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AU NORM IMPORT IN THE EUROPEAN PROMOTION OF REGIONAL INTEGRATION IN AFRICA

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COMPULSORY DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work or works of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signed by candidate

Signature: Date: 25. November 2019

ABSTRACT

The relation between the African Union (AU) and the European Union (EU) is the most institutionalised interregional relationship in the world. The EU, being a crucial external agent in African regional integration, exports open regionalism as a political norm through different mechanisms to the AU. Based on a qualitative research design with a constructivist theoretical viewpoint that regards regional organisations as interdependent political authorities, the dissertation examines the AU's receptivity to the EU's attempted norm diffusion and explores genuine AU norm import of European promoted regional integration. A document analysis of official EU and AU declarations and legislation in combination with primary data collected via semi-structured interviews with officials at the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa offers further insights into the African perspective on regional integration. Out of a variety of EU norm export channels, the study identifies capacity-building in the form of technical and financial assistance as most influential in promoting African regional integration processes. While coercion and political dialogue respectively lead to AU resistance and decoupling alias theatre regionalism, capacity-building and positive conditionality result in institutional incorporation and policy changes. A choice-oriented approach traces this genuine norm import in response to civilian norm diffusion mechanisms back to the external agency of the EU, despite major constraints like the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the EU and alternative interregional options within the alliance of emerging market economies. Yet, the limited traceable AU institutional and policy reforms reveal the agency of the AU. Norm import cannot be taken for granted; it only occurs when sufficient incentives are offered to the receiving side. Political dialogue is inspirational, but needs to be supplemented with financial and technical assistance to yield genuine norm import. These findings contribute to a better understanding of prospective EU-AU relations and can be used by policy-makers to adjust interregional negotiations like the on-going post-Cotonou consultations.

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ACP	African Caribbean Pacific Group of States
AEC	African Economic Community
AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
APRM	African Peer Review Mechanism
AU	African Union
CA	Central Argument
EC	European Communities
EEC	European Economic Community
EPA	Economic Partnership Agreement
EU	European Union
IR	International Relations
JAES	Joint Africa-EU Strategy
MIP	Minimum Integration Programme
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
PAP	Pan-African Programme
PIDA	Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa
REC	Regional Economic Community
TEU	Treaty on European Union
UCT	University of Cape Town
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
WTO	World Trade Organisation

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. BACKGROUND

The African continent is one of the most fragmented regions on the globe, owing to its division into 54 sovereign countries with arbitrary borderlines. In fact, the balkanisation of Africa still mirrors the continent's colonial past; leaving it internally divided and isolated from the rest of the world. (Asante, 1997) Africa's political leaders have identified continental integration as the main strategy for overcoming this artificial separation. The overarching framework for the continent's socio-economic transformation, the African Union Agenda 2063, envisions "an integrated continent, politically united, based on the ideals of Pan-Africanism and the vision of Africa's Renaissance" within the next 44 years. (AU Commission, 2015:1)

For the success of these anticipated regional integration efforts, local actors and their political willingness are of utmost importance. Nevertheless, next to internal driving forces, the impact of external agents in the form of third states or other regional organisations should not be underestimated as well. The latter's involvement falls under the term interregionalism, indicating interdependence and reciprocal influence among two or more regional organisations. (Jetschke & Lenz, 2013) This dissertation deals with the interaction between the European Union (EU) and African Union (AU), and the EU's role in African regional integration processes. The EU-AU relation is the most formal and most institutionalised interregional relationship in the world. (Farrell, 2013) Since the Yaoundé Convention in 1963, over the Lomé Agreement in 1975 and the Cotonou Agreement in 2000, up until current negotiations for Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs), the two regional organisations have extensively cooperated in the economic as well as political sphere. In 2007, at the second EU-Africa Summit in Lisbon, they signed the Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES), which was labelled the "most advanced and complex form of interregional relation in world politics". (Mangala, 2013:3)

Next to political dialogue and policy harmonising, JAES promotes African regional integration. The EU plays a vital role in modelling integration in other regions. "[…] the EU is the only global actor that actively and systematically promotes the norm and practice of regional integration around the world." (Lenz, 2013:212) Accordingly, over the last six decades, the European integration process has simultaneously served as a role model and

catalyser for regional integration in postcolonial Africa. (Nagar, 2012) This support is reflected in the EU's external policy, which explicitly prescribes the promotion of regional integration. (Farrell, 2013) Based on its own integration experiences, the EU has inspired African regionalism and has contributed ideas and resources to the AU. (Khadiagala, 2012) However, other scholars have assessed European influence as the imposition of a Eurocentric norm of governance by a self-interested actor within an asymmetrical interregional relationship. (Sicurelli, 2010) As an integral part of European foreign policy, the EU exports its integration model with a strong focus on market liberalisation and free trade areas. (ibid) "Beyond the rhetoric on equal partnership and common values, […] EU policy toward Africa is strongly realist in tone." (Mangala, 2013:38) Consequently, the EU attempts to influence African regional integration processes according to its own interests and norms.

The categorisation of regional integration as a political norm being deliberately spread by the EU across the globe highlights the relevance of norm dynamics in international politics in general and interregionalism in particular. According to social constructivists, in today's globalised world order, state action relies less on the distribution of (military) power and more on the achievement of soft skills like norms and values. (Björkdahl, 2002) The "return to norms" (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998:889) in international relations (IR) allows innovative pathways for studying new subject matters so far neglected by IR scholars. Henceforth, this study explores Europe's normative power in shaping regional integration in Africa. Though, instead of solely looking into how and to what extent the EU succeeds in forming regionalism in Africa, the dissertation rather places the emphasis on the assessment of this alleged influence by the African Union.

1.2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The research centres on regionalism on the African continent, more specifically on regional integration within the African Union. This focus criticises the "persistence of asymmetry in EU-Africa relations even at the level of scholarship. There is a relative underrepresentation of studies from Africa." (Kotsopoulos & Mattheis, 2018:446) African regional integration processes remain underexplored since the unique development of European integration informs most IR literature. It is therefore necessary to conduct research in the African context to challenge the existing Eurocentric bias in theorising about regionalism. (ibid; Tieku, 2011) The academic discourse has to appreciate diversity within the discipline, as regional projects around the world and especially in Africa differ from the European

experience. (Khadiagala, 2012) Although Africa hosts many regional initiatives that deviate from the European prototype, it is overlooked in the general debate on regionalism. "Regionalism is more dynamic and turbulent, and it should not be analyzed (only) through the lenses of Euro-centric integration theories." (Shaw, Söderbaum, Nyang'oro, Grant, 2003:193) Hence, drawing attention on African regionalism adds value to the IR discipline as it broadens knowledge production and enables a more balanced picture on regional integration worldwide.

Since the end of the Second World War, regional organisations have grown in number and (academic) significance. (Gaudry Sada & Shaban, 2017) More non-state actors, regional organisations and institutions are engaged in international politics than ever before. This "wave of regionalism" (Grant & Söderbaum, 2003:3) and the "global pursuit of regional integration as a tool for unity and development" (Fagbayibo, 2013:421) justify the relevance of the chosen topic. The boom of regional integration has also led to an advanced research interest in comparative regionalism and interregionalism. The latter has often been ignored in academia and remains conceptually and theoretically underdeveloped wherefore Hurrel (2007:132) claims that "concentrating more on the broader phenomenon of 'inter-regionalism', is an important area for future research." Traditional IR and regional integration theories are exclusively concerned about internal driving forces of cooperation and thus omit external influence of powerful global actors on the nature of regional integration in Africa. (Buzdugan, 2013) While there have been studies into the interregional relation between the EU and Asian or South American regional organisations, research concerning EU-AU normative interactions are neglected. (Lenz, 2012; Jetschke & Murray, 2012; Murray, 2009; Acharya, 2004) Therefore, paying attention to European external agency in African regional integration contributes to the achievement of a settled comparative theory of regionalism.

In addition, the study broadens the analytical approach towards regionalism as it concentrates on norm diffusion in interregional activities. It adds to the advancement of norm diffusion literature by analysing the interplay between the EU as the norm-maker and the AU as the norm-taker. (Björkdahl, Chaban, Leslie and Masselot, 2015) The focus is placed on the receiving side, which remains understudied, particularly in the third world[1]. There is little understanding of the reception of European promotion of regional integration in Africa.

[1] The third world is a political construct. Originally referring to states of the non-alignment movement, its meaning shifted with the end of the Cold War towards a group of developing countries in Asia, Africa, South America and Oceania. (World Population Review, 2019)

(Acharya, 2004; 2011) Hence, a research through the point of view of the recipient increases the agency of the norm-taker. "Using the concept of diffusion shifts analytical attention from the EU to the receiving end of external influence." (Lenz, 2013:224) The dissertation aims at examining the norm-taker's decision-making process to explore why some norms are truly adopted while others are only partly integrated or even rejected.

Investigating the AU's response to the EU's attempt at exporting regional integration and raising the question of AU genuine norm import builds upon the work of Vandeputte and Bossuyt (2017). They studied the perception of East African Community's stakeholders towards the EU's promotion of regional integration. The thesis at hand expands this analysis on the continental organisation AU rather than singling out one specific African Regional Economic Community (REC), and measures norm import in the form of institutional incorporation instead of individual stakeholder perception. Taken all together, the chosen research topic is academically justified and fills several research gaps.

1.3. RESEARCH AIM AND QUESTIONS

The dissertation aims at shedding light on norm diffusion within the asymmetrical relationship between the African Union and European Union. In addition to outlining the role of the EU within AU regional integration processes, it investigates the AU's assessment of this alleged European influence. While it does describe the reasons and channels for regional integration export, to a much greater degree, it lays the focus on the receiving side and elaborates on the norm import by the AU. Making use of a diffusion-oriented research agenda that regards regional organisations as interdependent political authorities, the thesis attempts to reveal the African perspective on the "normative desirability of the EU's international impact (or the lack thereof)". (Lenz, 2013:215)

Due to its qualitative nature and case study structure, it does not intend to generalise its outcomes to other settings or regions. In fact, it is designed to describe European involvement and to gain further insights into the African perspective in the light of interregionalism. In this way, it will contribute to a better understanding of prospective EU-Africa relations and can be used by policy-makers to adjust interregional negotiations as the on-going post-Cotonou consultations.

In accordance with the introductory part and the problem statement, the general aim of this research is to *explore genuine AU norm import of European promoted regional integration*. The aim can be further split into the three objectives:

1. *Revealing EU diffusion channels for exporting regional integration to Africa*
2. *Revealing AU receptivity to regional integration as a political norm*
3. *Tracing back AU norm import to EU norm diffusion*

In order to achieve these objectives, the dissertation attempts to answer the following main research question: *Does the AU import the EU's promoted diffusion of regional integration?*

The main question is divided into four subquestions, leading to a clear structure for the analysis:

1. *What type of regional integration does the EU attempt to pursue in Africa?*
2. *How does the EU promote regional integration within the AU?*
3. *Does the AU genuinely import regional integration as a political norm?*
4. *Can AU institutional and policy changes be traced back to EU norm diffusion?*

Figure 1 gives an overview of aforementioned aim, objectives and research questions:

FIGURE 1. RESEARCH AIM, OBJECTIVES AND QUESTIONS

Aim	Objectives	Research Questions
Exploring genuine AU import of European promoted regional integration	Revealing EU diffusion channels for exporting regional integration to Africa	RQ 1: What type of regional integration does the EU attempt to pursue in Africa? RQ 2: How does the EU promote regional integration within the AU?
	Revealing AU receptivity to regional integration as a political norm	RQ 3: Does the AU genuinely import regional integration as a political norm?
	Tracing back AU norm import to EU norm diffusion	RQ 4: Can AU institutional and policy changes be traced back to EU norm diffusion?

Source: The figure was compiled by the author.

1.4. CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study is guided by theoretical assumptions of social constructivism. Social constructivism is the only IR theory that acknowledges the importance of norms in global politics. (Jackson & Sørensen, 2016) In contrast to (neo)realism and (neo)liberalism, constructivists take international norms as valuable assets in international relations into account. (Hurd, 2008) They assume that norms, understood as a collective social narrative of appropriate, standardised behaviour, affect the identities and actions of international actors.

(Jackson & Sørensen, 2016; Björkdahl, 2002) Hence, the theory provides the basis for norm diffusion processes in interregional activities, considering intersubjective ideas and normative relations. States, whose behaviour is determined by socially-constructed identities and interests, continue to be the most important actors on the international level. (Hurd, 2008; Jackson & Sørensen, 2016) This state-centrism renders the constructivist perspective appropriate for the dissertation at hand, as it limits the research to interstate integration through highly formalised institutions.

The constructivist claim that norms matter and the assumption that the international system is constantly changed by social interactions lay the foundation for the following research approach to analyse norm diffusion processes. Lenz's (2013:223, 213) "concept of diffusion" describes "the spread of norms, ideas, institutions, policies and practices in time and space." It is the starting point for the subsequent analysis in which it is applied to the European promotion of regional integration in Africa. A categorisation of norm diffusion mechanisms in Figure 2 illustrates how and through which channels EU norms can be diffused and exported in general.

FIGURE 2. CHANNELS FOR NORM DIFFUSION

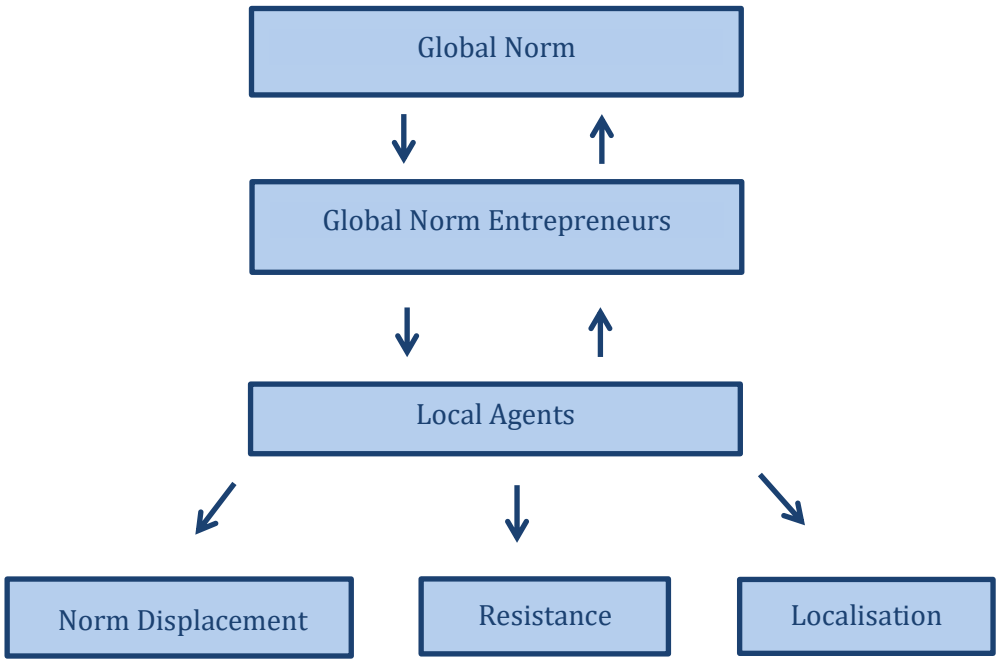
	Diffusion Mechanisms	**Type of EU Diffusion**	**Channels for Diffusion**
Military Power	Coercion	Material, Active	Military Imposition, Threats, Economic Sanctions (Negative Conditionality)
Civilian Power	Rewards	Material, Active	Technical and Financial Assistance Capacity-Building, Trade Agreements (Positive Conditionality)
	Competition	Material, Passive	Large, Well-Integrated Domestic Market
Normative Power	Socialisation	Ideational, Active	Cooperation Agreements, Political Dialogue
	Emulation	Ideational, Passive	Successful Integration; Symbolic Representation

Source: Lenz (2013:213).

The second category – civilian power – implies "manipulation of utility calculations" by offering positive incentives through rewards and competition. (Börzel & Risse, 2009:7) While rewards imply a material and active diffusion mechanism comprising mainly technical and financial assistance and capacity-building to "seduc[e] others into desired behaviour" (Lenz, 2013:214), competition refers to a passive impact aiming at the adoption of endorsed policies by others due to the appeal of the EU's single market. Finally, "normative power denotes a form of influence by which norms and practices spread through immaterial or ideational means." (ibid) It is split up into socialisation, meaning an active and direct promotion of norms through political dialogue, and indirect emulation. (Börzel & Risse, 2009) In the latter case, norms are not exported through active engagement of the norm-maker, but rather through their own symbolic representation as being legitimate and successful and hence attractive for imitators.

Having described the appropriate concept for norm diffusion informed by social constructivism used in this dissertation, another tool is required to analyse norm import. Therefore, the study is built upon Acharya's (2004:244) "conceptual framework" for norm localisation. Figure 3 visualises the process of norm localisation by a norm-taker, highlighting the agency of the receiving side in norm diffusion.

FIGURE 3. NORM LOCALISATION



Source: Acharya (2004:254).

Although Acharya (ibid) focuses on norm localisation in Asian regionalism, the overarching concept can be used to study norm import in other regions as well. "The framework of localization proposed in this article is helpful in understanding why any given region may accept a particular norm while rejecting another". (ibid:269) It describes the process of norm import, or more precisely, how international norms are promoted by global entrepreneurs and then either accepted, resisted or altered to fit pre-existing domestic norms by local actors. Thus, norm localisation does not imply an automatic process, but instead stresses the relevance of the norm-taker who has to actively import and institutionalise the new norms. This accentuation of the receiving side makes Acharya's framework suitable for this dissertation and its emphasis on the AU's perspective.

