



Policy and Society

The Version of Record of this manuscript has been published and is freely available in <Policy and Society> <26 January 2017> <http://www.tandfonline.com/> <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14494035.2017.1278874>>

ISSN: 1449-4035 (Print) 1839-3373 (Online) Journal homepage: <http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rpas20>

Higher education regionalism in Europe and Southeast Asia: Comparing policy ideas

Meng-Hsuan Chou & Pauline Ravinet

To cite this article: Meng-Hsuan Chou & Pauline Ravinet (2017): Higher education regionalism in Europe and Southeast Asia: Comparing policy ideas, Policy and Society

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14494035.2017.1278874>



© 2017 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group



Published online: 26 Jan 2017.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 6



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

Higher education regionalism in Europe and Southeast Asia: Comparing policy ideas

Meng-Hsuan Chou^a  and Pauline Ravinet^b

^aPublic Policy and Global Affairs Programme, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore; ^bCERAPS, University of Lille, Lille Cedex, France

ABSTRACT

Regional cooperation in the higher education policy sector has been on the rise throughout the last decades. In this article, we compare and analyse two instances of higher education regionalisms (i.e. political projects of higher education region creation) in Europe and South-East Asia from an ideational perspective. In so doing, we engage with and challenge the diffusion argument common in both European higher education studies ('Bologna Process export thesis') and new comparative regionalism. Using publicly accessible documents from regional bodies active in higher education policy coordination, and 53 semi-structured interviews with key policy actors involved in these developments, we identify the policy ideas of European and South-East Asian higher education regionalisms, and consider whether the extant models of regional cooperation and the knowledge discourse affected their evolution. Our findings indicate that the 'Bologna Process export thesis' and the diffusion assumptions of comparative regionalism are too simplistic and misleading. We conclude with suggestions for scholars interested in new comparative regionalism.

KEYWORDS

ASEAN; diffusion; EU; higher education; higher education regionalism; ideas; regionalism

1. Introduction: the regional dimension in higher education policy cooperation

In recent decades, the world's geographical regions and regional organisations are seen to be increasingly involved in the governance of higher education policies, a role usually reserved for nation states. For instance, in Europe we observe the well-known Bologna Process, which seeks to establish the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) where students, staff, faculty and knowledge would circulate freely through common degree structures and credit transfer (Gornitzka, 2010; Ravinet, 2008; Vukasovic, 2013). Looking elsewhere, we find similar efforts in creating common higher education 'areas' and 'spaces' in Africa (Hoosen, Butcher, & Njenga, 2009; Woldegiorgis, Jonck, & Goujon, 2015), in Latin America (Verger & Hermo, 2010) and in East Asia (Knight, 2012). Chou and Ravinet (2015, p. 368) described and conceptualised this phenomenon as the rise of 'higher education regionalism', which they defined as 'a political project of region creation involving at least some state authority

CONTACT Meng-Hsuan Chou  Hsuan.Chou@cantab.net, Hsuan@ntu.edu.sg

© 2017 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

(national, supranational, international), who in turn designates and delineates the world's geographical region to which such activities extend, in the higher education policy sector'. In spite of regional diversity, what these initiatives have in common is their emphasis on the importance of having intra-regional mobility and degree recognition so as to compete on the global higher education market vis-à-vis other regions (Chou & Ravinet, 2015). This phenomenon of higher education regionalism is one of several manifestations of higher education policy-making that takes place in complex multi-level settings and involves a variety of policy actors, but it has been relatively unexamined by the scholarly community (cf. Chou & Ravinet, 2016).

In this article, we compare and analyse two instances of higher education regionalisms to reveal this multi-level, beyond-the-nation state, regional dynamics of contemporary public policy coordination. We approach the case comparisons from an ideational perspective because focusing our attention on how policy ideas of higher education regionalism emerge and become institutionalised is a good entry point for understanding how actors make sense of multi-level complexity. We selected Europe and South-East Asia as our regional cases because they enable us to engage with, and challenge, the diffusion argument common in both European higher education studies and new comparative regionalism. In broad strokes, this diffusion argument emphasises the significance of European processes in shaping sectoral policy developments in other regions. In the higher education sector, the 'Bologna Process export thesis' postulates the following: developments in Europe triggered political interests elsewhere in the regional dimension, *ergo* the Bologna Process acts as a model for that region's higher education policy cooperation (Huisman, Adelman, Hsieh, Shams, & Wilkins, 2012; Vögtle & Martens, 2014). We see this diffusion argument as too Eurocentric and simplistic in the way it assumes that diffusion is unidirectional and all-powerful, and it overlooks endogenous regional developments as symbolic of that region's particularities and its preferred ways of doing things. Furthermore, much of the empirical data supporting the 'Bologna Process export thesis' remains anecdotal and lacks structured analysis grounded in theory. We situate our analysis within an ideational framework, and we trace and compare how the ideas of higher education regionalism emerge and evolve in Europe and South-East Asia to consider whether the 'Bologna Process export thesis' is merely one of several possible explanations of the renewed enthusiasm for regional initiatives in South-East Asia.

We begin by outlining the ideational framework for studying higher education regionalisms before elaborating our methodology and case selections. Next, we present the case comparisons of higher education regionalism in Europe and South-East Asia. We conclude with discussions of what our findings tell us about the 'Bologna Process export thesis' and the diffusion assumptions and comparative emphasis of regionalism.

2. An ideational approach to comparing higher education regionalisms

Our starting point in developing and operationalising our ideational approach to studying higher education regionalisms is to acknowledge the diversity of ideational approaches. It is beyond our scope here to provide a thorough review of the ideational literature (see Béland & Cox, 2012; Blyth, 2016), but it is important to single out how ideas are defined as embedded in distinct theoretical universes within the social sciences, which imply different

ways of operationalisation in terms of empirical research.¹ Our understanding of ideas stems from the new institutionalist perspective and our interests in ideas are in the ways that policy ideas are contested, disseminated and (re-) appropriated (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Strang & Meyer, 1993). We want to explain how certain ideas emerge and become taken-for-granted, while others are rejected. We delineate our focus in this way because we are interested in the major questions of political science: Who governs and how? What is considered legitimate and why? Similar to authors such as Schmidt (2008) we are drawn to the substance of ideas and discourse as a mode of interaction between policy actors in which ideas are conveyed. These interactions are embedded in specific institutional configurations that have, at the outset, a general acceptance of what is appropriate and what is deviant or innovative. We thus do not consider policy ideas as *a posteriori* justifications actors provide, nor are ideas used to mask conflicts of interests between them, nor are ideas mere veils of rhetoric for advancing policy actors' pre-determined preferences. Analysing ideas is a way to make sense of policy processes – the substances, the cleavages, the compromises and the power struggles structuring and re-structuring them.

