From Europeanisation to Diffusion: Introduction

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Introduction

TANJA A. BÖRZEL and THOMAS RISSE

This special issue explores to what extent policies and institutions of the European Union spread across different contexts. Are the EU’s attempts to transfer its policies and institutions to accession and neighbourhood countries sustainable and effective? To what degree do other regions of the world emulate the EU’s institutional features; what are the mechanisms of, and scope conditions for, their diffusion? This introduction provides the conceptual framework of the special issue. First, it specifies EU-related institutional change as the ‘dependent variable’. Second, it discusses how Europeanisation research and diffusion studies relate to each other and can be fruitfully combined to identify processes and mechanisms by which ideas and institutions of the EU spread. Third, we introduce scope conditions which are likely to affect domestic (or regional) change in response to the promotion or emulation of EU ideas and institutions.

This special issue explores to what extent policies and institutions of the European Union spread across different contexts. Are the EU’s attempts to transfer its policies and institutions to accession countries sustainable? To what extent does the EU promote its institutions beyond its borders and beyond Europe? To what degree do other regions of the world emulate or copy the EU’s institutional features, what are the mechanisms of this diffusion – and what are its limits?

In EU studies, these questions have been the subject of Europeanisation research, which has explored the EU’s impact on the domestic policies, institutions, and political processes of the member states as well as on the accession candidates, particularly with regard to its Eastern enlargement (overviews in Börzel and Risse 2007; Featherstone and Radaelli 2003; Graziano and Vink 2006; Sedelmeier 2011). Students of Europeanisation have identified both necessary conditions (‘misfit’ giving rise to adaptational pressure) and causal mechanisms (legal imposition, positive and negative incentives, and socialisation by persuasion and learning) through which ‘Europe hits home’.

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These approaches have been increasingly criticised by their top-down perspective, which tends to prejudge the EU as the main source of domestic change ‘screen[ing] out other domestic causes’ (Bulmer and Burch 2005: 864; also see Radaelli and Pasquier 2006). Moreover, they rely heavily on the ‘shadow of hierarchy’, which not only allows the EU to legally impose its policies and institutions on its member states but also provides important incentives for them to comply. The further we move away from the EU and its immediate neighbours, the more this criticism seems to hold and the less it makes sense to call the spread of EU policies and institutions ‘Europeanisation’. The EU Treaties influenced the ASEAN Charter in 2008 (see Jetschke and Murray 2012), and the Andean Court of Justice was modelled on the European Court of Justice (ECJ; see Alter 2012; also Alter and Helfer 2010). But neither Asia nor Latin America are becoming European in the process. Nor is the EU the only source of regional and domestic institutional change. Even in current candidate countries, for which EU accession requires direct institutional changes, the EU is not the only game in town in driving domestic reforms (Noutcheva and Düzgit 2012). Moreover, with geographical proximity to the EU and Europe in general decreasing, the EU’s ability to make non-members comply with its standards and its institutional prescriptions becomes weaker. Last but not least, the more distant countries and regions are from Europe, the less significant efforts by the EU become to directly influence institutional change. Instead, Latin American, Asian, and African countries may actively adopt or mimic European institutional solutions and adapt them to their specific needs.

Moving away from Europe allows us, first, to systematically vary several factors that have been identified as crucial by Europeanisation research, such as the ‘shadow of hierarchy’ (in the case of member states, see e.g. Börzel 2010) or the ‘shadow of conditionality’ (in the case of accession candidates, see e.g. Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005). Second, it provides us with the opportunity to systematically explore more indirect mechanisms by which the EU may influence institutional change that may be better captured by diffusion approaches.

This special issue embeds Europeanisation studies into the larger research on transnational diffusion processes (see e.g. Gilardi 2012; Holzinger et al. 2007; Meyer et al. 1997; Simmons et al. 2008). We argue that the mechanisms and scope conditions of Europeanisation are largely compatible with various factors identified in the study of transnational diffusion, while the latter is better suited to capture the more indirect ways in which the EU may affect domestic or regional institutional change.