Other scholars, like Finnemore and Sikkink with their "Norm Life Cycle" (1998:896), also contribute to norm import literature. Yet, their concept of internalisation takes the import of international norms for granted, without any consideration of local actors' interests. The research at hand casts doubt on this so-called "moral proselytism" (Nadelmann, 1990:483), which refers to moral superiority of international norms and downplays the agency of local actors and their norm practices.

Lastly, the two conceptual frameworks for norm diffusion channels and norm import responses have to be put into correlation. In the context of the research topic, the EU represents the sender who makes usage of several means to export its norms, while the AU depicts the norm-taker with the option to import, reject or alter the promoted norms. Norm import as the outcome is measured as institutional and policy changes. Or in Acharya's (2004:239) words: AU norm import is "indicated by the changes they [norms] produced in the goals and institutional apparatuses of the regional group." Institutional change can take place either by modifying existing structures or by creating new ones. (Aggarwal, 1998) If norm import is successful, the AU will replicate the EU's model of regional integration. Hence, new policy instruments and institutions within the AU architecture resembling their European counterparts function as the main criteria for genuine norm import.

However, "methodological difficulties in uncovering the EU's ideational impact empirically" (Lenz, 2013:212) remain. In order to attribute the actual outcome to EU ideational diffusion, one is required to trace back institutional incorporation and policy changes to the export of EU norms. For overcoming this well-known 'Galton's Problem' (Lenz, 2013; Jetschke & Lenz,

2011, Haverland, 2007), the dissertation employs Lenz's "choice-oriented approach" illustrated in Figure 4. (Lenz, 2013:221)

FIGURE 4. CHOICE-ORIENTED APPROACH

Step 1:	Reconstruct decision tree Identify contextual constraints and potential alternatives
Step 2:	Conduct correlational analysis Map EU-type decision onto actual outcome If no correlation exists, EU diffusion is unlikely to have had an effect
Step 3:	'Verify' EU ideational diffusion Control for alternative explanations Trace process of EU ideational diffusion

Source: Lenz (2013:221).

The approach, designed to allow inferences about the impact of norm diffusion, rests upon a counterargument: "policy-makers' decisions in regionalism would have been different in the absence of the EU." (ibid:220) Correlational claims become possible after three steps: reconstruction of decision-making including the outline of constraints and alternative options, comparison between EU-type choice and actual outcome, and verification through process-tracing and identification of specific EU norm export channels. This approach – implying a qualitative procedural analysis - allows ascribing AU norm import to the external agency of the EU. It reveals how exported norms can produce institutional and policy changes.

1.5. METHODOLOGY

The research questions above have the objective to reveal normative relations between the EU and AU. Henceforth, they classify as explanatory research questions that are addressed within a qualitative research design, well suited to clarify an understudied phenomenon. (Schwandt & Gates, 2018) The dissertation follows a deductive approach by testing theoretical assumptions on empirical data. Four central arguments are derived from existing literature, then applied to the specific case of EU-AU relations and subsequently verified throughout the analysis.

The unit of analysis, in this event the African Union, has been selected due to its continental scope. It represents the entire African continent rather than only a small sub-region. The AU can be regarded as the European Union's counterpart on the African continent. Its structure and mandate resemble the EU's institutions and competences the most closely compared to other regional organisations in Africa. Henceforth, the AU is the appropriate match to

examine European influence in African regional integration. The focus on the AU as one regional organisation in conjunction with deductive reasoning classifies the research as an explanatory case study. (Yin, 2014) A case study narrows down a set of complex issues to a detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of cases and studies their particularity. Given a definition of the case study research as a method "try[ing] to illuminate a decision or set of decisions" (Schramm, 1971), it qualifies as the most suitable approach for examining the AU's response towards alleged European involvement and for tracing back the exact procedure of AU norm import. A quantitative research design would be ineligible as numeric calculations cannot capture and reflect norm diffusion between regional organisations.

Qualitative research builds upon a variety of empirical materials. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018) For answering the research question, it must be ensured that the right data is collected. The construct of interest is norm diffusion between the EU and AU, observable in AU institutional and policy changes. As a consequence, the study is built upon qualitative data, collected through document analysis and library research. The focus is laid on primary sources like official documents of AU institutions such as Assembly or Ministerial Declarations, and of EU bodies like Action Plans and Annual Programmes. Furthermore, Joint Communiqués and Partnership Agreements between the EU and AU as for instance the Joint Africa-EU Strategy in 2007 or the Abidjan Declaration in 2017 are a crucial source of information since they provide details about interregional activities. Other important background knowledge is derived from legal texts applicable to the context of regional integration, including amongst others the Constitutive Act of the African Union, the Charter of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and the Treaty on European Union (TEU). Several academic secondary sources and think-tank analyses serve as a basis for the theoretical framework and literature review.

The data collection is complemented with two semi-structured interviews conducted face-to-face with officials at the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) in Addis Ababa in August 2019. The interview partners were selected based on their expertise in African regional integration processes. African Union officials were not readily available for participation. Purposeful sampling was utilised as the information gained in the interviews is only used additionally and does not serve as the primary data for analysis. Non-probability sampling was not required since no statistical inferences have to be made in a qualitative research design. For the semi-structured interviews, a general set of open-ended questions was prepared and used for both participants. (See Appendix 8.1) This method allows for a certain level of coherence between questions, while still leaving the freedom to ask

spontaneous in-depth questions based on the individual experiences of the interviewee. (Lichtman, 2014) For analytical purposes, the interviews were recorded and transcribed. The study was approved by the Ethics Committee of the UCT Department of Political Studies. The signed ethics clearance is attached in Appendix 8.2.

1.6. LIMITATIONS

Given its case study structure, this research does not intend to generalise its outcomes to other settings. It should be noticed that "we do not study a case primarily to understand other cases. Our first obligation is to understand this one case." (Stake, 1995:4) However, the limited number of studied cases can be seen as a major shortcoming only providing low reliability. Thus, the case study design is highly contested among scholars. (Gerring, 2012; Yin, 2014) According to critics, case studies do not allow for generalisation since the results are based on the characteristics of an individual case. Drawing conclusions on a wider scope of settings and units is hazardous. (Gerring, 2012)

Nevertheless, Yin (2009) argues that case studies can be generalised to theoretical propositions. While indeed the outcomes may not be directly applied to different populations and settings, the underlying theories may be generalised. Yin (ibid:43) calls this "analytical generalization". Therefore, it is important to recognise the advantages of this type of research. The insights from the African Union can be indicative for the prospects of further EU-AU relations, specifically against the background of the on-going negotiations for a post-Cotonou Partnership Agreement. (European Commission, 2019c)

In addition, the descriptive nature of the research into an understudied field poses another challenge. Since there is only limited data available concerning norm diffusion between the EU and the AU, the dissertation firstly has to ensure the unequivocal detection of norms. However, identifying norms on the international level has proven to be difficult due to only indirect evidence of existing norms. (Björkdahl, 2002:13) Given the fact that norms cannot be held individually but only collectively, they solely can be detected in political discourses and actors' norm-induced interests and behaviour. Consequently, the thesis has to study regional organisations' policies and institutions shaped by norms. As norms imply moral judgments and come along justifications for action, they "leave an extensive trail of communication among actors that we can study." (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998:892) It is precisely this bulk of legal and official communication issued by the EU and AU that the dissertation intends to discover and inspect by conducting a document analysis.

1.7. STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

After having introduced the dissertation's research aim, theoretical and conceptual framework, and methodology in Chapter 1, a literature review in Chapter 2 synthesises previous studies on regional integration, interregionalism and norm diffusion in the European and African context. Chapter 3 provides the historical and contemporary political context for African regional integration and outlines the development of Africa-Europe relations. The subsequent analysis in Chapter 4 scrutinises the EU's legal basis for the promotion of regional integration and identifies channels for norm-export. Then, in Chapter 5, the AU's receptivity to European norm diffusion is assessed, including options for norm import. A choice-oriented approach is applied in order to trace AU institutional and policy changes to the EU's external agency. A final discussion in Chapter 6 answers the research questions by taking into account the outcomes of the previous analysis, reveals shortcomings and offers an outlook for further norm diffusion research in the IR discipline.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The following literature review summarises relevant IR research on regional integration and interregional activities. Firstly, the term regional integration and its different forms are clarified before discussing interregionalism. The section concludes with an overview of norm diffusion literature and its significance for EU-AU relations. Four central arguments are made within the literature review, which will form the basis for the analysis part.

2.1. REGIONAL INTEGRATION

The study of regionalism focuses on "macro-regions (world regions), which are larger territorial […] units or sub-systems between the 'state' and the 'global' system level". (Grant & Söderbaum, 2003:5) According to this definition, regions comprise states that are linked together by geographical proximity and cultural, political and economic interdependence. (Hettne, 2005) Regionalism as a political concept describes the evolution from a geographical territory to a social and political entity. (Grant & Söderbaum, 2003) This active process in which a "geographical region is transformed from a passive object to a subject with capacity to articulate the interests of the emerging region" is commonly known under the term regionalisation. (Hettne & Söderbaum, 1998:5) Throughout that process, regions – which are not externally given but socially constructed – are being consolidated and institutionalised. As outlined in the author's previous work (Arfsten, 2018), in the first stage, the potential region forms a geographical unit based on natural boundaries and ecological characteristics such as 'Sub-Saharan Africa' or the 'Indian Subcontinent'. The second step is the most crucial as it includes the actual process of region-building by establishing formal institutions or informal networks. In the last phase, the newly created region is transformed into an independent entity being capable of acting on behalf of its region. (Hettne & Söderbaum, 1998)

Regionalisation implies a dynamic element and the active pursuit of a regional project, which in turn is informed by a regionalist ideology: regionalism. Regionalism thus entails and manifests specific objectives for a newly created region. (Bøås, 2003) In its original meaning, regionalism is a comprehensive and multi-dimensional notion including linguistic, cultural, economic and political aspects that emerges as a "consciousness of and loyalty to a distinct sub-national or supra-national area, usually characterized by a common culture, background or interest." (Chakrabarty, Datta & Roy, 2009:695) It stems from the field of sociology as it denotes a social phenomenon applicable to societies worldwide. However, in the course of

time, it has evolved into an exclusive political concept of governmental order. As such, regionalism refers to multi-level governance – including a local, national and regional level – with the aim to increase interaction between national governments. Regional cooperation implies collective state action, which leads to regional integration as its end point. (Babarinde, 1999; Asante, 1997)

Hettne and Söderbaum (1998) differentiate between old regionalism (1950-1970) and new regionalism (started during 1980s). Old regionalism has to be interpreted against the historical and political background of the Cold War. (Arfsten, 2018) It follows a state centric, inward-oriented path whereby only nation-states are considered relevant actors in the international sphere. (Hettne & Söderbaum, 1998) Therefore, old regionalism hints to "inter-state integration through formal institutional frameworks." (Clapham, 1999:53) Regional integration constitutes a sub-category of old regionalism. Focusing on the African Union and European Union in this dissertation, the term regional integration is used to point towards highly institutionalised interstate cooperation.

The notion of regional integration is often evaluated in purely economic terms. It implicates free trade agreements und customs unions, market access and policy harmonising; all aimed at the liberalisation of trade and termination of discriminating practices between domestic and foreign markets. (Asante, 1997) Yet, regional integration can also be formed in the political sector. Political integration indicates the pooling of national sovereignty in highly sensitive topics like security and defence or of national policies such as health and education. In this case, regional projects differ according to the depth of integration, meaning the readiness of involved states to share their sovereignty with others and cede national powers to a supranational body in exchange for intensified regional coordination. (Babarinde & Wright, 2013) The concept of supranationalism refers to the execution of overriding power by a regional organisation over its member states. As in the case of the European Union, a supranational institution enjoys legally binding authority outweighing national legislation. (Fagbayibo, 2013)

This concept of formalistic regionalism has often been criticised for producing side effects for certain participants. While some countries disproportionally profit from intensified regional integration, others bear the burden. Unequal distribution of integration benefits "may be conflictual, exploitative, reinforce a particular power relation or create other negative effects." (Grant & Söderbaum, 2003:6f.) As a consequence, critical scholars

developed a new analytical framework for the study of regionalism towards the end of the 1980s. Formal regional projects were challenged due their overestimation of the role of nation-states and international organisations. (Hettne & Söderbaum, 1998) The redefined concept of new regionalism recognises the weaknesses of state-centrism and "transcends [the] conventional state-centric and formalistic notions of regionalism." (Grant & Söderbaum, 2003:2) It has to be comprehended in the light of the demise of the Westphalian state system, globalisation, geopolitical shifts and economic interdependencies. New regionalism embraces a variety of actors outside of state institutions as for instance non-state actors, civil society and private corporations, wherefore it is also called "regionalism from below". (ibid:4) Seen as a global and diverse phenomenon, it deals with a much broader scope of content in contrast to old regionalism, which is limited to interstate relations. The new interpretation includes all policy fields and informal relations such as labour systems, migrant networks, diaspora connections and trade and smuggle routes. (ibid)

Yet – as the author has already indicated in her previous work (Arfsten, 2019) – the new concept is far from being homogeneous. Next to the old-new-regionalism dichotomy, Akokpari (2008) identifies more categories to classify current regional events. He distinguishes between form, approach and sequence. The form of integration refers to the degree to which the regional integration process is open towards external (economic) influences. Open regionalism "applies the central macro-economic assumptions of neo-liberal economies to the field of economic regionalism." (Iheduru, 2003:48) It reflects the deep interdependences within today's globalised economy and highlights the market's centrality. This "outward-oriented" strategy (Akokpari, 2008:90) contrasts the protectionist and closed ideology of old regionalism in which the protection of national economies was extended to the regional level.

In accordance, the second category – approach to integration – separates introverted, state-led regional integration from an extroverted, market-based one. While the former emphasised the detachment from global economic events and the nation-state's pivotal role, contemporary regional integration efforts are dominated by market-centralism. Akokpari (ibid:93) calls this "a radical shift from the state to the market". The third classification discusses the sequence of integration, meaning the order of policy fields in which cooperation is desired. Most regions firstly opt for economic integration prior to cooperation in highly sovereignty-sensitive policy fields. The linear market approach, starting with a preferential trade agreement over a customs union and common market before reaching a

fiscal and monetary union, is the usual sequence. Figure 5 illustrates the classical steps of linear market integration.

FIGURE 5. STAGES OF LINEAR MARKET INTEGRATION

Source: The figure was compiled with data from Economics Online (n.d.) and Arfsten (2018:19).

The EU can be regarded as the prototype of open, market-based regionalism. The European Commission (2019d) defines regional integration as "a process by which groups of countries liberalise trade, creating a common market for goods, people, capital and services." Hence, the EU pursues regional integration according to neoliberal values including market liberalisation and progressive trade opening within highly institutionalised frameworks.

2.2. INTERREGIONALISM

The above clarified terms of regionalism and regional integration exclusively consider internal dynamics and actors within the region. This inward orientation has been criticised for omitting crucial external influences on regional integration. More precisely, Buzdugan (2013:917) argues that "international actors can have direct and significant influence on the dynamics of regionalism, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa". The lack of attention on external agents ignores the influence that dominant international actors such as the European Union can have on less powerful and peripheral region like the African continent. (Grugel & Hout, 1999) The assumption of interregional influence stems from an observed macro-level phenomenon: regional organisations tend to cluster temporally and spatially, and resemble each other in form and function. (Jetschke & Lenz, 2013) A closer alignment among regional organisations can be noticed. Accordingly, Jetschke and Lenz (ibid) question the conventional viewpoint of regional organisations as isolated, self-contained units. Instead, they conceive them as interdependent and mutually influential.

The interaction between two or more regional organisations is called interregionalism. Doidge (2014:38) defines interregionalism as "institutionalised relationships between groups of states from different regions, each coordinating to a greater or lesser degree." However, given this broad generic term, three different, more specific types can be identified. Firstly, in case of interaction between two formalised regional organisations exclusively consisting of nation-states (like the EU and AU), scholars respectively speak of

"bi-interregionalism" (Rüland, 2014:16), "pure interregionalism" (Aggerwal & Fogarty, 2004:1) and "old interregionalism". (Hänggi, 2006:42) The second category is labelled as "transregionalism" (ibid:38; Rüland, 2014:16), which denotes either cooperation between two loosely coordinated and dispersed regional groupings of states with weak agency such as the Forum for East Asia – Latin America Cooperation and the Asia-Europe Meeting, or between one formal regional organisation and one more flexible regional group such as the EU-African Caribbean Pacific Group of States (ACP) relation. The last category draws attention to cooperation between one regional organisation and a single state like the EU-South African Strategic Partnership. This region-to-state relation is called "quasi-interregionalism". (Pirozzi & Godsäter, 2015:14) All other informal, non-state connections between two world regions, including networks of non-governmental organisations and private corporations, fall under the classification "hybrid interregionalism". (Rüland, 2014:16) This definitional pluralism shows that interregionalism is not a one-dimensional but rather a complex and diverse terminology. (Baert, Scaramagli, Söderbaum, 2014)

Interregionalism as a form of new international engagement developed during the 1960s and grew in volume and intensity mainly in the following two decades. (Doidge, 2012) It manifested regional cooperation at the global level. Its proliferation is linked to changes in the international state structure towards a multipolar world. Globalisation and the eroded significance of the Westphalian nation-state contributed to its rise. (Söderbaum & Van Langenhove, 2005) The relationship between regional organisations serves three main purposes: legitimation, capacity-building and global actorness. (Doidge, 2012) For one thing, it has a legitimising role by improving the international profile of regions and generating significance through visible external relations. Interregional partnerships institutionalise external recognition and legitimacy. (ibid) In accordance, scholars expect regions with low international status and weak economic leverage – such as the African continent – to establish an abundance of regional organisations and interregional channels. (Jetschke & Lenz, 2013) This explains the "over-representation" of regional organisations in Africa with a total amount of 39 and an African country's average membership of eight regional organisations. (ibid:631; Byiers, 2017; Byiers, Woolfrey, Medinilla, Vanheukelom, 2019) Secondly, interregional relationships contribute to the "promotion of regional integration and the strengthening of regional actors" by providing an institutionalised framework for capacity-building and mutual assistance between regions. (Doidge, 2012:75) The last purpose of interregionalism entails its function as a mediator between the national and global level. In that way, it facilitates multilateralism and global governance for addressing global issues.