In this article, we primarily focus on drawing out the ideas and their roles in the rise of higher education regionalisms in Europe and South-East Asia. Our reason for an ideational focus is because we believe ideas are intimately connected with policy actors' interests and identities; ideas are relevant indications of policy content and vectors for alliances, as well as conflict. By asking how respective policy actors comprehend and articulate key ideas associated with the rise of higher education regionalism, we are able to identify conflicts and determine how some actors are able to coalesce and push forward their shared vision of these processes, while others are shoved aside, powerless to realise their visions. We thus place ideas at the heart of institutional and policy transformation. An ideational approach also allows us to interrogate the rise of higher education regionalism, which is very much an idea itself. Although it is commonly accepted that the emergence of higher education regionalism is a response to globalised forces, particularly those related to changes and transformation towards knowledge economies, this statement is generally untested. This is puzzling because the contemporary organisation of international political order remains largely the nation state, which means that most forms of beyond-the-state cooperation, especially those involving binding commitments, are purposeful; the emergence of higher education regionalisms is not an organic development. At the same time, ideas are rarely unambiguous; it is essential to explore its varied expressions across time and place – especially when the latter has distinct histories and ways of doing things.

Parsing out ideas and specifying their roles in higher education regionalisms hold the key to understanding higher education regionalism and we will approach it in two ways. First, we interrogate the rise of higher education regionalism as an ideational phenomenon. This means that the policy idea of higher education regionalism is the *explanandum*, or the phenomenon to be explained. Our empirical research focus is on characterising this idea,

¹For instance, some researchers are interested in how scientific ideas steer public policies (see Hall, 1993), while others are concerned with general social beliefs determining the appropriateness of policy ideas (Muller, 2005). Another distinction addresses the polysemic notion of discourse. Some use it to qualify the discourse *content* and are interested in its overall consistency, while others are interested in the discourse *form* and how it is enunciated, disseminated and translated. Finally, there is also a divide concerning the autonomy of ideas (Hansen & King, 2001): some constructivist scholars consider ideas as independent factors, completely autonomous from actors' purposeful actions and institutional structure; whereas more rational choice scholars emphasise how an idea is embedded within institutional configurations and is epiphenomenal to actor interests (Goldstein & Keohane, 1993).

or model, to determine from where it came and to map its reformulations over time. The questions guiding this undertaking include: To what extent are the two higher education regionalisms alike or different? What explains their similarities and differences? Could we confirm whether any identifiable similarities are the result of diffusion from one region to another? Or is the ideational transfer part of the global process of higher education regionalism in circulation?

The second way to approach the rise of higher education regionalism is from the perspective of policy ideas as *explanans*, or the explanatory factors. Here, our empirical research focus is on isolating the ideational drivers behind higher education regionalism and assessing their overall relevance vis-à-vis other variables. Two sets of questions steer this analysis. The first deal with the role of the broader regional integration model in the rise of higher education regionalism; specifically, the ways in which the regional model may have driven or shaped higher education regional initiatives: Does higher education regionalism in Europe and in South-East Asia follow the extant models of regional cooperation (e.g. institutional vs. network) (Yeo, 2010)? Or are they independent processes? The second set of questions address the knowledge ‘turn’ in contemporary policy-making. These questions include: Does the knowledge discourse drive higher education regionalism in the same way across time? Is there a shared understanding of this discourse? Or is it translated differently across the world’s geographical regions? In our analyses of higher education regionalism, we encapsulate both facets of policy ideas and our findings will contribute to empirically illuminate the role of ideas in complex multi-level higher education policy-making.

3. Case selection, comparison template and methodology

We designed the study to be comparative and have selected two cases for comparison: higher education regionalism in Europe and in South-East Asia. These two geographical regions were chosen because their extant regional institutional presence is generally more developed than other regions in the world. For instance, Europe’s European Union (EU) is a political and economic union with institutions such as the European Council, Council of Ministers, European Commission, Parliament and a Court of Justice designed to exercise independent executive, legislative and judiciary powers across many policy sectors. Europe’s Bologna Process, as noted earlier, shows an established coordination platform and multiple policy instruments, which involve many actors representing very different organisations. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), while less institutionalised and with no central institutions having the range of executive, legislative, and judiciary powers as those of the EU’s, has experienced a revival of integration efforts in recent years, as indicated by the launching of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) in 2015. The last years have also seen strong efforts to develop a common higher education area in South-East Asia when this sector was singled out as one of the ways forward for regional cooperation. These two regions, with distinct regional organisational set-ups for cooperation and exhibiting strong interests in higher education regionalism, thus constitute appropriate cases for addressing our research questions.

We apply the same analytical template to delineate ideas as *explanandum* and ideas as *explanans* as introduced above. For each region, we first trace the idea of higher education regionalism specific to that region over time. Next, we identify the extent to which the extant regional model of policy cooperation and the knowledge discourse shaped and affected the

emergence and evolution of higher education regionalism in that geographical region. By explicitly avoiding organising our analyses in the classic structure of studies on regional organisations (i.e. extensively elaborating and comparing parameters such as forms of organisation, regional history and the status of higher education in the region), we acknowledge the limited ability of traditional approaches to higher education regional comparisons. In so doing, we are advocating a policy sector-based approach to comparative regionalism that will yield, in our view, richer insights into the forms and outcomes of translating transnational ideas (in the higher education sector, as well as others) and implementing them through regional institutions and infrastructures. By policy sector-based approach, we mean embracing policy sector developments as the primary unit of analysis and comparison, rather than the institutional structures and organisational histories as the starting point. This simple template presents the advantage of contextualising the cases within their historical processes and specificities while allowing for comparisons to be made. The implications of our approach would thus be increasing the capacity of researchers to ask new research questions, challenge conventional assumptions and to begin unravelling the relationship between transnational policy ideas, regional developments and national aspirations. After presenting the two cases, we draw several observations about the phenomenon of higher education regionalism and describe how our study on the policy ideas of higher education regionalism contributes to the diffusion thinking common in European higher education studies and new comparative regionalism.