The articles in this special issue explore transnational diffusion processes with regard to Europeanisation after accession (Sedelmeier 2012; Spendzharova and Vachudova 2012), accession candidates (Turkey and Western Balkans: Noutcheva and Düzgit 2012), the European neighbourhood in the Southern Caucasus (Börzel and Pamuk 2012) as well as the Middle East (Magen 2012; van Hüllen 2012) and in other regions of the world (Alter
2012 on the emulation of the European Court of Justice; Jetschke and Murray 2012 on East Asia; and Lenz 2012 on the diffusion of EU institutional models in Latin America and Africa).

This introduction provides the conceptual framework that guides the articles in their venture to study the spread of European policies and institutions. First, we specify institutional change as the ‘dependent variable’ of this special issue. Second, we discuss how Europeanisation research and diffusion studies relate to each other and can be fruitfully combined to identify processes and mechanisms by which ideas and institutions of the EU spread. Third, we introduce scope conditions which are likely to affect domestic (or regional) change in response to the promotion or emulation of EU ideas and institutions. Finally, we give a brief overview of the special issue.

The ‘Dependent Variable’: Institutional Change

The articles in this special issue share institutional change as their dependent variable. The authors explore the degree to which these changes can be traced back to the EU and its policies and institutions, be it directly through coercion, conditionality, socialisation, and persuasion, or indirectly through normative emulation, lesson-drawing, and competition. Some of the papers concentrate on institutional change only, while others include behavioural change following institutional transformations (e.g. Börzel and Pamuk 2012; Noutcheva and Düzgit 2012; Spendzharova and Vachudova 2012). In some cases, the causal pathway moves from behavioural or policy change toward institutional change (e.g. Sedelmeier 2012 investigating post-accession compliance of new member states and Magen 2012 exploring Israel’s emulation of EU standards and institutions).

By focusing on institutional change as our dependent variable, we follow the lead of Europeanisation research which has convincingly argued that policy change in response to the EU is not particularly puzzling for member states and accession candidates which have to comply with EU rules and regulations anyway (see Börzel and Risse 2007; Cowles et al. 2001; Goetz and Hix 2000; Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005). This ‘compliance pull’ is at work even in many neighbouring countries that are required to adopt parts of the acquis communautaire if they want to do business and trade with the EU and its members (Börzel and Langbein 2012). The more interesting question is under which conditions the adoption of EU policies results in domestic institutional change and to what extent EU institutions directly induce such changes. The more we move away from the EU and its neighbours, the more unlikely institutional change adapting or responding to EU policies and institutions becomes. In this sense, institutional change is harder to demonstrate empirically than policy change.

The articles in this special issue use a rather broad and encompassing understanding of institutions. We understand institutions as social structures and systems of rules, both formal and informal (following e.g.
Hall and Taylor 1996; March and Olsen 1989; Powell and DiMaggio 1991). Organisations are formal institutions with written rules and procedures prescribing behaviour. Organisations also encompass informal understandings such as bureaucratic routines and cultures. But there are also entirely informal systems of rules and norms, the latter defined as expectations of appropriate behaviour based on a given collective identity (see Jepperson et al. 1996).

The first part of this special issue dealing with new member states, accession candidates, or countries in the EU neighbourhood concentrates on *domestic* institutional change as the dependent variable. Sedelmeier (2012) looks at the degree of lock-in in the new Central East European member states in the case of institutions promoting gender equality at the workplace, while Spendzharova and Vachudova (2012) examine the consolidation or lack thereof of democratic reforms in post-accession Bulgaria and Romania. The institutionalisation of the rule of law is the dependent variable in the article on the accession candidates Turkey and the Western Balkans by Noutcheva and Düzgit (2012). With regard to the EU neighbourhood, Börzel and Pamuk (2012) examine – again – the establishment of the rule of law and the fight against corruption in the Southern Caucasus while van Hüllen (2012) investigates the (limited) effects of EU democracy promotion on domestic institutional reforms in the Maghreb and Magen (2012) explores broader institutional change in Israel in response to the EU.

The articles in the second part of the special issue, looking at Latin America, Africa, and Asia, focus on the extent to which regional institutions adapt to, emulate, or resist EU institutions. Alter (2012) examines to what extent the institutional design of the European Court of Justice has been emulated in various parts of the world. Lenz (2012) analyses the diffusion of EU institutions to Latin America (Mercosur) and to the Southern African Development Community (SADC), while Jetschke and Murray (2012) look at the degree to which the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has emulated EU institutions.