The discourse about interregionalism is particularly connected to the studies of the European Union, being "the region with the deepest engagement in interregional relations around the world". (Baert et al., 2014:3) The EU prefers interactions with other regions to bilateral relations with single third states and can therefore be regarded a pioneer of interregionalism. (Jetschke & Lenz, 2011) Besides, interregional activities are an integral part of the EU's external relations. Relationships between the EU and its partner regions are shaped by the active promotion of regional integration. (Söderbaum & Van Langenhove, 2005) The Union perceives regional integration as a desirable political norm to achieve global stability, peace and prosperity. It is important to note that there is a shared viewpoint within the EU that the "European model itself is worthy of emulation". (Doidge, 2012:76) The EU regards open regionalism not only beneficial for itself, but aims at expanding its own model through interregional relations to other regional organisations, in particular to the African Union. (Farrell, 2009) It "deliberately promotes a form of regional integration based on its own experiences." (Buzdugan, 2013:931)

In line with the literature on regional integration and interregionalism, the first central argument (CA1) can be derived: *The EU, a pioneer of interregionalism, aims at promoting its own model of open regionalism to the AU.*

2.3. NORMS

2.3.1. NORMS IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Norms originated in the field of sociology as they describe social practices. Norms are "context-dependent" (Björkdahl, 2002:13), meaning they vary according to their social environment. Consequently, norms differ in the private and public realm, and between the domestic and international level. Since this dissertation deals with regional integration in the international sphere, it focuses on public, international norms. Norms are increasingly applied in political science. They have been introduced to the IR discipline mainly by the theory of social constructivism, which acknowledges the impact of normative influence on international actors. (ibid) Accordingly, norms and identities are pivotal in formulating foreign policies and crafting interregional relations. (Söderbaum & Van Langenhove, 2005)

From a constructivist perspective, norms denote a collective understanding of proper behaviour of actors with a given identity. (Björkdahl, 2002; Murray, 2009; Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998) Nevertheless, multiple definitions of norms exist in the academic literature, depending on the role of norms as either being regulative, constitutive or normative.

Raymond (1997:128) emphasises the regulative role and claims that international norms are "generalised standards of conduct" that prescribe the actions and jurisdiction of a state. In line with this interpretation, norms regulate state interactions by setting standard behavioural patterns and reducing uncertainty. Besides, they can create new actors, interests and standard behaviours wherefore they also perform a constitutive role. (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998) In combination, norms constitute and regulate actors within their environments. (Björkdahl, 2002; Legro, 1997)

Apart from that, Gurowitz (1999) draws the attention on the normative role of norms and defines them as guidelines for legitimate and appropriate behaviour. The same holds true for the definition of Björkdahl and Elgström (2015:135): "norms are intersubjective understandings that […] prescribe what appropriate behaviour ought to be by expressing rights and obligations." Instead of only setting out behavioural expectations, norms also create principles how to behave morally. "Norms by definition are shared and intersubjective and relate to shared moral assessments." (Björkdahl, 2002:13) Thus, norms also include normative prescriptions based on morality and justice. Finnemore and Sikkink (1998:891) highlight this normative purpose as the "oughtness" of norms that distinguishes them from other kinds of rules and regulations. To clarify, norms as standard patterns of behaviour are not only regulating interactions but are also desirable themselves. In that way, rather than being means to an end, they are an end in itself.

In recent years, the IR scholarship has allocated more academic attention to the study of norms. (Acharya, 2011) In global politics, norms result from common practices among states and thus can only be held collectively. (Gurowitz, 1999; Björkdahl, 2002) For instance, the international norm of sovereignty becomes visible not until looking at the interaction of states, namely by the external recognition of a state's sovereignty by the international community. A state individually declaring itself sovereign, as in the case of the Western Sahara or Somaliland, does not make the state sovereign unless it obtains collective international recognition. Therefore, norms are common, interactive social practices.

2.3.2. NORM DIFFUSION

A specific normative interaction is norm diffusion, whereby norm entrepreneurs promote local norms on the global scale. Finnemore and Sikkink (1998) confirm that the origin of many international norms lies in the domestic sphere. Through the efforts of norm entrepreneurs, they have ultimately developed into global norms. Norm diffusion describes

the “flow of social practices among actors”. (Strang & Meyer, 1993:487) Normative standards, ideas and even institutions and policies are spread across time and space from a sender to a recipient via communication and influence. (Björkdahl & Elgström, 2015; Börzel & Risse, 2009; Börzel & Risse, 2012)

Europe is often depicted as the centre of normative power implicating progressive and good norms. The notion of Normative Power Europe was coined by Manners (2002) who describes normative power as the “ability to shape conceptions of normal”. The authority to determine normality indicates the dominance of European norms to such an extent that they are internalised and taken for granted by others. In other words, the EU is teaching norms. (Finnemore, 1993) European normative power has resulted in an international system biased towards liberal norms that are associated with economic growth and development. (Björkdahl & Elgström, 2015) When analysing international norms, one has to take this bias within the norm discourse into account. Norms are never objective and value-free.

Norm diffusion in the international realm is especially observable between regions. Thereby, regional and international organisations play a crucial role. As Jackson and Sørensen (2016:215) affirm: “The norms of international society are transmitted to states through international organizations.” Diffused norms shape the interests and thus the behaviour of states, who import international norms into their national policies. Consequently, norm diffusion is responsible for institutional and policy changes at the domestic level. (Finnemore, 1996) The influence between different regional organisations leads to another outcome: clustering and institutional similarities. Cooperating regions tend to resemble each other in set-up, structure and scope of action, wherefore regional organisations have to be taken as interdependent phenomena. (Jetschke & Lenz, 2013) While each region maintains its own features and specificity, it is always influenced by interregional diffusion.

Social practices can be diffused by several means. Yet, the question of which channels to be included in the research of interregional diffusion is contested. For instance, the scholars Jetschke and Lenz (2011; 2013) and Elkins and Simmons (2005) explicitly exclude any coercive diffusion measures such as military imposition, threats and economic sanctions since they base their work on a narrow definition of diffusion as an uncoordinated, decentralised and voluntary process of mutual influence between regional organisations. In contrast, according to Lenz’s (2013) above explained conceptual framework, coercion is a crucial norm diffusion channel, especially in regards to asymmetrical relations between two

regions like the EU and AU. Diez (2005) also argues that military power is compatible with normative power. They can coexist and reinforce each other for diffusing norms. Hegemon actors exert notable influence and spread their own ideas by making use of unequal power relations. In that case, norms are imposed onto the receiver by the sender. However, coercion and extensive pressure may lead to formal adoption but not to genuinely embraced and institutionalised norms. (Björkdahl & Elgström, 2015) Imposed norms are not equally valued by the norm-taker as those that are voluntarily adopted.

Next to coercion, norm-senders can employ other direct channels to ensure the expansion of their value system. Rewards, also referred to as positive conditionality, seek to change cost-benefit calculations of targeted actors. The promoters of norms promise rewards to "induce other actors into adopting their ideas by manipulating their utility functions." (Börzel & Risse, 2009:7) Incentives in form of financial and technical assistance push the receiver towards a desired behaviour. This capacity-building is pivotal to urge other actors to adopt and accept diffused norms. It is complemented by socialisation, meaning norm diffusion through best practices, learning experiences and naming-and-shaming. Norm-senders persuade others to follow their example within political dialogues and cooperation agreements. Socialisation denotes promotion via discourse whereby the targeted actor is won over by the appropriateness and legitimacy of the promoted norm. The sender exerts influence "by the impact it has on what is considered appropriate behaviour by other actors". (Diez & Manners, 2007:175) Linked to this ideational type of norm diffusion is emulation. However, emulation is an indirect form of spreading norms. It does not require actively engaged norm entrepreneurs, but relies solely on a successful role model and mimicry. If a social practice is highly attractive, it will be copied and imitated by followers. In this depiction, a norm is diffused only by virtue of its success and desirability. (Lenz, 2013)

Scholars have identified a "sophisticated tool box" through which the European Union diffuses its own model of open regionalism to other world regions. (Börzel & Risse, 2009:6) It includes regional competition, exchanging best practices, technical and financial support, and positive and negative conditionality. (ibid; Hurrell, 2007) In addition, Lenz (2012) stresses the importance of passive emulation in spreading the EU institutional model. But in order to actively diffuse its own specific type of regional integration, the EU relies heavily on positive conditionality and capacity-building. (Börzel & Risse, 2009) Offering technical and financial assistance to new regional initiatives is an essential stepping-stone in boosting regional integration efforts. For instance, only months after the foundation of the Southern

Common Market in South America in 1991, the European Commission supplied administrative support to the new organisation. (Sanchez Bajo, 1999) The offered training and assistance programmes aimed at establishing strong (economic) ties between the two regions. Informed by its own integration experience, the EU builds capacity in other regional organisations to ensure a close interregional partnership. (Doidge, 2012)

Given this overview of norm diffusion literature, the second central argument (CA2) can be formulated: *The EU spreads open regionalism mainly through positive conditionality and capacity-building.*

2.3.3. NORM IMPORT

Despite the fact that diffusion has become an increasingly applied concept in political science, most scholars focus on the exporting sender, leading to a lack of literature on norm import. Hence, Björkdahl and Elgström (2015) argue that the conventional perspective on norm diffusion undermines norm recipients and their agency. Norm diffusion is often depicted as an automatic process in which norms exported by the sender are directly imported by the receiver. But norm import should not be taken for granted; it requires agency and willingness of the norm-taker who has to actively and voluntarily incorporate the new norms into domestic conditions and eventually displace previous ones. (Acharya, 2004) It is not necessarily a smooth procedure, but can also entail tensions and conflicts. Firstly, the exported norms need to be formally adopted, then, they need to be widely accepted and finally have to be implemented. (Björkdahl & Elgström, 2015) This last step implies behavioural change. Henceforth, successful norm import becomes visible in changes within institutions, structures and policies. On the global level, this means that norm import involves "processes by which norms in the international system can change behaviour of states". (Johnston, 2008) In order to confirm genuine norm import, one has to distinguish between norm existence and behavioural change. (Björkdahl, 2002) As already elaborated above, identification of norms proofs difficult due to mere indirect evidence. Behaviour shaped by norms and norm-induced institutional and policy changes on the receiver's side are therefore crucial to investigate norm import.

Since norms are interpreted against the cultural background of the norm-taker, their translation into practice varies among states. Norm diffusion "never enters into vacuum" and therefore "rarely leads to similar or even comparable […] outcomes." (Lenz, 2013:218) Björkdahl and Elgström (2015:135) assign this diverging implementation of international

norms to cultural differences, so-called "cultural filters". This explains why some norms are truly adopted while others are rejected. Only if there is a "normative fit" between exported norms and local norm standards, genuine norm import is possible. (Björkdahl et al., 2015:2) Acharya's (2004) earlier illustrated concept of norm localisation speaks to that by highlighting congruence and cultural matching between global and local norms. There is an academic consensus that norm import is simplified by a resonance between the promoted global and home-grown local norm. (Checkel, 1998) Thus, the local context determines the extent to which norm-takers consent with the exported norm.

Vandeputte and Bossuyt (2017), and Björkdahl et al. (2015) oppose the notion of mere dichotomy between acceptance and rejection, and rather distinguish four outcomes of consent: adoption, adaption, resistance and rejection. Adoption refers to acceptance and internalisation of international norms, which are fully translated into local practices. They "acquire a taken-for-granted quality and are no longer a matter of broad public debate." (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998:895) Norms that reach the stage of internalisation are no longer questioned and alternatives cede to exist. For instance, one of the most powerful political norms that has been globally internalised is the notion of the nation-state as the most effective form for political organisation. (ibid)

Next, adaption implies norm import whereby international norms have to be adapted and contextualised to meet local conditions. Nevertheless, the original content of the norm remains unaltered. Just the opposite can be observed with resistance. Here, the core value of local normative standards is maintained while global norms are only imported to a minimal extent as they do not comply with local practices. (Björkdahl et al., 2015) Finally, rejection results from an incompatibility between international and domestic norms. (Vandeputte & Bossuyt, 2017) Such fundamental norm clashes prevent any genuine norm import. African states experienced this after gaining independence: while they were cautious to protect their newly achieved independence, territorial integrity and the principle of non-interference, Europe promoted the pooling of decision-making power and sovereignty on a regional level to enhance cooperation. (Acharya, 2011; Lenz, 2013; Sicurelli, 2010)

These deep normative differences may not only lead to rejection though, but also have an impact on the nature of the diffused norm. Local agents have the opportunity to formally adopt the new norm without actually implementing it. They rather interpret it in a new way and offer own understandings of the international norm. This phenomenon is labelled "decoupling, that is the delinking between imported norms and practices and their subsequent functioning in the new context." (Lenz, 2013:219) It allows the formal adoption

of legitimated international norms while simultaneously maintaining own domestic normative standards and behaviour. In the applied conceptual framework of Acharya (2004), this is referred to as norm localisation. External norms are only imported to a limited extent as they are made congruent with already existing local norms.

Decoupling prevails within EU-AU relations since the EU struggles to generate and advertise truly common values that are imported by African countries beyond the superficial level. (Murray, 2009) Despite the EU's efforts in norm diffusion, real norm import is limited on the African receiving side. Or in Murray's (ibid) words: "[…] it can be argued that there is no clear evidence of political or behavioural norm acceptance". The AU's norm import remains – despite signing several formalised partnership agreements with the EU – superficial and declaratory. Imitation of the European model serves the purpose to enhance the region's identity and legitimacy, not to embrace regional integration as a virtue on its own. This reinterpretation of regional integration in the African context points to decoupling. Imported norms are delinked from their original meaning and thus fulfil a different purpose in the new environment. Björkdahl and Elgström (2015) even cast doubt on any genuine norm transfer between the EU and AU. In addition, in his study about European promotion of regional integration in East Asia, Murray (2009) found only little substantiated evidence to trace policy changes back to EU norm diffusion. Henceforth, it can be assumed that institutional and policy changes within the AU as indicators of genuine norm import and direct result of European norm export are limited. Thus, the third and fourth central argument can be formulated:

CA3: *The AU formally adopts but does not genuinely import regional integration as a political norm exported by the EU.*

CA4: *Only limited traceable institutional and policy changes within the AU as a result of EU norm diffusion are visible.*

2.4. SUMMARY

The literature review synthesised existing academic works on regional integration, interregionalism and norm diffusion. It has shown that the EU follows the narrative of open regionalism and seeks to spread its regionalist model across the globe. Its promotion is an integral part of the Union's foreign policy. The EU is particularly influential within the African Union, being a powerful external agent that employs several norm diffusion mechanisms to export open regionalism as a political norm. For that purpose, it makes use of

positive conditionality and capacity-building. Nevertheless, the acceptance and implementation of regional integration depends on the AU as the norm-taker. There are only limited indications that the AU is genuinely importing the diffused EU norm. To a greater extent, the African Union formally adopts them without actual internalisation and traceable institutional and policy changes. The four derived central arguments are tested throughout the analysis to answer the research questions.

The four central arguments are summarised and assigned to the research questions in Figure 6.

FIGURE 6. LINK BETWEEN RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND CENTRAL ARGUMENTS

Aim	Objectives	Research Questions	Central Arguments
Exploring AU import of European promoted regional integration	Revealing EU diffusion channels for exporting its own type of regional integration to Africa	RQ1: What type of regional integration does the EU attempt to pursue in Africa? RQ2: How does the EU promote regional integration within the AU?	CA1: The EU, a pioneer of interregionalism, aims at promoting its own model of open regionalism to the AU. CA2: The EU spreads open regionalism mainly through positive conditionality and capacity-building.
	Revealing AU receptivity to regional integration as a political norm	RQ3: Does the AU genuinely import regional integration as a political norm?	CA3: The AU formally adopts but does not genuinely import regional integration as a political norm exported by the EU.
	Tracing back AU norm import to EU norm diffusion	RQ4: Can AU institutional and policy changes be traced back to EU norm diffusion?	CA4: Only limited traceable institutional and policy changes within the AU as a result of EU norm diffusion are visible.

Source: The figure was compiled by the author.

3. HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

In order to analyse the African Union's response to European diffusion of regional integration, it is crucial to understand the background in which the AU emerged and how its ties to the EU developed. This chapter provides an overview of regional integration processes in colonial and independent Africa before going into detail about Africa-Europe interregional relations since the early 20th century.