To describe and explain the developments of higher education regionalism in Europe and in South-East Asia, we relied on multiple sources and used a combination of methods. First, we carried out secondary analysis based on a review of published academic and policy studies on higher education regional policy cooperation in Europe and in South-East Asia, as well as publicly available documents issued by the respective regional organisations and relevant policy institutions active in the higher education sector. We observed at this stage the tremendous asymmetry of data available for both regions. For example, while the extant research on European higher education policy cooperation constitutes its own field of research² (some of which we contributed), the same cannot be said for South-East Asia. Indeed, we noted that only a handful of solid scholarly work exists for illuminating the landscape of higher education regional cooperation in South-East Asia (e.g. Dang, 2012; Knight, 2012; Ratanawijitrasin, 2012). Turning to policy documents, we found a similar trend: official documents from the European side were abundant and easily accessible; there were fewer documents for South-East Asia and they were not readily available.

Second, to address the asymmetry of available data, we carried out 43 semi-structured interviews³ with policy actors in South-East Asia who are or were directly involved in steering regional initiatives. These interviews took place from April 2015 to March 2016 in Bangkok (Thailand), Jakarta (Indonesia) and Singapore. Our overall approach was to give interviewees anonymity because we wanted to establish a conversational environment within which they felt comfortable expressing their views. Early on in the interview process, we

²Indeed, the field of European higher education studies is so well developed that it even has its own dedicated networks and community of scholars, as well as its specialised journals and book series.

³The interviews were with representatives from the ASEAN Brussels Committee, ASEAN Secretariat, ASEAN University Network (AUN) Secretariat, Asia Europe Foundation (ASEF), British Council, European Association for Quality Assurance (ENQA), European University Association (EUA), European national delegations based in South-East Asia (France and UK), German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organisation's Regional Centre for Higher Education and Development (SEAMEO RIHED) and the UNESCO Bangkok office.

saw that our approach encouraged interviewees to refer freely to ideas they considered most relevant and important in describing the developments from their perspective. We further carried out 10 interviews with 3 European Commission services (development cooperation, education and external action service) in Brussels throughout the same period to update our knowledge of the latest European policy developments.⁴ Two interviewers were present for majority of the interviews and they independently took notes, which were subsequently transcribed and compared; the interviews were not taped to provide interviewees further assurance of their anonymity. We also had several follow-up exchanges with interviewees to confirm or clarify our observations. Together, the 53 interviews, official documents and published research on higher education regional policy cooperation in Europe and South-East Asia constitute the data for our comparison.

4. Europe and the institutionalisation of the Bologna Process

4.1. European higher education regionalism: from university to funding mobility and policy coordination

While we can trace the idea of a common European space for knowledge to the Middle Ages, the contemporary policy idea for European higher education regionalism emerged more recently. In her classic study of European higher education developments, Anne Corbett (2005) dated the discussion for European higher education regionalism to as early as 1955. Yet due to the reluctance of governments, especially the French, this idea did not materialise in any concrete form, either in the Treaties or among the first European Community initiatives. But this development had enduring effects. For about 20 years, European higher education policy cooperation occurred outside of the supranational framework: within the Council of Europe (with the states adopting conventions on higher education) and within the European association of university presidents, which developed networks for socialising actors in the higher education field. There was no consensus on a policy idea for European higher education regionalism beyond the attention given to universities as *the* institution and site for this undertaking; indeed, Corbett (2005) documented fascinating debates between promoters of a ‘Europe of universities’ and those for a ‘European university’.

The emphasis on the university dimension changed with the implementation of the Erasmus programme in 1986 (Pépin, 2006). Initiated as a pilot project in the 1970s, the Erasmus programme introduced *funding student mobility* as the policy idea for European higher education regionalism. This reframing propelled the European Commission to the higher education policy stage, where it was previously absent. The symbolic impact of the Erasmus programme was far more significant than its reach: the proportion of students involved stabilised around 1% of Europe’s total student population and never reached the 10% target stated in the 1980s.⁵ European governments were consistently vigilant with limiting its budget, which was instrumental for enacting a policy idea revolving around funding. Yet the Erasmus experience became a reference for student culture in European

⁴The authors have researched European higher education policy developments for more than a decade and have completed more than 200 interviews with European officials in this area.

⁵For example, in the academic year of 2012–2013 (the latest figures available), the European Commission reported that 270,000 students from 33 countries (EU28 plus Iceland, Liechtenstein, Switzerland, Norway and Turkey) spent time studying abroad under the Erasmus programme (European Commission, 2014, p. 4) out of 20,187,400 students estimated to be enrolled in tertiary education in Europe (Eurostat, 2016).

countries, promoting mobility as *the* student experience and also a symbol of what European policies can actually do for its citizens. Indeed, by the end of the 1990s, Erasmus became the ‘label’ and ‘brand’ of European higher education regionalism, and funding mobility as the policy idea, within and outside of Europe.

The launch of the Bologna Process in the late 1990s shifted the focus of funding mobility as the policy idea *de rigueur* for European higher education regionalism (see Ravinet, 2008, 2011, 2014). The Bologna Process seeks to build an EHEA through policy coordination, specifically the implementation of measures revolving around, for instance, degree structure and quality assurance system. While these developments were geared towards improving the overall mobility of European students, the importance of student *employability* and *competitiveness* of European higher education dominated. This seemingly subtle change in ideational emphasis masked the awareness among Bologna members that embracing *funding student mobility* as the *sole* policy idea for European higher education regionalism was flawed. Indeed, under the Erasmus programme, student mobility was envisaged as students moving between different systems. In the policy vision of the Bologna Process, these very differences were identified as key obstacles to increasing student mobility, employability and system competitiveness. The policy solution thus lies in regional policy coordination beyond mere funding. With 47 countries participating, Bologna’s reach extends far beyond the EU’s borders, and its unique follow-up structure keeps Bologna at the EU’s institutional margin. Bologna’s specific working culture and decision procedures are decisively *not* the EU’s even though it enjoys supranational resources and support, and involves the European Commission as a key participant. It is this blurring of what is European and the EU that has contributed to the common confusion that the Bologna Process is an EU process.