Demonstrating that the EU has induced institutional change directly or indirectly tells us little about compliance with these institutions, however. In fact, diffusion research leads us to expect that the more formal institutions and organisational features are simply copied from different local or regional contexts leading to institutional isomorphism, the more likely becomes decoupling between formal rules, informal understandings, and behavioural practices (DiMaggio and Powell 1991). Merely downloading institutional designs from one context into another is likely to lead to less behavioural compliance with the rules and regulations than active adaptation and alteration of institutional features to a given domestic or regional context. Some, but not all, articles in this volume investigate whether indeed behavioural practices follow institutional change (see particularly Börzel and Pamuk; Jetschke and Murray 2012; Sedelmeier 2012; Spendzharova and Vachudova 2012).
Having clarified our dependent variable, we now move toward our theoretical framework, namely the integration of Europeanisation studies into the larger diffusion research.

**From Europeanisation to Diffusion: Mechanisms**

The special issue starts from the assumption that Europeanisation and diffusion research can be fruitfully combined in order to overcome problems of ‘top-down’ approaches that tend to over-emphasise the role of the EU and legal compliance for (institutional) change. More specifically, we argue that Europeanisation research can be regarded as a special instance of policy and institutional diffusion. *Diffusion* is conceived as a process through which ideas, normative standards, or – in our case – policies and institutions spread across time and space (see Gilardi 2012; Simmons *et al.* 2006; Strang and Meyer 1993). Like Europeanisation mechanisms, the various diffusion mechanisms discussed below relate to the major logics of social action that rest on distinct assumptions about actors and their relations with social structures and institutions (see Börzel and Risse 2009a, for the following). It should be noted, however, that these logics of action are ideal types that rarely occur exclusively in real life:

1. **Instrumental rationality or logic of consequences**: actors are conceived as (mostly self-interested) utility maximisers who select their course of action according to cost–benefit calculations.
2. **Normative rationality or logic of appropriateness**: actors are thought of as rule followers who ‘do the right thing’ because they want to be part of a particular community and have been socialised into following rules.
3. **Communicative rationality or logic of arguing**: actors deliberate and try to persuade each other about the validity claims inherent in any causal or normative statement. Arguing involves reason-giving and challenging these reasons as well as the legitimacy of norms (Habermas 1981; Risse 2000).

In addition, we distinguish between two types of diffusion mechanisms. First, ideas, policies, and institutions might diffuse through direct influence mechanisms. An agent of diffusion actively promotes certain policies or institutional models in her interactions with a receiving actor or group of actors. Second, diffusion also occurs through indirect mechanisms, namely emulation. Here, the action starts at the receiving end. Actors need to solve a problem or to overcome a crisis and look around for ‘best practices’ and institutional solutions that serve their needs (logic of consequences). They might also simply ‘download’ an institutional model, because this is the way things are done in a given community to which one wants to belong (logic of appropriateness).¹

Europeanisation studies typically emphasise – at least implicitly – the first type of diffusion, the direct influence model. Most scholars define
Europeisation as the ‘domestic impact of Europe and the EU’ in the sense that EU members and non-members adapt and change domestic institutions in response to EU rules and regulations (Börzel and Risse 2007; Featherstone and Radaelli 2003). A ‘misfit’ or incompatibility between European demands for change, on the one hand, and domestic policies, institutions, and political processes, on the other, constitutes a necessary condition for domestic change. Institutions mediate or filter the domestic impact of Europe, which emanates from pressure of adaptation caused by such misfit. In this special issue, the articles on new member states, accession candidates, and the European neighbourhood countries (ENC) specifically draw on Europeisation research. Its mechanisms of institutional change are compatible with the direct influence model of diffusion and can be mapped unto four mechanisms which have also been identified by diffusion research (see Table 1).

The first mechanism, which is often overlooked in the literature defining diffusion as voluntary adaptation to external influences (Holzinger et al. 2007), concerns physical or legal coercion. Strictly speaking, coercion is only relevant with regard to internal diffusion following the obligation by member states to comply with EU law. In its external relations, the EU hardly uses coercion, even though some aspects of accession conditionality are hard to distinguish from law enforcement. Note, however, that in the case of member states or accession candidates, legal coercion has to be distinguished from the use of force in the sense that member states or accession candidates have voluntarily agreed to be subject to coercion by virtue of them being EU members or candidates to membership. In sum, we expect legal coercion as a diffusion mechanism only to be at play with regard to member states and, to a lesser extent, accession candidates.