3.1. AFRICAN REGIONAL INTEGRATION

Looking back at the historical development of regional integration in Africa does justice to the uniqueness of the African Union. Instead of considering it as a mere by-product of the global pursuit of regional governance or as a copy of the European Union, its own roots and distinct raison d'être need to be respected. Hence, the AU deserves research within its own context and requires studies that take into account its history and characteristic features.

To begin with, regionalism is not a recent phenomenon on the continent. (Arfsten, 2018) Shaw et al. (2003) clarify that African regionalism has an ironic history with its origin in colonial times. Western powers promoted regional integration and created trading blocs among its neighbouring colonies to facilitate the extraction and export of minerals. For instance, France installed the federations French West Africa (1895-1960) as well as French Equatorial Africa (1910-1960), and the United Kingdom combined its colonial territories at the Southern tip of Africa under the Southern African Customs Union in 1903. (Adedeji, 2012)

While colonial regionalism had the purpose to link neighbouring colonies to maximise economic profits for colonial powers, initial self-owned regional integration efforts in Africa aimed at political liberation from foreign domination. (Clapham, 1996) The founding stone of this home-grown regional integration was laid by the ideology of Pan-Africanism, which dates back to the liberation struggle of African-Americans in the 19th century. (Mathews, 2018) In essence, "Pan-Africanism is a recognition of the fragmented nature of the existence of Africans, their marginalization and alienation". (Murithi, 2005:7) It calls for social solidarity among all people of African descent on the African continent as well as in the African Diaspora and aims at political, economic and cultural emancipation. As its core value, it embraces pride in Blackness and Africanness in the pursuit of a self-determined life. The Pan-African Congresses between 1900 and 1945 consolidated Pan-Africanism as a political

ideology. Pan-Africanism paved the way for systematic decolonisation in Africa and laid the foundation for an organisation that intended to unite the entire continent. (Don Nanjira, 2010)

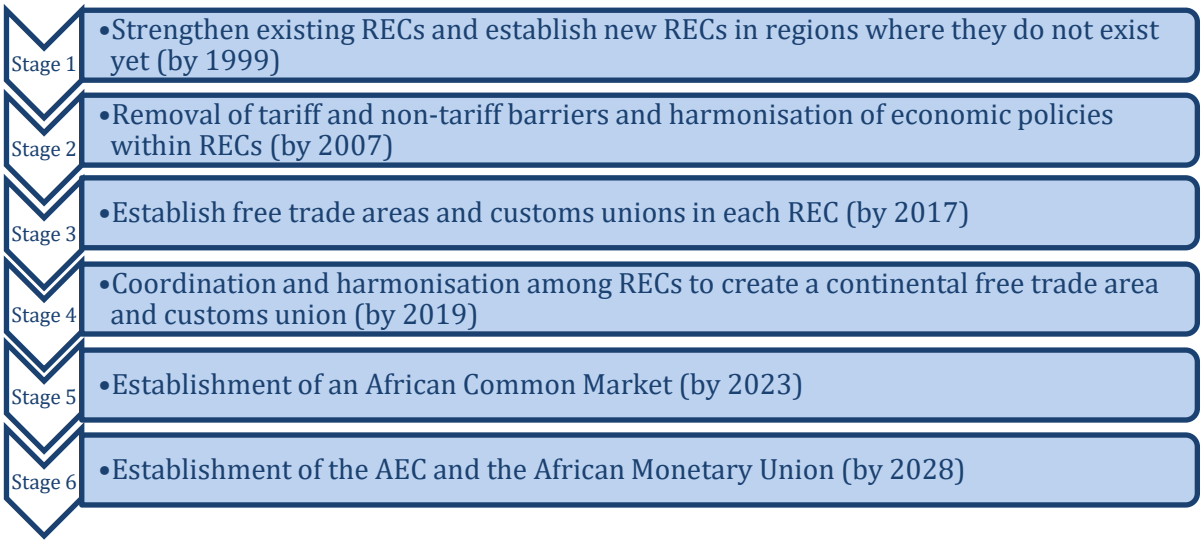
In the 1960s, African leaders envisioned a continental organisation to affirm the continent's newly won independence and unity. However, the nature of this organisation was contested among the first postcolonial regional groupings, which were formed along geographic and linguistic lines mirroring Africa's artificial division. The Brazzaville Group consisted of twelve Francophone African states that maintained close political and economic relations among each other and with their former patron France. Absorbing the members of the Brazzaville Group, the larger Monrovia Group emerged in May 1961 comprising twenty moderate, pro-Western Francophone countries. (ibid) It called for a gradualist approach towards African unity, starting with vague economic and cultural cooperation. (Genge, Kornegay and Rule, 2000) On the contrary, the Casablanca Group of seven socialist-oriented African countries was launched in January 1961 with the purpose of promoting extensive continental integration. The alliance hence advocated an immediate and far-reaching political union, and made a passionate plea for the establishment of the United States of Africa. (ibid) Members of the Brazzaville and Monrovia Group opposed such a political union, as they were not willing to renounce national sovereignty and independent statehood. Instead, they rather sought "a loose organization that acted like a 'club' or association, but had no enforcement authority over African states." (Don Nanjira, 2010:257)

These political and ideological differences revealed that the rhetoric of Pan-Africanism and solidarity just served the purpose to cover deepening cleavage lines among the newly independent governments. The great majority of African rulers proved strongly reluctant to cede any national power to a continental institution. (Clapham, 1996) Consequently, the ultimate foundation of the Organisation of African Unity in 1963 bears witness of major compromises and constitutes "certainly a diplomatic triumph", which should not be taken for granted. (ibid:110) The demands of the moderate Monrovia Group prevailed, visible in the OAU's protection of member states' statehood and territorial integrity through the retention of the colonial border lines. Clapham (ibid) claims that the final OAU perfectly reflected the principle of juridical sovereignty without any aspirations of being a supranational authority.

The organisation's fragile set-up put any further political integration on hold. Yet, it initiated further cooperation in the economic sphere. In 1980, the Lagos Plan of Action for the

Development of Africa moved for ending economic dependence on European powers and accomplishing collective self-reliance. (Mathews, 2018) Following the Abuja Treaty in 1991, the African Economic Community (AEC) was initiated, which envisaged free trade areas, customs unions, a single market and eventually an economic and monetary union in line with the linear market approach. Figure 7 displays the six stages required in the Abuja Treaty to achieve the AEC.

FIGURE 7. STAGES OF AFRICAN ECONOMIC INTEGRATION



Source: The figure was compiled with data from OAU (1991), UNECA (n.d.) and Arfsten (2018:20).

The OAU granted unconditional membership and hence included all (by the time of its creation) 32 independent and self-governed African states regardless of their governmental systems. Article II of the OAU Charter (OAU, 1963) listed up promotion of unity and solidarity, defence of members' sovereignty, and eradication of colonialism in Africa amongst its main objectives. The prescribed consolidation of sovereign statehood and territorial integrity of member states implied the principle of non-interference. The organisation had no competences in members' national affairs, as it has been constructed to protect instead of threatening individual sovereignty. This safeguarding of national sovereignty was upheld to prevent intra-African state conflicts and to protect the continent from foreign domination. (Clapham, 1996)

Nevertheless, the OAU's extremely limited capabilities and passive posture also offered impunity for postcolonial leaders. Growing nationalism, emerging dictatorships and increasing numbers of military coups were left unscathed since the organisation had no mandate to intervene. The stringent protection of state sovereignty and maxim of non-

interference rendered the OAU powerless. (South African History Online, 2011) With the spread of violence and armed conflicts during the 1980s, "the failure of juridical statehood as a formula for resolving domestic conflicts became increasingly evident." (Clapham, 1996:116) The OAU had to admit its own inadequate competences for which its limited charter was to be blamed. The weak compromise that had enabled its foundation "turned out to be as well the cause of its dissolution". (Arfsten, 2018:3) Besides, the OAU's narrowly defined mandate of decolonisation became redundant with the end of South Africa's Apartheid regime in 1994. A reform was inevitable.

At the turn of the millennium, a new generation of African leaders reinterpreted the doctrine of Pan-Africanism as a call to take the continent's destiny in own hands. (Mathews, 2018) This so-called African Renaissance sought to strengthen the institutional framework of the continental organisation and to equip it with the necessary mandate to address Africa's pressing challenges. Accordingly, the new interpretation of the Pan-Africanist ideology as African Renaissance encouraged deeper regional integration within a powerful political entity. (ibid) In 2001, Africa's political leaders agreed on a reconceptualisation of the OAU and transformed it into the African Union. The revised Union was launched in 2002 with clear-cut organs: the AU Assembly comprising all Heads of State and Government as the main decision-making body, the Executive Council as its counterpart on the ministerial level, the AU Commission as the executive branch, and the Pan-African Parliament as well as the Economic, Social and Cultural Council as advisory boards. (OAU, 2000) The AU Constitutive Act transfers profound competences in a range of policy fields upon the Union, even including highly sensitive peace and security affairs. Special progress has been made in regards to regional integration. Article 3 of the Constitutive Act (ibid) aims at accelerating "the political and socio-economic integration of the continent" and at promoting "sustainable development at the economic, social and cultural levels as well as the integration of African economies".

To achieve its objectives, the AU recognises eight Regional Economic Communities[2] that harmonise integration efforts on the regional and continental level. The RECs were established as sub-regional building blocks for the AEC's realisation and, since then, have formed the basis for continental economic integration. (AU, n.d.) The relationship between

[2] The AU recognises eight RECs: the East African Community, the Economic Community of West African States, the Southern African Development Community, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, the Economic Community of Central African States, the Community of Sahel Saharan States, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and the Arab Maghreb Union. (AU, n.d.)

the AU and its RECs is governed by the Abuja Treaty, the AU Constitutive Act and the 2008 Protocol on Relations between the RECs and the AU. (ibid) But despite improved coordination under the AU Minimum Integration Programme (MIP) that functions as a "connecting link or common denominator for African continental integration players" (AU, 2009:7), the relation between the AU and its RECs remains characterised by missing coherence and unclear division of labour visible in overlapping memberships and incompatible or even contradicting integration agendas. (Kagame, 2017) Sub-regional economic integration evolves at a faster pace and on more affirmative grounds than its continental counterpart. The RECs' independent development has led to a double-tracked African regional integration with separated processes on the continental and sub-regional level. (Nagar & Nganje, 2018) This disconnect can be seen as a unique feature of African regionalism that hinders any speedy progress. Scholars therefore claim that "the pace and depth of [African] integration are for the most part disappointing." (Corrigan, 2015:25)

Apart from this, looking at the historical evolution of the AU and its predecessor OAU, undeniable progress has been made towards more intense regional integration. (Welz, 2013) The African Regional Integration Index in 2016 detected deeper regional integration most notably in trade and free movement of people. Amongst the RECs, the East African Community is the top performer in regional integration overall. (AU, African Development Bank and UNECA, 2016) The African Union has not only stepped up as a powerful actor in Africa's political and economic development, it has furthermore institutionalised continental cooperation in a much broader scale, including economic, financial, social, environmental and security policies. While the OAU was limited to mere administrative functions, the AU enjoys a mandate for coordination, monitoring and implementation. (OAU, 2000) In addition, it created a wide range of programmes to stimulate further regional cooperation like the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) and the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA). Each of these initiatives promotes a different aspect of integration: the market-based NEPAD focuses on socio-economic development, APRM consolidates principles of good governance and PIDA strengthens the infrastructural system to facilitate intra-African trade.

To bundle all these diverse efforts under one overarching framework, the Agenda 2063 was launched in 2013. It outlines the AU's strategy for the continent's qualitative transformation. (AU Commission, 2015) The agenda includes flagship projects to achieve a prosperous and peaceful Africa within an overall period of 50 years. Although all of these initiatives have the

ultimate goal to unite the continent, one project stands out due to its significance for regional integration. The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) – adopted in March 2018, entered into force in May 2019 and launched in July 2019 – constitutes "a milestone for future continental unity, regional integration and deeper economic ties." (Parshotam, 2018:3) Trading under the new AfCFTA's conditions will begin in July 2020. If fully implemented, it will be more than a traditional free trade agreement since it also contains certain elements of a single market, especially concerning trade in goods and services, investments, competition policies and intellectual property rights. (UNECA, AU and African Development Bank, 2017) Hence, the AfCFTA will implement crucial steps of the AEC and will form the basis for a prospective African Economic and Monetary Union.

To sum up, it can be argued that an extensive institutional architecture has been established to trigger further political and economic integration on the regional as well as continental level with the AU as the primary actor. (Nagar & Nganje, 2018) Thereby, the AU has increased its agency on the world stage and has become a powerful voice in negotiations with other regions. While, over the last two centuries, external actors have largely determined Africa's political development, intensified regional integration efforts have enhanced the continent's actorness in shaping its own destiny. (Carbone, 2013a) The evolution of the interregional relationship between Africa and Europe affirms the former's bolstered position.

3.2. AFRICA – EUROPE RELATIONS

Since its early beginnings, the EU (and its predecessor organisations) maintained close relations to its geographical neighbours on the African continent. Taylor (2016:98) calls these linkages "typical core–periphery relations […] springing from the historical colonial relationship between Europe and Africa". During Europe's imperialism in the 19th and early 20th century, the notion of 'EurAfrica' was prominently used to describe an alleged interdependence and complementarity of the two world regions. The destiny of Europe and Africa was said to be predetermined and naturally linked. (Martin, 2002) It mainly served the interests of colonial powers as a justification for their political oppression, economic exploitation and cultural subjugation. From the European perspective, Africa was a reservoir of natural resources and cheap labour forces that could be used for Europe's advantages. (Hansen & Johnson, 2015) As a result, "Europe's socio-economic development became a perfect corollary of Africa's underdevelopment." (Matlosa, 2018:85)

With the start of the European integration project, colonial powers were mostly concerned with maintaining preferential trade conditions with their overseas territories. Hence, the Schuman Declaration in 1950, which initiated the European Coal and Steel Community, emphasised Africa's importance for Europe. (Rein, 2017) France, Belgium, Italy and the Netherlands aimed at intensifying European integration and simultaneously safeguarding the historical links to their empires. Their interests were formally recognised in the Treaty of Rome in 1957 as the agreement establishing the European Economic Community (EEC) also ensured economic and financial association of colonies with the European market by introducing a free trade area. (Centre Virtuel de la Connaissance sur l'Europe, 2019)

However, in the 1960s, the relations between Europe and its colonies were radically modified when colonial empires crumbled and third-world countries emerged as independent players on the international stage. (ibid) With the dawn of independence, 18 former French colonies renegotiated the trading conditions with the EEC and agreed on the Yaoundé Convention I and II in 1963 and 1969 respectively. Based on Article 132 of the Treaty of Rome (European Union, 1957), the EEC applied the same trading terms to the African states as they accorded to each other and thus installed a trade regime of reciprocal preference. Due to the integrated principle of reciprocity, the agreement was a mere continuation of colonial trade regulations and was therefore "deemed a neo-colonial engagement with francophone Africa dressed in the guise of development aid." (Kotsopoulos & Mattheis, 2018:449)

The tables turned with the United Kingdom's accession to the European Communities (EC) in 1973. Trade relations had to be adapted for including the Commonwealth countries, especially the Anglophone countries in Africa. The strong demand to broaden the scope of EC-Africa cooperation led to the comprehensive Lomé Convention in 1975, including all – by that time – 46 states of the African, Caribbean and Pacific alliance. (Adedeji, 2012) Coinciding with the rising political ideology of 'Third Worldism' and the desire for a New International Economic Order, the ACP countries enjoyed a strong negotiation position. (Taylor, 2016; Kotsopoulos & Mattheis, 2018) Their advocacy for a substantial reform of North-South relations between developed and developing countries was successful: The Lomé Agreement offered non-reciprocal trade benefits for the ACP states by granting them open access to the European market for primary goods. (Akokpari, 2017) A special mechanism – known as the System for the Stabilisation of Export Earnings – compensated exporting nations for a fall in commodity prices. Yet, many agricultural products were protected by the EC's Common

Agricultural Policy and thus exempted from the customs-free export. Additionally, EC members continued to enjoy preferential access in ACP markets in line with the Most Favoured Nation Treatment. Henceforth, Tibazarwa (1994) argues that the proclaimed free and non-reciprocal market access was significantly restricted and undermined. The envisioned socio-economic development progress in ACP countries failed to materialise.

The Lomé Convention regulated the trade between the ACP and EC (later EU) for 25 years until its expiration in 2000. After growing critique on its non-compliance with regulations of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), it was replaced by the newly signed Cotonou Agreement. In contrast to the previous pure trade deals, Cotonou presents an explicitly political agreement highlighting political dialogue and partnership. (Hurt, 2003; Kotsopoulos & Mattheis, 2018) It comprehensively covers and guides trade, aid, and development policies between the EU's 28 members and the 79 ACP countries. (Akokpari, 2017) The introduced development-trade nexus mirrors the new European approach for development whereby trade replaces aid. (Farrell, 2009; 2013)

For its aim to fully integrate ACP states into the world economy, the Cotonou Partnership sets a common agenda for poverty reduction and sustainable economic growth. (Carbone, 2013b) Instead of only regulating trade of goods, it expands North-South relations to the commonly known Singapore Issues including investment, competition and intellectual property. (Farrell, 2009) Besides, by including provisions on human rights, good governance, and environmental protection, the partnership politicises the interregional relation and introduces negative conditionality of aid. Hurt (2003:161) pictures this development as a significant shift in the Africa-EU relationship "from one of co-operation to one of coercion."