The impact of implementing Bologna objectives varied across Europe, but there is an overall consensus that it generated unprecedented dynamics for change in the region, at the supranational, national and institutional levels. While European higher education policy is certainly a hybrid of Bologna and European Commission measures, which promote a stronger neoliberal discourse (see below, and Modernisation Agenda in Ravinet, 2014), the emergence and institutionalisation of the Bologna Process clearly defined what European higher education regionalism means today. Time and again, our interviewees in Southeast Asia and the European Commission’s External Action Service often spoke of ‘Bologna’ as an equivalent for European higher education policy cooperation and generally did not differentiate between policy coordination and funding student mobility as two distinct policy ideas. Understandably, this is because *policy coordination* as a policy idea is less tangible and far more comprehensive than funding student mobility. The malleability of the Bologna policy idea has led Pavel Zgaga (2012) to argue that Bologna is better understood as an agora where higher education policy ideas were debated, rather than a philosophy with identifiable principles. We found in our fieldwork that the strength of the Bologna brand was indeed its very fluid nature.

4.2. Ideational drivers behind European higher education regionalism

Turning to ideational drivers, we find that the extant model of regional cooperation left indelible marks on European higher education regionalism. For instance, following the stagnation in the 1970s, the relaunch of the European integration process in the 1980s addressed concerns that the Common Market was too narrowly focused on the economic

dimension. Discussions about a 'Citizens' Europe' led the European Commission to bring the two objectives of developing a European identity and citizenship together with the training of students as future mobile workers for the European job market. Similarly, debates about limits of European integration in the 1990s questioned, again, the appropriateness and suitability of the Community method as the way forward. Emergent preferences for voluntary coordination of national policies, shared understanding, best practices, socialisation and soft constraints at the time came to become the *modus operandi* for the Bologna Process. As Ravinet (2011) explained, these principles of 'new European governance' were by no means specific to higher education, but were part of a larger debate about EU policy-making and governance then transforming European integration.

The knowledge discourse – which emphasises the significance of knowledge in economic growth, international competition and social cohesion in a globalised post-industrial economy – has also shaped European higher education regionalism. While it certainly did not invent the knowledge discourse and its promotion of innovation and high-level training as keys to implementing the post-fordist productive model, the EU was an effective sound box for its diffusion in the region. This occurred more comprehensively at the turn of this century when the overall European project was redefined as one geared towards building a Europe of Knowledge. As a sector specialising in creating, applying, transmitting and diffusing knowledge, higher education was moved from the margins of European policy-making to its core (Gornitzka, 2010). When the knowledge discourse enabled the re-articulation of the function of mobility to include issues concerning student employability and system competitiveness, policy mechanisms beyond mobility support were legitimised at the European level.

It should be emphasised that certain legal and institutional conditions were in place in Europe to enable the amplification of the knowledge discourse. Specifically, the legal basis for supranational initiatives in vocational training and related European Court of Justice rulings in the 1980s allowed the European Commission to successfully and gradually intervene in the higher education policy domain where it does not have treaty competence (Pépin, 2006). This tension, and the intentional blurring of European and EU resources, explains the lack of a consensual and single policy idea for European higher education regionalism, which vacillates, as discussed above, between funding student mobility and policy coordination. We find this tension discursively manifested in the Bologna Declaration and EU's revised Lisbon Strategy, which continues today as the Europe 2020 Strategy: in the former, knowledge is seen as crucial for 'reinforcing intellectual, cultural, social, scientific dimensions of Europe' (Bologna Declaration, 1999; Sections 1–2); in the latter, knowledge from the higher education sector is the key to increase the overall employability of European graduates and hence the relevance of policy coordination in achieving this (Ravinet, 2014).

5. South-East Asia and the rise of the 'ASEAN higher education space'

5.1. South-East Asian higher education regionalism: institutionalising ideational differences

In comparison to Europe, there appears to be general consensus early on among governments of South-East Asian nations that regional policy cooperation on educational issues was important. Indeed, shortly after the UNESCO Bangkok Asia Pacific Bureau was

established in 1961, we notice the creation of SEAMEO in 1965 for promoting regional cooperation in the areas of education, science and culture. Similarly, following the launch of ASEAN in 1967, we find the introduction of the ASEAN education ministerial meetings (ASEM), but the forum quickly became dormant, leaving intergovernmental cooperation on policy issues for decades to SEAMEO (Dang, 2012). Two characteristics define South-East Asian higher education regionalism during this early period. First, unlike Europe, *higher* education was not singled out as a focus for political cooperation in the broader educational policy sector; it was simply subsumed. Second, efforts behind regionalism concentrated on settling the outline of the political structures for initiating and organising cooperation in the region, rather than its substantive content. Already, what we observe at this stage is that higher education regionalism in Europe and in South-East Asia is of a different *kind* rather than in mere intensity.

The difference in kind between these two higher education regionalisms became more apparent in the early 1990s when there was a remarkable shift towards *higher* education issues in South-East Asia. Two main regional bodies were explicitly set up to deepen cooperation in the region among the different actors, with each organisation embodying a different policy idea for higher education regionalism. The first is the ASEAN University Network. Established in 1992 by ASEAN members, AUN coordinates activities between 30 flagship higher education institutions in the region. Staffed with a secretariat based in Bangkok, AUN manages a variety of (generally) discipline-based collaborative initiatives, projects, networks and associated mobility scholarships for participating in these activities. All member institutions are invited to participate and they decide on a case-by-case scenario; AUN activities also involve non-ASEAN countries. Several interviewees pointed out that it is important to clarify that the AUN is not an independent body like the EUA in Europe; it is actually one of many ASEAN sectoral ministerial bodies⁶. Yet AUN's structural organisation promotes a distinct policy idea for South-East Asian higher education regionalism: it is about *networking* among the best universities in the region based on pragmatic (discipline-specific) initiatives.

The second regional body responsible for deepening higher education cooperation in ASEAN region is SEAMEO's Regional Centre for Higher Education and Development (RIHED). The current membership of SEAMEO and ASEAN overlaps exactly, with the exception of Timor Leste, which is not an ASEAN member; SEAMEO remains outside of the ASEAN institutional framework to this day. In 1993, SEAMEO ministers decided to re-establish RIHED in Bangkok. Hosted by the Thai Government, RIHED has five objective areas all geared towards fostering 'access, excellence, and synergy in higher education for regional development'. Originally set up in 1970 in Singapore, the idea for RIHED came from a joint collaboration between UNESCO, the International Association of Universities and the Ford Foundation in 1959; but it became inactive in 1985. In contrast to the AUN, SEAMEO RIHED operationalises under another policy idea for South-East Asian higher education regionalism: it is about *cooperation between governmental actors* with powers to decide and adopt policies, and having sector-wide objectives. Both the AUN and SEAMEO RIHED spearheaded many higher education initiatives and projects since, including student mobility programmes and quality assurance frameworks.