The second mechanism concerns diffusion through manipulating utility calculations by providing negative and positive incentives. The promoters of institutional models can induce other actors to adopt their ideas by trying to change their utility functions. They offer rewards, e.g. in the form of financial and technical assistance, or impose costs through sanctions or

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*Source: Börzel and Risse (2009a).*
empowering domestic actors who push for the adoption of the institutional solution.

The EU routinely uses positive and negative incentives to induce institutional change in accession candidates and in its neighbourhood, thereby pursuing its own instrumental interests, such as security, stability, prosperity, and environmental protection. In its attempt to induce other actors to accept and adopt its institutions, the EU and the member states rely on external incentives (conditionality), on the one hand, and technical and financial assistance (capacity-building), on the other (Börzel et al. 2008; Kelley 2004; Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005; Vachudova 2005). *Conditionality* tries to manipulate the cost–benefit calculations of target actors through creating positive and negative incentives. *Capacity-building*, by contrast, provides target actors with additional resources enabling them to make (strategic) choices to begin with. Yet the EU often uses financial and technical assistance as an (additional) incentive to reward domestic change (reinforcement by reward and support; see Schimmelfennig et al. 2003). Research has identified the differential empowerment of domestic actors who are then enabled to promote institutional change by providing political elites with incentives (electoral support, shaming campaigns) as an effective mechanism of Europeanisation (Börzel and Risse 2007). This mechanism is also compatible with an incentive model of directly influencing change. In general, then, we expect this mechanism to be relevant particularly with regard to accession candidates and the European neighbourhood as well as other countries which seek market access to the EU (Börzel and Pamuk 2012; Noutcheva and Düzgit 2012; Sedelmeier 2012; Spendzharova and Vachudova 2012; van Hüllen 2012). The further we move away from Europe and the more the EU itself is interested in market access to other regions, the less we expect this influence mechanism to matter.

The third mechanism works through normative rationality or the logic of appropriateness and involves *socialisation* (March and Olsen 1989, 1998). Rather than maximising their egoistic self-interest, actors seek to meet social expectations in a given situation. Processes of socialisation often result in complex learning by which actors redefine their interests and identities (Checkel 2005b; Johnston 2007). They can also work through habituation. By talking the talk, actors may change their social practices and dispositions, finally ending up walking the walk.

From this perspective, the EU can be understood as a gigantic socialisation agency which actively tries to promote rules, norms, practices, and structures of meaning to which member states are exposed and which they have to incorporate into their domestic structures (see also Checkel 2005a). The EU is a ‘teacher of norms’ (Finnemore 1993) with regard to member states, accession candidates, and countries in its neighbourhood. Socialisation also relies on domestic actors, but the ways in which domestic actors facilitate reforms are different. Norm entrepreneurs such as epistemic communities or advocacy networks socialise domestic actors into new
norms and rules of appropriateness through persuasion and social learning, and they redefine their interests and identities accordingly (Börzel and Risse 2007). The more active norm entrepreneurs are and the more they succeed in making EU policies resonate with domestic norms and beliefs, the more successful they will be in bringing about domestic change. Thus, socialisation mechanisms should be particularly relevant in conjunction with incentive-based modes of influence, and with regard to countries and regions aspiring to become part of the liberal community of democratic states (Börzel and Pamuk 2012; Noutcheva and Düzgit 2012; van Hülle 2012).

Fourth, and closely related to socialisation, persuasion is based on communicative rationality or the logic of arguing. As mentioned above, it refers to situations in which actors try to persuade each other about the validity claims inherent in any causal or normative statement. The EU uses persuasion continuously in dealing with accession candidates, neighbouring countries, and in its external relations with third countries in general. As Judith Kelley has shown, for example, accession conditionality is always accompanied by efforts to persuade candidate countries of the normative validity and appropriateness of the EU’s institutional models (Kelley 2004). Moreover, political dialogue as a way to promote norms and institutions constitutes a regular part of the EU’s toolbox in promoting human rights, democracy, and the rule of law in third countries including accession candidates (Börzel and Risse 2009b). Finally, the further we move away from Europe, the fewer incentives the EU has to offer to promote its policies and institutions and the more it has to rely on mechanisms of persuasion and of communication to make its case. Mechanisms of persuasion are, therefore, expected to matter particularly when the EU deals with other regions of the world (Jetschke and Murray 2012; Lenz 2012).

