Fachbereich Sozialwissenschaften

Explaining Regional Problem Definitions and Policy Solutions

A Comparative Account of Regional Organizations in Climate and Education Policy

Dissertation

zur Erlangung der Doktorwürde durch den

Promotionsausschuss Dr. rer. pol.

der Universität Bremen

vorgelegt von

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Bremen, 05.06.2023

Verteidigt am **21.09.2023**

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Preface

This cumulative thesis consists of the following publications:

Niemann, Dennis; Krogmann, David; Martens, Kerstin (2023, in print): Torn into the Abyss? How subpopulations of international organizations in climate, education, and health policy evolve in times of a declining liberal international order. *Global Governance: A Review of Multilateralism and International Organizations*

Krogmann, David (2022): International Organizations and Education Policy in the Islamic World, in: Martens, Kerstin; Windzio, Michael (Hg.), *Global Pathways to Education. Cultural Spheres, Networks, and International Organizations*, Global Dynamics of Social Policy, Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 191-215, doi:10.1007/978-3-030-78885-8

Krogmann, David (2022): Regional Ideas in International Education Organizations: The Case of SEAMEO, in: Martens, Kerstin; Windzio, Michael (eds.), *Global Pathways to Education. Cultural Spheres, Networks, and International Organizations*, Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 217-237, doi:10.1007/978-3-030-78885-8

Krogmann, David (forthcoming): Here to Stay? Challenges to Liberal Environmentalism in Regional Climate Governance.

The first of these contributions has been written and published in co-authorship with Prof. Dr. Kerstin Martens and Dr. Dennis Niemann. In adherence to the Promotionsordnung Dr. rer. pol. of the University of Bremen, I declare that I have contributed substantially to this publication. Specifically, I have contributed a majority of the theoretical work on this paper, including sections 8.2 and 8.3. I further contributed major parts of the empirical sections 8.4.2 and 8.5. I also contributed notable aspects of sections 8.1 and 8.6, as well as general work in regard to literature selection and data collection.

“When I think of the good things still to be written I am glad, for there is no end to them, and I know I myself shall write some of them”

William Saroyan

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Figures and Tables

Abbreviations

ABEGS	Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AfDB	African Development Bank
ALECSO	Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization
AOSIS	Alliance of Small Island States
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CBSS	Council of Baltic Sea States
CCCCC	Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre
COP	Conference of the Parties
COTED	Council for Trade and Economic Development
COW	Correlates of War
CPACC	Caribbean Planning for Adaptation to Climate Change
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ESD	Education for Sustainable Development
EU	European Union
GAP	UNESCO Global Action Programme
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GIZ	Gesellschaft für internationale Zusammenarbeit
IADB	Inter-American Development Bank
ICESCO	Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
ILO	International Labour Organization
IO	International organization
IR	International Relations
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
ISESCO	Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
LIO	Liberal International Order
MENA	Middle East and Northern Africa
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OAS	Organization of American States

OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OIC	Organisation of Islamic Cooperation
PAHO	Pan American Health Organization
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
RO	Regional organization
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SEAMEO	Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization
SEAMES	SEAMEO Secretariat
SEAMOLEC	SEAMEO Regional Open Learning Centre
SEARCA	Regional Centre for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SPC	Pacific Community
UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNCHE	United Nations Conference on the Human Environment
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
VOIP	Voice-over-IP
WBG	World Bank Group
WHO	World Health Organization
YBIO	Yearbook of International Organizations

1. Introduction[1]

This thesis is concerned with the distinct policy ideas of regional organizations (ROs) and how they come into being. Some ROs have become influential actors in international politics over the last decades, while others remain peripheral. Apart from the empirical observation that recent years have seen "more and deeper regionalism" (Börzel 2016: 41) in many regional contexts, scholars have engaged ROs from different angles. While some argue that the rise of a number of regional organizations may challenge the liberal international order (LIO) which has structured international relations from 1945 onwards by promoting regional "sub-orders" (Kornprobst & Paul 2021; Lake et al. 2021), others point to the lack of International Relations (IR) theorizing about ROs (Acharya 2009, 2014). Traditionally, studies on regionalism have focused on the European Union (EU), thereby spawning a host of theories about regional integration (e.g. Moravcsik 1995). However, while there is a rich and established body of literature on European integration, non-EU regional politics have been severely neglected. Where ROs have been studied outside of Europe, the focus has mostly been on their different institutional designs rather than on their output (Jetschke & Lenz 2013; e.g. Jetschke et al. 2021). The IR literature is especially lacking comprehensive accounts of region-specific policy ideas. Where such accounts are available, they mostly stem from development studies and are limited to economic ideas (e.g. O'Reilly & Heron 2023).

In a "world of regions" (Katzenstein 2019: 1), this lack of attention is problematic, since it is currently widely accepted in IR theory that ideas matter in politics, and scholars have moved on to question how they do so (Mehta 2011). The lack of comprehensive theorizing about how regional organizations generate, reproduce, and implement ideas poses a considerable challenge for understanding and explaining contemporary world politics. While there is a robust body of studies about the role of ideas and how they are generated through the EU (Parsons 2002; see for instance Börzel & Risse 2009; Heidbreder 2012), these cannot sufficiently account for non-EU regional organizations.

This thesis seeks to fill this gap by answering the following research questions: (1) How can regional ideas be explained? (2) What determines regional ideational outcomes and ideational change?

[1] This thesis is a product of the research conducted in the Collaborative Research Centre "Global Dynamics of Social Policy" at the University of Bremen. The centre is funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, German Research Foundation)—project number 374666841—SFB 1342.

In doing so, this thesis offers both empirical and theoretical contributions to the literature. First, it provides a theoretical account of ROs which explains how these organizations generate ideas while moving beyond the EU-centrism often attested to the field. While ROs are heterogeneous, it is reasonable to assume some level of generalizability among less supranational ROs. To account for this, the following analysis will rely on multiple case studies from two different fields, namely climate policy and education policy. It will compare ROs which are active in climate and education policy over three different case studies. The cases encompass a range of organizations from different regions. They also differ in size and scope. The organizations covered here are the Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ICESCO)[2], the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO), the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States (ABEGS) and the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organisation (SEAMEO) for education policy, and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) as well as the Council of Baltic Sea States (CBSS) for climate policy. ICESCO, ALECSO and ABEGS are mainly comprised of nations in the Middle East and North Africa region (MENA), while SEAMEO represents its Southeast Asian member states. CARICOM and CBSS are mandated by their member states in the Caribbean and the Baltic Sea region respectively.

Climate policy and education policy are selected for comparison as "diverse cases" (Seawright & Gerring 2008) because they represent fundamentally different problem structures. The objectives of "good" education policy are highly dependent on social and cultural context, whereas the core objective of climate policy – mitigating and adapting to climate change – is rather context-independent. Thus, these fields represent two extremes on the spectrum of policy fields in which ROs are active.

This design enables the analysis to infer how ROs construct distinct ideas which may differ systematically from globally dominant ideas, and from those produced in other regions. The notion that ideas matter in world politics in the first place is inherently constructivist. To answer the research questions, this thesis will thus rely on a constructivist and sociological institutionalist framework. One of the basic assumptions of this framework is that regional and global IOs have fundamentally different intrinsic institutional features, which can help explain their success or failure. While this

[2] ICESCO has undergone two name changes in recent years, being known as Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) before 2020 and as Islamic World Education, Science and Culture Organization (ICESCO) for a brief period during 2020.

assumption is crucial for explaining the development of the IO population in general, the notion that ROs fulfil a unique role in multilateral policymaking also forms the basis of the theoretical argument put forward here. I argue that ROs are situated at the intersection of global and regional bodies of knowledge. They incorporate both global scientific and otherwise structured, formal knowledge as well as anecdotal or non-formal regional knowledge gained from regional experience, practice and observation when generating policy ideas. Regional knowledge thus becomes a moderating variable in the idea production process of ROs, which contributes to ideational change or "stickiness" over time. This also means that the process by which ideas are formed and institutionalized within regional organizations is presumably different from the process in global organizations, as these are not bound to regional contexts and therefore either unwilling or unable to incorporate regional knowledge in the same way. Regional offices of large global bureaucracies may be an exception in that regard, but they are often treated as extensions or subordinates of the respective IOs, which possess only very limited agency.

Based on these theoretical assumptions, I first show how the numbers of IOs in different policy fields have developed over time since 1945, emphasizing that ROs specifically have become more relevant over time, and make up about 40% and 65% respectively of the IO population in the observed fields (see paper 1). From this vantage point, I then explore how ROs have developed their own distinct regional ideas and discourses in education policy and climate policy. As ROs aim to tap into the economic benefits of globalized education policy and produce educational outcomes which enable the citizens of their member states to participate in global labor markets, they are yet unwilling to sacrifice what they deem to be their regional cultural roots, values and traditions. This finding is consistent for ROs in the Islamic world (see paper 2) as well as Southeast Asia (see paper 3). ROs in both regions view legitimate education policy as context-specific, and stress the need to take into account regional norms and values when designing successful education policy. This finding is also consistent with data from climate policy (see paper 4). Comparing ROs in the Baltic Sea region as well as the Caribbean shows that there is variance in climate discourses and ideas between these two regions, where the former focuses on implementing the global sustainable development agenda, while the latter views its own very survival to be compromised by the lack of adequate climate mitigation and adaptation around the world and thus calls for more radical action, thereby also stressing the notion of climate justice. This variance can be explained through changes in the bodies of knowledge available to ROs, where a

combination of new knowledge from both scientific and non-scientific sources influences how ROs conceptualize climate change.

For these empirical contributions, the thesis relies on mixed methods over the four papers which it comprises. It employs descriptive statistics as well as qualitative content analysis over multiple case study designs. It is overall rather qualitative in nature, but engages with quantitative data where useful. Mixed methods have been shown to produce robust results in many research designs in the social sciences (Bergman 2010). Specifically, they are "eminently suited for exploring variations in the construction of meaning of concepts" (Bergman 2010: 172) through comparative research designs (Berg-Schlosser 2012), and will serve that same function here.

The thesis is structured as follows. First, I explore the relationship between regions, regional organizations, and regionalism in section 2. I then focus on regional organizations and discuss their exploits in international politics in section 3. I do so with respect to how IOs in general have been studied in international relations, and what different theories of IR have to say about IOs as actors. Afterwards, I turn to the theoretical framework which the thesis is based on, discussing constructivist and institutionalist assumptions as well as the relationship between knowledge and policy ideas in section 4. Following some methodological remarks in section 5, I show how each of the four papers comprising this thesis contribute to its research objectives in section 6. Finally, I conclude with a discussion of my findings, their limitations and their implications for future research in section 7.

2. Making Sense of Political Regions - Regional Organizations and Regionalism

This section analyzes the available literature on regional organizations, how they come into existence, how they engage with and produce ideas and what we know about their exploits in different policy fields. Before setting the stage in this way, the section discusses what it means to talk about "regions" and situates this thesis within the general debate on regionalism. All three of these concepts – region, regional organization, and regionalism – are related to each other, and it is important to gain conceptual clarity about the specific nature of this relationship here. Regional organizations can be seen as manifestations of political regions, and they represent instances of regionalism.

2.1 Regions

The term "region" is employed quite inconsistently in both scientific literature as well as public discourse. At times, it is taken to refer to the sub-national level, as in "the region of Madrid". This is most common in fields such as business studies or urban planning and development, where a region is a rather well-defined area within a nation state, often times with its own municipal government (Lönnqvist et al. 2014). In this conceptualization, the region has clear boundaries, and there is little debate about where it ends or what it is comprised of.

Other times, "region" refers to groups of nation states, as in "the Southeast Asian region". It is this latter usage which is the subject of this thesis, and it is here where the concept becomes slightly more puzzling. Most of this confusion stems from the fact that the composition of a region changes depending on which criteria it is defined by. Geographically, for example, "the Baltics" can be seen as a region comprised of states which border the Baltic Sea, namely Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania. But within and above that same geographical space, multiple other groupings exist which could legitimately be called regions, for instance the region "Europe", which encompasses all Baltic states. The picture becomes even less clear when political, cultural or otherwise socially constructed criteria of regional belonging are taken into account. Notions such as the EU's "Europe of Regions" and the "European Committee of the Regions" serve to illustrate the elusiveness of the term region. Geography has thus struggled to come to a concise definition of regions, as "there seems to be a consensus that regions are more than just territorial spaces, but it remains difficult […] to grasp that extra-geographical element" (van Langenhove 2013: 474).

In political science as well as IR, most of the attention has been given to the social construction of regions beyond their mere geographical properties, especially to the role of regions in global and local governance (van Langenhove 2013; Börzel & Risse 2016a). As for political regions, a comprehensive definition is offered by Paasi, according to whom "regions […] are historically contingent social processes that become institutionalized" (2011: 10). All three elements of this definition – historicity, social (re-)production and institutionalization are key features of political regions, but it is the creation and continuation of regional institutions where the rather abstract concept of "region-ness" becomes most readily observable.

The institutionalization of regions can take many forms, and encompasses coordination and organization among private actors, state actors, civil society, as well as hybrid forms. ROs fulfil a unique role for regional institutionalization and integration, because they are both agents of and subjects to regional integration (Weiffen et al. 2013). In other words, they can be drivers of regional integration through the mandates granted to them by their member states, but that same process also deepens their scope and capacities, since they offer frameworks for nation states through which to direct integration.

2.2 Regional Organizations

While regions are somewhat unwieldy as analytical units, regional organizations are much easier to define, observe, analyze and theorize. They have been engaged mostly as distinct empirical phenomena by scholars of regionalism, and often disregarded by international relations theorists in favor of larger global bureaucracies when studying international organizations. However, for a concise definition, the first step is to acknowledge that regional organizations are international organizations. While there are many ways to define IOs, one of the most common definitions is provided by Barnett and Finnemore, according to which IOs are "organizations which have representatives from three or more states supporting a permanent secretariat to perform ongoing tasks related to a common purpose" (2004: 177).

Regional organizations, then, are IOs which somehow relate to regions. One dimension of this relationship is membership. Regional organizations are typically comprised of states in geographical proximity to each other[3], which therefore share incentives for cooperation in matters concerning what they perceive as their region. Another dimension is the external representation of the region. Regional organizations often represent their member states in international negotiations with third parties, such as other IOs, when it is beneficial for them to "speak with one voice". For example, CARICOM officials have often acted on behalf of Caribbean states in multilateral climate negotiations. A third important dimension is the regional scope of activities. While some ROs, especially the EU, extend their reach beyond their home region through funding and policy advice on a more global level in many policy fields, ROs will generally focus their policies on the

[3] ICESCO is not technically a regional organization following this definition, as it has member states on three different continents. However, there is a clear bias towards the MENA region within the organization in both budgetary contributions as well as policy focus. Much like the OECD has been treated as a global IO in the literature, although it is not universal in its membership, this thesis will therefore treat ICESCO as a RO.

region that they are situated in, because that is where their primary mandate stems from. A large part of ROs is therefore defined by their actions – ROs are IOs which engage in region-building or regionalism in some form or another. Regional organizations, then, "are formal and institutionalized cooperative relations among states […] and constitute regionalism" (Börzel & Risse 2016a: 7). By extension, when regional ideas are mentioned in the following sections, they refer to the policy ideas held by and within regional organizations.

If regional organizations are but one type of international organization, why should they be studied as distinct empirical phenomena? A first step in answering this question is to acknowledge that empirically, RO numbers in many policy fields have massively increased over the last decades. Data from the Yearbook of International Organizations as well as the Correlates of War set show that ROs make up around 40% of all IOs active in climate policy, and about 65% in education policy today (see paper 1). However, they were rarely the first IOs to cover a given policy field. Instead, they engaged with these topics only after global organizations had their mandate expanded to incorporate them, like the UNFCCC in climate policy or the World Bank in education policy.

This development is remarkable because it demonstrates that although global structures for international education and climate policy were already in place, nation states around the world were convinced that there was a niche for regional IOs to cover these issues. In other words, in order for so many ROs to incorporate education and climate topics into their missions, there had to be a conviction among the member states that this step would yield benefits beyond what global organizations could provide. After all, setting up a new department responsible for climate action, hiring experts on climate policy, or otherwise contributing to the development of policy costs time and money, both of which are scarce in intergovernmental bureaucracies. Consider the following statement from resolution AG/RES. 1440 (XXVI-O/96) of the Organization of American States (OAS) from 1996, in which the organization first adopted climate change as one of its areas of work, identifying

> the need to make use of the comparative advantages of the OAS not only by tapping cumulative experience but especially by directing the Organization toward areas where, in the opinion of the member states, opportunities exist for action to complement the efforts of the states themselves and efforts of other international organizations and institutions, particularly those operating within the Hemisphere (OAS 1996).

