downloading” of some institutional software for ROs.

Fourth, as to how functional explanations and diffusion accounts relate to each other, my tentative conclusion from the literature suggests that the demand for regional cooperation and integration usually originates in the particular region in response to some internal or external problem (“problematization” in Duina and Lenz, 2014; see also Börzel and Risse, 2012b). Diffusion takes place on the supply side of both meaning construction and framing and the identification of specific solutions with regard to institutional designs and governance regimes.

Finally, future research on the diffusion of regionalism and regional institutions should focus on processes of translation and localization. At this point, diffusion research seriously neglects the domestic politics of regional institution-building – a central theme of conventional theories of cooperation and integration (see Wood, 2014 for a similar point with regard to the transnational diffusion of civil wars). While the latter approaches regularly ignore diffusion processes and outcomes, the domestic politics of localization remains probably the largest gap in the emerging literature on diffusing regionalism (see also chapter 5 Solingen/ Malnight, this volume). It is here where research in comparative regionalism is just beginning.



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## Notes

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<sup>2</sup> I owe this point to numerous conversations with Detlef Jahn.

<sup>3</sup> See e.g. [http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/acp/overview/rsp/rsp\\_10th\\_edf\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/acp/overview/rsp/rsp_10th_edf_en.htm) (last access May 1, 2014).

<sup>4</sup> Fredrik Söderbaum alerted me to this point.

<sup>5</sup> On the current status see [http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2009/september/tradoc\\_144912.pdf](http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2009/september/tradoc_144912.pdf) (last visited May 30, 2014).