None of these four mechanisms assumes that the agents at the receiving end of diffusion are simply passive recipients of EU policies and institutions. Rather, the adoption of and adaptation to EU norms, rules, and institutional models into domestic or regional structures mostly involve active processes of interpretation, incorporation of new norms and rules into existing institutions, and also resistance to particular rules and regulations. Social learning as a process of acquiring and incorporating new norms and new understandings into one’s belief systems, for example, involves active engagement, not passive ‘downloading’ of some new rules and institutional ‘software’. As research has shown time and again, the result of these adaptation, learning, and transformation processes is differential Europeanisation rather than convergence (Cowles et al. 2001; Héritier et al. 2001; Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005; Sedelmeier 2011).

These active processes of adaptation, change, interpretation, and resistance are observed in the current accession states (Noutcheva and Düzgit 2012) as well as the neighbourhood countries (Börzel and Pamuk 2012; van Hülle 2012), where ruling elites (ab)use EU demand for domestic institutional change to advance their own political agenda and ensure their
political survival. They become even more relevant when we move toward the more indirect ways in which EU institutions might affect both domestic change and modes of regional cooperation beyond the nation-state. Diffusion processes do not require active promoters of ideas or institutional solutions. Emulation of institutional models such as the EU in different regional contexts could well be completely independent from any effort by the EU to promote certain norms or regulations. Emulation only requires agents looking for institutional designs outside their own realm to solve certain problems or to mimic the behaviour of their peers.

In this context, we can distinguish three mechanisms of emulation (see Table 2). First, competition involves unilateral adjustments of behaviour toward ‘best practices’. Actors compete with each other over meeting certain performance criteria, e.g. creating employment or fostering economic growth, to which they unilaterally adjust their behaviour accordingly (Busch et al. 2005; Elkins et al. 2006; Vogel 1995). Competition entails not only the diffusion of ideas as normative standards for political or economic behaviour but also the diffusion of causal beliefs, e.g. by learning from best practice, on how to best reach these standards (Börzel 2007). Actors, in turn, borrow ideas in order to improve their performance (functional emulation) in comparison to others.

The EU has sought to encourage competition among countries seeking closer relations with the EU. While the EU’s external relations have been largely structured around regional dimensions (Börzel et al. 2008), accession and neighbourhood countries also negotiate bilateral agreements with the EU based on their performance with regard to adopting European policies and institutions (Bauer et al. 2007). Next to this ‘regatta principle’, the EU has used the Open Method of Coordination developed internally in sensitive areas of EU policy-making (education, employment, health) in its attempt to foster cooperation among countries within one region setting benchmarks and organising regular peer reviews (Tulmets 2003).

Second, lesson-drawing resembles competition insofar as actors look to others for policies and rules that effectively solved similar problems elsewhere and are transferable into their domestic context (Dolowitz and Marsh 2000; Meyer and Rowan 1977). Institutions may become ‘contagious’ (Myers 2000: 175) under conditions of uncertainty, policy failure, and dissatisfaction with the status quo. Lesson-drawing usually starts with actors who are faced with a particular political or economic problem which

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requires institutional change to solve it. They then look around for institutional solutions which are suitable to solve their problems. When lesson-drawing is at play, one should expect the selective rather than wholesale adoption of institutional solutions, since they need to be tailored to the problems at hand.

Both lesson-drawing and competition are based on instrumental rationality, since they follow a functional logic. Actors cannot achieve their goals – e.g. economic performance in a globalised world – and look for or compete about ‘best practices’ to increase their performance. We assume that lesson-drawing constitutes a prime mechanism by which actors in regions outside Europe look at EU institutions to promote cooperation and integration in their respective regions. We also expect them to strategically adapt EU solutions to their particular needs (Alter 2012; Jetschke and Murray 2012; Lenz 2012).