During the latter half of the 2000s, South-East Asian higher education regionalism was transformed: there was increased political impetus for higher education policy cooperation

⁶While formally listed as one of the 'ASEAN sectoral ministerial bodies' (ASEAN Charter, Annex 1), the AUN does not meet in a configuration of ministers or ministerial officials.

as part of ‘enhancing ASEAN identity’ and for sustaining regional economic development (see below). Indeed, this period saw policy actors and observers clearly expressing a desire towards a South-East Asian common space for higher education. At the same time, the unique organisational division of labour remains⁷: RIHED is responsible for political and policy cooperation (now shared with ASED, reactivated in 2006), and AUN oversees the practical implementation of higher education initiatives at the university level. Unlike the seemingly co-existence of the Bologna Process and EU’s Europe of Knowledge undertaking, our interviewees from South-East Asia explicitly distinguished between RIHED and AUN measures and adopted mechanisms. The renewed interest in South-East Asia for regional higher education cooperation emerged alongside growing concerns for the ‘external dimension’ of the Bologna Process (Zgaga, 2006), which has been interpreted as a political interest in promoting the Bologna Process as a model for regional higher education policy cooperation. In their study, Chou and Ravinet (2015) argued that the dynamics sweeping South-East Asia were observable elsewhere around the world. To consider these two empirical claims, we need to attend to the ideational drivers behind South-East Asian higher education regionalism.

5.2. Ideational drivers behind South-East Asian higher education regionalism

We find the extant model of regional cooperation to be explanatory in the form and evolution of South-East Asian higher education regionalism. Unlike European integration and its overall emphasis on establishing independent supranational institutions and adopting binding rules in a variety of sectors (higher education being an exception), ASEAN cooperation has been on developing platforms for constructive exchanges among its member states (Dosch, 2011) and generating non-binding consensus. Known as the ASEAN Way, this style of cooperation is characterised by informality, non-interference in national affairs, non-confrontational consultation and consensus building as the main mode of decision-making (Koga, 2010). The ASEAN Way is unique to the region, with most of the member states sharing a colonial past and the resultant desire to assert their individual sovereignty vis-à-vis the rest of the world and against one another (Narine, 2008; Rüländ & Jetschke, 2008). This remains the case despite continual criticisms of how this approach limits the regional capacity to face external challenges and internal discord (Chou, Howlett, & Koga, 2016). Our interviewees repeatedly referred to the ASEAN Way, and the region’s historical legacy, as responsible for the singular organisational division of labour – i.e. AUN and RIHED – for South-East Asian higher education regionalism. This approach reflects participating member states’ general preference to prevent any potential co-mingling of decision-making powers between state officials and ASEAN representatives (who may or may not be seconded by their national ministries). Against this context, it is therefore surprising how discussions and an agreement emerged in the latter half of the 2000s concerning creating a common South-East Asian higher education space.

Along similar magnitude the extant model of regional cooperation has affected South-East Asian higher education regionalism, the knowledge discourse accounts for the political impetus observed towards the end of the 2000s. In 2007, ASEAN announced the deadline

⁷There are contemporary efforts to address this divide through the SHARE initiative (EU Support to Higher Education in the ASEAN Region) and involving the ASEAN Secretariat. At this writing, it is too early to make any assessment since these activities remain ongoing.

of 2015 for completing the ASEAN Economic Community. This political commitment propelled policy actors outside of the AEC pillar – in our case, ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community pillar – to advance cooperation in their respective sectors. While readers familiar with the European case may point out this is reminiscent of European Commission’s ‘creeping competence’ or the ‘spill-over’ effect of European integration, it generally emphasises the cross-cutting nature of complex policy areas such as higher education, where effective policy-making and implementation require some horizontal coordination (Gornitzka, 2010). The knowledge discourse and its emphasis on the role of knowledge in economic growth, international competition and social cohesion simply could not be ignored even in ASEAN where there has been a tradition of limited cooperation in limited sectors. Indeed, according to our interviewees, it became clear that it was difficult to retain a clear separation between the sociopolitical role of higher education and its economic one – two dimensions of the knowledge discourse.

The knowledge discourse ushered in the possibility of a common higher education space in the region, but it also pointed to the many challenges ahead, specifically the need to reconcile two different policy ideas for South-East Asia and simplifying the range of initiatives already on the ground. Since the 2007 announcement, we observed policy actors in the region tackling these challenges with renewed efforts. For instance, SEAMEO RIHED was asked to carry out a mapping exercise of other regional higher education initiatives that would provide ‘analyses on obstacles, opportunities, and the relevance of the promotion of “ASEANness” in developing and planning a similar process in Southeast Asian countries’ (Yavaprabhas, 2010, p. 10). Presented in 2008 (SEAMEO RIHED, 2008), this report revealed that the Bologna Process was only one of several regional initiatives under consideration. Moreover, this report cautioned against the overarching Bologna approach by explicitly stating that it should be avoided due to ‘doubts and suspicions among Asian countries’ (SEAMEO RIHED, 2008, p. 82). This blunt statement encourages us to question the ‘Bologna Process export thesis’ conventionally assumed in European higher education studies – a discussion to which we turn next.

6. Beyond the ‘Bologna Process export thesis’: what our cases revealed

We raised two sets of questions concerning ideas as *explanandum* and *explanans* at the outset, and we will now address them more in turn. Beginning with higher education regionalism as *explanandum*, we find similar policy ideas in both regions – political cooperation, networks between institutions and student mobility – appearing early on in their regional cooperation. More importantly for our purposes, political cooperation in the area of higher education began in South-East Asia even before the Erasmus programme came into place, and certainly before the policy vision for the Bologna Process was even uttered. Their developments, however, took very different pathways. In South-East Asia, participating states focussed on how to allocate authority into distinct institutional venues, which involved generally different audiences. Comparatively less attention was given to the substantive contents of what such authority are meant to decide and implement.⁸ According to Sauwakon Ratanawijitrasin (2012, p. 236), ‘there are currently multiple, yet non-coherent and sometime overlapping efforts conducted separately to harmonize the region’s

⁸In practice, this separation has led the regional bodies to adopt similar instruments, such as the frameworks and mechanisms for quality assurance, which target different audiences (e.g. AUN, 2007; SEAMEO RIHED, 2012).

higher education.’ By contrast, participating states in Europe gave primacy to discussing and selecting which aspects of regional policy actions were legitimate in the higher education sector and thus concentrated on reaching consensus on the substance of policy visions for steering political cooperation, even though these visions were often used interchangeably and agreements were painstakingly achieved.