Thus, regional organizations and their member states may view themselves as holding a "comparative advantage" over global IOs. This advantage does not necessarily

manifest itself in terms of resources in staff or budget, which, for most regional organizations, is magnitudes smaller than those of global bureaucracies. Rather, it is expressed in their knowledge about local and regional connections and networks and insights into the respective social contexts in which they operate. In this view, regional organizations are uniquely situated (both literally and metaphorically) to deal with policy issues in a way that is both more likely to be effective and more likely to be accepted and supported by the citizens in their home regions.

This notion can be found within many regional organizations. The Pacific Community (SPC), for instance, stresses that

> addressing these Pacific challenges [of climate change] requires multilayered action, at all governance levels. Local biophysical, social, economic, political and cultural circumstances must prevail when designing adaptation and mitigation options. (SPC 2020)

The idea that ROs have unique insights into how "their" region works socially, culturally and politically and are thus able to design or contribute to designing better policy for that region is also present across policy fields. For instance, ASEAN has often emphasized the "ASEAN way" as a paradigm for security policy in Southeast Asia, which is based on informal rules and state sovereignty against outside (especially Western) influence (Caballero-Anthony 2022). In conjunction with regional membership, external representation and regional scope of activities it is this notion of uniqueness that distinguishes ROs from other IOs, and that makes them distinct units of analysis.

2.3 Regionalism

I follow Börzel and Risse in distinguishing between regionalization and regionalism, where regionalism is "a primarily state-led process of building and sustaining formal regional institutions and organizations among at least three states" (Börzel & Risse 2016a: 7). Contrary to this top-down process, regionalization refers to increased regional interactions between non-state actors and will thus be irrelevant here. Historically, the literature on regionalism has distinguished between early, old and new regionalism. The latest development in research on regionalism may be called "comparative regionalism" and proposes both theoretical as well as methodological openness in order to generate insights from comparing different cases and instances of regionalism (Söderbaum 2016). New and comparative regionalism have both focused rather heavily on processes of political integration, especially in the EU. Thus, European integration has been viewed as a model for regional integration in other regions, and the design philosophy of the EU as

a guiding framework for other regional organizations, although it is entirely unclear whether that framework is transferable to other regional contexts (Acharya 2016). Indeed, the available literature suggests that it is not, as regional organizations have pushed alternatives to the concept of "global governance" in some regions, the most prominent of which is ASEAN (Stubbs 2008; Jetschke & Katada 2016), and have contributed to shaping distinct regional identities (Checkel 2016). Theories of regional integration have tended to ignore that "there is no single model of institution-building in world politics" (Acharya 2014: 15).

While processes of regional integration thus remain contested subjects in comparative regionalism, there is little literature on the ideational outcomes of integration. In other words, scholars have been more concerned with how regional institutions come about and how they differ from each other in their institutional designs, rather than with the ideas and norms they produce. This thesis takes another approach. Rather than with the determinants of regionalism as an integrative process of institution-building, I am concerned with the ideational outcomes of such developments.

3. Regional Organizations as Actors in International Politics

Having distinguished between regions, regional organizations and regionalism, the following section summarizes how international organizations in general and regional organizations specifically matter in international politics according to different theoretical frameworks from IR literature. Much has been written about the influence of international organizations and bureaucracies in international relations, and many of the avenues of IO influence naturally also apply to ROs. Most of these studies rely on a variety of institutionalist or constructivist frameworks, sometimes combining both.

3.1 Institutionalist and Constructivist Accounts of IOs in IR Theory

Rational choice institutionalists have employed principal-agent theory to identify conditions under which IOs can act independently and display agency (Hawkins et al. 2006; Oestreich 2012). Here, the main mechanism for IO influence is based on the interplay between delegation and agency, and may be called policy drift or "mission creep" (Einhorn 2001). States delegate authority to IOs to reduce transaction costs (Keohane 2005). As both principal (the member states) and agent (the IO) are rational utility maximizers, but principals do not have complete information about their agents at all times, this asymmetrical information enables the agent to act independently under

certain conditions. The agent will then aim to expand its mandate ("competence-seeking") and budget ("budget-seeking"). The greater the information advantage of an IO vis-à-vis its member states, the greater its agency.

Historical institutionalists have less to say about IOs in particular, but have offered comprehensive insights into conditions of institutional success, persistence, and failure (Hall & Taylor 1996; Fioretos 2011). Focusing on path dependency, historical institutionalists argue that international institutions (for example IOs) are influential precisely when they are persistent, as they structure long-term relations between states. Thus, "international institutions, especially as they gain regulatory power over traditionally 'behind the border' issues, can over time influence governments' preferences on domestic and foreign policy" (Rixen & Viola 2016: 16).

Sociological institutionalism and constructivist institutionalism offer yet another perspective on IOs. Both are sometimes used interchangeably, but they do differ in their core assumptions and analytical foci. Sociological institutionalism assesses how institutions shape what is perceived as appropriate action by states, organizations or individuals (Douglas 1986; Powell & DiMaggio 1991; Saurugger 2015). If understood as independent variable, IOs can thus exert influence by providing cognitive frames for actions through norms, rules and codified meaning (Finnemore & Sikkink 1998). As constructivism is not a theory of international relations specifically, but rather a general ontology about social life and social change, it usually needs to be complemented by an additional theoretical notion about which actors matter in order to be useful for analyzing empirical phenomena, such as IOs (Finnemore & Sikkink 2001). Hence, institutionalist frameworks informed by constructivist assumptions have been employed to show how IOs act through the diffusion of norms and ideas, the fixing and framing of meanings, the creation and implementation of rules as well as the generation and administration of knowledge (Barnett & Finnemore 2004; Rittberger et al. 2019). Constructivist scholars have also argued that IOs may be crucial in forming and maintaining what Haas calls "epistemic communities", international networks of experts with shared beliefs which produce influential policy consensus (Haas 1992). These theories establish different avenues to make sense of IOs (and thus, ROs) as actors in international relations. As this thesis is concerned with ideas and knowledge, a constructivist framework is most suitable for its purpose. Before providing such a framework in more detail in section 4, I briefly illuminate how the theories presented above hold up in empirical reality by presenting some evidence from the literature.

3.2 IOs and ROs in Education and Climate Policy

Indeed, empirical cases of IO influence or agency can be found in both international education and climate policy. Education policy, which has traditionally be understood as an inherent task of the nation state, has become ingrained into the programmatic missions of a growing number of international organizations like the World Bank (Mundy & Verger 2015) or the OECD (Niemann & Martens 2018). Other prominent IOs that are operating on a global level in education policy include the UNESCO and ILO (Niemann 2022). When global education policy took its "neoliberal turn" in the 1980s, spearheaded by domestic political developments in the US and Great Britain (Robertson 2005), the World Bank and the OECD were key proponents of this new paradigm (Klees 2008). Through frameworks for the assessment of education quality, like PISA, IOs shaped global discourses and ideas of what proper education entailed, which goals education policy should achieve, and the means necessary to do so (Sellar & Lingard 2014).

Following neoliberalism, education should first and foremost provide labor markets with skilled human capital, leading to economic growth as well as individual prosperity for all. Over time, this would allow for the elevation of societies from poverty and enable flourishing national economies. As for the measures to achieve this ideal, a "sort of Washington Consensus in education" argued that "user fees should be used to pay for all levels of education, that primary education was a more important investment than higher education, that the privatization of education at all levels is efficient and equitable, [and] that foreign investment should be an important mechanism for privatization […]" (Klees 2008). This consensus further meant that IOs could leverage their technical knowledge and expertise as well as their capacities to gather large bodies of data in order to influence policy. As guides and best practices for achieving education policy which would allow countries to compete in global markets became coveted goods, IOs evolved into important providers of these resources. IOs could and would also act as "norm entrepreneurs" (Sunstein 1996). Rather than simply reproducing existent educational norms and ideas, they contributed the production of new ones, such as for example the concept of "lifelong learning" (Zapp & Dahmen 2017). Indeed, the production and diffusion of ideas has been established as one of the key venues of IO influence in education policy (Nagel et al. 2010).

Against this backdrop, ROs account for a significant share of the growth in the total number of international organizations working in the education field which can be

observed since 1945 (Niemann et al. 2022). The EU is the most covered RO in studies of regional education governance, although the EU regularly acts beyond its regional context through policy transfer and financing projects in other world regions. The Bologna process, which aims to streamline and standardize European higher education, has been studied extensively by scholars of both European integration as well as international education, serving as a solid case for the impact of regional organizations in this field (Klatt 2014). Higher education cooperation through ROs has also been studied for Non-EU ROs, such as ASEAN (Hawkins et al. 2012), but it is debatable whether cooperation at the university level is mainly state-driven rather than IO-driven.

In climate policy, IOs have become some of the most influential international actors. Until recently, research on IOs in climate governance has usually been treated as part of a larger nexus of literature on environmental regimes and earth system governance (Toulmin 1995; Young et al. 2008; Breitmeier et al. 2010; Mitchell 2010), although there are exceptions (Stripple & Bulkeley 2013). With the rising prominence of climate change, scholars have started to view climate governance as a research field in its own right (Meadowcroft 2009; Biermann & Pattberg 2012; Dellmuth et al. 2018; Mitchell & Carpenter 2019). There is a growing number of case studies on different IOs and their role in global climate policy, including research on the IPCC (Agrawala 1998), the NATO (Floyd 2015) as well as the UN institutions and the World Bank (Biermann & Siebenhüner 2009a; Gough 2013). The UN agencies, especially the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its secretariat, as well as the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) have received considerable attention by scholars of international climate governance (Conliffe 2011; Kuyper et al. 2018). These IOs have been able to influence international climate policy through the dissemination of ideas and norms, policy transfer, as well as financial aids, and they are also important "knowledge brokers" which may act as hubs for research on climate change (Meckling & Allan 2020). The fragmented, polycentric nature of climate governance also means that IOs provide important frameworks of reference and coordinate efforts, as there is a vast field of involved actors and climate projects are often cooperative (Jordan et al. 2015). They may thus be seen as "managers of global change" (Biermann & Siebenhüner 2009b: 4). Climate policy has also seen various instances of mission creep and budget-seeking among IOs. For example, the UNCCD "has committed disproportionate attention to climate change in order to capitalize on the financial resources the climate regime has

garnered" (Conliffe 2011: 45). Similarly, when the World Bank launched its 5-year action plan against climate change in 2016 with the aim of taking on a leadership role in climate governance, it stressed that "climate change is a threat to the core mission of the World Bank Group (WBG): to end extreme poverty and increase shared prosperity in a sustainable way" (World Bank Group 2016: 7). However, not all IOs display the same level of agency. As climate governance is connected to many policy areas traditionally assumed to be crucial to state sovereignty, some IOs have been "living in a straitjacket", i.e. been subjected to rather tight control by member states. The UNFCCC is one such case, where its role has largely been to provide a legal framework of reference (Busch 2009).

ROs have only received limited attention by scholars of international climate governance, with a disproportionate focus on the EU (Bremberg 2018). For example, Zwolski and Kaunert examine epistemic communities in the EU, suggesting that EU officials successfully engage in climate-related norm entrepreneurship, both globally and at the EU member state level (Zwolski & Kaunert 2011). Other studies on regional climate policy include ASEAN, SAARC and ECOWAS (Krampe & Mobjörk 2018; Islam & Kieu 2020), as well as various ROs in the pacific (Williams & McDuie-Ra 2017). Regional climate policy carried out through IOs is often a collaborative effort, in which regional and global IOs work in tandem. For example, the Caribbean Planning for Adaptation to Climate Change (CPACC), a climate project carried out under the umbrella of CARICOM between 1997 and 2001, was funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), implemented by the World Bank, executed by the Organization of American States (OAS) and supervised by a committee chaired by CARICOM (CPACC 2020).

In sum, it is well established that IOs (and thus, ROs) do make a difference in international relations in general, as well as in the specific policy fields compared here. The point of contention remains how to best capture and theorize their effects. In the following section, I adopt the constructivist view that IOs exert most of their influence through the production and dissemination of ideas. However, I argue that ROs differ from other IOs in how they generate these ideas through the introduction of regional knowledge as a moderating variable.

4. Constructivist Institutionalism – Knowledge, Ideas and Institutions

This thesis seeks to explain regional ideational outcomes, as well as the conditions under which they may change through the mobilization of new regional knowledge. As such,

constructivist theory is the most suitable school of thought for its purpose, as constructivists have engaged with the influence of ideas in world politics from multiple angles. One of them is constructivist institutionalism[4], which emphasizes the importance of institutions in structuring social relations and moderating behavior (Béland 2016; Hay 2016). Constructivist institutionalism will provide the theoretical framework for the case studies in papers 2, 3, and 4, since it combines constructivist assumptions about the value of ideas as analytical units with an institutionalist perspective on organizations. However, since constructivist institutionalism is somewhat broad in its theoretical conceptualization of institutions, I develop a framework for regional ideas that is based on such assumptions, but is better equipped to engage with regional organizations specifically. In doing so, I also draw from literature which may be more adequately described as sociological institutionalist, in the sense that I take much of what ROs do in international politics to be based on norms and rules. ROs, just as any other IOs, influence policy through norms and can act as norm entrepreneurs under certain circumstances (Barnett & Finnemore 2004). Sociological assumptions are especially present in papers 2 and 3, as they explain regional education policy through what could be described as regional-cultural norms and values. At the same time, I focus on the underlying ideas instead of the formal and informal norms produced by ROs, since a norm can be viewed as a codified idea. Thus, the overall focus of the thesis remains constructivist in nature. Since constructivist institutionalism has such a large variety of different strands, not all of which are neatly separatable from more sociological accounts (Larsson 2015; Béland 2016), it can be difficult to sum up what all of them have in common. I therefore lay out these common elements first to be able to amend them into a framework which is suitable for the purpose of this thesis. At their most basic, constructivist institutionalists agree that institutions, whatever form they may take, influence and moderate the behavior of purposive actors within the social contexts they reside in. In IR, one of the most common subjects is the creation and change of policy on international, national or sub-national levels, and how these interact with and co-constitute each other. Constructivists have contributed significantly to ideational research in IR by showing how institutions can exert influence in policymaking on all levels through ideas (Hay 2011) and discourse (Schmidt 2017). A basic constructivist notion of how institutions, ideas and policy relate to each other may therefore be summarized as follows (figure 1). This sketch does of

[4] Sometimes also referred to as discursive institutionalism, see Schmidt (2008, 2010).

course not claim to be exhaustive and disregards, among other aspects, the constructivist assumption that these concepts may also be mutually constitutive. It rather serves illustrative purposes.

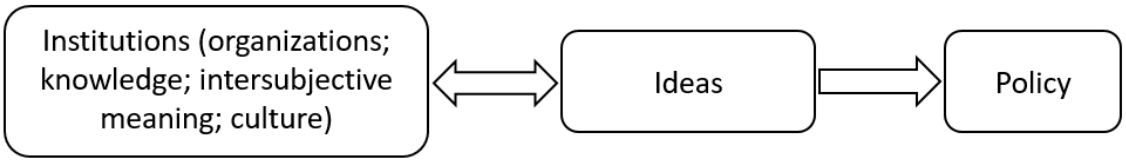


Figure 1 - Institutions, ideas and policy in constructivist theory

For constructivists, institutions can take many forms, such as organizations, knowledge, intersubjective meaning, culture, and tradition, which all hold explanatory power for political outcomes. While these terms describe distinct concepts, the literature is less clear about what precisely it is that separates them, and some of them have at times been used interchangeable (Finnemore & Sikkink 2001). Many constructivist scholars have been "hesitant to explore the ways in which ideas are themselves affected by other factors" (Berman 2001: 233), failing to explain how the ideas that influence policy outcomes come into existence in the first place (Campbell & Pedersen 2015), while acknowledging their contested nature within IOs (Béland & Orenstein 2013). In a regional setting, region-specific knowledge, I argue, is one of these factors. Knowledge has mostly been treated as "scientific knowledge" in IR (Paasi 2015; Vadrot 2017; e.g. Allan 2018), but my analysis points to the importance of knowledge from other sources such as experience, which has often been ignored. The following sections offer a typology of knowledge which accounts for these regional sources of knowledge. First, however, it is important to clearly define knowledge and ideas as analytical categories, as well as distinguish them from each other.