Third, actors may also emulate others for normative reasons, e.g. to increase their legitimacy (Polillo and Guillén 2005). Or they might simply imitate others because the appropriateness is taken for granted (mimicry; see Haveman 1993; Meyer and Rowan 1977). Normative emulation/mimicry are thus based on the logic of appropriateness. For example, states might want to be members of an international community ‘in good standing’ and thus fight corruption, improve their human rights standards, or institute the rule of law. As a result, they look around for institutional solutions which they then emulate. In this case, the driving force is not instrumental rationality, but the desire to be a legitimate member of a community. Mimicry is based on the same social logic of appropriateness, but involves a less active process. It almost resembles the automatic ‘downloading’ of an institutional ‘software’ irrespective of functional need, simply because this is what everybody does in a given community. Thus, we expect normative emulation or mimicry to be at work particularly in situations and in regions where the EU is considered particularly legitimate (Alter 2012; Jetschke and Murray 2012; Lenz 2012).

In sum, diffusion research provides us with a series of mechanisms by which EU policies and institutions might spread worldwide (or not). These mechanisms, particularly those based on the active promotion of institutional ideas by an agent, are compatible with Europeanisation approaches. Whether or not these mechanisms ultimately lead to diffusion and to domestic institutional change depends on scope conditions, to which we now turn.

Scope Conditions for Institutional Change

The articles in this special issue not only specify the processes and mechanisms by which European policies and institutions diffuse into different countries and regions of the world. They also spell out scope conditions under which we expect diffusion processes to occur leading to
institutional change (or not). We distinguish here among four such potential scope conditions.

**Domestic Incentives**

Europeanisation research has confirmed time and again that domestic institutional change responding to EU rules and regulations is unlikely to take place unless domestic actors in politics or society take them up and demand reforms themselves. The differential empowerment of domestic actors has been identified as a powerful scope condition to account for variation in the degree of Europeanisation (see above). Research on the Europeanisation of accession candidates has shown that EU conditionality empowers liberal reform coalitions in target countries who then use the EU demands to pressure for domestic reform (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2004, 2005).

Next to the logic of instrumental rationality, according to which actors use EU demands to further their own interests and benefits, domestic norm entrepreneurs can be equally empowered by EU norms to call for institutional change as the ‘right thing to do’, i.e. following a logic of appropriateness (Börzel and Risse 2007). Moreover, the EU does not only empower liberal reform coalitions who provide ruling elites with domestic incentives to introduce domestic institutional change (Noutcheva and Düzgit 2012; Spendzharova and Vachudova 2012). If EU demands align with the political preferences or survival strategy of (semi-)authoritarian and corrupt elites, the latter can use EU policies and institutions to push their own political agenda and consolidate their power (Börzel and Pamuk 2012; Noutcheva and Düzgit 2012; van Hüllen 2012).

Domestic incentives are likely to matter even in cases in which we do not find any direct EU influence. Emulation processes also depend upon domestic actors in some states or regions to demand domestic change and who then look for policies and institutions to meet their goals. We expect, for example, that the diffusion of EU institutional models of regional integration in other parts of the world is to be explained by the domestic incentives for actors in powerful states in those regions (Jetschke and Murray 2012; Lenz 2012).

**Degrees of (Limited) Statehood**

States vary considerably in the degree to which they are able to adopt, implement, and enforce decisions. While failed, failing, and fragile states are rather rare in the international system, ‘areas of limited statehood’ are ubiquitous (Risse 2011). Many countries lack the capacity to implement and enforce the law in large parts of their territory or with regard to some policy areas. Yet state capacity is a decisive precondition for governments to adopt and adapt to EU demands for domestic institutional change. Moreover,
non-state actors (civil society and business) equally require the capacity to push the reform agenda at the domestic level by exerting pressure on state actors, talking them into domestic change and/or providing them with additional resources. Finally, the EU might be less inclined to push for domestic change in states whose institutions are already fragile. Thus, the institutional and administrative capacity of states and degrees of statehood in general play a crucial role in mitigating the transformative power of the EU (Börzel 2011).