These differentiated paths ultimately defined how these two higher education regionalisms were received within and outside of the region. For instance, while our interviewees invoked ‘Erasmus’ or ‘Bologna’ easily when asked about the policy vision of European higher education regionalism, no labels were consistently given when asked about South-East Asian higher education regionalism. Instead, we heard ‘patchy’ or examples of concrete (earlier, lapsed) initiatives. The metaphor that is conjured up for us is one of sailing: if higher education regionalism means a fleet flying the same regional banner, the South-East Asian version is a *regatta* (different regional bodies competing for dominance with *their* measures) and the European case is one led by a *flagship* known as ‘Bologna’. This indicates, as mentioned earlier, that these differences in higher education regionalisms are in *kind* rather than in intensity. Our findings endorse Acharya’s call to give region-specific norms and culture a more prominent place in the comparative regionalism agenda because these differences are significant in accounting for the final outcome, as well as the shape, of implementing transnational ideas such as higher education regionalisms (see the excellent exchanges in Jetschke, Acharya, De Lombaerde, Katsumata, & Pempel, 2015, p. 23).

Recognising their differences in how ideas of higher education regionalism are translated into practice is useful for revealing how respective policy actors handle complexity. When European actors use the term ‘higher education area’ and ‘Bologna’, they are generally referring to further building upon agreed objectives. By contrast, the more recent usage of ‘common space’ in South-East Asia is an attempt to articulate and make sense of the long-standing differences between regional policy actors. Specifically, ‘common space’ refers to the multiplicity of existing higher education regional measures and governance structures. To our knowledge, there are no substantive discussions about reducing this multiplicity beyond the notion of improving ‘People-to-People Connectivity’ following the adoption of the 2012 Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity. Indeed, multiple venues remain a defining feature of South-East Asian regional cooperation (see Chou et al., 2016).

Considering the impact of other ideational variables on European and South-East Asian higher education regionalisms (ideas as *explanans*) offers further observations to challenge the ‘Bologna Process export thesis’. In both cases, we found that the extant models of regional cooperation were strongly influential on the ideas of higher education regionalism, which were not entirely independent processes even though several key political decisions were taken outside of the extant regional institutional frameworks. For instance, efforts to relaunch European integration in the 1980s after ‘Euro-sclerosis’ gave birth to the Erasmus programme, and the new European governance approach defined how the Bologna Process would be operationalised. Similarly, the ASEAN Way instilled the principles of non-interference on national affairs and non-confrontational consultation, which ultimately led to the establishment and endurance of two distinct platforms for higher education policy cooperation: SEAMEO RIHED and the AUN.

To complete the landscape, the knowledge discourse paved the way for higher education regionalisms around the world by singling out the significance of knowledge sectors for collective advancement. While the European Commission and EU have often been identified

as amplifiers of the knowledge discourse, we observed actors in both regions, inside and outside of the higher education sector, with or without policy- or decision-making powers, championing this discourse. While policy actors did interpret and use the knowledge discourse differently – some emphasising the economic aspects, others its social inclusion potential⁹ – the discourse was instrumental in providing a new *raison d'être* for regional cooperation. In Europe, the knowledge discourse enabled bringing together the Bologna Process and the Europe of Knowledge, both espousing different aspects of this discourse. In South-East Asia, the knowledge discourse was the hook on which higher education policy cooperation was made feasible in a region where non-intervention was the normative method of operation. What the ideational perspective (ideas as *explanandum* and *explanans*) allows us to conclude at this stage is that the ‘Bologna Process export thesis’ is too simple and somewhat misleading. This finding enables us to begin addressing the enduring questions underpinning the emergence of the comparative regionalism agenda; specifically, whether social science concepts travel outside the context of their development and the significance of macro processes such as globalisation, internationalisation and regionalisation on the political order of states around the world (Jetschke et al., 2015, p. 2). In the next section, we elaborate this claim from the perspectives of the diffusion and comparative ‘turns’ in the scholarship on regionalism.

7. Regionalism and the diffusion and comparative ‘turns’: some remarks

We set out in this article to investigate and compare two instances of higher education policy cooperation at the regional level. Through substantive empirical fieldwork, our objective was to contribute to an improved understanding of the multi-level, beyond-the-state, regional dynamics of policy coordination – an agenda of regionalism, which has grown in analytical sophistication in recent years (see Börzel & Risse, 2016). Comparative regionalism, the latest form of regionalism, invites us to examine regional developments as part of a multi-layered global governance structure in a multi-polar and ‘multiplex’ world order (Söderbaum, 2016, p. 31). Börzel and Risse (2016), and colleagues (see Jetschke & Lenz, 2013; Söderbaum, 2016), have been instrumental in paving the intellectual foundation for the new comparative regionalism agenda. By challenging the atomistic view of regional cooperation as a bottom-up process, whereby ‘dynamics internal to the region drive their establishment and evolution’, or as a top-down process, where regional actors ‘react to the changing structural incentives emanating from the global economy’ (Jetschke & Lenz, 2013, p. 626, 627), comparative regionalism scholars call attention to the significance of *interdependence* worldwide and *diffusion* as a potential mechanism for explaining resemblances between regional organisations. To this new research agenda, our research offers two remarks.