4.1 On the Relationship Between Knowledge and Ideas

Separating knowledge from ideas is not entirely unproblematic, and the distinction between both remains largely undertheorized in the literature. Goldstein and Keohane provide a widely accepted typology of ideas, which are "beliefs held by actors" (Goldstein & Keohane 1993: 1) that can take different forms, such as principled beliefs, causal

beliefs, or world views. Building on this conceptualization, a useful and more specific framework of policy ideas that distinguishes between problem definitions, policy solutions, and *Zeitgeist* is provided by Mehta (2011). I rely on this latter typology to make sense of the relationship between knowledge, ideas, institutions, and policy. Where an investigation of Zeitgeist is both beyond the scope of this thesis as well as analytically problematic, problem definitions and policy solutions are of particular interest for my purpose. They represent narrower forms of ideas, where problem definitions are "particular ways of understanding a complex reality". These ideas, as per the term, define the problems to be solved by policy solutions, which Metha takes to refer to the "means for solving the problem and accomplishing [a given set of] objectives" (Mehta 2011: 29–30). ROs may produce or generate entirely novel policy ideas themselves, but they may also simply reproduce ideas disseminated to them from other actors, such as IOs or states, at times giving them their own distinct regional "twists".

It is less straight forward to define knowledge. Indeed, although knowledge has been the subject of many philosophical debates, there is no undisputed epistemological definition of what it means to know something (Bolisani & Bratianu 2018). The Britannica dictionary proposes that knowledge refers to "information, understanding, or skill that you get from experience or education". For the purpose of this dissertation, it will suffice to rely on this somewhat limited definition. The following section separates knowledge and ideas as analytical categories.

For many constructivist scholars, knowledge and ideas are essentially the same thing. Commonly, knowledge about causal relationships is seen as one type of ideas (e.g. Andersen & Breidahl 2021), or policy ideas are treated as a category of knowledge among many other forms of expertise (e.g. Hirschman & Berman 2014). Despite this theoretical baggage, I argue that there is analytical value in distinguishing between knowledge and ideas. If an idea is a causal belief held by a given actor about 1) how a given problem should be defined and/or 2) how a given problem should be solved, then knowledge is best understood as the cognitive background in regard to which actors define problems and conceptualize solutions. In other words, knowledge accumulation precedes the formulation of policy ideas, which are "deriving from knowledge" (Christensen 2021: 458). The key difference between knowledge about a given problem and an idea about the definition or solution of said problem is that the former is generally referring to primarily empirical statements that contain some element of objective "truth", or at least claim to do so. The latter, on the other hand, "generally invokes both normative and

empirical descriptions in ways that are mutually reinforcing" (Mehta 2011: 33). For a policy field-specific example, an actor might know that climate chance is an empirical reality, as this knowledge can be acquired from sources that the actor considers legitimate, such as scientific resources, publications of international organizations or other, non-formal avenues. However, knowing about the causal relationship between global emissions and climate change does not yet tell the actor how he ought to judge this relationship. First of all, however unlikely, it is not inconceivable that some actors might not define climate change as a problem in the first place. For the actors that do so, there is a myriad of possibilities to conceptualize the problem, to propose solutions to the problem, and to prioritize these solutions in different ways. All of these contain an element of normative judgement on how climate change should be understood, which goes beyond causal knowledge claims. This is especially clear for problem definitions. Any problem definition works by excluding a range of meanings from the conceptualization of that problem, while incorporating others, in order to represent what the actor believes to be the nature or essence of the problem. In the given example of climate change, defining what makes climate change a problem also means defining which of its aspects are less or not at all problematic. If climate change, for instance, is defined as an economic problem, because of its potential to damage the global economy in unprecedented and unpredictable ways, this definition contains an implicit judgement about the importance of the global economy. Such a judgement can only be expressed on normative grounds, as there are no objectively agreeable criteria in regard to which all possible problem definitions of climate change could be ranked. Similar examples are easily imaginable for education policy. The key difference between knowledge and ideas in policy is thus that while knowledge claims aspire to represent objective truth (whether they accomplish that goal is another question), ideas, especially problem definitions, cannot exist without an element of normativity.

At the same time, knowing about climate change is a prerequisite for an actor to be able to formulate and put into action any policy ideas relating to it. While knowledge and ideas are therefore distinguishable analytical categories, they are also not completely independent of each other.

4.2 Knowledge Types and Regional Organizations

There are different types and different sources of knowledge that IOs can mobilize to exert influence in world politics (Barnett & Finnemore 1999; Sturdy et al. 2013). While

scholars have generally characterized IOs as essentially technocratic actors, diffusing expertise and universally valid standards generated through scientific research, a study by Sturdy et al. on European health policy through the WHO shows that IOs can also mobilize knowledge in other ways – "holistic, experience-based and context-sensitive" (Sturdy et al. 2013: 532). I argue that this mode of knowledge mobilization – of what I call "regional knowledge" - is essential for ROs and can explain the ideas that ROs produce and reproduce in both climate and education policy. ROs are unique actors in that they reside at the intersection of the global and the regional, through their member states on the one hand and their connections and entanglement with global institutions and discourses on the other. This allows them to access, mobilize and integrate both "local, experiential and contextualized knowledge" as well as "non-local, objectified and generalized knowledge" (Rydin 2007: 54) generated through scientific institutions. It is precisely this combination of bodies of knowledge generated from different sources that defines knowledge accumulation within ROs.

A useful typology of knowledge is provided by Stepanova et al. (2020), expanding on the work of Rydin (2007). The following sections build upon this typology, while amending it to enable the analysis of regional organizations. Figure 2 shows the resulting typology.

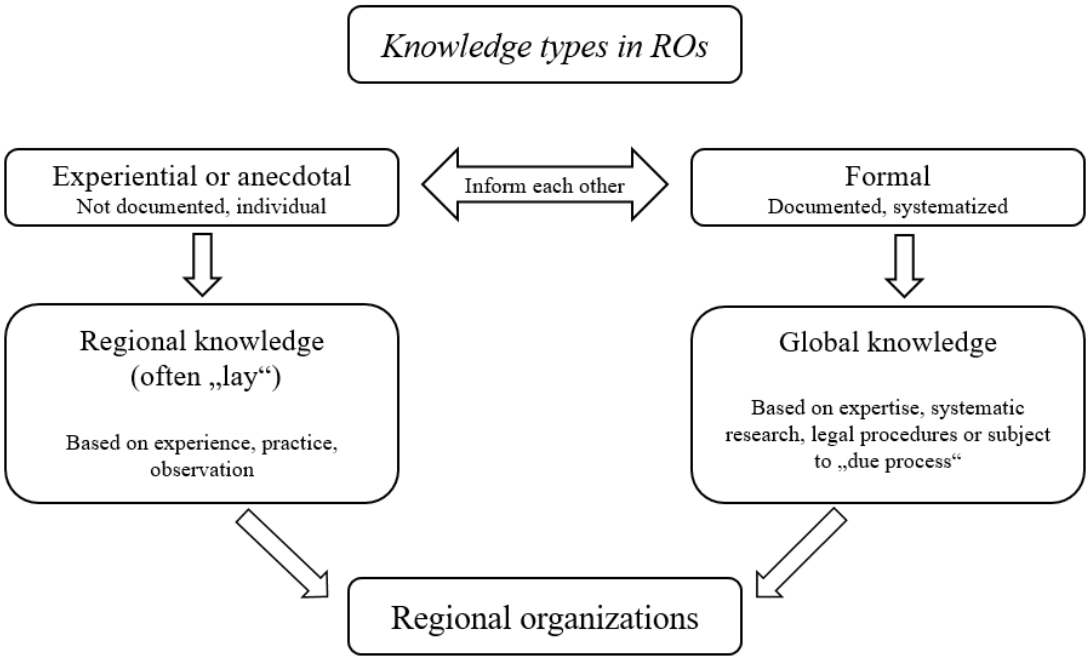


Figure 2 – Knowledge types and regional organizations

Experiential or anecdotal knowledge is comprised of information or understanding about a given topic which is neither systematically documented nor otherwise formalized into

rules, laws or official procedures. For example, one could imagine fisheries in the Carribean to experience decline in their yield because of climate-related environmental changes. Knowledge about this decline would first accumulate with local fishermen, before gaining regional notoriety. However, knowledge about such developments would likely remain limited to the affected region for some time, and accumulate mainly within individual fishermen, i.e. a specific subset of the regional population. Regional knowledge, then, refers to a body of knowledge which is based on "on the ground" experience, regional practice and observation through the affected groups and individuals. It is thus often "lay" knowledge, held by practitioners instead of policy experts or scientists.

Accordingly, formal knowledge is more systematized and closer to what is often called "expertise" in political science and IR (Littoz-Monnet 2017). It is comprised of information that is documented and published in some form or another, and subject to "due procedure". Such information feeds into what I refer to as global knowledge, because it is in principle accessible from anywhere in the world. It is also usually either sourced from scientific research and empirical evidence, or from national or international law. To stay with the example above, consider the manyfold studies which have been carried out by marine ecologists on how climate change negatively impacts fisheries around the world (e.g. Brander 2010). These represent global knowledge. Anyone with access to the internet or a well-stocked university library can, in principle, draw on these insights and gain an understanding of the relationship between climate change and fisheries, without actually having to make any related experiences.

These bodies of knowledge may also inform each other, of course, but conceding that they do holds little analytical value beyond the awareness that these categories are less dichotomous in empirical reality. Some scholars argue that such a distinction is arbitrary in the first place, since positivist and structured knowledge, especially scientific knowledge, is less objective and much more biased than it supposes to be (Ramirez et al. 2019). I argue that distinguishing between these two types of knowledge is valid because their underlying knowledge claims are different. While they both claim to be true, global knowledge also aspires to be generalizable and replicable over time, space and social context, while regional knowledge does not.

ROs, then, hold a unique position in this knowledge grid as they serve as hub for both global and regional knowledge, thus contributing to their "comparative advantage" vis-à-vis global organizations as mentioned above. RO officials have access to both regional

and global knowledge, through member state input as well as work experience on local and regional policy issues on the one hand, and the global scientific community as well as their cooperations with other IOs on the other hand. They may experience first-hand that local fisheries are in decline, when they read about it in local newspapers or talk to representatives of local municipalities. They may then match this regional knowledge with the scientific evidence that fisheries are in decline globally, and connect that to the empirical reality of climate change, confirming what they gather from their day-to-day work. As outlined in paper 4, this combination of global knowledge with regional experience makes for a potent driver of ideational change.

Combining this typology of knowledge with constructivist institutionalist assumptions about the interaction of institutions, ideas and policy results in a comprehensive framework of how ROs generate ideas by incorporating regional knowledge. This framework (see figure 3) is both theoretically consistent as well as supported by the empirical evidence presented in the contributions below.

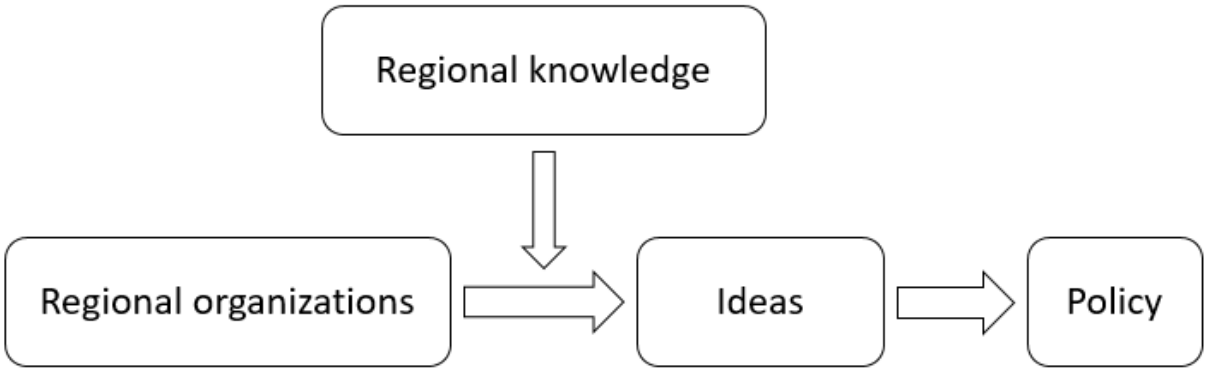


Figure 3 – Regional knowledge as moderating variable

ROs produce and reproduce ideas (problem definitions and policy solutions) which in turn influence the policies that they propose and implement. Regional knowledge serves as a moderating variable in this process, where ROs may take regional experiences into account and "cross-check" them with other sources of knowledge that they have access to. Ideas are thus determined, among other factors, by knowledge. For example, regional Muslim IOs in the Middle East place education policy within their own regional-cultural roots, and stress the socio-cultural dimension of education, because they have distinct and exclusive regional knowledge about these (see paper 2). CARICOM has recently begun

to stress narratives of survival over economic concerns in regard to climate governance in light of regional experiences with climate change (see paper 4). Regional experience, practices and observations influence ROs' ideas through contributing to regional knowledge. Thus, this framework amends constructivist and institutionalist assumptions about the relationship between institutions, ideas, and policy and applies them to regional settings in ROs. Regional knowledge is only one source of knowledge, but it is more important and a larger part of the equation for these ROs than it may be in global IOs, which are necessarily cosmopolitan. Global IOs are producers of knowledge which has the claim to be valid independent of context.

It is important to note here that I am not disputing constructivism's claim that institutions and ideas are mutually constitutive. Of course, the causal relationship displayed in figure 3 is perhaps not a one-way street in empirical reality. However, for the purpose of my analysis, I will disregard the "feedback loop" of how ideas can also influence the institutional setups they originate in, and instead focus on the ideational outcomes as well as the meaning of regional knowledge in them. This framework can explain ideas at specific "snapshots" in time, but it can also be used to explain ideational change over time, which constructivists have traditionally struggled to do (Carstensen 2011). The creation, distribution and incorporation of new regional knowledge in RO settings may drive or contribute to ideational change in this way (see paper 4). If knowledge about a given problem changes, so may its definition and the solutions proposed in regard to it. Admittedly, regional knowledge is a rather broad term when conceptualized this way. In education policy, for instance, I use it to describe understanding about regional culture and social (specifically, religious) context. The analyzed ROs refer to their specific socio-cultural contexts and traditional values as key for successful education policy. In climate policy, regional knowledge refers to experience with and observation of lived physical and discursive encounters with the effects of climate change. In policy fields beyond those analyzed in this thesis, yet other elements of regional knowledge might hold explanatory power. I argue that it is both valid and analytically valuable to refer to all of these as different instances of regional knowledge.

The following section will elaborate on how the papers presented in this thesis engage with this regional knowledge by examining regional ideas in these policy fields through the analysis of discourse.

5. Methodology and Research Design

This section summarizes the methodology employed this thesis and explores how the different methodological choices I have made contribute to its overall purpose. Quantitative methods are mainly used to set the stage and to explore what the landscape of international organizations in climate and education policy looks like. Qualitative methods can then be employed to investigate and compare the selected regional organizations within this context. This is a rather common approach to mixed methods, in which quantitative work uncovers empirical evidence which requires more in-depth explanation, and which can then be examined in more detail using qualitative methods (Tashakkori & Creswell 2007). In the context of this thesis, descriptive statistics and population-level large-n analysis show that the share of regional organizations in the total population of IOs has increased by large margins over the last decades. These developments require more explanation than can be offered by statistical analysis, as they invite questioning how regional organizations operate and what makes them distinct actors in international politics. The following section covers how such explanations can be found through qualitative content analysis, the materials that are explored, how these have been coded, and which software tools are used. It starts, however, by justifying the case selection for the comparative approach taken below.

What, then, can be learned from comparing these fields, and what makes the selected ROs relevant cases? This thesis aims to uncover how ROs generate ideas and explain how their ideas change over time depending on available regional knowledge. However, analyzes which heavily rely on case studies, such as this one, are notorious for being difficult to generalize beyond their specific cases (Levy 2008; Schwandt & Gates 2018). To achieve a robust level of generalizability, the thesis therefore needs to rely on evidence from fields that are sufficiently different from each other. This can be done by selecting what Seawright and Gerring call “diverse cases” (Seawright & Gerring 2008), i.e. cases which represent the full range of variation in the population of ROs.

Climate policy and education policy are suitable for comparison as diverse cases because the core problem(s) which actors try to solve in these fields fundamentally differ from each other in their dependency on the social contexts they reside in. Where it should be expected that regional knowledge is incorporated into policymaking in education policy, because what is seen as “good education” is so dependent on social and cultural context, the opposite is true for climate change. Some scholars have argued that climate change

must be understood in context of its social construction, as well (Pettenger 2007). While this thesis subscribes to this notion in general, I contend that the empirical problem of climate change itself must be understood as largely fixed and independent of social context – the climate is changing in a measurable and empirically observable ways, and the scientific evidence on it is rather clear. What is context-dependent about climate change is how it is understood in terms of its social and economic implications and how to best go about fixing it, i.e., problem definitions and policy solutions.