Notwithstanding the broadened scope of the agreement, the greatest reform is the end of non-reciprocity. In order to be compatible with WTO rules, the ACP members have to open up their local markets for European products and remove trade barriers. (Taylor, 2016) For that reason, the Cotonou Agreement marks a return to the colonial and early postcolonial notion of reciprocity. This transformation is especially visible in the departure from preferential trade regimes to free trade arrangements called Economic Partnership Agreements. EPAs, which were brought forth as "instruments for development", promise to boost Africa's economic growth through extensive trade liberalisation and reciprocal market access. (Akokpari, 2017:56) With that said, the increasing influence of neoliberalism on the EU-Africa relation does not come unexpected. (Farrell, 2013; Hurt, 2003) Neoliberalism

requires open markets and removal of any customs tariffs. But given the economic imbalance between the EU and the ACP states, European countries accepted an asymmetrical liberalisation meaning that ACP countries do not have to respond with the same level of market opening as the EU: while EU member states have to guarantee 100% market access, ACP states only need to open up 75% of their domestic markets. (Sanders, 2015) This arrangement intends to protect domestic infant industries and sensitive products from international competition.

The EPA negotiations began in 2002. However, instead of collectively negotiating with all EU and ACP countries like in previous agreements, the ACP alliance was divided into seven configurations (Southern Africa, East Africa, Eastern and Southern Africa, West Africa, Central Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific) and negotiations started with each region individually. (Akokpari, 2017) Given the ACP states' concerns and great scepticism of the new trade conditions, only one EPA with the Caribbean region was concluded by the deadline in December 2007. In consequence, the EU exerted enormous pressure and tightened its grip on negotiation partners by presenting EPAs as the only viable alternative and threatening to close down its market for ACP imports. (Hurt, 2003; Akokpari, 2017; Stevens, 2013) In addition, it commenced talks with individual countries at the expense of regional negotiations.

Therefore, Sanders (2015) claims that an economic partnership is in fact a bilateral agreement between the collective EU and an individual African state. Up until today, the EU managed to conclude three EPAs with African sub-regions. Nonetheless, only the EPA with Southern Africa is fully operational. The partnership between the EU and Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa and Swaziland was signed in 2016 and entered into force in 2018. (European Commission, 2019a) While the EPA with the East African group – signed in 2014 – remains to be ratified, the agreement with 16 West African states has been stalled. Only Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire joined a temporary EPA with provisional application. The two other African configurations (Central Africa, and Eastern and Southern Africa) have only concluded interim EPAs, which are provisionally applied by Cameroon since 2014 and Madagascar, Mauritius, Zimbabwe and the Seychelles since 2012. (European Commission, 2019b)

In summary, economic cooperation between Africa and Europe has altered significantly over the last 60 years. Figure 8 presents a brief timeline.

FIGURE 8. AFRICA – EUROPE ECONOMIC COOPERATION

Source: The figure was compiled with data from Kotsopoulos & Mattheis (2018) and Taylor (2016).

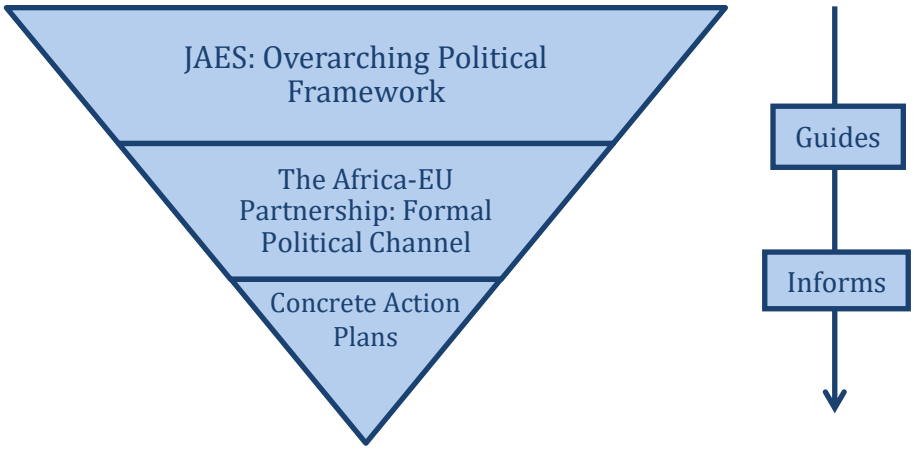
As already stated, next to economic cooperation, the Cotonou Partnership also strengthened political ties between Africa and Europe. In 2000, political dialogue was formalised within the first EU-Africa Summit in Cairo, Egypt, whereby the relationship gained "a truly bi-regional dimension". (Bach, 2008:359) The summit recognised Africa's growing strategic importance by establishing the Africa-EU Partnership. It is the official political channel through which the two continents cooperate and engage in policy dialogue. (AU & EU, 2018) It can be considered the beginning of a highly institutionalised relation under the slogan 'One Europe, One Africa', comprising summits, ministerial troikas, Commission-to-Commission meetings and joint programmes. This was further intensified in 2002 by the launch of the African Union, through which the EU gained an African continental counterpart with similar structures and interests. (Rein, 2017) The newly created AU enhanced the African assertiveness and ownership of the cooperation process. Nevertheless, the following summits rhetorically remained between the EU and Africa, since the non-AU member Morocco – a strategically important partner of the EU – was always included. (Bach, 2008) This only changed in 2017 when Morocco's accession to the AU allowed for official bonds between the EU and AU. (Kotsopoulos & Mattheis, 2018)

In 2005, the European Union adopted the EU Strategy for Africa, being the first EU policy that addressed Africa collectively as a single entity. (Rein, 2017) It sought to coordinate the Union's as well as its member states' various Africa policies from different policy fields like development, trade, migration, and peace and security. Though, despite enabling a more coherent EU policy towards Africa, the strategy was questioned by African states as it had been unilaterally initiated without any consultation of African stakeholders. Thus, two years later at the second EU-Africa summit in Lisbon, Portugal, the Joint Africa-EU Strategy was signed. JAES is the overarching long-term framework for EU-Africa relations that functions as a political guideline for the interregional partnership. (AU & EU, 2018)

It set out to streamline the highly fragmented system of bilateral, regional and continental interaction between the EU, its individual members, the AU and the eight RECs. At its core, it

entails the following four priority areas: "(a) peace and security, (b) governance and human rights, (c) trade and regional integration and (d) key development issues." (AU & EU, 2007:4) Based on JAES's result-oriented approach, these centrepieces shall be implemented through concrete, measurable short-term action plans. Since 2007, each of the past four AU-EU summits produced a short-term action plan: 2008-2010 First Action Plan at the 2nd Summit in Lisbon, Portugal; 2011-2013 Second Action Plan at the 3rd Summit in Tripoli, Libya; 2014-2017 Roadmap at the 4th Summit in Brussels, Belgium; and the 2018-2020 Abidjan Action Plan at the 5th Summit in Abidjan, Ivory Coast. (Rein, 2017) Figure 9 illustrates the dynamics between the Africa-EU Partnership, JAES and the action plans.

FIGURE 9. AFRICA – EUROPE POLITICAL COOPERATION



Source: The figure was compiled with data from AU & EU (2018).

As an agenda-setting instrument, JAES extends the scope of cooperation into various new areas like environmental protection, migration, peacebuilding and science. Thereby, the cooperation has moved beyond the historical donor-recipient relationship towards a "partnership of equals". (Mangala, 2013:8) This shift has to be understood firstly against the backdrop of a multipolar world order requiring multilateralism and new alliances with emerging countries, and secondly in the light of the EU's growing membership of Central and Eastern European countries that do not hold any colonial connections to Africa. It follows that the deeply-rooted partnership cannot be solely explained anymore by reference to the colonial past, but must be comprehended as a recognition of Africa's increasing strategic significance for Europe. (ibid) Considering this broader picture, "the JAES stands out as a unique experiment in EU-Africa relations in particular, and in the realm of interregional relations in general." (ibid:241)

The chapter's overview of the historical development of African regional integration puts the current EU-AU relation into context. Over the last 60 years, the partnership between the two organisations has not only been heavily formalised but also widened to various policy fields. Today, the alliance between Europe and Africa is the most institutionalised relationship in the world. (Farrell, 2013) These strong interregional bonds constitute the basic requirement for the European diffusion of regional integration and the AU's acceptance thereof.

4. EU DIFFUSION OF REGIONAL INTEGRATION

This analytical chapter links the two concepts of interregionalism and norm diffusion in order to investigate European diffusion of regional integration. Throughout the analysis, the aforementioned four central arguments are tested. To begin with, the dissertation elaborates on the EU's general perception on regional integration and the legal basis for its regional integration promotion. Then, specific EU channels for norm export are identified.

4.1. EU PROMOTION OF REGIONAL INTEGRATION

The European Union perceives regional integration as a desirable system of governance to acquire global peace, stability and prosperity. (European Commission, 2019d) This intrinsic motivation for its own integration also informs its external relations whereby regionalism represents the EU's preferred model of world order. (Hettne & Söderbaum, 2005) Multilateralism is the cornerstone of any EU external action, enshrined in the General Provisions on the Union's External Action of the TEU. (EU, 2007) On top of that, the EU advocates an international system based on "multiregionalism", referring to an international community of regions rather than nation-states. (ibid:17) The European Union Global Strategy declares support for "cooperative regional orders worldwide". (EU, 2016:10) Henceforth, the promotion of regional integration is an integral part of the EU's external policies, in which it prefers interactions with other formal regional organisations to bilateral relations. (Bach, 2008) These highly institutionalised interregional activities form the basis of the EU foreign policy framework. (Söderbaum & Van Langenhove, 2005)

The emphasis on interregionalism can be traced back to the very start of European region-building. Since its foundation, the EU and its predecessors have supported integration processes in other parts of the globe. However, this assistance became much more explicit after the end of the Cold War when the Union managed to increase its external agency on the global scale. (Farrell, 2009) By promoting regional integration, it expanded its scope of influence in international politics. Spreading regional integration follows a dual strategy: it constructs a regional order at the global level, and it consolidates the EU's global presence and agency. (ibid) In addition, it strengthens the Union's internal coherence and own regionalist ideology. Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier (2005) call this phenomenon "reinforcement by support", whereby the EU's identity was forged through its ability to project itself on others.

In consequence of the EU's intensified self-image of being a global actor, it presents itself as a role model and assumes an advisory function to other regional integration projects. (Hettne & Söderbaum, 2005; Murray, 2009) The former President of the European Commission, Romano Prodi, encouraged other regions to follow the European example by stating:

> "Our European model of integration is the most developed in the world. Imperfect though it still is, it nevertheless works on a continental scale. […] and I believe we can make a convincing case that it would also work globally." (Prodi quoted in Rosamond, 2005:473)

The conviction that the EU model is worthy of global application creates the opportunity to export European norms within the promotion of regional integration. (Farrell, 2009) Interregionalism facilitates this norm transfer. Norm diffusion is driven by the European Commission, who is also the key actor in interregional dialogues and activities. It acknowledges the realist tendencies of norm export: "The EU does not try to impose its system on others, but is not shy about its values […] open markets, economic growth and a political system based on social responsibility and democracy." (European Commission, 2007) These neoliberal values indicate the EU's strategy to channel existing regional efforts towards the specific type of open regionalism featuring market-orientation and trade liberalisation.

The Union spreads norms on the basis of its international image as a civilian and normative power, which is obliged by its founding treaty to act according to its values. (Telò, 2009) In line with the notion of Normative Power Europe, its foreign policy is norm-driven. The Treaty on European Union (EU, 2007: Article 21.1 TEU) asserts that "the Union's action on the international scene shall be guided by the principles which have inspired its own creation". The article prescribes not only an organisation built upon common values and norms; it also demands the active promotion of these norms on the global level. Norm diffusion is thus embedded in the EU's legal framework. To be more specific, the treaty entails explicit provisions on interregionalism and the advancement of regional integration in other regions. Article 21.1 and 21.2 (e) of the TEU (ibid) set the objective to build multilateral partnerships with regional organisations and to encourage the integration of countries into the world economy. To achieve the latter, the European Commission issued a milestone document in 2008 called 'Regional integration for development in ACP countries'. (European Commission, 2008) The document established the promotion of regional

integration as an EU policy doctrine and outlined the roadmap of EU support for regional integration in developing countries. Since then, the European Commission includes clauses aiming at the promotion of regional integration in partnership agreements with regional organisations, like the Cotonou Agreement with the ACP-alliance, the EPAs with sub-regional groupings or the JAES with the African Union. (Farrell, 2009; Söderbaum & Van Langenhove, 2005; Babarinde & Wright, 2013) EU regional support includes five priority areas: strengthening of regional institutions, building regional integrated markets, supporting business development, connecting regional infrastructure networks, and developing regional policies for sustainable development. (European Commission, 2008)

Furthermore, the Commission's document installed the assistance for regional integration as "a fundamental tenet of EU development policy and EU-ACP relations." (ibid:10) This is reinforced by the Joint Declaration of the European Parliament, the Council of the EU, the European Council, and the European Commission (2017) on 'The new European Consensus on Development: Our World, Our Dignity, Our Future'. The Joint Declaration identified regional integration as a cornerstone of socio-economic development. It states: "The EU will continue to promote trade and regional integration as key drivers of growth and poverty reduction in developing countries." (ibid:11) This emphasis on region-building within the EU development policy is in accordance with the Treaty of Lisbon of 2007, which marked the paradigm shift in development from aid to trade. (Carbone, 2013a; Farrell, 2013) It altered the structure of EU external policies by connecting foreign, trade and development policies. The remodelling and strengthening of its competences raised the EU onto a supranational level with binding legislative powers over its member states. European countries ceded national competences to a superordinate authority in favour of enhanced regional integration. This internal transformation was supposed to streamline the Union's external policies and to enhance the profile of the EU as a powerful global actor. (Mangala, 2013)

4.2. EU CHANNELS FOR NORM EXPORT

Having established the legal framework for EU promotion of regional integration, this part of the analysis aims at detecting concrete EU programmes that serve as norm export channels to promote African regional integration processes. According to Farrell (2009:1178), "regional integration policy is nested within a broad range of policy instruments". The dissertation at hand has already ascertained that the EU presents a crucial external agent in regional integration in Africa and diffuses regional integration as a political norm. The next step includes the application of the dissertation's conceptual norm diffusion framework. (See

Subchapter 1.4) Lenz (2013) distinguishes between military, civilian and normative power categories that entail diffusion mechanisms for the EU to spread norms in general. The question remains which exact channels the EU employs when interacting with the AU in the context of regional integration.

It should be noted that the European Union has a broad policy tool box at its disposal, which varies according to the promoted norm and targeted region. Especially the latter is a relevant variable, as the European support for African regional integration is much stronger than for other regions. (Söderbaum, 2007; Hettne & Söderbaum, 2005) In comparison, the EU's promotion of regional integration is pursued most explicitly within its external relations to Africa. (Farrell, 2009) While region-building in Africa is an EU policy priority, this does not hold true for its interregional relations with Asia. The EU approach depends on the regional distribution of power as well as the partner region's relative strength. (Hettne & Söderbaum, 2005) The promotion of regional integration is linked to regional asymmetries; "it occurs in situations where a less coherent integration arrangement engages with a 'stronger' external other." (Doidge, 2012:76) For instance, EU-Africa relations are frequently labelled to be asymmetrical compared to the Asia – Europe Meeting, which is considered a partnership among equals. (Akokpari, 2017; Farrell, 2009) The more balanced cooperation with Asian regional organisations limits the EU capacity for projecting its norms. Farrell (2009) explains that the greater political and economic equivalence between Europe and Asia prevents the EU from exploiting power asymmetries and using conditionality. Hence, the asymmetrical relationship between the EU and AU has to be taken into account when analysing norm transfer.

To begin with, the normative power category for norm diffusion is investigated. The first diffusion mechanism is socialisation, implying a direct and active promotion of norms as legitimate and true. Political dialogue falls within this category. Political dialogue between the EU and AU is highly institutionalised under political partnership agreements. The European Commission (2008) identified political dialogue as a major instrument to support regional integration in ACP countries. It demanded to enhance dialogue on regional integration, for instance by initiating regular consultation, exchanges of experiences, and peer reviews. (ibid) This teaching and learning process should also be intensified with the establishment of interregional business and civil society forums.