First, diffusion is likely to be merely one – and often *not* the main explanatory – mechanism behind growing similarities between regional organisations in terms of their ambition and cooperation processes. Jetschke and Lenz (2013, p. 628, 629) thoughtfully isolated three ideal-type mechanisms associated with diffusion in a regional context: *competition* (‘a process in which ROs [regional organisations] are affected by the decisions of those whom they rival in the international arena for scarce (economic) resources’); *learning* (‘Diffusion

⁹It is important to emphasise that this difference exists within and between the two regions.

dynamics in this process emanate from measurable performance differences between organizations that suggest “superior” institutional solutions’); and *emulation* (‘denotes a process in which the norms, values and practices of other ROs are perceived as desirable and legitimate, and are hence emulated by the aspiring RO so as to signal its belonging to the same community’). We observed none of these three variants of diffusion processes in our research. Indeed, as mentioned above, in their search for ‘best practices’ South-East Asian actors explicitly rejected the Bologna Process as *the* model that should be embraced in their efforts to create a common higher education space. Furthermore, in our ongoing study of an instrument for higher education policy cooperation between EU and South-East Asia (SHARE initiative) we have already seen strong contention between policy actors from both regions. The source of initial contention was the general lack of acknowledgement or awareness of existing efforts already made in South-East Asia on higher education policy coordination. Our research shows that, even when the diffusion discourse is prominent, it is essential to conduct a ‘diffusion-blind’ classic comparative study in the first instance. We therefore urge scholars interested in comparative regionalism to be more attentive to endogenous regional dynamics in order to isolate the role that diffusion may or may not play in regional integration. A comparable lesson here that can be drawn to address the debate concerning whether social science concepts travel beyond their contexts of creation: Acharya’s concept of ‘norm localisation’ captures far more accurately the processes we have observed (see roundtable discussion in Jetschke et al., 2015). In other words, concepts do indeed travel, but their application must take into consideration the power of the locals to translate this very activity and decide which aspects to implement.

Second, comparisons and empirical fieldwork have much to offer for advancing the regionalism research agenda. Our research has been inspired by the comparative ‘turn’ in regionalism studies. Among the leading proponents of comparative regionalism are established EU scholars who offer sophisticated analytical frameworks and urge researchers to go beyond Europe (see Börzel & Risse, 2016; Jetschke & Lenz, 2013; Warleigh-Lack, 2015). When designing our study, we immediately noticed two issues that are not addressed, but should, to the same extent by comparative regionalism scholars. The first issue is the units of comparison (*what* is being compared?), and the second concerns the method of comparison (*how* are comparisons made?). While extant comparative regionalism studies have generally and extensively identified the units of comparison as formal structures and processes of regionalism, there is a visible tendency to trot out categories and rationales of one of the cases as reference points and to project its characteristics as dimensions for comparison. The outcomes of this comparison exercise are thus often about the degrees of institutionalisation, integration or robustness of one form of regionalism versus the other(s), with the suggestion that the other(s) is *less* (in quantity or quality) along these scales. While these suggestions may be implicit and unintentional, they do contribute to a design and analytical bias in comparative regionalism, which is exemplified by the diffusion emphasis discussed above; ultimately, they do little to advance our collective knowledge of this phenomenon as well as the importance and impact of macro processes such as globalisation, internationalisation and regionalisation on the world’s political order. This is where empirical fieldwork provides a working solution: assumptions, such as diffusion¹⁰, about regionalism are best tested in the field. Being in the field allows us, for example, to

¹⁰Similarities, or concomitances, address the question of diffusion as a possible explanation, but they certainly do not answer it – precisely because similarities are *not* mechanisms.

identify the actor constellations that may have contributed to the diffusion process observed (if any), as well as the channels for diffusion within and between the regions. More importantly, fieldwork enables subsequent development and refinement of strong propositions for empirical investigations of mechanisms, which are currently under-formulated or absent in comparative regionalism studies. By explicitly suggesting that data collection is essential for advancing the comparative regionalism agenda, we support those who advocate a grounded theory methodology approach to researching and explaining social phenomena (see Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

To sum up, the comparative and diffusion ‘turns’ in regionalism delineate an exciting research agenda, inviting us to consider regional developments through the lens of interdependence. Amidst this renewed enthusiasm to take the region seriously in a new analytical light, it is important to not overlook the tensile points both within and between the regions; viewing these points in temporal isolation reveals only one possible (perhaps misleading) explanation of regionalism. Empirical fieldwork is crucial in this process: it takes us beneath the surface, where we find differences – some small, some distinctive – that often reveal another story.

Acknowledgement

We are thankful for the support from the Ministry of Education of Singapore (AcRF Tier 1), the Institut Français de Singapour, and NTU Singapore (Merlion) to undertake this research. We are also indebted to our interviewees, who have shared their generous time with us to explain their views of policy developments. All errors, as always, remain ours.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

ORCID

Meng-Hsuan Chou  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-8138-236X>

References

- AUN. (2007). *ASEAN University Network Quality-Assurance: Manual for the implementation of the guidelines*. Bangkok: Author.
- Béland, D., & Cox, R. H. (Eds.). (2012). *Ideas and politics in social science research*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Blyth, M. (2016). The new ideas scholarship in the mirror of historical institutionalism: A case of old whines in new bottles? *Journal of European Public Policy*, 23, 464–471.
- Bologna Declaration. (1999). *The Bologna Declaration of 19 June 1999, joint declaration of the European Ministers of Education*. Retrieved August 21, 2016, from http://www.magna-charta.org/resources/files/BOLOGNA_DECLARATION.pdf
- Börzel, T. A., & Risse, T. (Eds.). (2016). *The Oxford handbook of comparative regionalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Chou, M.-H., Howlett, M., & Koga, K. (2016). Image and substance failures in regional organisations: Causes, consequences, learning and change? *Politics and Governance*, 4, 50–61.
- Chou, M.-H., & Ravinet, P. (2015). The rise of “higher education regionalism”: An agenda for higher education research. In H. De Boer, D. Dill, J. Huisman, & M. Souto-Otero (Eds.), *Handbook of higher education policy and governance* (pp. 361–378). Palgrave: Basingstoke.