The argument put forward here is that if there is no significant variation in the utilization of regional knowledge even in such diverse cases, there should not be much more variation if one were to include more cases from other policy fields. Variation in the observed cases is indeed not very spread, as ROs have relied on regional knowledge and regional experiences in all cases covered here. Regarding the theoretical framework proposed above, this means that regional knowledge is a valid explanatory (moderating) variable for the generation of ideas through ROs in international politics. The caveat is that while diverse cases are "likely to be representative in the minimal sense of representing the full variation of the population" (Seawright & Gerring 2008: 297), they do not tell us how variation is spread across that population. In the context of this thesis, this methodological problem is alleviated by the fact that there is little variation in the incorporation of regional knowledge between ROs to begin with.

The cases of ROs active in these fields – ICESCO, ALECSO, ABEGS, SEAMEO, CBSS and CARICOM – are drawn from the subpopulations of IOs active in climate and education policy, which are established in paper 1. The IOs which comprise these subpopulations are sourced from two different sets of data, the Brill *Yearbook of International Organizations* and the *Correlates of War* (CoW) dataset. An inquiry into the IOs in the *Yearbook* yields 286 organizations classified as such. Three criteria are then applied to these organizations to define more clearly the subpopulations of IOs for the given fields. First, the organization must be an international organization as defined in section 4. Second, it must be currently active. Discontinued organizations are not considered relevant for the purpose of this thesis. Third, climate policy or education policy respectively must be part of its programmatic mission or indicated as a distinct area of work by the organization. Some organizations, like the various international and regional development banks, are focused on providing financing or data rather than designing policy. Organizations are only taken to be part of the subpopulation if they contribute to the realization of climate or education policies. The criteria are applied based

on a manual review of available strategic publications and documentation from the archives of the IOs as well as their current online presence. After applying these criteria to the 286 organizations, the resulting sample is cross-checked with the CoW database to identify potentially missing IOs. The result of this process is a current subpopulation of 43 IOs active in climate policy, and 30 IOs active in education policy, of which 18 and 20 are ROs, respectively.

From these subpopulations, different configurations of ROs are sampled for more in-depth investigation. Paper 2 and 3 are explorative in nature, since their purpose is less to explain why the regional ideas on education produced by the observed ROs take a specific shape, but rather to confirm that ROs indeed do produce their own ideas and distinct discourses. Such a *description* is the foundation of any approach towards an *explanation* of regional ideas. The lack of any literature on both the Muslim education IOs covered in paper 2 as well as the SEAMEO covered in paper 3 makes this approach mandatory. Describing regional ideas accurately and disentangling them from globally dominant discourses in these cases allows for an attempt at explaining them, which paper 4 focuses on. As papers 2 and 3 aim to uncover these regional ideas in education policy, the cases selected for analysis need to cover a reasonable range of variation to generate generalizable evidence. This is achieved by selecting diverse cases. ICESCO, ALECSO and ABEGS, which represent Muslim or Islamic ROs, are examined through a comparative case study to also account for possible differences between these organizations. SEAMEO, on the other hand, lends itself to a single case study since it is both the largest and the most influential education organization in Southeast Asia. Paper 4 seeks to both describe and explain regional ideas on climate policy. CBSS and CARICOM are therefore investigated through structured focused comparison, which is a technique aimed at generating evidence by asking a set of standardized, generalized questions from comparable cases. It is thus "focused because it deals selectively with only certain aspects of the case […] and structured because it employs general questions to guide the data collection and analysis in that case" (George 2019: 212). Similar designs have been able to contribute to theory development in IR in the past and will serve that same purpose here (Collier 1993).

All three case studies employ qualitative content analysis of relevant material to examine the selected ROs. Qualitative content analysis is "the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns" (Hsieh & Shannon 2005: 1277). Qualitative content analysis has been

a staple in the social sciences for some time (Schreier 2012; Krippendorff 2018). In political science as well as IR, it has proven to generate valuable insights on ideas and norms. In the context of this thesis, it is therefore used to examine RO ideas and explain how they come about. It is assumed that regional knowledge and ideas manifest in discourse, which ROs produce through different media, such as the document types listed below. Qualitative content analysis of such data therefore allows for the inference of regional ideas and knowledge.

To infer meaning from text data systematically, qualitative content analysis typically relies on different forms of coding, i.e., assigning classifications to bits of text, in order to uncover common themes (Mayring 2014). This thesis is no exception. Using the software tool MAXQDA, various types of material have been coded for the case studies. This material can be divided into three main bodies (see Table 1). One such body of material is comprised of the strategic documents published by the ROs, such as action plans, strategy papers, official declarations or treaties and charters (type I). These documents are usually intended to be read by a larger audience of both policy makers and stakeholders as well as the general public. They are valuable sources for ideational research because they contain both explicit objectives and reasoning in regard to the given policy issue, as well as implicit statements about the underlying values which inform said policy goals and measures. Another promising avenue for qualitative analysis are the various public statements which RO officials make at press conferences, in newsletters, in opinion pieces or at multilateral negotiations (type II). These are valuable for similar reasons, but have to be interpreted more carefully by research within the context of the material, since RO officials may at times present their personal views instead of those that inform policymaking within the organization. Type I documents should thus be prioritized over type II documents for ideational research, because they are less likely to be skewed by individual perceptions of officials. For the purpose of this thesis, type II documents have been analyzed mainly as complementary to type I and type III documents. The third main source for material are semi-structured interviews which have been carried out for two of the three case studies (type III).

The specifics of this coding process are covered in more detail in the papers[5]. In general, the coding is done deductively, inductively adding codes only where it seems appropriate and necessary. In total, 68 documents and three interviews of about 50 minutes in length

[5] For a more extensive discussion of the coding frame employed in paper 2 and 3, see also Windzio and Martens (2022a)

have been coded over all cases studies. 911 data points or codings form the basis for the analysis. The interviews carried out for this thesis relied on the Voice-over-IP (VOIP) softwares Skype and Zoom, which was necessary due to travel and other restrictions in the course of the Covid-19 pandemic from 2020 to 2022. While digital interviews are usually seen as inferior to in-person interviews for various reasons, they may also have distinct benefits under certain circumstances (for an in-depth discussion, see Oliffe et al. 2021). The main benefits of digital interviews in the context of this thesis were access and flexibility, as they made it possible to schedule interviews in the first place despite any restrictions, and do so independently of funding or timing constraints.

	Type I - **Official strategic publications** - **Action plans** - **Treaties, charters, declarations**	**Type II** - **Public statements** - **Press conferences** - **Conference proceedings**	**Type III** - **Interviews**
ICESCO[6]	19	1	0
ALECSO	4	1	0
ABEGS	4	1	0
SEAMEO	12	3	1
CBSS	14	1	1
CARICOM	9	3	1

Table 1 – Types of documents selected for case study analysis

There are a few methodological idiosyncrasies to be considered for ROs in regard to the material which is available for content analysis and it is crucial for valid results to account for them. ROs usually have limited capacities for producing output in comparison to other IOs. Where organizations such as the World Bank or the OECD have published hundreds or even thousands of documents over their areas of work, ROs often have published low double digit numbers of documents at most. For example, as of 2019, the OECD had published over 1000 documents on education policy (Seitzer 2021), whereas the ROs covered in paper 2 had published 26 documents in total between all three of them.

[6] Some of the documents examined here are published by all three organizations in conjunction. In these cases, they are counted individually for each organization

Constraints in budget and staff further limit the availability of RO officials for interviews. Where it is not uncommon for researchers to be able to recruit ten or more officials for interviews from, say, UNESCO, organizations like CARICOM or CBSS do not even have ten staff members in total working on climate policy or education. This means that apart from general availability, RO officials may also be especially unwilling to agree to interviews, given that each staff member represents a larger share of the total work force of their department. Overall, research on ROs may suffer from a much more constrained data basis, both in terms of published documents as well as interviews. Instead of carefully selecting documents from a vast body of publications and excluding irrelevant material, as is often key in IO research, the challenge for RO research lies in compiling sufficiently extensive relevant material in the first place. To gain sufficient and valid evidence, then, the triangulation of data from different sources is even more important for the purpose of this thesis than it is elsewhere. Triangulation refers to the utilization of two or more types or sources of qualitative material in order to generate robust evidence (Patton 2015). For example, if a given theme or idea can be coded in multiple documents, and is then also mentioned by an interviewee, it is valid to assume that the idea is relevant for the RO in question.

6. Paper Summary

The following section shows how the papers compiled in this thesis build upon each other and how they provide distinct contributions to the overall purpose of the thesis. The first paper offers a general account of IOs and ROs in world politics, focusing on the trajectories of the overall numbers of both global and regional IOs over time since 1945. By distinguishing between geographical and thematic scope, and tracing both dimensions, it serves as an empirical foundation. ROs have grown in numbers and relevance in both climate and education policy over time, but the literature on them is rather scarce, especially so in terms of ideas research. This observation provides the puzzle for the second, third and fourth paper to engage with. The second and the third paper are best viewed in conjunction, as they employ the same theoretical framework and methodological approach to different cases. The second paper provides a comparative account of three Muslim or Islamic education IOs, while the third paper examines one case in detail, namely SEAMEO. These two papers represent the first systematic reviews of the organizations covered, and are therefore rather explorative in nature. Both find that ROs have their own distinct ideas which they promote through discourse, and which

influence how they conceptualize and implement policy. Both also find that these ideas are reflected and can be tracked in the activities which ROs carry out "on the ground", as well as in their budgets if available. The fourth paper confirms these findings, but also expands upon them. Changing the empirical scenery, it lays out which ideas ROs have produced in climate policy, and how these vary between different regions. It then goes on to synthetise these findings into a theoretical framework, which can be used to explain ideational change in ROs. In doing so, it also fixes some of the theoretical shortcomings of the second and the third paper. All of the papers are informed by institutionalist assumptions about how IOs and ROs work and should be studied, although they differ in the specific notions of institutionalism they employ. While the first paper does not explicitly rely on an institutionalist framework, but rather on organizational ecology, it still assumes that IOs as institutions matter and make a difference in world politics. The four papers are summarized in more detail below (see also Table 2).

6.1 Torn into the Abyss? Subpopulations of International Organizations in Climate, Education, and Health Policy in Times of a Declining Liberal International Order

The first paper of this thesis is published in co-authorship with Dennis Niemann and Kerstin Martens and examines the landscape of IOs in health, education and climate policy, the latter two of which are considered here. In doing so, it contributes to answering the research question by providing crucial context as to why the question must be asked in the first place. There is very limited literature on regional organizations from an IR perspective, as most studies do not account for different geographical reaches of IOs, and do not distinguish between ROs and globally active IOs. Thus, this paper undertakes a complete survey of the IOs which are active in climate and education policy, explicitly differentiating between the regional and the global level. It does so by employing organizational ecology, a theoretical framework designed to explain the trajectories of populations of organizations in a given field over time (Abbott et al. 2016). We assume that the sum of IOs in a given field is best understood as a subset or subpopulation of all IOs active in world politics. We rely on data from the *Brill Yearbook of International Organizations* as well as the *Correlates of War v3.0* data set on IOs, from which we select configurations of IOs along the criteria outlined in the methods section of this thesis. For our analysis, we employ both descriptive statistics as well as qualitative content analysis. For regional organizations, we find that in both fields, the group of ROs is substantial and

their numbers have increased both in absolute and in relative terms post-1945. As of 2020, regional IOs constitute a majority of the subpopulation in education (with sixty-five percent of the subpopulation), while representing a significant share (about forty percent) in climate policy (figure 4).

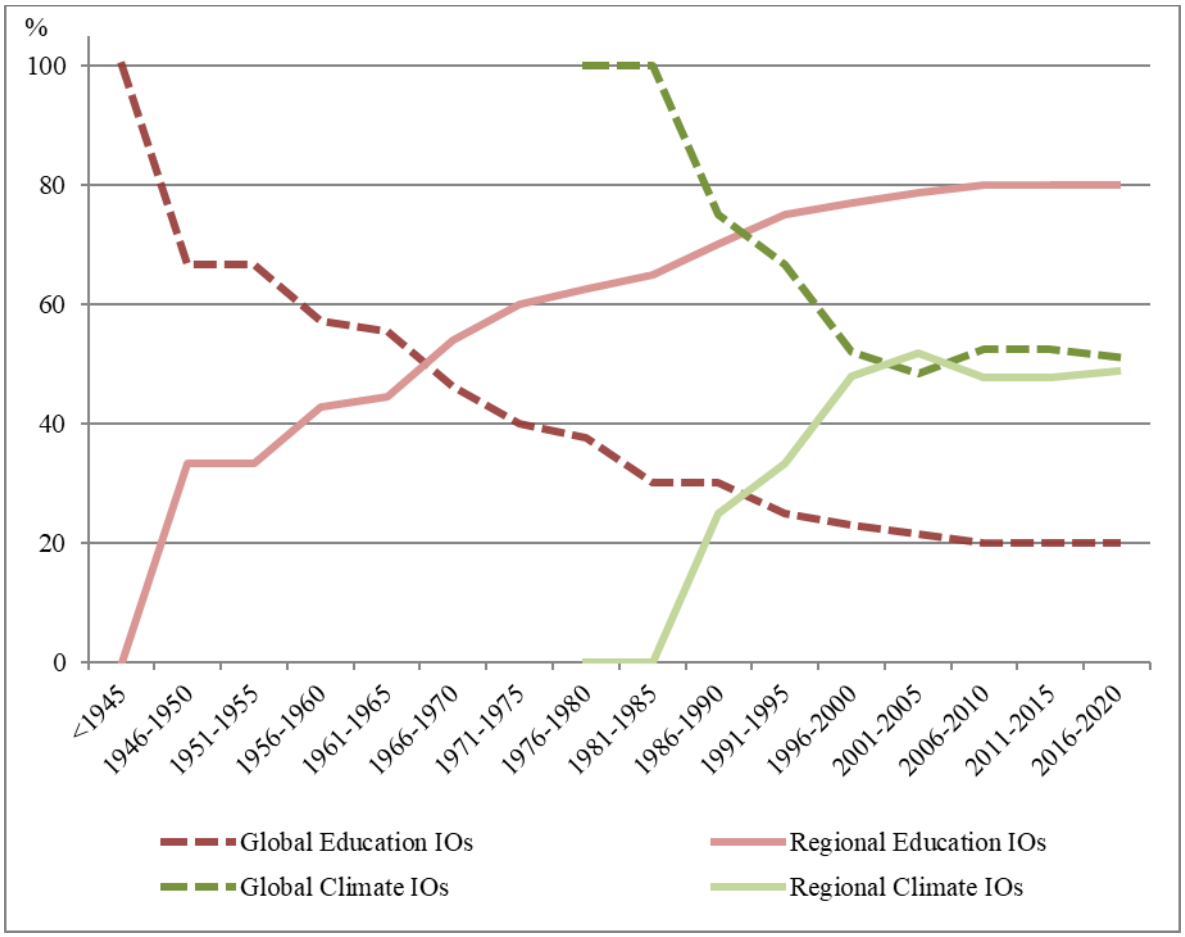


Figure 4 – Percentage shares of IOs in education and climate policy over time

While ROs thus constitute significant shares of the subpopulations in both fields, they find their organizational niches more easily in policy fields in which policy goals and objectives are highly context-dependent, such as education. We explain this empirical observation by contending that ROs are uniquely situated at the intersection of global, regional and local policy arenas, which enables them to deal with policy issues in a way that is both more effective and more legitimate in their regional contexts. In organizational ecology terms, ROs therefore have intrinsic features which are sufficiently

distinct from those observed in global IOs to treat them as two different organizational forms within the group of IOs. For the purpose of this thesis, the most important conclusion from this observation is that a one-size-fits-all-approach to IO analysis is not adequate for examining ROs. Against this backdrop, it is surprising that IR literature has so rarely engaged with ROs in detail. Our findings also grant relevance to ROs as actors in world politics, thereby setting the stage for the three other papers. They should thus be understood as the contextual canvas of this thesis.

6.2 International Organizations and Education in the Islamic World

The second paper investigates IOs and their ideas or "leitmotifs" on education policy in the Islamic World, comparing ICESCO, ALECSO, and ABEGS. ICESCO is best viewed as a regional organization for this purpose, although it is not exclusively comprised of member states in the MENA region. Drawing on insights from both sociological and constructivist institutionalism, the paper assumes that ROs are purposive actors which matter in international politics, and which can "act back" against the social environments they are situated in in meaningful ways (Blyth 2011). One avenue through which they do so through is the (re-)production of discourse which reflects their ideas on given policy matters.

The paper starts by mapping the organizations with predominantly Muslim member states that are active in the field of international education policy and how they cooperate with each other. It further covers the education ideas, reccuring themes and leitmotifs that these organizations promote and the discourse they construct around education policy. It does so by employing qualitative content analysis of documents, such as strategic publications, statements made by officials, websites, newsletters and other material.