However, even though the European Commission's milestone document on regional integration stressed the significance of political dialogue, it only included Africa as part of the ACP-grouping. Thus, JAES follows a continental approach and solely deals with interactions

between Africa and Europe. As one of its four main objectives, it states "to strengthen and promote […] regional and continental integration in Africa." (AU & EU, 2007:2) To ensure its implementation, the EU unilaterally installed the JAES Support Mechanism for which it dedicated €9.5 million between 2016 and 2018. (European Commission, 2014) This financial commitment indicates the importance of JAES's successful enforcement for the EU. Furthermore, JAES is realised through the Africa-EU Partnership, which "is driven through formal dialogue at various levels between African and European counterparts." (AU & EU, 2018) The most high-levelled political dialogue takes place within regular EU-AU Summits. African and European Heads of State and Government meet every three years to discuss the most pressing challenges and set priority areas for the upcoming period. Since 2007, all summits resulted in short-term action plans, which altogether identified political dialogue as a critical mean to boost regional integration in Africa. For example, in the 2014-2017 Roadmap, participants "agreed to pursue and deepen political dialogue and cooperation." (AU & EU, 2014:1)

Other forms of political engagement involve the annual AU-EU Commission-to-Commission meetings, the European Parliament – Pan-African Parliament Summit, the AU's Peace and Security Council – EU's Political and Security Committee annual joint consultative meetings, and ministerial meetings. The latter took place in January 2019 and produced a Joint Communiqué stating that "the EU, having experienced the multiple benefits of regional integration […], reaffirmed its commitment to share its own experience and partnership in regional integration and cooperation, to which it will lend its full support." (AU & EU, 2019:2) Next to institutional meetings, dialogue is also expanded to non-governmental stakeholders. The existing Africa-Europe youth summits, and business and civil society forums fulfil the requirements of the European Commission's milestone document. Overall, these undertaken efforts show the pivotal role that political dialogue and partnership agreements play in the spreading of regional integration as a political norm.

The second diffusion mechanism of normative power is emulation, meaning the indirect and passive export of norms via symbolic representation. The sender's legitimate and successful international image attracts others to imitate its behaviour. In the context of the EU, this mainly applies to the Union's self-presentation as a pioneer of regional integration and a role model for other regions. The EU's self-image as a forerunner of regional integration is an important variable in analysing its contribution to the global promotion of interregionalism. (Söderbaum, 2007) The European Commission (2008:3) affirms this by declaring: "The European experience is a point of reference for many ACP regions." The Union's success in

integrating the continent has been acknowledged by the interviewees. The EU is an inspiration from which many lessons can be learned. UNECA Official 1 (Interview on August 20, 2019 in Addis Ababa) clarifies: "Europe has good best practices that the African Union can also learn from." The dominant narrative of Normative Power Europe in combination with the EU's successful integration facilitates the passive norm export of regional integration.

Similar, but falling under Lenz's (2013) category of civilian power, is the passive norm diffusion mechanism of competition. Competition hints to the idea that a large, well-integrated market stimulates other actors to follow the example in order to profit from access to the created single market. UNECA Official 1 (2019) highlights the EU's success in establishing a functional internal market. Economic attraction – through the appeal of the EU's single market – is a powerful tool to project regional governance onto other regions who seek market access.

Next to competition, civilian power entails the active diffusion mechanism of rewards. Rewards manipulate the cost-benefit analysis of targeted regions by providing positive incentives. (Börzel & Risse, 2009) Applied to the EU, these incentives come in the form of capacity-building through technical and financial assistance. The European Union aims at the improvement of knowledge, skills and equipment to ensure the effectiveness of the AU. (Bach, 2008) Being the key cooperation partner and major sponsor, the EU finances a variety of different programmes to strengthen regional integration in Africa. In 2014, it launched the Pan-African Programme (PAP) to support the effective implementation of the Africa-EU Partnership. It is "the first ever EU plan for development and cooperation that covers Africa as a whole." (AU & EU, 2018)

In 2018, the PAP's annual action programme included two actions that explicitly addressed regional integration in Africa. Firstly, the 'Africa-EU Partnership Support Measures' – initiative complements the JAES Support Mechanism in reinforcing institutional and stakeholder dialogue. It "is to be considered the oil in the Africa-EU Partnership's engine" by allowing the EU to engage with African partners in a multiplicity of platforms. (EU, 2018a) It finances amongst others the logistical preparation of the AU-EU summits, ministerial meetings, Africa-Europe youth summits and business as well as civil society forums. Consequently, it raises public awareness on and visibility of the Africa-EU Partnership. The second action, the so-called 'African Union Support Programme IV' (AUSP IV), is the most

funded and hence also the most relevant component for the EU. (EU, 2018b) With an estimated cost of €30 million, it builds extensive capacity in the AU, more especially in the AU Commission. The AU Commission has been chosen to be the main recipient of EU funds as it is considered the driving force of integration. (Akokpari, 2017) The AUSP IV works towards "the objective to contribute to the AU Commission mission to become an efficient and value-adding institution". (European Commission, 2018a:2)

As AUSP IV has a direct impact on the AU structure, it is an effective tool to influence the institutional architecture of the AU. AUSPs have been providing funds and technical assistance since the establishment of the AU. To consolidate the newly set-up AU organs, the first AUSP (2006-2013) was equipped with €55 million. Official 2 at the UNECA (Interview on August 21, 2019 in Addis Ababa) remembers this flagship project and contends that "the EU has concretely supported integration in the continent financially and in terms of building capacity." Each AUSP is assigned to a certain short-term action plan under the Africa-EU Partnership and finances its implementation. "The AUSP series has been the key support instrument to the AU […] [with] a unique strategic value in influencing and advancing the AU institutional reform agenda and driving change in the AU." (European Commission, 2018a:5) In case of lacking political will by African leaders to internalise the endorsed reforms, the EU considers AUSPs useful as leverage. (ibid:4) This is what Lenz (2013) refers to as positive conditionality. The AU is only financially supported if it accepts the institutional guidelines and policy provisions by the EU.

The latest annual action programme of the Pan-African Programme in 2019 added another crucial action, namely the 'Contribution to the Africa Investment Platform in support of continental economic integration across Africa'. (EU, 2019) With an estimated cost of €90 million of the total PAP budget for 2019 of €101.5 million, this project assumes the biggest funds by far. It sets out to strengthen "regional integration with an emphasis on resilient continental/inter-regional infrastructure." (ibid:11) Therefore, it encourages the full implementation of the AfCFTA and supports the AU's infrastructural programme PIDA. Taken altogether, the actions under the PAP 2018 and 2019 have the common goal to stimulate deeper regional integration within the AU framework. Although each project has its own individual focus on political dialogue, free trade, infrastructure or institution-building, they all represent EU norm diffusion channels for regional integration.

In complementarity with the Pan-African Programme, the European Commission introduced the 'Africa-Europe Alliance for Sustainable Investment and Jobs' in September 2018. One of its four pillars is the reinforcement of the AfCFTA, since the EU "made it a key priority to tap the potential of Africa's continental economic integration and boost trade relations". (AU & EU, 2018) For that purpose, the European Commission offers an additional €50 million for the AfCFTA negotiation process. (European Commission, 2018b) At the adoption of the AfCFTA in March 2018, the EU had immediately offered its assistance for the implementation procedure. Since then, "the EU has expressed its continued support (politically, technically and financially) towards African continental integration, and notably the AfCFTA, on numerous occasions." (European Commission, 2018c) The Union's greater aim is to accomplish a continent-to-continent free trade agreement between Africa and Europe. The AfCFTA is thus seen as a stepping stone for further interregional cooperation and trade.

Next to financial and technical assistance for economic regional integration to the AU, the EU is concerned with institutional capacity-building within the sub-regional RECs. Given their high quantity, this dissertation cannot go into detail in the individual programmes. Nevertheless, the fact that the EU put up Regional Integration Support Mechanisms for Southern Africa, East Africa, and Eastern and Southern Africa, as well as Regional Indicative Programmes for West Africa, East Africa and Southern Africa implies strong European commitment. (European Commission, 2019c) Promoting regional integration is not only an EU priority area on the continental level, but also on the sub-regional level. The interviewed UNECA Official 2 (2019) stresses this double-track support: "The EU has been very influential in structuring and shaping African regional integration both, at the continental level […] and the sub-regional level." The RECs are sustained by capacity-building and the deployment of trained staff. All in all, the outlined EU programmes providing capacity-building through technical and financial assistance clearly reveal enormous EU interest in promoting regional integration in Africa. The wide range of action plans in conjunction with the notable amount of spent money do not leave any doubt that the EU attempts to influence the African Union in line with its own interests. Capacity-building as well as technical and financial assistance constitute the key EU norm export channels.

Another norm diffusion mechanism under civilian power is the conclusion of trade agreements. Negotiations for trade agreements are particularly helpful to spread the notion of economic regional integration. (Kotsopoulos & Mattheis, 2018) For instance, Article 47 of the Lomé Convention (ACP & EEC, 1975) manifests that "the Community shall provide

effective assistance for attaining […] regional and interregional cooperation. This assistance shall aim to: (a) accelerate economic co-operation and development both within and between the regions of the ACP States." Almost the exact wording can be found in the most recent trade agreement between the EU and ACP-countries. Article 28.1 of the Cotonou Partnership Agreement (ACP & EU, 2000) states: "ACP-EU cooperation shall provide effective assistance to achieve […] regional cooperation and integration." Article 28.2 (b) continues: "ACP-EU cooperation shall aim to enhance economic development and economic cooperation through the build-up of larger markets, the free movement of persons, goods, services, capital, labour and technology". It follows herefrom that the EU and its predecessor organisations have had the desire to export regional integration since the very beginning of ACP-Europe relations. The overarching goal is to promote open regionalism to gradually integrate ACP countries into the world economy. The promotion of regional integration has been and still is a focal priority of the EU, which is realised through trade agreements. This diffusion mechanism is based on the assumption that the economic promises of trade agreements induce third states into cooperation and eventual acceptance of European norms. (Bach, 2008) Hence, the EU employs trade agreements as an important norm export channel.

However, trade agreements can also be used coercively under certain circumstances. They then fall under the category of military power including military imposition, threats and economic sanctions. (Lenz, 2013) The case of EPA negotiations between the EU and African sub-regions clarifies the classification of trade agreements as coercion. Economic Partnership Agreements have been the cornerstone of EU support for African regional integration. (Farrell, 2009) The Union follows a dual approach with supporting African regional integration and EU-AU interregionalism at the same time. Regional integration has to be here understood as open regionalism with the emphasis on trade liberalisation; an assumption that was proven true during the EPA negotiations. (ibid) The EU advocates the linear market approach and shapes integration processes in Africa. The overall intention is summed up in the European Union Global Strategy (EU, 2016:36): "The Economic Partnership Agreements can spur African integration and mobility, and encourage Africa's full and equitable participation in global value chains."

After the signing of the Cotonou Agreement in 2000, it quickly became clear that the EU was lending its full support for the rapid conclusion of EPAs. In order to incentivise ACP states to join EPA talks, the Union relentlessly promoted EPAs as the main instrument for sustainable

development and poverty reduction. (European Commission, 2018) Negotiations began in 2002 and were scheduled to be concluded by December 2007. Yet, when ACP negotiators raised concerns about reciprocal trade relations and market openings, the EU changed its negotiation strategy and made use of threats and coercion. (Jones & Weinhardt, 2015) Being aware of its relative power position and taking advantage of its economic might, the EU pressurised ACP states to sign EPAs on its own terms. (ibid) Despite its rhetoric of a partnership among equals, it exploited the existing power asymmetries. "The EU, by blending ideas of consent […] and coercion […] has managed to impose its material (even normative) interests on weaker partners." (Carbone, 2013b:10) Its main source of coercive power was the strict negotiation deadline of December 2007 after which the EU threatened to withdraw unilateral trade preferences. If ACP countries wished to maintain full market access to the EU's single market, they had to conclude an EPA. (Jones & Weinhardt, 2015; Hurt, 2012) Considering the great dependence of Africa's economies on the EU market – the EU is Africa's biggest trading partner accounting for 37% of African exports in 2017 (AU & EU, 2018) – the announcement to close down the market for ACP exports equalled the impact of deliberate economic sanctions. Consequently, the EU's market-access-focused behaviour and hard-bargaining strategy during the EPA negotiations can be categorised as coercion. Following Lenz's (2013) concept, European tactics of negative conditionality to accelerate the conclusion of EPAs classify as economic threats, which fall under military rather than civilian power.

To sum up, the European Union has a variety of norm export channels for regional integration at its disposal. Each of Lenz's (ibid) categories can be applied to the EU-AU relationship. Normative power becomes visible within partnership agreements (JAES and the Africa-EU Partnership) and political dialogue (EU-AU summits and ministerial meetings). Besides this active ideational promotion, the EU also profits from passive emulation (EU self-image as a successful role model). The attractiveness of the EU single market yields – despite its classification as civilian power – similar results. Beyond question, the most important EU norm export channels are technical and financial assistance and capacity-building. The vast amount of actions under the Pan-African Programme, most notably the African Union Support Programmes I-IV, leaves no doubt about the Union's intention to shape the institutional make-up of the AU. In addition, the great volume of financial support confirms its commitment to promote open regionalism in Africa. The European Union funds the AU extensively and even covers basic operational and logistical costs like the preparation of summits. These enormous financial pledges reveal, on the one hand, a deep AU dependence

on the EU, but on the other hand, they also point out Africa's importance to Europe. Regional integration in Africa has become an EU policy priority for which no expenses and efforts are spared. Finally, the tool box is complemented by coercion. Even though the exercise of economic threats remains an exception, the EU knows about its economic advantage and does not hesitate to exploit it for the pursuit of its own interests, as seen in the EPA negotiations. To conclude, it can be argued that capacity-building in combination with positive conditionality forms the basis for the EU export of regional integration to the African Union. Figure 10 summarises all identified norm export channels in line with the dissertation's conceptual framework.

FIGURE 10. EU NORM EXPORT CHANNELS FOR REGIONAL INTEGRATION

	Diffusion Mechanisms	Type of EU Diffusion	Channels for Diffusion	EU External Action or Policy
Military Power	Coercion	Material, Active	Military Imposition, Threats, Economic Sanctions (Negative Conditionality)	EPA Negotiations
Civilian Power	Rewards	Material, Active	Technical and Financial Assistance, Capacity-Building, Trade Agreements (Positive Conditionality)	Pan-African Programme, AUSP I-IV, Africa - Europe Alliance, Lomé Convention, Cotonou Partnership Agreement
	Competition	Material, Passive	Large, Well-Integrated Domestic Market	EU Single Market
Normative Power	Socialisation	Ideational, Active	Cooperation Agreements, Political Dialogue, Technical Assistance	JAES, Africa-EU Partnership, Summits and Ministerial Meetings, Exchanging Best Practices
	Emulation	Ideational, Passive	Successful Integration, Symbolic Representation	EU Self-Presentation, Source of Inspiration, Mimicry of EU's Integration Success

Source: The figure was compiled by the author with data from Lenz (2013).

5. AU NORM IMPORT

Following the outline of European norm export channels for regional integration in Africa, this part of the analysis concentrates on the receiving side by investigating the African Union's response. While the EU attempts to diffuse norms, its capacity to transfer regional integration depends on the AU's willingness to endorse the political norm. To detect genuine norm import, the AU's general perspective on regional integration is discussed before singling out three AU norm import options in correspondence with the concept of norm localisation. Finally, a procedural analysis unpacks the outcomes of European norm diffusion by tracing back AU institutional and policy changes to EU external influence.

5.1. AU PERSPECTIVE ON REGIONAL INTEGRATION

The historical evolution of regional integration outlined in Subchapter 3.1 points out that African independence and development are inextricably intertwined with the idea of continental cooperation and regional integration. This correlation is also confirmed by the interviewees. UNECA Official 1 (2019) claims that regional integration is absolutely beneficial for Africa's development as, for one thing, it combines small, fragmented economies into a bigger economic space and thus attracts investments, and for another thing, it functions as the anchor of peace and security. UNECA Official 2 (2019) contends that "without regionalism, the continent cannot survive in the global arena!" Both interview partners adopt a historical perspective and refer to the great achievement of reforming the OAU into the AU. Regional integration is therefore perceived as a useful and desirable instrument for development.

The African Union commits itself to regional integration and states that it is "perhaps the only, way for Africa to realize its growth potential, participate effectively in the global economy, and share the benefits of globalization." (AU Commission, n.d.) UNECA Official 2 (2019) hints to the name of the African 'Union' and argues that by definition regional integration is the AU's raison d'être and modus vivendi. Article 3 of the AU Constitutive Act outlines the Union's objectives. Accordingly, the AU shall "accelerate the political and socio-economic integration of the continent" and "promote sustainable development at the economic, social and cultural levels as well as the integration of African economies". (OAU, 2000) Being included in two objectives of the AU founding document, it becomes obvious that the pursuit of deeper regional integration is a legal provision in the AU framework. This commitment is rhetorically reinforced by several African leaders. Moussa Faki, incumbent Chair of the AU Commission, even identified regional integration as an AU priority and

imperative for Africa's development (Karbo & Murithi, 2018), "so that Africans can finally cease to be foreigners in their own continent." (Cited in Murithi, 2017) The advantages of regional integration can be experienced in various policy fields. Former South African President Thabo Mbeki highlights the economic profits when claiming that "[b]ecause our individual economies are small, our hope for a better market share in the global economy lies in our combined efforts". (Cited in Wigström, 2013:18) Alassane Ouattara, the current President of the Ivory Coast, notices the benefits for African states in "pool[ing] their resources and […] attain[ing] a level of technical and administrative competence that would not be possible on an individual basis". (Cited in Corrigan, 2015:7)

The AU and its member states acknowledge these manifold advantages and thus incorporate regional integration into continental policies. The ultimate goal is to fulfil the Abuja Treaty by gradually integrating the continent and eventually establishing the African Economic Community. (AU Commission, 2019) The AU has expressed enhanced ambitions for its regional integration agenda and set-up major continental initiatives under the overarching AU Agenda 2063. These initiatives include: the AfCFTA, the Boosting Intra-African Trade – Action Plan, the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme, the Resource-Based African Development Strategy, the Accelerated Industrial Development for Africa – Initiative, the African Governance Architecture and the African Peace and Security Architecture. (Seck & Thariki, 2013) Two other programmes – MIP and PIDA – stand out due to their explicit aim to accelerate continental integration.