However, it is less clear how limited statehood affects the various diffusion mechanisms. On the one hand, we assume that the more limited statehood characterises parts of the territory or some policy areas, the less likely it is that the diffusion of EU institutions leads to sustainable institutional change and a transformation of domestic practices (Börzel and Pamuk 2012; Noutchева and Düzgit 2012; van Hüllen 2012). On the other hand, limited statehood and lack of state capacity might induce domestic and regional actors to adopt EU institutional solutions to increase their legitimacy (Jetschke and Murray 2012; van Hüllen 2012) or as a substitute, irrespective of their functionality. In this case, we would expect normative emulation or mimicry (Alter 2012; Lenz 2012).

**Democracy vs. Autocracy**

The democratic quality of a regime influences the willingness of state actors to promote domestic change in response to EU influence (Schimmelfennig 2005). The costs of adaptation to EU demands for domestic change are lower for incumbent governments of democratic states with market economies than for authoritarian regimes, which have a firm grip on economy and society as a result of which compliance with EU requirements threatens their hold on power. At the same time, the latter are less likely to face pressure from below since domestic actors lack the political autonomy to mobilise in favour of compliance with EU demands for reform. Thus, we expect that the more authoritarian a regime is, the less likely the EU is to influence domestic institutional change. This scope condition applies particularly to EU demands for domestic reforms with regard to human rights, the rule of law, democracy, or market economy. In the case of authoritarian regimes, these EU demands directly threaten the survival of the regimes, as a result of which they are unlikely to lead to institutional reforms, unless other conditions are met (e.g. mobilisation of domestic opposition with regard to human rights, see Risse et al. 1999). Likewise, the more democratic the members of a regional organisation, the more likely it should emulate EU institutions, not only because of greater resonance. Autocratic regimes are also more reluctant than democracies to voluntarily forgo aspects of their ‘Westphalian’ sovereignty (Jetschke and Murray 2012 on Southeast Asia).

Note, however, that regime type is not a dichotomous variable, but there are degrees of democracy and autocracy. Several articles in this special issue
explore to what degree EU efforts at the promotion of democracy, human rights, the rule of law, and good governance lead to institutional change in target countries with different degrees of democratisation (Börzel and Pamuk 2012; Noutcheva and Düzgit 2012; Spendzharova and Vachudova 2012; van Hüllen 2012).

Power (A)symmetries

Last but not least, the distribution of material and ideational resources between the EU, on the one hand, and target countries or regions, on the other, is likely to matter in explaining the variation in domestic change. The degree of interdependence crucially shapes the pressure for adaptation the EU is able to exert and the power of the target country to resist such pressures. Except for Russia, the economic and political power of the EU renders its external relations with neighbouring countries rather asymmetrical. In principle, accession candidates, but also ENC have much to gain by closer relations with the EU which then increases the EU’s ability to exert pressure. However, some states possess resources (gas, oil) of interest to the EU, are of strategic importance, and/or have the potential to create substantial negative externalities for the EU (illegal immigration, cross-border crime). Strategic or economic goals can seriously undermine the consistency of the EU in pushing for domestic change in its neighbourhood (Börzel and Pamuk 2012; van Hüllen 2012). Israel is another interesting example of a country balancing its economic dependence on the EU through its security relationship with the United States (Magen 2012).

Power (a)symmetries not only matter with regard to the EU’s neighbourhood. The further we move away from Europe, the more complex the picture becomes. On the one hand, the power relationship between the EU and the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) as well as other emerging economies is rather symmetrical as a result of which the EU and its partners treat each other as equals (Jetschke and Murray 2012). In these cases, mutual interest in granting each other market access leads to a rather balanced relationship which also circumscribes the EU’s abilities to successfully demand institutional reforms. On the other hand, there are also many countries in the world which are crucially dependent on getting access to the most important market of the developed world. As a result, the EU is able to exert considerable pressure for institutional reform (Lenz 2012). Finally, power relationships are not only relevant with regard to material resources. One should also keep in mind ideational resources and discursive power (overview in Barnett and Duvall 2005). The EU’s discourse on human rights and democracy, for example, is increasingly challenged by the People’s Republic of China, on the one hand, and by left-leaning governments in Latin America, on the other. As a result, an ideational balance of power is emerging. A similar example pertains to the so-called ‘Asian way’ of regional integration which has served as a powerful counter-
discourse rejecting the EU’s supranationalism as inappropriate for South- 
east Asia (Jetschke and Murray 2012). In sum, however, we would expect 
that – everything else being equal – the EU is the more able to exert direct 
influence and adaptational pressure for institutional change, the greater the 
material power asymmetries in its favour.