The paper follows an explorative approach, which seems mandatory given that there is virtually no literature on the organizations covered. Significant space is allocated to a rather descriptive account of the ROs covered. This also means that the analysis remains somewhat limited in terms of specific causal relationships between the observed ideas and their determining factors. Still, the influence of regional knowledge and regional socio-cultural context on the ideas which ROs promote is obvious even from such superficial analysis.

I find that Muslim education ROs produce ideas that revolve around the synthesis of traditional values drawn from Islamic philosophy with the demands of a modern global

labor market. They focus on the social purposes of education rather than on economic ones, which runs counter to the rather economically focused global education discourses which have dominated since the 1980s (Zapp & Ramirez 2019). They are thus distinctly non-secular and place emphasis on cultural and religious themes, including for example a sense of a larger-than-life "Islamic civilization" which education policy is supposed to protect and promote. In an ever more globalized world, balancing these region-focused ideas with the skill-based education demands of the global knowledge economy is a challenging task for these ROs, especially when they face shortages in budget and staff.

The contribution of this paper to the overall objective of this thesis is therefore twofold. Firstly, it shows that ROs have their own ideas which may differ systematically from those found in IOs that are not bound to regional contexts. Secondly, it hints at the possibility of explaining how these ideas are generated by relying on regional knowledge and experiences as causal factors. These suspicions are confirmed for another case in the third paper. They are then confirmed again for another field and condensed into a theoretical framework in the fourth paper.

6.3 Regional Ideas in International Education Organizations: The Case of SEAMEO

The third paper in this thesis conducts a case study on SEAMEO, which has been a major player in education policy in Southeast Asia for decades, but still remains uncharted by IR scholars at large. Similar to the second paper, this paper explores the underlying themes and ideas which inform discursive patterns produced and reproduced by SEAMEO. It applies the same theoretical basis and methodology which have proven to be effective tools in the second paper to different case in SEAMEO. The material used for the analysis is quite similar as well, comprising primarily strategic documents published between 1970 and 2019 to track the development of ideas over time. In addition, however, this paper cross-checks the finding from the qualitative content analysis of these documents with data from a semi-structured interview with a high ranking SEAMEO official.

This paper also provides a basic outline of SEAMEO's history as well as its general institutional setup to provide an understanding of how the organization compares to other IOs and why it is a relevant case. It does so for lack of comprehensive literature on SEAMEO, but sacrifices a deeper engagement with the educational ideas and themes explored in the analysis.

Inquiring how SEAMEO conceives of education and how its image of education evolved over time, I find that SEAMEO mostly follows the UN's global sustainable development agenda in education policy. SEAMEO therefore proposes a quite holistic ideal of education, stressing both the social as well as the economic purposes of education. However, it does so with a distinct emphasis on reinforcing the "collectively shared values and traditions" of its member states, which it deems unique to Southeast Asia. I argue that this makes another case for regional knowledge in the production of regional ideas through ROs.

The paper thus makes both an empirical as well as a theoretical contribution to this thesis. Empirically, it confirms and expands upon the findings from the second paper. ROs produce their own distinct ideas in education policy, or reproduce and amend existing global ideas in a way that they deem a better fit for their regions. In regard to theory, these findings hint at some generalizability for how ROs relate to ideas in education policy, in that they incorporate regional knowledge about their socio-cultural roots, values and traditions. Both the second and the third paper show that regional knowledge seems to play some sort of role, but they do not explicitly theorize this observation in a comprehensive framework. Due to their explorative nature, they focus on *describing* the distinct ideas of ROs in education policy rather than *explaining* why they take a specific form. The final step of this thesis, then, is to provide such an explanation in paper 4, while also matching the findings from education policy with another policy field.

6.4 Here to Stay? Challenges to Liberal Environmentalism in Regional Climate Governance

The fourth and final paper in this thesis investigates regional ideas in climate policy by comparing CARICOM and the CBSS. As international climate governance has institutionalized a normative compromise of liberal environmentalism since the 1990s (Bernstein 2002; Jernnäs & Linnér 2019), the article assesses ideational challenges to this compromise. It examines how regional climate policy ideas have evolved over time and explains variation between the organizations through the advent of new (regional) knowledge.

It does so by employing a strictly constructivist institutionalist framework, which, contrary to the second and the third paper, disregards cultural factors in favor of a purely ideational perspective. Methodologically, it follows a structured focused comparison design (George 2019) of two similar cases in CARICOM and CBSS. As qualitative

content analysis has proven to be adept at exploring ideas in education policy in the former two papers, it is also used to engage with climate policy ideas here. The material for the analysis is comprised of strategic documents published by both organizations, as well as semi-structured interviews with officials from each organization.

The article finds that both CARICOM and CBSS have supported and reproduced liberal environmentalism in the past. More recently, CARICOM has started to connect climate change with notions of survival and justice, implicitly challenging liberal environmentalism, while CBSS remains within established discourses of sustainable development. The article then argues that the mobilization of new knowledge from both scientific as well as anecdotal and experiential sources explains the evolution of ideas in these regional organizations. Problem definitions of climate change evolve within regional organizations when officials gain access to new scientific data, and are able to combine or confirm them with anecdotal experience from their day-to-day work.

The paper thus contributes both additional empirical evidence from climate policy, as well as a theoretical explanation for ideas and ideational change in ROs. It shows that regional knowledge can function as a moderating variable by contributing to the body of knowledge available to ROs. ROs (re-)produce ideas which influence the policies they propose and implement. They do so relying on the knowledge available to them, which is mobilized from different sources. Regional anecdotal, observational or experiential knowledge is one of these sources. ROs in climate policy thus function as hubs between *the global*, *the regional* and *the local*, in which different knowledges meet and mix with each other and influence policy.

	Paper 1	Paper 2	Paper 3	Paper 4
Title	Torn into the Abyss? Subpopulations of International Organizations in times of a declining liberal international order	International Organizations and Education in the Islamic World	Regional Ideas in International Education Organizations: The Case of SEAMEO	Here to Stay? Challenges to Liberal Environmentalism in Regional Climate Governance
Theory	Organizational ecology	Sociological and constructivist institutionalism	Sociological and constructivist institutionalism	Constructivist institutionalism
Research question	Are there different trajectories of IO subpopulations across fields, and if so, how can they be explained and what does that tell us about the LIO?	Which organizations consisting of predominantly Muslim member states are active in the field of international education policy, and how, if at all, do they cooperate? Which education leitmotifs and ideas do these organizations promote, and what kind of discourse do they construct around education policy?	How does SEAMEO conceive of education?	How do ROs construct climate change? How can variation in discursive patterns produced by ROs be explained?
Dimension of regionalism	Population of ROs globally and change over time	Regional education policy in the Middle East	Regional education policy in Southeast Asia	Regional climate policy in the Caribbean and the Baltics
Cases	286 international organizations	ICESCO, ALECSO, ABEGS	SEAMEO	CARICOM, CBSS
Most relevant findings	- no decline in IO numbers in any of the observed policy fields which would account for general contestations of the LIO - several regionally constituted LIOs have emerged, ROs make up significant shares of the IOs in climate and education policy - Regional and global IOs have fundamentally	- Muslim education IOs focus on social purposes of education over economic ones - Distinct cultural and religious elements in their education ideas - "balancing act" of synthesizing these ideas with global norms and ideas on what good education policy entails	- SEAMEO produces holistic education ideal in which both social and economic purposes are relevant - Emphasis on cultural values and traditional norms rooted in regional context of Southeast Asia which require attention in education policy - ROs aim to reap the development benefits of globalized education	- variance in climate discourse between CARICOM and CBSS, former focuses on survival and climate justice, latter on sustainable development - variance can be explained through the availability of new knowledge from anecdotal and scientific sources - combination of "knowledges" influences

	different intrinsic features, which can help explain their success or failure		policy, but are unwilling to sacrifice their cultural roots, values and traditions for it	how ROs conceptualize problem definitions and policy solutions - importance of specific regional knowledge and experience for RO ideas and policy
Design	Large-N complete survey	Comparative case study	Single-case study	Structured focused comparative case study
Method	Mixed methods - descriptive statistics + qualitative content analysis	Qualitative content analysis	Qualitative content analysis	Qualitative content analysis
Material and data	Brill Yearbook of International Organizations, Correlates of War V3.0	Documents (Type I and II)	Interview, documents (Type I, II and III)	Interviews, documents (Type I, II and III)
Range of time[7]	1945 - 2020	1945 - 2019	1970 – 2020	2009 - 2022
Dependent variable	IO subpopulation development and composition over time	Regional education ideas in the Middle East	Regional education ideas in Southeast Asia	Regional climate ideas in the Caribbean and the Baltics over time
Independent variable	Problem structure and organizational environment	Regional-cultural context	Regional-cultural context	Knowledge
Co-authors	Dr. Dennis Niemann, Prof. Dr. Kerstin Martens	-	-	-
Status	Published in *Global Governance: A Review of Multilateralism and International Organizations* (Brill)	Published in *Global Pathways to Education* (eds. Martens/Windzio 2022)	Published in *Global Pathways to Education* (eds. Martens/Windzio 2022)	Under review in *Global Policy* (Wiley)

Table 2 – Overview of publications

[7] Years from which data were drawn and interviews were conducted

7. Conclusion and Discussion

This thesis has been guided by two related questions – how can regional ideas be explained, and what determines regional ideational outcomes and change? The thesis has thereby tackled a number of empirical and theoretical problems present in contemporary research on international organizations. On a population level, the trajectories of IOs have been studied in detail (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni 2021; Debre & Dijkstra 2022), but such analyses have not distinguished between geographical scopes. On the regional level, ideational research has rarely concerned itself with policy ideas which are specific to given regional settings, with the EU being an exception rather than the norm in terms of research interest. From an IR perspective, it is unclear whether regional ideas *exist* in the first place, much less how they come about or what they are determined by.

To contribute to filling these gaps in the literature, the thesis was structured along the following internal logic. First, I set out to explore the landscape of ROs in international politics and how it has developed over time, by comparing the subpopulations of ROs in three different policy fields in the first paper. I then selected a number of cases from these subpopulations for closer investigation in the second, third and fourth paper. The second and third paper explored regional ideas in education policy, providing evidence for distinct ideas in ROs, which differ significantly from global ideas and discourses. They also found regional socio-cultural factors which inform ICESCO's, ABEGS's, ALECSO's and SEAMEO's ideas in education policy. The fourth paper confirmed these findings for CBSS's and CARICOM's policy ideas in climate governance and then developed a theoretical explanation for why these distinct ideas exist and how they come about. All of the papers have been informed by institutionalist assumptions, while each of them applies a different focus to the study of ROs as institutions. For the first paper, this notion is rather a point of departure than a comprehensive theoretical framework. Operating under the assumption that IOs (and thus ROs) are relevant subjects of research because they are important actors in international politics, the paper employs a framework of organizational behavior and evolution rather than a proper institutionalist theory. The second and the third paper add to this assumption the notion that not only do ROs matter, but they matter primarily through norms and ideas (Barnett & Finnemore 2004). These ideas are represented in discourse which ROs publish or otherwise produce, and can thus be inferred from text material via qualitative methods. Both papers further assume that ROs operate within specific socio-cultural contexts, which influence their ideas. They are

thus conceptually closer to sociological institutionalism, since they emphasize how ROs do not act in a vacuum, but vis-à-vis social structures and cultural contexts they are located in. In this thesis, I have taken these social elements to constitute forms of regional knowledge, which can explain why ROs produce specific regional ideas. The fourth paper has followed a similar approach, which is nevertheless more constructivist in nature, since it is narrowly focused on ideas and ideational change. Disregarding cultural elements, the fourth paper has inquired how regional ideas change over time depending on the availability of new knowledge.

As the climate and the education policy fields differ fundamentally in the core problem structures which inform their principle objectives, they were picked for a comparison of diverse cases. This way, the thesis was able to employ case study designs in the three latter papers, while retaining a sufficient level of generalizability. The results of these case studies can thus be reasonably extrapolated to the general population of ROs in international politics. The thesis relied on a primarily qualitative approach, which applied quantitative methods where necessary, mainly in the first paper. The case studies carried out in the latter papers employed qualitative content analysis of relevant documents as well as semi-structured interviews to be able to infer policy ideas from available discursive material.

This thesis has primarily been concerned with two related but distinct concepts, namely ideas and knowledge. More specifically, it has set out to examine how knowledge accumulated within ROs moderates the policy ideas they produce and reproduce.

In education policy, ROs have displayed an emphasis on regional cultural values and traditions in the ideas they promote. At the same time, they have attempted to balance these values with a more globalized education policy, which they deem prerequisite for participation in the global knowledge economy. Islamic or Muslim ROs hold exclusive knowledge about religious and cultural aspects in their regions, which needs to be taken into account in order to design legitimate and successful education policy. At the same time, they are not entirely clear what these aspects entail, as they are at times debated within the ROs themselves, such as the notion of “true Islam” (see paper 2). For SEAMEO, these regional values are more secular, but still distinctly bound to what the organization deems Southeast Asian culture.

In climate policy, CARICOM and CBSS have traditionally subscribed to the UN sustainable development agenda, which has a number of ideational implications. However, recently, CARICOM has promoted more radical ideas and discourses which

connect climate change with survival and justice, while CBSS has remained within their previous discursive lane. I have argued that this variation can be explained with the way in which ROs mobilize local and regional anecdotal knowledge and combine it with global scientific knowledge available to them. New knowledge generated this way is a powerful driver of ideational change in ROs.

When comparing these two fields, the findings are largely consistent. In both fields, ROs act as hubs or intersections between global and regional levels of policymaking. Thus, they incorporate, reject or otherwise interact with knowledge and ideas stemming from both levels. In both education policy and climate policy, there are more or less dominant global discourses against or with which regional organizations position themselves, either implicitly (climate change) or explicitly (education). Indeed, both fields are rather similar in that global discourses have intimately connected them to economic policy, while their core problems are not originally economic in nature. In climate policy, liberal environmentalism forms the normative framework within which problems are defined and solutions are found (Bernstein 2001). Only recently has CARICOM begun to implicitly challenge the policy priorities established by liberal environmentalism, while other ROs have not. In education, neoliberal policy ideas connecting education policy primarily to economic concerns have informed global education policy since the 1980s (Robertson 2005; Zapp & Ramirez 2019). ROs such as ICESCO and SEAMEO refer to these discourses in their discursive output, calling into question the efficacy of a one-size-fits-all approach to education policy by stressing the importance of regional idiosyncrasies.

These findings have a number of theoretical implications. Two of IR's most prominent debates revolve around international organizations and around ideas – do ideas matter, and do IOs matter in international politics? In both of these debates, the current constructivist literature has moved from inquiring *if* these factors matter to *how* and *to what extent* they do so (Mehta 2011; Larsson 2018). This thesis has contributed to both debates by exploring how ideas and ROs are related to each other. I argue that IOs do not only matter in international relations, but they matter in specific ways which depend among others on their geographical scope. ROs matter because they translate and mobilize regional knowledge into policy ideas, which grants them a "comparative advantage" and unique position in policymaking vis-à-vis global actors. ROs must thus be conceptualized as distinct actors that hold sufficient agency to pursue their own policy ideas.

As for ideas as causal factors, the evidence presented above implies that ideas are not equally powerful and generalizable over social contexts but must be viewed within this context in order to trace their explanatory power. An idea which originates in a given setting will not necessarily translate well to other political arenas without being amended in some way. For instance, the concept of sustainable development enshrined in the UN SDGs (United Nations Sustainable Development 2021) has constituted the normative basis for much of contemporary global climate policy. However, as paper 4 has shown, it has been given region-specific meanings and twists during implementation by ROs, which has sometimes compromised its efficacy.

Furthermore, and connected to the causality of ideas, this thesis has some implications for the importance of crises as drivers of ideational change (Hall 1993). Traditionally, IR theory has contended that ideas and policy paradigms change when external shocks or crises render old ideas obsolete. Although climate change constitutes such a crisis, it has also been a known issue on the international stage for at least 50 years (and arguably more) as of today. Education policy, on the other hand, has had its share of external shocks, such as the financial crisis of 2008, but their impact on education ideas has remained questionable. This thesis, then, has argued that ideational change happens not only during crisis, but also incrementally over time (Carstensen 2011). It has done so by showing how RO ideas in different policy fields can change when new knowledge becomes available, which does not require a moment of crisis.

At last, some remarks should be made in relation to the study of regionalism and the merits of comparison. Research under the umbrella of comparative regionalism as the most recent strand of theories of regional integration has engaged with different models of such integration and the mechanisms and effects of supra- and transnational transfers of authority. While most studies on regionalism have remained rather eurocentric, and mainly cover non-European regional integration in relation or comparison to the EU, the field has nevertheless contributed significantly to our understanding of integration processes. As has been shown in this thesis, comparative research designs can not only provide evidence for the causal mechanisms behind regional integration, i.e., how ROs come about, but also for the effects of integration, i.e., what ROs do and why their existence makes a difference in world politics.