The Minimum Integration Programme was adopted during the Fourth Conference of African Ministers in Charge of Integration in Yaoundé, Cameroon in 2009. It is a consensual framework between the AU Commission and RECs, mandated to coordinate regional integration efforts on the continental and sub-regional level to speed up the overall integration process. It operates as a "mechanism for convergence" between the AU and its RECs through sharing information and best practices. (AU Commission, 2019:6) It exclusively focuses on priority areas selected by the RECs, including amongst others: (1) free movement of persons, goods, services and capital, (2) peace and security, (3) infrastructure and energy, and (4) agriculture. (AU, 2009) MIP is financed through internal contributions by member states, the AU and the African Development Bank and external sources from development partners. To guarantee the effectiveness of MIP, the signatories agreed to create the African Integration Fund. However, so far, the fund remains in the realm of rhetoric. (Seck & Thariki, 2013)

Another AU project strengthening regional integration is PIDA. The infrastructure programme started as a joint initiative of the AU Commission, NEPAD, African Development Bank and UNECA. It was officially endorsed and adopted by the AU Assembly at its 18th Ordinary Session held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in January 2012. (AU Commission, 2019) It addresses the challenge of lacking intra-African infrastructure resulting in Africa being "the least integrated continent in the world." (NEPAD, 2019) Henceforth, building cross-border infrastructure is a long-term priority of the AU between 2012 and 2040. "PIDA envisages the development of 37,200km of highways, 30,200km of railways and 16,500km of interconnected power lines by 2040." (UN Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, 2015:2) PIDA is cross-sectoral and covers infrastructure projects in transport, energy, transboundary water resources as well as information and communication technology. (AU Commission, NEPAD, African Development Bank and UNECA, 2017) The total costs to realise the PIDA priority action plan comprising 51 projects until 2020 amount to nearly $70 billion. The vast majority of funds is channelled into transport and energy projects, representing around 95% of the overall financial resources. (AU, 2017) Yet, missing financial means continue to be the greatest obstacle as domestic funds in combination with international aid do not meet Africa's infrastructure needs. (UN Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, 2015)

Despite prevailing monetary challenges, the presented integration programmes clearly indicate a strong political will to boost integration in Africa. In fact, the AU and its ambitious policies are a testimony of the unique political commitment of African leaders to regional solutions. (Yihdego, 2011) A consensus exists within the AU that regional integration is beneficial. It is appreciated and embraced as a developmental tool. As such, regional cooperation is already integrated into the AU policy framework. Indeed, Acharya (2011) argues that the doctrine of Pan-Africanism has led to the formulation of African political norms of regional autonomy and regional cooperation. Following this, it can be noted that the promoted EU norm of (economic) regional integration resonates with local norms in Africa. These are favourable conditions for successful norm diffusion.

5.2. AU RESPONSE TO EU PROMOTED REGIONAL INTEGRATION

The previous analysis of the African perspective on regional integration is a necessary precondition to detect genuine norm import, as the promoted EU norm is interpreted against the AU's general perception of regional integration. The established normative congruence between the exported European and domestic African norms allows for norm import. (Björkdahl et al., 2015) This part of the analysis highlights the agency of the African Union as

the norm recipient, who decides whether regional integration as a mode of governance is accepted, rejected or adapted to the local context. For that purpose, Acharya's (2004) concept of norm localisation is applied to the AU and its response towards the EU's attempts at exporting regional integration on the continent. (See Subchapter 1.4)

As a starting point for the application of the localisation concept, it has already been established that the political norm of regional integration is actively promoted to other world regions by the EU as a global actor. (See Subchapter 4.1) The next step involves local agents of the targeted region, who interpret the promoted norm against their own normative background. Norm import is not taken for granted, but instead accentuates the relevance of the receiving side. The norm-taker here is the African Union. The dissertation at hand considers the AU as one legal entity capable of representing the African continent. The AU is taken as the continental counterpart of the EU and is thus dealt with as a unified actor. Accordingly, norm import is here measured in the form of norm-induced policies and institutional incorporation rather than individual stakeholder perceptions.

The AU as the local agent decides to what extent the exported norm is integrated into its own policy and institutional framework. Opposing the idea of a mere dichotomy between acceptance and resistance, the localisation concept offers the opportunity for norm recipients to align global norms to pre-existing local norm standards. (Acharya, 2004) In line with this, the AU cannot only accept and reject regional integration, but also alter the norm to fit domestic practices. This process is called localisation. The following paragraphs outline three AU responses to European norm export and assign them to the categories of norm displacement, resistance and localisation.

The first category, norm displacement, refers to acceptance and internalisation of promoted norms, which are fully translated into local practices. In this case, foreign norms replace domestic ones, and new instruments and policies are created. In Acharya's (ibid:254) words: "A new institution (without much similarity to the previous one) appears or the old institution is significantly modified." The transformation from the OAU to the AU is a prime example of norm displacement in response to EU civilian norm diffusion mechanisms. The reform process has been strongly encouraged and facilitated by the EU through the provision of financial and technical aid. Thus, shortly after its establishment, the AU Assembly (2003) expressed "its profound gratitude to the EU for the assistance rendered so far to the AU". The former Deputy Chairperson of the AU Commission, Mr Erastus Mwencha, appreciated the EU's, help stating that "support under the African Union Support Programme has helped consolidate the institutional transformation of the African Union". (Cited in AU & EU, 2016)

With the launch of the AU, African leaders departed from core political norms like non-interference and incorporated the norm of deeper regional integration in various policy fields. The new organisation stands in sharp contrast to the founding principles of its predecessor, implying a paradigm shift "from non-interference to non-indifference". (Ankomah, 2007:10) The AU Constitutive Act includes a broader mandate and conveys more competences upon the Union compared to the OAU Charter. The Union even enjoys the notable right to interfere in member states' national affairs. (OAU, 2000: Article 3(f)) In addition, the AU Assembly's mandate is expanded by coordination, monitoring and implementation. (ibid: Article 9(1)) Not only shall the AU accelerate political and socio-economic integration, its new objectives inscribed in Article 3(d) and 4(d) of the Constitutive Act (2000) also allow for the determination of African common policies. The conveyance of such profound national competences simplifies regional coordination and harmonisation. The newly absorbed norms and governance principles strengthen the position of the AU vis-à-vis its member states. (Yihdego, 2011) The obvious shift from a solely administrative OAU to a much broader and stronger AU needs to be acknowledged.

The norm displacement process internalising European norms has been further intensified by the establishment of new institutions. In 2001, the Pan-African Parliament was set-up with the eventual aim to evolve into a full legislative body strengthening the democratic legitimacy of the AU. (OAU, 2001: Article 2(3)) The notion of democracy has also been embraced by the launch of NEPAD in 2001 as a continental development agency committed to democratic principles, good governance and human rights. In contrast to the OAU, which was infamously known as a club of dictators who rather protected member states' sovereignty instead of citizens' human rights (Obonye, 2012), the AU values democracy as one of its guiding principles. (OAU, 2000: Articles 3(g) and 4(m)) NEPAD regards democratic governance and safeguarding of human rights as crucial preconditions for Africa's development. (NEPAD, n.d.) It also founded a voluntary governance assessment tool, the APRM, for spreading good governance through peer learning and exchange of best practices. "It is a unique accountability method for African countries to review each other's governance and hold each other to account." (ibid)

Furthermore, NEPAD marks the beginning of neoliberal policies for African development. It aims at the eradication of poverty and the end of Africa's global marginalisation by enabling sustainable growth and integration into the world's economy. For that purpose, NEPAD highlights the significance of foreign direct investments to attract valuable resources to the continent. (Obonye, 2012) While the Lagos Plan of Action set the pathway for a more

independent, self-sufficient African economy with protectionist trade policies, NEPAD embraces trade liberalisation and open market access. Since its formation, market-based economic integration has dominated regional development on the continent.

According to UNECA Official 2 (2019), the AU integration efforts clearly comply with the European vision of open regionalism as they follow the stages of linear market integration. His colleague confirms strong EU influence on the structure and process of African economic integration. Pointing to the similarities between the EU model and the Abuja Treaty, UNECA Official 1 (2019) highlights that "there was actually an influence of the European integration approach to the design of the Abuja Treaty." Due to its economic interest to open up international markets for the export of European products, the EU channels the African regional agenda towards linear market integration. This market-based approach has been the default form of regional integration implemented by the AU. In line, the signing and rapid ratification of the AfCFTA was a historic milestone. The AfCFTA is the ultimate enactment of open regionalism on the continent with its objectives to "create a liberalised market", "lay the ground for the establishment of a Continental Customs Union" and "contribute to the movement of capital and natural persons." (UNECA, AU, African Development Bank and United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, 2019:64) Hence, the AU regional integration scheme has been transformed in compliance with the prevailing neoliberal discourse, whereby regional free trade areas are consolidated and integrated to become stepping stones for the establishment of a single global economy. (Grant & Söderbaum, 2003) In that way, African states follow the market-oriented EU model of linear economic integration. (Söderbaum, 2012; Hartzenberg, 2011)

These policy and institutional changes indicate that the AU „borrows a number of significant features from the EU template." (Bach, 2008:355) The AU's name itself is a clear reference to the EU. It can be argued that the AU structure is largely inspired and derived from the EU institutional framework. (Nagar, 2012) The institutional mimicry is confirmed by UNECA Official 2 (2019) who remarks that "the African integration processes have been greatly influenced, shaped and structured by European integration experience." The AU has founded new institutions, extended the scope and function of existing ones and installed new policy instruments to fit the newly imported doctrine of deeper regional integration, particularly in the economic sector. The Union has embodied regional integration as a political norm at the expense of its previous sovereign nation-state – centred approach. These changes and adaptations completely fulfil Acharya's (2004) conditions for norm displacement.

The second AU response to European norm export is resistance. Thereby, no new policy instruments are created and the institutional structure remains intact. (ibid) Sustained resistance, due to a clash between the promoted norm and the domestic one, leads to rejection and thus to the failure of norm diffusion. (Vandeputte & Bossuyt, 2017) The negotiations between the EU and African sub-regions for the conclusion of EPAs fall into this category of resistance. Even though EPAs do not include the African Union as a direct party to the agreement, the AU Commission monitors, coordinates and harmonises the efforts of RECs and individual states in the talks with the EU. (AU Assembly, 2003) From early on, the AU called for unity and urged its member states "to speak with one voice and safeguard Africa's interests in WTO and EPA negotiations." (AU Assembly, 2005) The Union realised that in order to benefit from trade agreements with Europe, continental consensus and collective action were absolutely essential. The advocacy for a continent-to-continent high level negotiation is supported by UNECA Official 1 (2019) who argues that the most beneficial approach for Africa is a united AU-EU EPA: "These separate EPAs […] needed to collapse into something that was Africa-EU." Nevertheless, EU representatives insisted on negotiations on a sub-regional level, as previously agreed on in the Cotonou Agreement. Despite its public rhetoric of an equal partnership, the EU did not recognise the AU as its appropriate negotiation partner. (Bach, 2008; Adedeji, 2012)

Consequently, EPA talks continued on the sub-regional level. Although the AU emphasised the necessity of EPAs to "be consistent with […] the programmes of the Regional Economic Communities and the African Union", five special EPA configurations were formed that did not match with already existing regional blocs. (AU Assembly, 2007) UNECA Official 2 (2019) confirms that EPAs further fragmented and "unravelled the integration map on the continent." The introduction of new EPA groupings not aligned to existing RECs has also undermined the African regional integration agenda. Different arrangements about tariffs, exclusion lists and rules of origin complicate intra-African trade and thus weaken regional integration. (UNECA, 2016) To give an example, the AfCFTA and EPAs have incompatible rules of origin, "whereby rules of origin for instance under the EPAs make it difficult to achieve the objectives of the AfCFTA." (UNECA Official 1, 2019) The AfCFTA's successful implementation is jeopardised and recedes into the far distant future. (Sanders, 2015) A 'spaghetti bowl' of regional EPA configurations and bilateral agreements operating at dissimilar trade liberalisation levels has been created by the EU's action, which undermines regional integration within RECs. (Adedeji, 2012) This further fragmentation has already been compared to Africa's colonial split up during the Berlin Conference in 1885. Tanzania's

former President, Benjamin William Mkapa, blamed the EU of using "a divide and rule strategy". (Cited in Jones & Weinhardt, 2015:235)

The African Union has expressed its concerns about the hard-bargaining tactic of the EU several times. Especially the scheduled deadline for EPA conclusions led to the escalation of tensions. (Carbone, 2013b) In January 2007, the AU Assembly "call[ed] on the European Union to extend the deadline for the completion of negotiations beyond the December 2007 time frame and to explore the alternatives of Economic Partnership Agreements as required by the Cotonou Partnership Agreement". (AU Assembly, 2007) Furthermore, it requested the African negotiators to "remain vigilant and steadfast". (ibid) A year later, it was deeply concerned about the political and economic pressure exerted by the European Commission to force African states to sign interim EPAs. (AU Assembly, 2008) The AU Heads of State and Government condemned the EU's usage of negative conditionality by "link[ing] the disbursement of European Development Fund and Aid for Trade resources to the signing of EPAs." (ibid)

All in all, the EU's coercive strategy stirred up resentment within the African Union and deteriorated the EU-AU relationship. (Stevens, 2013) The strong resistance resulted in rejection at large when African states refused to bear any further EU imposition. (Carbone, 2013b) As a consequence, up until today, only one single EPA with Southern Africa is fully operational. The agreements with other African sub-regions have either been stalled, remain to be ratified or are merely provisionally applied. (European Commission, 2019b) Besides, African states successfully opposed the inclusion of services, intellectual property and product standards. The concluded EPAs are reduced to the core, namely trade in goods. (Jones & Weinhardt, 2015) The rejection of the Singapore Issues fulfils the demands laid out in the AU Ministerial Declaration on EPA negotiations in 2005. Thereby, AU Ministers decided to block any EU proposal concerning these trade facilitating issues. (AU Conference of Ministers of Trade, 2005)

The resistance continued even after the official conclusion of EPAs. African governments postponed and evaded the signature, ratification and implementation of the agreements. (Jones & Weinhardt, 2015; Stevens, 2013) The interview with UNECA Official 1 (2019) reveals that African countries "have not been quick to implement or even to fully sign and ratify the EPAs." Overall, the outcome of the EPA negotiations can be summarised as follows: the large majority of African governments has declined to conclude EPAs, the ones that

joined defer the ratification process and refuse to change key policies, and the multi-facetted EU-AU relation has been overshadowed with suspicion. (Stevens, 2013) The lack of any changes in the institutional and policy arrangement indicates resistance in line with Acharya's (2004) concept. The explicit EU promotion of regional integration through EPAs has been rejected by the AU, its RECs and its member states.

The final category of possible AU reactions towards EU norm export is norm localisation. Localisation means that foreign ideas are adapted by an organisation to meet local norms without replacing its original goals and institutional arrangements. (ibid) External norms are only imported to a minimal extent. Their reinterpretation and alteration takes place via "active construction […] of foreign ideas by local actors." (ibid:245) In regards to the EU-AU dialogue, the African Union officially imports regional integration as a political norm without strictly adhering to it. Referring to the Africa-EU Partnership and JAES, the AU Assembly (2009) "welcome[d] efforts to strengthen the dialogue between the two sides". The appreciation of political dialogue boosting regional integration becomes obvious in the AU Assembly's decision to continue the AU-EU partnership post 2020. (AU Assembly, 2018) However, regional integration has a different meaning in the African context than in the European one. While the AU uses it as a developmental tool and therefore as a means to an end, the EU perceives it as an end in itself: a desirable mode of regional and global governance. These different interpretations lead to rhetorical AU commitment to regional integration without any or only trivial and unsustainable institutional and policy changes. In Acharya's (ibid:254) words: "The [local] norm hierarchy remains unaltered."

While third states rhetorically borrow EU norms, they deliberately disregard them in terms of compliance and translation into action. (Carbone, 2013a) This behaviour is called decoupling, whereby the import of norms is delinked from their subsequent functioning in the new context. (Lenz, 2012) There is a disconnect between the formally agreed on norm, the informal understanding and interpretation thereof, and behavioural practices. (Börzel & Risse, 2012) Mere verbal commitments within political dialogue without any binding rules lead to superficial copying of norms without implementation and hence decoupling.

Regarding the African Union, the AU Commission's anticipated reform is a prime example of this rhetoric-reality gap. In 2009, the AU Assembly decided to convert the AU Commission into the AU Authority. (AU Assembly, 2009) Through the transformation, the Commission would have gained critical new competences such as the power to initiate own policies in

important fields like peace and security affairs. (Fagbayibo, 2013) The right of initiative presents a crucial element of supranational authority. The planned conveyance of national competences onto the AU Commission suggests a turn towards supranationalism, as the Commission is the only AU body reflecting common AU interests instead of national ones.

Yet, ten years later, the crisis of implementation becomes clear in the still pending conversion of the AU Commission into the AU Authority. The reform decision remains in the rhetorical sphere. As a consequence, operational process has been limited and the AU continues to function according to intergovernmental structures. The interview with UNECA Official 2 (2019) reveals that the AU "has been stuck on the intergovernmental level." While the EU managed to set-up supranational governance with binding legislation and enforcement mechanisms, the AU "has not been able to acquire that level of urgency that the EU has." (ibid) The speed and depth of integration within the AU are disappointing, since the organisation still largely operates according to intergovernmental guidelines. The fact that national governments represented in the AU Assembly remain the most important decision-makers renders the continental policy process dependent on the political will of individual member states. Former Chair of the African Union, Paul Kagame, acknowledged the problem in his proposal for an institutional reform, which was adopted by the AU Assembly in 2017. (AU Assembly, 2017) According to Kagame (2017:12), "this complicated structure hampers the African Union's ability to make decisions and implement initiatives."