Table 3 summarises the theoretical framework of this special issue.

Overview of the Special Issue

The articles in this special issue are divided in three groups. The first group 
deals with the Europeanisation of new member states and accession 
candidates and thus focuses on the direct influence mechanisms specified 
above. The second group of articles also investigates primarily direct 
influence mechanisms, but with regard to the ENC which do not have an 
accession perspective. The dependent variable of these six articles is 
domestic institutional change, particularly with regard to democracy, 
human rights, and the rule of law. In contrast, the third group of articles 
in this special issue focus on regional institutional change as their dependent 
variable, namely the degree to which regional cooperation and integration 
efforts follow EU models. These articles also examine emulation and thus 
the more indirect mechanisms of diffusion specified above. All articles in this 
special issue focus on the same scope conditions for institutional change.

Europeanisation of New Member States and Accession Candidates

With the ever-growing transfer of competences to the European Union, 
students of European politics have become increasingly interested in how 
European integration has transformed the domestic institutions, policies,
and political processes in the member states. Eastern enlargement then created a unique opportunity for the next generation of Europeanisation research to test the various approaches that had emerged to account for the conditions and causal mechanisms through which the EU triggers domestic change. The power asymmetries of the accession process, by which candidate countries have to Europeanise as a condition and not as a consequence of membership, significantly mitigate the domestic impact of the EU. So do the varying degrees of statehood and democracy in the Central and Eastern European countries, the Western Balkans, and Turkey. It seems that ‘accession Europeanisation’ has triggered only limited institutional change, which varies, however, across time, countries, and policy areas. The articles by Sedelmeier (2012), Spendzharova and Vachudova (2012), and Noutcheva and Düzgit (2012) explore to what extent our Europeanisation model of direct influence mechanisms can account for these findings.

Promoting Institutional Change in the European Neighbourhood

With the borders of the EU moving eastwards, students of Europeanisation have been awarded yet another real-world experiment. As in case of accession candidates, the EU seeks to transform the domestic institutions of its eastern and southern neighbours in order to foster peace, stability, and prosperity. Yet the European Neighbourhood Countries do not have a membership perspective, at least not in the foreseeable future, so that the big carrot is missing. Moreover, the Southern and Eastern neighbours of the EU suffer from both weak statehood and weak democracy, if not outright autocratic systems. Since the EU can neither coerce its neighbouring countries into domestic institutional change nor provide sufficient incentives to pay off the adaptation costs, the misfit between EU and domestic institutions does not translate into strong adaptational pressures. Nevertheless, our authors do find domestic institutional change, at least to some degree. The articles by Börzel and Pamuk (2012), Magen (2012), and van Hüllen (2012) explore how we need to expand our theoretical toolbox in order to theorise voluntary domestic change in response to the diffusion of EU policies and institutions.

Diffusing EU Institutions Beyond Europe

As argued above, mostly indirect mechanisms of diffusion (emulation) are at play when the EU’s institutional models travel beyond the European neighbourhood. In Asia, Africa, and Latin America, the EU’s transformative power is even more limited than in its neighbourhood. Moreover, and with regard to models for regional cooperation and integration, the EU is not the only game in town. Both, free trade areas according to WTO rules (including its dispute settlement mechanisms) and the comprehensive North American Free Trade Area (NAFTA) of Canada, the US, and Mexico constitute alternatives to the EU’s multi-level governance system that
encompasses a whole variety of policy areas as well as supranational institutions interfering deeply with the ‘Westphalian’ sovereignty of states. Yet we do observe the emulation of EU institutions in most unlikely regions of the world, such as Africa and Asia. But the adoption of EU models is rather selective in other parts of the world and the behavioural practices are also different, as Alter (2012), Lenz (2012), and Jetschke and Murray (2012) demonstrate in this special issue.

The concluding piece by Börzel and Risse (2012) summarises the major findings of the special issue and discusses several avenues for further research combining Europeanisation and diffusion approaches.

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Note

1. Our distinction between direct and indirect influence differs from concepts such as leverage versus linkage (Levitsky and Way 2005) or external governance (Lavenex and Schimmeleffing 2010) since these still take the EU as the sender of policies and institutions employing soft or hard mechanisms.

References