7.1 Limitations

While there is compelling evidence for the conclusions drawn above, there are also considerable limitations which need to be taken into account. In this section, I will discuss these concerns, starting with the more serious ones.

First of all, an obvious retort to the premise of this thesis would be a rationalist view in which political action is based on the interest of calculating, utility-maximizing actors. Such a view would certainly dispute the attention I have granted both ideas as well ROs here. One could argue, as some rationalist approaches do, that ideas are second to material interests in explaining political outcomes, if they hold any causal influence at all. Applied to this thesis specifically, it could be argued that the statements which Muslim education IOs make in their publications and the discourse they produce are just manifestations of their member states' aspirations to stay sovereign nations vis-à-vis a globalized world which supposedly requires a certain approach to education policy. It could further be argued that CARICOMs recent calls for more radical climate action is similarly just a reflection of their member states' material dependence on an intact environment. These are valid objections, but they do not contradict the thesis as fundamentally as one might assume. Following Hay (2011), I contend that interests must be seen as socially constructed as well. Interests are just ideas given form, because what is meant by this term is what actors perceive as their interest, which in turn depends on ideas, norms, and values. Ideas are what defines interest in the first place.

Second, there is the "elephant in the room" in the theoretical framework of this thesis, which is that it remains unclear how exactly the mobilization of regional knowledge in ROs works in empirical reality. What is the *mechanism* by which ROs incorporate and manage knowledge? Which are the factors which drive ideational change on a more micro level, and what is the role of RO officials as individual actors in this process? These questions come down to an agent vs structure debate, and there is a number of possible constructivist and sociological answers. One possible answer would be that knowledge is diffused and synthesized through socialization and social learning. RO officials, in this view, are purposeful actors acting back against the organizational settings they reside in, who translate their own physical interactions with their environment into political action (Blyth 2011). While especially paper 4 follows a similar assumption, it still does not make falsifiable statements about the conditions under which knowledge leads to ideational change, beyond the fact that new knowledge must be available to ROs. This is a rather

serious concern, but one that this thesis cannot alleviate properly. Apart from the fact that answering how individuals interact with knowledge is more suitable for sociological or even psychological research, the specific mechanism at play here is beyond what the data available to my analysis can provide.

In regard to data, there are a number of small contentions which are worth mentioning here in brief. One is that the material could be more extensive for some of the ROs covered in the case studies. While all available publications and documents have been taken into account for these organizations, it is less than ideal for the analysis that officials of neither ICESCO, ALECSO nor ABEGS were available for expert interviews. For other ROs, one would wish for more interviewees. However, as alluded to in the methods section, these are unfortunate realities of research on smaller regional organizations, which are to be expected. There could also be biases unaccounted for because the interviews were carried out digitally instead of in person, but research suggests that this is not a serious methodological hurdle (Oliffe et al. 2021). Lastly, one could argue that it would be beneficial for the generalizability of the results to extend the analysis to more policy fields, and at the same time also take into account data for globally active IOs. For the moment, it must remain uncertain to which extent these IOs can and do incorporate regional knowledge, which means that there could be cases in which ROs are not as unique as suggested by the analysis above. Global IOs may for instance mobilize regional knowledge through their regional offices from time to time. Both of these limitations are valid and real concerns, but none that could be solved within the scope of this thesis. Future research is needed in order to progress the literature in this regard.

7.2 Further Research

This section explores future avenues for research on ROs, ideas, and knowledge which may contribute to the literature in relation to this thesis. An empirical question which is very relevant to the study of ROs, but beyond the thesis' scope, is how influential these organizations really are in world politics. As this thesis has shown, they are numerous and distinct actors. At the same time, many ROs are quite limited in terms of budget and staff, and their smaller size can be assumed to have an impact on their influence compared to large global bureaucracies like the UN institutions or the World Bank. Presumably, ROs have varying influence between different ROs and different policy fields, depending on factors like their financial resources, their level of institutionalization, their historically contingent expertise, and others. ROs may also fulfill different roles in cooperation with

other IOs, which may influence how they behave. If an RO acts primarily as an implementer for projects designed elsewhere, such SEAMEO has done at times (see paper 3), it may thereby limit its own independent influence on political outcomes.

In regard to theory development, a question that is intimately connected to these considerations is whether ROs have more or less agency vis-à-vis their member states compared to larger IOs. Agency has often been defined as a function of information advantages. If an agent has access to information that its principal has not, it enjoys greater discretion in its own actions. For ROs, it is unclear whether they have lesser, greater or similar information advantages in comparison to other IOs, which means that we do not know how applicable theories of delegation and agency are to them (Hawkins et al. 2006).

As for the role of ideas and knowledge in international relations, one important pathway for future research is to examine the specific mechanism by which IOs and ROs mobilize knowledge. While there is some research on knowledge mobilization in IOs, it generally suffers from rather narrow conceptualizations of knowledge as expertise (Littoz-Monnet 2017). In this thesis, I have linked ideas and knowledge as analytical units, but the underlying social mechanism of idea production remains elusive.

Finally, in regard to methodological considerations, research on ROs should employ both quantitative and qualitative designs, which have proven valuable in the context of this thesis. Digital expert interviews seem especially suited to generate large volumes of qualitative data on ROs, because they alleviate limitations for research on ROs where there are great distances between researchers and object of study. After all, it is easier to get a number of Zoom appointments with CARICOM staff members in Georgetown, Guyana than to get funding for a 14-hour flight. While digital interviews have not been prominent tools before the Covid-19 pandemic, their flexibility and ease of access should make them part of any qualitative researcher's methodological toolkit in the future.

In sum, research on ROs is still in its infancy compared to other fields in IR, at least beyond studies on the EU. As of today, many ROs have not been engaged with systematically whatsoever, much less in a comparative design which aims at generating generalizable evidence. If we are to understand the intricacies of international politics not only on the global, but also the regional and the local level, gaining more insight into how ROs as political actors actually work is of crucial importance.

8. Torn into the Abyss? Subpopulations of International Organizations in Times of a Declining Liberal International Order

8.1 Introduction

International Organizations (IOs) are an integral part of the modern Liberal International Order (LIO). The LIO may be defined as the rule-based institutionalization of international relations between nation states by virtue of both political and economic liberalism: core features of political liberalism include principled equality and sovereignty of nation states, democratic rule and the protection of human rights, while economic liberalism proposes capitalist markets, free trade as well as capital mobility, among others (Finnemore et al. 2021). As it "has structured relations among capitalist, democratic, and industrialized nations since the late 1940s" (Lake et al. 2021: 225), the LIO and its related Westphalian system of sovereign states provided the ground for formalized multilateral cooperation of states through IOs. In fact, IOs have been a central node in the international network of global and regional governance, as they became important agencies for securing durable cooperation and coordinating policy responses for international problems.

However, the LIO is not a static imperative, but changes over time. On a global scale, the LIO may, for example, be contested by authoritarian or single powerful states; internally, liberal states must cope with by populist movements questioning international commitments. Others argue that the individualism inherent in contemporary Western societies undermines the moral principles of the LIO (Barnett 2021). Given such challenges to multilateral cooperation (Ikenberry 2018), we examine whether the contestations of IOs as part of the LIO are reflected in the subpopulations of IOs in different policy fields. How IOs manage cooperation heavily depends on the institutional structures which shape them and on the organizational environment in which they operate. Structural differences in policy fields and the interplay between endogenous and exogenous factors have been systematically overlooked in previous research on IOs. We therefore ask: Are there different trajectories of IO subpopulations across fields, and if so, how can they be explained and what does that tell us about the LIO?

We aim to contribute to both empirical and theoretical debates around IOs. Empirically, we make two main arguments regarding perceived challenges of the LIO. On the one hand, we show that there is no decline in IO numbers in any of the observed policy fields which would account for general contestations. On the other hand, we support the

argument that several regionally constituted LIOs have emerged (Lake et al. 2021). Theoretically, we contend that IOs can exhibit differences in their basic characteristics and institutional setup which are sufficiently significant to constitute distinct intrinsic features, thereby expanding upon organizational ecology (Debre & Dijkstra 2022; Downie 2022). In addition to these debates, we also use the latter argument to explain how intrinsic features interact with specific problem structures in the three examined policy fields, thereby shaping IO subpopulations.

IOs are often differentiated by their institutional setup such as membership rules (open versus closed), thematic scope (generalist versus task-specific), degree of authority (hard versus soft governance), degree of autonomy (independent from versus controlled by member states), and geographical reach (global versus regional) (Koremenos et al. 2001; Barnett & Finnemore 2004; Hawkins & Jacoby 2006; Hooghe et al. 2019). While these different and widely applied categories for distinguishing between IOs are helpful for characterizing the general population of IOs, we argue that the picture of IOs becomes more diverse once we differentiate them by policy fields. In doing so, we are able to include the idiosyncrasies of individual policy fields into the explanatory model of IO population development. Furthermore, while others argue that regionalism and generalism of IOs are closely entwined (Hooghe et al. 2019), we show that this does not necessarily hold true for the IO subpopulations once we control for policy fields. Hence, it is important to distinguish IOs geographically, because this does not only tell us about how multilateral cooperation is organized in different regions but also allows us to extrapolate the findings to the general state of the LIO.

In this article, we examine the subpopulations of IOs in three distinct policy fields – climate, education, and health - from a comparative perspective. Our basic assumption is that the idiosyncrasies and constituting features of a policy field are responsible for the development of (different types of) IOs in that very policy field. The most distinctive feature of a policy field is its underlying problem structure, that is, the degree to which the interpretation of the core policy problems in these fields depends on the social and spatial contexts they reside in. In other words, context dependency determines agency and high context dependency comes with highly limited agency.

In order to cover the maximum variance on the dimension of problem structure, we applied a diverse case selection technique (Seawright & Gerring 2008) and selected three policy fields for analysis: climate, education, and health policy (see Table 3). In climate policy, the underlying problem is context-independent and fixed. Global warming is a

scientific fact and the man-made causes for this development are factual knowledge. Therefore, in climate policy, there is little room for sound reinterpretations of the problem. At the other pole of the (problem structure) continuum is education. Educational problems are highly context-dependent and open to interpretation. What is considered good education or good educational outcomes is open for definition and political agency. Health policy falls in the middle of the context dependency spectrum of policy fields' problem structure and resembles a median case. The core foundations are determined and not open to redefinition – e.g. the Corona virus is transmitted by aerosols. However, others dimensions of health topics are more context-dependent – e.g. how best to prevent transmissions of the Corona virus.

	Policy Field		
	Climate	**Health**	**Education**
Problem Structure	*Context-independent & limited agency*	*Core foundations context-independent & average agency*	*Context-dependent & high agency*

Source: own account

Table 3 – Problem structures in three policy fields

Taken together, with our case selection, we covered the whole range of policy fields' problem structures characteristics in world politics. These three fields reflect the overall prevalent value frame and the prioritized topics for multilateral cooperation as they are firmly anchored in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)[8]. However and within this frame, these fields represent each of the central dimensions of the SDGs, namely, reduction of disparities of living standards (health), the creation of equal opportunities (education) as well as sustainable management of natural resources (climate).

Using the Correlates of War (COW)[9] dataset and the Yearbook of International Organizations (YBIO)[10], we selected the IOs which declare themselves as being active in each of the three selected policy fields. By IOs, we refer to institutions which are set up by at least three states and have a permanent structure. With the notion of 'IO population', we refer to theoretical accounts originating from the life sciences that have been adapted by International Relations scholars (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni 2020; Debre & Dijkstra 2021; Niemann et al. 2021). A population is defined as the totality of all individuals of the same

[8] https://sdgs.un.org/
[9] https://correlatesofwar.org/
[10] https://uia.org/yearbook

species – IOs in our approach – that occur in a specified area, or policy field. Therefore, we refer to the totality of IOs in each of the three fields as subpopulations.

Subsequently, we develop and present our argument about analyzes of IO subpopulations divided by policy fields. First, we lay out our theoretical approach using organizational ecology. We expand current approaches by adding that the specific problem structure of policy fields needs to be considered for an adequate assessment of IO subpopulations. We then describe our methodology of how we examine every IO in the established data sets regarding its activity in one of our three selected policy fields. In the third and empirical part, we start by providing a general analysis of the population of IOs before differentiating IO subpopulations according to the policy fields of climate, education, and health. We compare the density and diversity of IO subpopulations over time regarding their geographic distribution and thematic scope. Next, we continue to explain how characteristics of the respective policy fields have shaped different developments over time. In the concluding section, we reflect on how our approach and our findings on IO subpopulations relate to current discussions about the substance and constitution of the LIO.

8.2 A Theoretical Approach to Populations of IOs in Policy Fields

Organizational ecology, as pioneered by Hannan, Freeman, and Carroll in the social sciences (Hannan & Freeman 1989; Hannan & Carroll 1992) and recently applied to global governance by Abbott, Keohane, and Green (Abbott et al. 2016), allows for an analysis of both the organizational environment in which IOs operate as well as the intrinsic features of the specific organizational form that IOs represent. The theoretical approach, hence, focuses on isolating variables for population growth, stagnation, or demise. On the one hand, organizational ecology provides the appropriate terminology for describing a given population of organizations. On the other hand, it also offers an explanation for the trajectories of individual subpopulations.

First, the organizational environment is characterized by its *density*, meaning the number of resources available in the field divided by the number of organizations competing for them. The term ‘resources’ is used rather broadly in this context and may refer to social, political, or material resources alike. Organizational ecology predicts that populations of organizations experience growth when the organizational density in the given policy field is low. If only a few organizations compete for a large volume of available resources, newcomers are more likely to move into the field to try to gain access to these resources.

Another dimension of the organizational environment is its degree of *diversity*. Here, the focus is on how (potentially) diverse a policy field is at a given point in time to host many different IOs simultaneously (Niemann et al. 2021). IOs can occupy different niches if the degree of diversity is high. This also means that in a field with high density, additional IOs can populate the field if the diversity is similarly high and IOs can occupy a particular niche.

The diversity of a field can, for example, be influenced institutionally and discursively by broadening the scope of a certain policy field. It is, thus, important to note that both density and diversity are not fixed but open for change and adaptation. For instance, external shocks and events in world politics, such as the end of the Cold War, can affect the density of an organizational environment by enabling states to spend more resources on IOs (or prevent them from doing so). Not only do singular events in a confined period influence the organizational environment for IOs, but general global trends also shape opportunities for IOs. Colonialism and de-colonization substantially influenced how international relations were organized and, in turn, determined the available resources and niches for IOs. Hence, and according to organizational ecology, variation in density (also regarding resource allocation) and the degree of diversity (regarding establishing potential new niches) can contribute to an explanation of an IO subpopulation's change.

The second element of the organizational ecology approach is the dimension of intrinsic features. They refer to how the institutional design of an IO shapes its behavior and determines the extent in which it can autonomously operate in an organizational field (Abbott et al. 2016; Niemann et al. 2021). In other words, the 'birth characteristics' of IOs shape how they mature. In this regard, IOs are often differentiated by the thematic scopes they embody – specialists vs. generalists. Generalist IOs are characterized by a broader policy portfolio and focus on the provision of public goods for a relatively homogenous political community in a setting with incomplete contracts (Hooghe et al. 2019). Hence, generalist IOs are more likely to expand their policy portfolio to other policy fields. In contrast, task-specific or specialized IOs that feature a limited policy portfolio are based on complete contracts for a heterogeneously structured membership. In this case, expansion is not necessarily expected due to clearly defined tasks and divergent preferences of its members.

In addition, IOs have various geographic boundaries in which they operate, or which are defined by their member states, meaning that they can be separated into regional and global IOs (Karns et al. 2015). With regard to regional IOs, we find similarly structured

IOs in different regions of the world which aim at fostering (economic) integration (EU, ASEAN, African Union, Mercosur). However, there is also a variety of transregional organizations, which link states from different parts of the world due to a common (colonial or cultural) history (e.g. Commonwealth of Nations, Organisation internationale de la Francophonie), religious alignment (e.g. Organisation of Islamic Cooperation), or on other grounds (Niemann & Martens 2021). Thus, intrinsic features influence how organizations can reinvent their original missions and how flexible they are to adapt to new challenges (Koremenos et al. 2001). A basic assumption is that the 'early years of an organization significantly affect its further development' (Boin et al. 2010: 386). Organizational ecology predicts that the intrinsic features of IOs imply a state preference for the expansion of existing IOs into new policy fields over the creation of new IOs, as IO creation is inherently very costly and requires significant commitment.