Especially in the field of economic regional integration, the AU emulates the EU model without strictly adhering to it. Despite the AU's ambitious policy frameworks such as the Abuja Treaty, "the AU Commission is still a powerless spectator of its member-states' lackadaisical transcription" of its continental integration agenda. (Bach, 2008:367) The AU finds itself incapable of implementing regional economic integration, as RECs are responsible for the translation of policies into practice on the ground. As a result, one can detect a division between economic integration on the continental and sub-regional level. (Nagar & Nganje, 2018) Despite the MIP's purpose to align AU efforts with the individual integration agendas of RECs, a double-track integration process has emerged. UNECA Official 2 (2019) confirms that Africa experiences a "multiple phased progress towards integration" that needs to be reconciled.

The absence of supranational AU authority over its RECs as well as its member states has severe consequences. Lacking implementation of regional agreements results in "shadow

regionalism" (Nagar & Nganje, 2018:213) or "theatre regionalism" (Wigström, 2013:21). Both terms indicate that African governments officially sign regional integration agreements with no intention to actually implement them. In contrast to the signing of agreements, which projects a certain degree of international recognition, implementation is associated with losing control over national competences and policy domains to a regional authority. A government's interest in signing a regional partnership is higher than implementing it. (ibid) Regional integration within the AU is merely used to derive external legitimacy for national governments. They rhetorically commit to further cooperation only to obtain international support for their regime survival. Since the AU is only instrumentalised for seeking gains through integration, a lack of implementation is inevitable. Paying lip service to regional integration without genuinely endorsing it falls into Acharya's (2004) category of norm localisation. Norms diffused solely via political dialogue are formally imported but they neither alter pre-existing normative behaviour nor cause sustainable institutional and policy changes.

5.3. LINKING EU NORM EXPORT AND AU NORM IMPORT

Drawing on the identification of EU norm export channels for regional integration and the observation of three diverse AU responses towards them, the two concepts of norm export and norm import have to be linked. A procedural analysis unpacks the correlation between the EU's promotion of regional integration and the AU's level of acceptance thereof. As explained in the above conceptual framework (see Subchapter 1.4), newly created or changed institutions and policy instruments in line with the exported EU model are the main criteria for genuine norm import. (Acharya, 2004; Björkdahl et al., 2015) In order to assess institutional incorporation and policy changes within the African Union, the AU response options are assigned to EU norm diffusion mechanisms. Figure 11 offers an overview of the foregoing analysis of EU norm export and AU norm import measured as institutional and policy changes.

FIGURE 11. LINK BETWEEN NORM EXPORT AND IMPORT

EU Norm Diffusion Mechanisms	AU Norm Import Responses	Institutional and Policy Changes
Civilian Power: Technical and Financial Assistance, Capacity-Building	Acceptance and Norm Displacement	Yes
Coercive Power: EPA negotiations	Resistance and Rejection	No
Normative Power: Political Dialogue	Norm Localisation	No Sustainable Changes

Source: The figure was compiled by the author.

The analysis showed that only regional integration diffused via civilian power is fully accepted and internalised leading to successful norm displacement. In response to technical and financial assistance as well as capacity-building, the AU expands the scope of already existing institutions and policies or installs new ones to match the imported norm of open regionalism. In contrast, norm diffusion through EPA negotiations is strongly resisted and ultimately rejected. "The attempt to […] reinforce regional integration through the EPAs has not been successful". (Carbone, 2013a:492) Similarly, European normative power in form of political dialogue does not yield tangible results. Sole rhetoric and verbal commitments are inspirational; yet they do not offer the AU sufficient incentives to change institutions and policies. The norm of regional integration might be formally imported by the AU, but is not genuinely endorsed and implemented by AU member states, wherefore it results in mere theatre regionalism.

Henceforth, AU norm import depends on the specific EU export channel. Acceptance of open regionalism can be detected in the AU response to technical and financial assistance, while other channels stirred up opposition and resistance. It can be argued that while the AU generally perceives regional integration useful as a developmental tool, its import and implementation is highly selective. This finding confirms the research outcomes of Vandeputte and Bossuyt (2017) who concluded that East African stakeholders largely consent with the idea of regional integration but only selectively adopt it into local practices. The selectivity of norm import rests upon the difference between AU and EU priorities, "which makes the European model attractive only to a limited extent from the African perspective." (Sicurelli, 2010:152f.) UNECA Official 1 (2019) underpins this argument by emphasising that the AU can indeed learn a lot from the EU, but should not replicate everything. His colleague finds even clearer words. According to him, it is a myth that the EU functions as a role model of integration for Africa. "The EU has a lot to contribute to African integration, but it would be misplaced to attempt to copy the EU." (UNECA Official 2, 2019) As the AU started under different political and economic circumstances and thus has a distinct raison d'être, the AU should not blindly transfer institutions and policy processes; institutional mimicry would be a "recipe for failure". (ibid)

Given this scepticism towards EU norms, the question remains whether the observed institutional incorporations and policy changes can be indeed traced back to EU norm export. Since institutional and policy changes could only be detected in response to technical and financial assistance, Lenz's (2013) choice-oriented approach is exclusively applied to EU

civilian norm diffusion mechanisms. The approach – introduced in the above conceptual framework (see Subchapter 1.4) – is based on the counterargument that the AU's behaviour would have been different in the absence of the EU's external agency. Firstly, the AU's decision-making including possible alternative options and potential constraints is outlined. The transition from the OAU to the AU has been identified as AU norm displacement that created new institutions like the AU Commission and NEPAD, expanded the mandate of the AU Assembly and launched new policy initiatives like MIP and PIDA. In addition, Kagame's (2017) institutional reform aims at streamlining the AU's work on key priority areas like continental economic integration and enhancing the organisation's efficiency on the political and operational level. Especially the structure and function of the AU Commission has to be realigned to be able to focus on the agreed priorities. This includes the employment of skilled and qualified professionals and the provision of sufficient equipment. (ibid) The AU Commission has been made out as the key player advocating the reform.

This pinpointing of the AU Commission as the driver of change and motor of regional integration strongly resembles the European Commission's central position as the executive branch of the EU. Although the supranational structure of the EU has recently led to enormous turbulences within the Union causing the United Kingdom's scheduled withdrawal from the EU, infamously known as Brexit, the African Union continues to copy its institutional set-up. Brexit is a major constraint to the import of European norms since it serves as a deterrent. Both interviewees strongly advised the AU to avoid European mistakes that resulted in the Brexit debacle. (UNECA Official 1, 2019; UNECA Official 2, 2019) Learning from its lessons, "the AU should go beyond what Europe has done". (ibid) The risks that the EU took by developing into a supranational entity have to be taken into consideration.

The fact that the AU copies the EU despite these immense constraints indicates strong and fruitful influence. This holds especially true when alternative options are available. Within the alliance of the emerging market economies Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, the AU could find valuable interregional partnerships that do not follow the EU model of regional integration. (Carbone, 2013b) Also the regional Association of Southeast Asian Nations offers an alternative pathway for regionalism that is neither "so receptive to the explicitly normative European agenda nor to any extension of policy discussion beyond the trade and economic arena." (Farrell, 2009:1171) This reconstruction of the AU decision tree with identified constraints and potential alternatives clearly hints to successful norm

diffusion from the EU to the AU. Lenz (2013:222) concludes: "When contextual constraints are largely pushing towards alternative decisions, EU diffusion matters more […]."

The second step of the choice-oriented approach requires a comparison between the EU-type choice and the actual outcome. This correlational analysis has already been covered by the previous Subchapter 5.2, which unveiled institutional isomorphism. The AU mimics the institutional and policy framework of the EU. Most notably, the AU Commission enjoys the same privileged role as its European counterpart in coordination, monitoring and implementation. Further structural and functional similarities can be found between the European Parliament and the Pan-African Parliament, the European Council and the AU Assembly as well as between European Court of Justice and the African Court of Justice and Human Rights. In the words of Rein (2017:557): "The EU sought to export the model of its own […] structure, and Africa was ready to import it." Hence, the established correlation between EU and AU institutions implies great receptivity to the European norm of regional integration. As already elaborated earlier, the pre-existence of regional cooperation as a continental development doctrine in line with Pan-Africanism facilitated this norm import, since there is a resonance between the local and promoted norm.

Finally, step 3 includes the verification of EU norm diffusion through the identification of concrete norm export channels. Subchapter 4.2 outlined a wide range of EU policy instruments that explicitly promote regional integration in Africa. The most influential channels are capacity building, technical assistance and financial assistance. The institutional incorporations and policy changes under Kagame's reform can be traced back to these specific diffusion channels. To give more details, the comprehensive Pan-African Programme of the EU – especially the African Union Support Programmes I-IV – manages to shape the institutional make-up of the AU. The AUSP IV expressed aim is "the transformation of the AU Commission into an efficient and value addition institution to accelerate the AU institutional reform process" (EU, 2018b:2). The on-going AU reform process perfectly speaks to this with its aim to "to create an efficient and effective Commission". (Kagame, 2017:9)

The issue of reversed causation can be raised when considering that the AU Assembly decided already in 2009 to convert the Commission into the AU Authority. Nevertheless, the anticipated transformation never took place. While the necessity of an institutional reform was known, it was not further pursued and implemented due to missing political will and, what is more, due to lacking funds. Even with immense political support, the reforms could

not have been translated into practice by the AU alone. The EU assessed the risk of lacking AU (financial) capacity hindering the implementation as high. (EU, 2018b) In fact, the provided EU financial and technical assistance through the AUSP IV made the AU institutional reform possible in the first place. Therefore, controlling for alternative explanations, the counterargument that the outcome would have been different in the absence of the EU can definitely be verified. The tendency to exercise deeper regional integration in the form of institutional and policy changes was already existent within the AU framework, but could not be realised given the lack of funding. Subchapter 5.1 already highlighted the monetary challenges mentioning the African Integration Fund and PIDA's infrastructural needs. Missing financial means make the AU more receptive to EU capacity-building and hence to norm diffusion. Consequently, civilian norm diffusion channels are most influential. Coercion causes opposition; political dialogue alone does not offer the AU enough incentives wherefore it results in mere decoupling. It has to be supplemented with financial and technical assistance in order to enable genuine norm import of regional integration.

6. CONCLUSION

Having examined the underlying intention and actual success of regional integration diffusion between the European Union and African Union, this final chapter aims at answering the research questions by taking into account the outcomes of the previous analysis. Moreover, shortcomings of the study are revealed and an outlook for further research is presented.

6.1. DISCUSSION ON OUTCOMES

The dissertation set out with the overall purpose to explore genuine AU norm import in the European promotion of regional integration. These normative interregional relations are often omitted in the IR scholarship. The study of regional integration mainly concentrates on internal actors and driving forces and thus neglects the impact of external agents. Making use of a constructivist, diffusion-oriented research agenda that regards regional organisations as interdependent political entities with reciprocal influence, this dissertation revealed the AU's receptivity to the EU's regional integration export. Due to its qualitative nature and case study methodology, it did not intend to generalise its findings. Instead, it described European involvement in African regional integration and provided further insights into the AU response thereof.

The literature review clarified that the EU is a strong pioneer of interregionalism who prefers engagements with other regional organisations to bilateral relations. The promotion of regional integration to other world regions is an integral part of the EU's foreign policy. Its legal framework and actions leave no doubt that the EU attempts to influence the African Union in line with its own market-based integration approach. The European Union embarks on the pathway of open regionalism, based on neoliberal economic ideas like trade liberalisation and open market access. The removal of trade barriers in an interdependent, globalised economy is advocated by the EU as the crucial first step in integration processes. Its image as a global actor and normative power facilitates this promotion. The finding that the EU encourages the AU to follow its own linear market approach through interregionalism confirms the first central argument made in the literature review.

Norm diffusion yields results most notably in unbalanced interregional relations. As a result, the highly asymmetrical EU-AU partnership leaves the EU with great leverage to project its political norms. Applying Lenz's (2013) concept of norm diffusion, out of a variety of EU

norm export channels, capacity-building as well as technical and financial assistance can be identified as most effective in promoting African regional integration processes.

Revealing positive conditionality in form of financial rewards through projects like the Pan-African Programme as the basis for the EU's export of regional integration, underpins the second central argument. In fact, civilian norm export channels also prove most potent in causing sustainable institutional and policy changes within the AU framework. According to the norm localisation concept of Acharya (2004), the AU can accept, reject or make the promoted norm congruent to local conditions in response to EU external intervention. Resonance between the exported and pre-existing local norms facilitates genuine norm import. While coercion and political dialogue respectively lead to AU resistance and decoupling, capacity-building and financial assistance result in institutional incorporation and policy changes. Consequently, the third central argument is partly confirmed and partly rejected. The AU does genuinely import regional integration, but only in response to civilian norm diffusion mechanisms. The AU's acceptance of regional integration as a political norm is highly selective; it depends on the deployed EU export channel.

A choice-oriented approach traced this genuine norm import back to the external agency of the EU, despite major constraints like Brexit and alternative options of interregional relationships. Owing to the AU financial dependency on its European counterpart, many continental initiatives boosting African regional integration could not be realised in the absence of the EU. The lack of funding makes the AU more receptive to EU technical and financial assistance and hence to norm diffusion.

Consequently, civilian norm diffusion channels are most influential and responsible for substantial alterations within the AU institutional and policy framework. However, in accordance with the fourth central argument, only limited institutional and policy changes can be traced back to EU norm diffusion. Coercion causes opposition; political dialogue is inspirational but does alone not offer the AU enough incentives wherefore it results in mere shadow regionalism. It has to be supplemented with financial and technical assistance in order to enable genuine norm import of regional integration.

In conclusion, the study has demonstrated lessons for future EU-AU engagements. The EU's usage of coercive means does not produce desired results. In contrast, it deteriorates the long-term and close interregional relationship between the two continents. It should rather

rely on its civilian and normative power for successful regionalism diffusion. Nevertheless, it also became obvious that the African Union has great agency in responding to the European external influence. Norm import cannot be taken for granted; it only occurs when sufficient incentives are offered to the receiving side. Taken these outcomes into account, the dissertation contributes to a better understanding of prospective EU-Africa relations and can be used by policy-makers to adjust interregional negotiations as the on-going post-Cotonou consultations.

6.2. SHORTCOMINGS

The study focused on regional integration within the context of the AU to contest the prevailing Eurocentric bias in regionalism research. However, a major challenge was encountered during the data collection process. The lacking availability of official AU documentation became obvious in the direct comparison with the EU's open data base. While the European Union provides free access to its statements, decisions and legislation via its official website 'EUR-Lex', the AU is relatively reserved to share information with the public.

Since the document analysis as the applied research method was stretched to its limits, interviews were conducted to mitigate the lack of African primary sources. Although the gathered data was sufficient to adequately answer the research questions, more primary data from the African Union including interviews with AU officials would intensify the insights into the African perspective on regional integration. A comprehensive data collection would enhance the significance of the study and add to the already available knowledge.

6.3. OUTLOOK

Based on its intention to expand the existing literature on interregionalism and external agency within regional integration processes, the dissertation concentrated on the highly institutionalised relations between the EU and AU without considering internal actors or processes that could influence the outcome of norm diffusion. Further research into the topic should take internal AU reasons for the reluctance to supranational regional integration into account.

Moreover, such an in-depth analysis of the African Union would then replace the formalised, state-centred approach used in this dissertation. Instead of unifying the AU into one

homogeneous entity capable of representing the entire continent, a closer look into the diverse actors and interests within the AU framework would contribute to the IR scholarship. Investigating the notion of the African Union as an elite project disconnected from civil society would be particularly fruitful. In this context, the question arises if the perception and import of regional integration varies between the AU elite and civil society members.

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8. APPENDIX

8.1. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Briefly explain your current position and tasks.
2. How would you define regional integration?
3. Is regional integration beneficial for Africa's development?
4. Is African regional integration successful? Can you give examples?
5. In the context of regional integration, what do you know about the European Union?
6. Which political norms does the EU represent?
7. Does the EU actively promote regional integration?
8. What do you know about EU-Africa relations? Can you name some joint projects?
9. What are (dis-)advantages of EU-Africa relations for African regional integration?
10. How do Economic Partnership Agreements influence African regional integration?
11. Should the African Union take the EU as a role model? Why?
12. What can Africa learn from the EU about regional integration and vice versa?
13. What does the EU/AU emphasise in regional integration?
14. Does the AU genuinely import the EU model? If yes, how is norm import visible?
15. Do you have any further contributions or comments?

8.2. ETHICS CLEARANCE

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To: A/Prof John Akokpari

From: A/Prof Thiven Reddy

Subject: Ethics Clearance

Research: European Involvement in African Regional Integration

Date: 4th April 2019

This letter confirms that the student researcher, Ms Antonia Arfsten (ARFANT001) Ethics Project Title: European Involvement in African Regional Integration has been approved by the Political Studies Ethics Committee on the 4th April 2019.

Signature Removed

A/Prof Thiven Reddy
Ethics Committee
Department of Political Studies

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