- Chou, M.-H., & Ravinet, P. (2016). The emergent terrains of “higher education regionalism”: How and why higher education is an interesting case for comparative regionalism. *European Journal of Higher Education*, 6, 271–287.
- Corbett, A. (2005). *Universities and the Europe of knowledge: Ideas, institutions, and policy entrepreneurship in European community higher education policy, 1955–2005*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Dang, Q. A. (2012). The Bologna process goes east? From “third countries” to prioritizing inter-regional cooperation between the ASEAN and EU. In A. Curaj, P. Scott, L. Vlasceanu, & L. Wilson (Eds.), *European higher education at the crossroads: Between the bologna process and national reforms* (pp. 763–783). Dordrecht: Springer.
- DiMaggio, P. J., & Powell, W. W. (1983). The iron cage revisited: Institutional isomorphism and collective rationality in organizational fields. *American Sociological Review*, 48, 147–160.
- Dosch, J. (2011). Southeast Asia: ASEAN and the challenge of regionalism. In M. K. Connors, R. Davidson, & J. Dosch (Eds.), *The new global politics of the Asia Pacific* (2nd ed., pp. 121–139). London: Routledge.
- European Commission. (2014). *Erasmus, facts, figures & trends: The European Union support for student and staff exchanges and university cooperation in 2012–2013*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.
- Eurostat. (2016). File: Number of tertiary education studies, 2013 (thousands) ET15.png. *Tertiary education statistics*. Retrieved December 6, 2016, from http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Tertiary_education_statistics
- Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Chicago, IL: Aldine.
- Goldstein, J., & Keohane, R. (Eds.). (1993). *Ideas & foreign policy: Beliefs, institutions, and political change*. Ithaca: Cornell University.
- Gornitzka, A. (2010). Bologna in context: A horizontal perspective on the dynamics of governance sites for a Europe of knowledge. *European Journal of Education*, 45, 536–548.
- Hall, P. A. (1993). Policy paradigms, social learning, and the state: The case of economic policymaking in Britain. *Comparative Politics*, 25, 275–296.
- Hansen, R., & King, D. (2001, January). Eugenic ideas, political interests, and policy variance: Immigration and sterilization policy in Britain and the U.S. *World Politics*, 53, 237–263.
- Hoosen, S., Butcher, N., & Njenga, N. K. (2009). Harmonization of higher education programmes: A strategy for the African Union. *African Integration Review*, 3(1), 1–36.
- Huisman, J., Adelman, C., Hsieh, C.-C., Shams, F., & Wilkins, S. (2012). Europe’s Bologna process and its impact on global higher education. In D. K. Deardorff, H. de Wit, J. Heyl, & T. Adams (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of international higher education* (pp. 81–100). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Jetschke, A., Acharya, A., De Lombaerde, P., Katsumata, H., & Pempel, T. J. (2015, April). Roundtable: Studying Asian and comparative regionalism through Amitav Acharya’s work. *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, 26, 1–30.
- Jetschke, A., & Lenz, T. (2013). Does regionalism diffuse? A new research agenda for the study of regional organizations. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 20, 626–637.
- Knight, J. (2012). A conceptual framework for the regionalization of higher education: Application to Asia. In J. N. Hawkins, K. H. Mok, & D. E. Neubauer (Eds.), *Higher education regionalization in Asia pacific* (pp. 17–35). New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Koga, K. (2010). The normative power of the “ASEAN way”: Potentials, limitations and implications for east Asian regionalism. *SJEEA*, 2010, 80–95. Winter.
- Muller, P. (2005). Esquisse d’une théorie du changement dans l’action publique. Structures, acteurs et cadres cognitifs [Sketch of a theory of change in public policy. Structures, actors and cognitive frameworks]. *Revue française de science politique*, 55, 155–187.
- Narine, S. (2008). Forty years of ASEAN: A historical review. *The Pacific Review*, 21, 411–429.
- Pépin, L. (2006). *The history of European cooperation in education and training: Europe in the making – An example*. Luxembourg: European Commission.
- Ratanawijitrasin, S. (2012). The evolving landscape of South-East Asian higher education and the challenges of governance. In A. Curaj, P. Scott, L. Vlasceanu, & L. Wilson (Eds.), *European higher*

- education at the crossroads: Between the Bologna process and national reforms* (pp. 221–238). Dordrecht: Springer.
- Ravinet, P. (2008). From voluntary participation to monitored coordination: Why European countries feel increasingly bound by their commitment to the Bologna process. *European Journal of Education*, 43, 353–367.
- Ravinet, P. (2011). European coordination *Alla Bolognese* – Notes on the instrumentation of the European higher education area. *Revue française de science politique*, 61, 19–42.
- Ravinet, P. (2014). La Commission européenne et l'enseignement supérieur: La néo-libéralisation du discours comme ressort de pouvoir? [The European Commission and higher education: the discourse of neo-liberalization as a source of power] *Gouvernement et action publique*, 2, 81–102.
- Rüland, J., & Jetschke, A. (2008). 40 years of ASEAN: Perspectives, performance and lessons for change. *The Pacific Review*, 21, 397–409.
- SEAMEO RIHED. (2008). *Harmonisation of higher education: Lessons learned from the Bologna process*. Bangkok: Author.
- SEAMEO RIHED. (2012). *A study on quality assurance models in Southeast Asian countries: Towards a Southeast Asian quality assurance framework*. Bangkok: Author.
- Schmidt, V. (2008). Discursive institutionalism: The explanatory power of ideas and discourse. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 11, 303–326.
- Söderbaum, F. (2016). Old, new and comparative regionalism: The history and scholarly development of the field. In T. A. Börzel & T. Risse (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of comparative regionalism* (pp. 17–33). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Strang, D., & Meyer, J. W. (1993). Institutional conditions for diffusion. *Theory and Society*, 22, 487–511.
- Strauss, A. L., & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Verger, A., & Hermo, J. P. (2010). The governance of higher education regionalisation: Comparative analysis of the Bologna process and MERCOSUR-Educativo. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 8, 105–120.
- Vögtle, E., & Martens, K. (2014). The Bologna process as a template for transnational policy coordination. *Policy Studies*, 35, 246–263.
- Vukasovic, M. (2013). Change of higher education in response to European pressures: Conceptualization and operationalization of Europeanization of higher education. *Higher Education*, 66, 311–324.
- Warleigh-Lack, A. (2015). European Union Studies and the New Regionalism. In K. Lynggaard, K. Löfgren, & I. Manners (Eds.), *Research methods in European Union studies* (Chapter 19) (pp. 297–308). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Woldegiorgis, E. T., Jonck, P., & Goujon, A. (2015). Regional higher education reform initiatives in Africa: A comparative analysis with the Bologna process. *International Journal of Higher Education*, 4, 241–253.
- Yavaprabhas, S. (2010, May 10–11). SEAMEO RIHED and the progress towards a common space of higher education in Southeast Asia. Paper presented at the Regional Workshop on Educational Cooperation in East Asia Summit Countries, Jakarta, Indonesia.
- Yeo, L. H. (2010). Institutional regionalism versus networked regionalism: Europe and Asia compared. *International Politics*, 47, 324–337.
- Zgaga, P. (2006). *Looking out: The Bologna process in a global setting. On the “external dimension” of the Bologna process*. Oslo: Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research.
- Zgaga, P. (2012). Reconsidering the EHEA principles: Is there a ‘Bologna philosophy’? In A. Curaj, P. Scott, L. Vlasceanu, & L. Wilson (Eds.), *European higher education at the crossroads: Between the Bologna process and national reforms* (pp. 17–38). Dordrecht: Springer.