While organizational ecology has recently been used to analyze the trajectory of IO development as a whole, we explore specific IO subpopulations. Policy fields have varying degrees of context dependency in regard to their problem structure. For example, if an IO's main mission is to support its member states in achieving 'better education', this can mean different things in distinctive geographical or socio-cultural contexts. Conversely, there are also policy goals which have relatively universal meanings, like combating climate change. Regional and transregional IOs find their organizational niches more easily in policy fields in which context matters a great deal, such as education. They are uniquely situated (both literally and metaphorically) to deal with policy issues in a way that is both more likely to be effective and more likely to be accepted and supported by the citizens in their home regions.

Combined with the different organizational densities and different degrees of diversity, idiosyncratic developments in the three IO subpopulations can be assessed. Against the backdrop of our theoretical framework, we expect that the IO subpopulation developments in the three policy fields follow distinct trajectories. While the organizational environment influences how many IOs a policy field can sustain, intrinsic features address the capacities of IOs to react to external or internal momenta. The effects of both variables are moderated by the problem structure of the policy field. It has been shown that different problem structures can account for different degrees of influence of otherwise similar IOs (Bauer 2006; Biermann & Siebenhüner 2009a). This also means that issue areas with a high problem saliency and higher problem pressure offer better opportunities for IOs to be extended to these areas. We argue that the different

characteristics of the policy field yield explanatory power when exploring developments in the subpopulations of IOs in different areas. In sum, we assume that the proportion of general and specialized IOs and the proportion of global, regional, or transregional IOs is not only shaped by the organizational environmental and intrinsic features but also by the problem structure of the policy field in which an IO is active.

Climate policy is a comparatively young field, in which IOs have become some of the most influential actors (Bauer 2006; Zillman 2009). While the issue of climate change was first introduced to the international stage as part of environmental policy during the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (UNCHE) in 1972, it was not until 1979 that IOs began to engage with it. From then on, a number of intergovernmental conferences provided an impetus for states to participate in institutionalized coordination to combat climate change and international climate governance has grown into what is often called 'fragmented governance' (Zelli & van Asselt 2013). Research on IOs in climate policy has largely failed to acknowledge their diversity. While globally active IOs in climate governance, like the World Bank or the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), have been reviewed in depth (Keohane & Victor 2011; Gough 2013), there is little evidence for the developments and trajectories of IOs operating at a regional level. Climate change is a largely context-independent policy problem. Although there may be a lot of variation among the measures and focus that different actors deem to be adequate to combat climate change, there is a basic scientific consensus about the causes and effects of climate change. Therefore, we expect more global IOs to be relevant in climate governance, as the nature of climate change favors global policy solutions that are independent of socio-cultural context. Since climate policy affects multiple other areas and the field has been discursively broadened over time by establishing multiple niches (climate change as economic risk, as a driver for migration, etc.), general and specialized IOs with non-climate background are expected to successively enter the subpopulation.

Education has traditionally been considered a national policy field. While international exchange in education was almost always relevant, efforts for multilateral coordination in the field were sparse. The internationalization of education policy eventually took off in the 1990s, making it a latecomer compared to other social policy fields (Mundy 2007). The establishment of multiple international projects and initiatives turned the national domain of education into an internationalized area, like the PISA study or the European Bologna Process. Internationalized education policy became more relevant because it

addressed issues of human capital production for economic development. This paradigmatic shift was also driven by IOs, like the World Bank (Mundy & Verger 2015) and the OECD (Sellar & Lingard 2013; Niemann 2022). Accordingly, the problem structure in (international) education policy can be assessed as rather context dependent. How education is framed is contingent on specific interpretations, and these interpretations are open to involving cultural and regional idiosyncrasies. Thus, we expect more regional and specialist IOs to be more active in education in comparison to global and generalist IOs.

As a policy field of international concern, health has a long history. Early on, due to diseases crossing borders, international initiatives were launched to tackle common problems. For example, in response to cholera epidemics in the 1830s and 1840s, the first International Sanitary Conference was convened in Paris in 1851 and in 1902 the International Sanitary Bureau, which later became the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), was founded. Both institutions established mechanisms for international cooperation for disease control (McCarthy 2002). Due to various international diseases spreading across the globe (Spanish flue, HIV, SARS, and lately COVID-19), the field of global health IOs has attracted wide recognition as a topic of research in academia, primarily its main actors the WHO and the World Bank (Kaasch 2015; Pantzerhielm et al. 2020). In regard to the problem structure, the policy field of health takes a medium position compared to climate and education. It can be assumed that core foundations in health are predetermined across national health policy and in international health policy, such as the basic delivery of care, medical benefits, and treatment. However, the extent of these can be highly context-specific. Therefore, we expect a balanced amount of regional/transregional versus global and generalist versus specialist IOs active in this field.

8.3 A Methodological Approach to Dissecting IO Properties

The analysis presented here relies on an exploratory mixed-method approach that combines descriptive statistics and qualitative content analysis (Bowen 2009). The IOs examined in this paper are drawn from two sources: the Brill *Yearbook of International Organizations* and the *Correlates of War* dataset. Three criteria are then applied to these organizations to assign IOs into subpopulations. First, the organization has to be an international organization that fits the definition of having ‘representatives from three or more states supporting a permanent secretariat to perform ongoing tasks related to a

common purpose' (Barnett & Finnemore 2004: 117). Such a definition excludes NGOs, international regimes, or hybrid forms like the G20. Second, it has to be currently active. Discontinued organizations are not considered because their dissolution often involves the loss of crucial data, which may skew results. Third, education, climate, or health *policy* must be part of its programmatic mission or indicated as a distinct area of work by the organization. Some organizations are focused on providing e.g. health care, training, or merely scientific exchange on climate data, rather than designing policy. Insofar as they contribute to the realization of policies, they are still included in the sample.

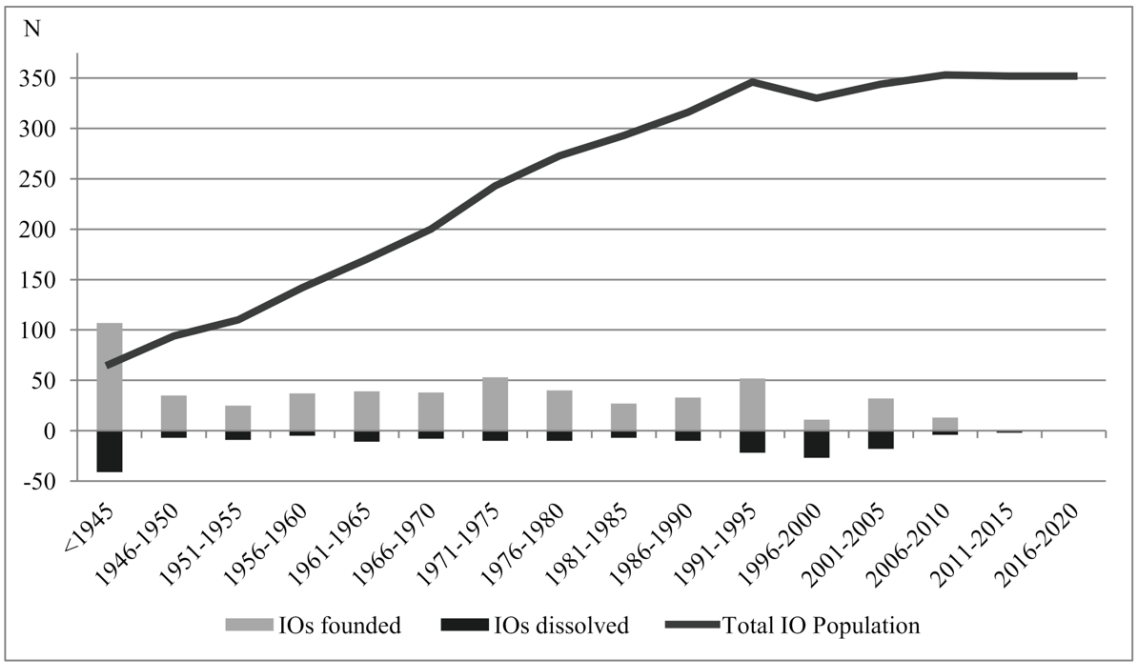
The criteria are applied based on a manual review of available strategic publications and documentation from the archives of the IOs as well as their online presence. After applying these criteria to all organizations in the YBIO, the resulting sample has been cross-checked with the CoW database to identify potentially missing IOs. Using descriptive statistics, this paper first explores the development of subpopulations over time in order to identify and compare the main trajectories within the fields. It is important to note that IOs can be members of more than one subpopulation. For instance, seven of all eighty IOs in our data set are simultaneously part of the subpopulations in all three policy fields. After mapping the developments, we provide an explanation for the determined trajectories.

8.4 Mapping the IO Population

The variety of IOs we find in today's world is not a recent phenomenon. IOs have existed for around two centuries and had very specific tasks, goals, and missions. Some of them still exist, while others have ceased: even before 1945, 107 IOs were founded (Figure 5) and more than one third of them (forty-one) dissolved within the same period. Most IOs, however, have been created after the Second World War, when multilateral cooperation flourished and became increasingly institutionalized. One of the oldest active IOs, the ILO, was founded in 1919 to specifically address issues of labor rights and decent working conditions. The ill-fated League of Nations, on the other hand, was more generalist, though its main focus was on preventing military conflict. Consequently, different types of IOs have emerged, displaying a wide range of intrinsic features. For instance, a generalist IO with a global focus is quite different from an IO that deals with environmental policy in the Baltic Region.

After 1945, international cooperation through IOs experienced a boom over several decades; however, recent developments question whether IOs are still relevant and

whether the LIO shifted away from coordinated multilateralism (Lake et al. 2021). Since 1945, there has been rapid growth of the IO population across the international community resulting in a saturation of IOs since the mid-1990 (Hasenclever & Mayer 2007; Börzel & Zürn 2021). However, in contrast to Börzel and Zürn (2021), we cannot confirm the 'explosion' in IO numbers after the end of the Cold War – in fact, IO numbers slightly declined in the period between 1991-1995. A possible explanation for the variation may be due to the inclusion of IO 'death rates', where we assess the net growth of the entire IO population.



Source: own account, based on YBIO and CoW

Figure 5 – Development of the IO population after 1945

Instead, the IO population grew steadily between 1945 and the early-1990s by a factor of 1.2-1.5 every ten years. Since the mid-1990s, the number of IOs remains constant at around 350 IOs (Figure 5). As the quantitative expansion of the LIO has come to a standstill, new IOs have rarely been founded (or existing ones have been dissolved) after the turn of the millennium.[11] Since 2006, only fourteen new IOs were founded and six were dissolved. In comparison, between 1996 and 2005, forty-three IOs were founded and forty-five were disbanded (Figure 5). Therefore, for the overall population of IOs we

[11] The number of IOs is just one indicator for assessing the state of multilateral cooperation. It has to be noted that the autonomy and authority of IOs could expand or contract irrespective of whether new IOs are founded or existing ones are terminated.

find constant growth and standstill (since the mid-1990s). In the following sections, we examine whether different trajectories of this general development can be distinguished between policy fields.

8.4.1 Density and Diversity of IO Subpopulations in Climate, Health, and Education

In all three policy fields of climate, education, and health, the relative number of IOs steadily increased over time. When comparing the growth rates of IO subpopulations in health, education, and climate over time, it becomes evident that in all three fields IOs were relative latecomers compared to the general population of IOs, meaning that the diversity in these fields was low for a long time in comparison to the overall IO population. While twenty percent of the entire IO population (that exists today) had already been founded by 1945, the number of prospective IOs active in our three fields of analysis was much lower – in health five percent, in education seven percent, and in climate policy zero percent of today's IOs existed already in 1945. While the IO population reached its numerical peak in the period of 1991-1995, the IO subpopulations in the three analyzed policy fields instead plateaued only recently in the period 2006-2010 (Figure 6).

Comparing the three fields, the highest growth rate over the shortest period of time was visible in the subpopulation of climate IOs. This is not surprising, as the field formed only in the early 1970s and gained momentum afterwards. Education and health IO subpopulations, on the other hand, show similar growth rates. However, in contrast to both the population of all IOs and the subpopulation in climate policy, they started later and grew until the mid-2000s. The education IO subpopulation formed earlier than health, but the subpopulation of health IOs consistently caught up since the mid-1990s (Figure 6). Surprisingly, the total number of IOs in the three policy fields is quite similar as of the latest period of 2016-2020 with forty-one IOs in health, thirty in education, and forty-three in climate policy. This indicates that at a certain point a field becomes saturated by the number of active IOs and all available niches are being occupied. Even when more resources were available, like in the recent period of climate policy, it did not lead to a surge of new IOs.[12] This finding underscores that diversity is not just a function of density.

[12] External shocks, like the global financial crisis of 2008/2009, might have contributed to a slower growth rate of climate IOs. However, since after the crisis was over, almost no additional IOs were founded, confirming the point of saturation in 2006-2010.

If density causes more diversity, IO growth rates should have continued, particularly in the field of climate policy where encompassing resources were made available during the last decade. The observed saturation indicates that no additional niches were created that would have allowed new IOs to populate them.

Moreover, a large share of IOs expanded their activities to health policy, which was not part of their initial mission only after they were active for some time in other areas (as indicated by lines in Figure 6). When comparing IOs that address health policy at a certain point in time with IOs that already exist and will eventually become health IOs in a later period, we can see that there is a substantial gap between both groups (bars vs. line) (Figure 6). To a lesser degree, this kind of expansion can also be seen in the case of education between 1951 and 1990. In the case of climate IOs, this gap is instead substantial due to the field only emerging in the early 1970s. However, the wide gap abruptly closed in the period 2001-2005 and the period 2006-2010 (Figure 6). This can be explained by the skyrocketing concern over climate change issues, provided resources, and the prominence the topic gained worldwide.

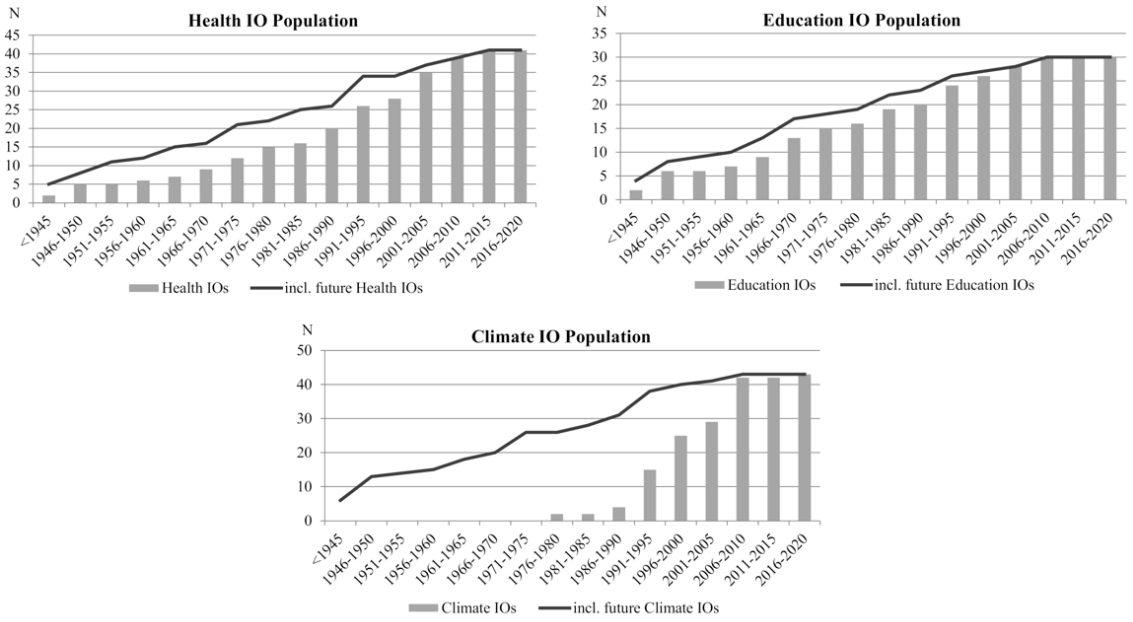


Figure 6 – Developments of three subpopulations

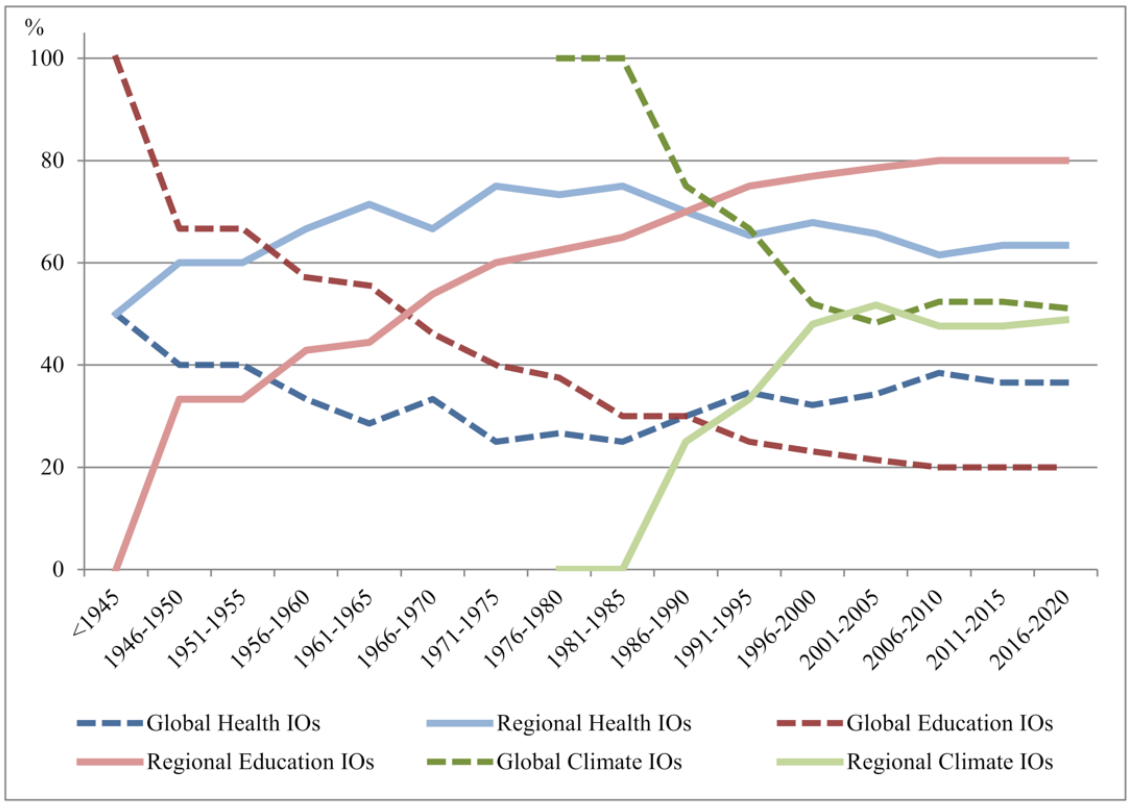
8.4.2 Geographical Reach and Thematic Scope of IOs in Climate, Education and Health

With regards to the geographical distribution within the IO subpopulations, we observe that in all three fields, the group of regional IOs is substantial and their numbers have grown in absolute and in relative terms since 1945. Today, regional IOs constitute a majority of the subpopulation in education (with sixty-five percent of the subpopulation) and health (with fifty-four percent of the IO subpopulation), while representing a (albeit significant) minority (about forty percent) in climate policy (Figure 7).

However, some divergent developments regarding the regionalization in IO subpopulations can be identified. In education, the tendency towards regionalization is straightforward. Starting with a share of seventeen percent in the timespan of 1946-1950, the percentage of regional IOs in the subpopulation of education IOs increased to sixty-seven percent in the periods after 2005 (Figure 7). At the same time, the absolute number of global education IOs remained largely the same, as there was only a slight increase of global education IOs between the mid-1950s and mid-1960s. In addition, just a few transregional IOs expanded into the subpopulation of education IOs since the early 1970s. As expected in our theoretical approach, regionalization in education seemed to be generally preferred over further globalization through IOs. Since the late-1960s, we observe that regional (and transregional) IOs became the largest geographical type within the subpopulation of education IOs. After global IOs had populated the field within approximately twenty years, regional (and transregional) IOs found their respective niches in education over a period of forty years.

In health, the share of regional IOs reached its peak between 1981 and 1985, when almost seventy percent of the health IO subpopulation were regional organizations (Figure 7). Afterwards, some global (and few transregional) IOs were founded or became active in health policy – accordingly, the relative number of regional IOs decreased. Global health IOs especially gained some further prominence in the decades after the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s. Taking into account the gap between already existing IOs and their involvement with health issues, it can be argued that it was mainly global IOs which expanded their thematic scope to health policy since the late 1980s and early 1990s. In climate policy, the trend of regionalization took off in the early-1990s and continued throughout the nineties. Since the mid-1990s, the absolute growth rates of global and regional climate IOs were almost parallel. In relative terms, at the origin of the climate IO subpopulation, global IOs clearly dominated. However, since the late-1990s, regional

IOs gained considerable momentum within the climate IO subpopulation and are almost at par with global IOs as of today, while the group of transregional IOs only plays a minor role in this policy field.



Source: own account, based on YBIO and CoW, for better readability, the categories regional and transregional are combined as Regional […] IOs

Figure 7 – Geographic distribution of IO subpopulations

Differentiating the three IO subpopulations according to the thematic scope of the involved IOs, additional patterns related to the specific policy field in which they are active can be identified (Figure 8). For example, in the health IO subpopulation, the proportion between general and special IOs has stayed almost the same since the mid-1950s, which means that the number of IOs that have a general focus and IOs that have a special focus on health changed at the same ratio. Around twenty-five to thirty percent of all IOs active in health have been general IOs, while seventy to seventy-five percent of IOs which work in health issues are specialized in this field. Furthermore, the number of global and regional IOs active in health increased to similar extents. In education, the share of generalist IOs relatively increased over time compared to specialized IOs. General IOs saw a greater growth rate in the subpopulation than specialized IOs. In the

1950s, over eighty percent of the IOs in the subpopulation were specialized in a particular policy field (e.g., education or economics) and less than twenty percent were general IOs, like the EU, ASEAN, etc. that cover a broad variety of policy issues. In the period after 1985, the share of generalists rose to almost forty percent and, accordingly, specialist IOs dropped to sixty percent. Furthermore, the continuous expansion of IOs with a generalist focus that expanded their activities to education topics correlates with the increasing regionalization in the subpopulation of education IOs. Regional education IOs are mostly generalists and have multiple areas of expertise, while some have primarily an economic focus, like the regional development banks (ADB, AfDB, IADB). The IO subpopulation in climate policy experienced a similar development. Since the mid-1980s, general IOs entered the policy field (with approximately thirty percent generalists after 2006) and grew more than specialized IOs. However, this growth ratio evened out in the early 2000s and both groups subsequently developed almost identically. Less than thirty percent of IOs active in climate governance today are generalists, while most of the subpopulation is constituted by a variety of specialists from different fields, such as energy policy, social policy, or economic policy.

When comparing the IOs in each subpopulation that were originally specialized on health, education, or climate change, we observe that the proportion of original health IOs is the highest (between forty-three percent and thirty-one percent) throughout the analyzed time period from 1946 to 2020, followed by specialized education IOs (thirty-three percent to twenty-one percent). The relatively low number of specialized IOs in climate policy, ranging only between seven to twenty percent, is an outlier because the issue area only formed in the mid-1970s, while climate issues were almost exclusively covered by environmental IOs in the early days of the field.[13]

[13] To illustrate this, the graph on climate IOs in Figure 8 also includes environmental IOs.

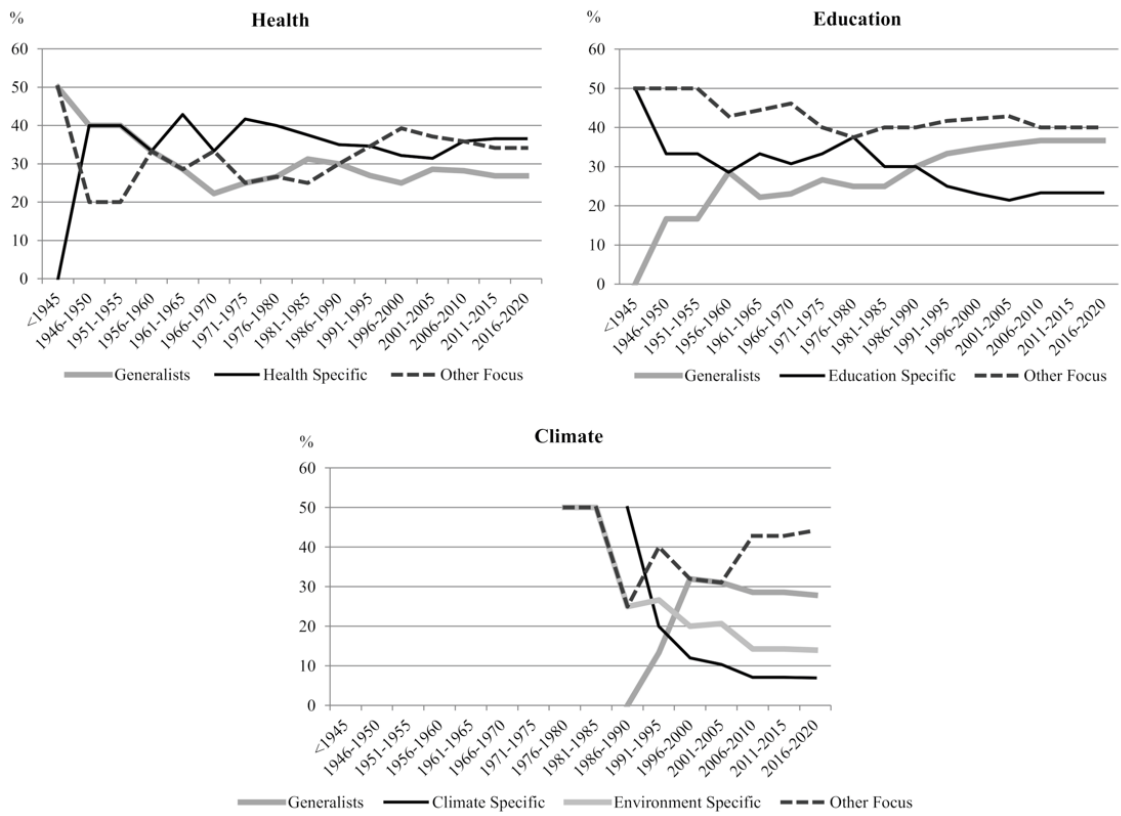


Figure 8 – Thematic scope within three subpopulations

8.5 The Impact of Policy Fields' Characteristics

Growing international interdependencies and intensified global exchange processes change the structure of any given policy field. This phenomenon has influenced IOs in health and education, allowing for expansion of these subpopulations. As health and education policy became more diverse and internationally relevant, additional resources became accessible and existing IOs expanded their thematic scope to these policy fields. For example, the OECD, which is one of the leading education IOs today, expanded its activities to education when the economic relevance of educational outcomes became increasingly prevalent for economic performance (Martens & Jakobi 2010). With an ever growing interest in education, the degree of diversity in the organizational field of education grew, and the prospect of resources incentivized existing IOs to aim for occupying a niche in the subpopulation. The rapid growth of the IO subpopulation in climate policy after 1990 can be attributed to similar mechanisms. IOs could rely on vast political, social, and material resources and, thus, were able to include climate governance into their portfolios. In terms of political resources, a number of influential

intergovernmental conferences legitimized coordinated intergovernmental action through IOs as an effective way to combat climate change (Haas 2016). The ideational complex of sustainable development also provided a multitude of potential avenues for newcomers, which meant that a number of new IOs were able to find their respective niches in the field.

At the same time, the trajectories of regional and transregional IOs are notably different across the fields. The findings indicate that since the early 1990s, regional and transregional IOs have increasingly been more prevalent in education policy than in health policy, with climate policy displaying even less regionalization over time, at least measured in the relative share of regional IOs in the subpopulation. Taking into account the different problem structures in these policy fields helps to explain the variation in regionalization processes. Different socio-cultural and/or geographical contexts require different education policies (Windzio & Martens 2022b). Regional and transregional IOs often aim to provide more context-tailored approaches to education (see paper 2 and 3) because they are well connected within their home regions and are able to assess which policies are both pragmatic as well as legitimate in these contexts. Although global IOs sometimes have established regional divisions, these offices are associated with their parent organization and still adhere to their general program. Thus, regional IOs have intrinsic features that allow them to better engage with problem structures like education. While both generalists and specialists IOs have been successful in all three subpopulations, IOs which were founded with an explicit mandate in health policy have been more prevalent as a share of their respective subpopulation over time than originary IOs in education and climate policy. The problem structure of health policy offers two complementary explanations for this development. First, health policy's aims are often normative and functional ends in themselves, rather than means to another end. A healthy society is, first and foremost, a normative goal which IOs contribute to achieving. On the other hand, education policy and climate policy, while also representing normative ends in themselves, are highly relevant to the achievement of policy goals that lie outside their realms, such as economic policy or energy policy. More recently, the COVID-19 pandemic constitutes a global health problem that severely affects the economy. Consequently, both are more attractive to generalists and specialists originating from other fields which may also lead to more institutional overlap. At the same time, the degree of specialization among originary health IOs is habitually higher than that of their equivalents in climate and education policy. Health IOs may, for instance, be founded to

combat a specific epidemic, like UNAIDS. This high degree of specialization does not have a comparable counterpart in the other two subpopulations.

8.6 Conclusion

While studies applying organizational ecology have focused on the entire IO population or on the largest and most prominent IOs, we have explored IO subpopulations by analyzing the IO composition across different policy fields. This more nuanced analysis in several fields contributes to a better understanding of how differences and similarities between IOs working in different policy fields emerged.

Contrary to earlier approaches to organizational ecology, we argue that IOs are often sufficiently different from each other for their characteristics to constitute distinct intrinsic features. For example, the intrinsic features of a regional IO may differ greatly from those of a globally active IO, and this difference has explanatory power for their respective shares within the population of IOs in a given field. Similarly, highly specialized IOs can exhibit unique features, which separate them from generalist IOs.

At the same time, policies carried out in some fields can affect multiple states to some degree, thereby creating a complex web of entangled interests and institutional factors which co-constitute the organizational environment in which they operate. This means that even the most specialized IOs do not always operate within the strict boundaries of their mandate in a given field. Accordingly, specialists and generalists among IOs likewise expand their activities into new fields, which they deem relevant to their original mission in light of this entanglement.

Another finding is that the relevance of regional and transregional IOs in a given policy field depends on the nature of the problem(s) said field is concerned with solving. Regional IOs, in particular, can position themselves as legitimate and significant actors more easily in fields in which successful policy relies on a shared understanding of issues that may be subject to varying interpretations, such as education. Transregional IOs often focus on one specific theme (such as language or religious education) that is shared between member states across the globe.

We therefore support the argument that multiple liberal international orders may exist in parallel (Lake et al. 2021). Our data for all three examined policy fields display a significant share of regional IOs. How these organizations are connected to the LIO or whether they form regional or otherwise structured sub-orders cannot be answered within the limits of this article but warrants further exploration. Overall, our findings show that

recent contestations of the LIO have not been reflected in the trajectories of different IO subpopulations. If the LIO is in decline, this demise does not (yet) show in terms of raw numbers.

However, the data presented here cannot separate the *de jure* existence of IOs from their *de facto* activities. The way IOs operate in international relations may have undergone changes. It has been pointed out that IOs have become orchestrators of multilateral cooperation (Abbott et al. 2015). Hence, a different role for IOs emerged. IOs may lose relevancy and influence in international politics, even if their numbers stay consistent. We further suggest that the concept of multiple liberal orders offers a promising avenue for future research. Comparing different policy fields, we find variance in the IO subpopulations both in terms of regionalization as well as in the thematic scopes of the IOs within. More research is needed to examine whether this variance is sufficient to constitute distinct liberal sub-orders.

9. International Organizations and Education in the Islamic World

9.1 Introduction

As education policy evolves into an increasingly internationalized field, the impact of international organizations (IOs) on national education policies is becoming more and more relevant. While research has been concerned with some of the more influential organizations in education policy, such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), other IOs have largely flown under the radar. There are a number of education IOs of predominantly Muslim member states that have not been reviewed systematically in almost 40 years of their existence. This chapter maps the existing education organizations in the Muslim world. The analysis presented here revolves around two main questions. First, which organizations consisting of predominantly Muslim member states are active in the field of international education policy, and how, if at all, do they cooperate? Second, which education leitmotifs and ideas do these organizations promote, what kind of discourse do they construct around education policy, and are aspects of it crucial for a particular 'cultural sphere' as defined by Windzio and Martens (2022a)?

In answering these questions, this chapter also provides insights into existing discourses within a particular 'cultural sphere' proliferated by international organizations and how they are constructed as alternatives to or even contradictions against globally dominant discourses of education policy. It does so by focusing on the content of these discourses, rather than the mechanisms and power structures along which they are constructed. Using qualitative content analysis, this chapter explores the themes and ideas underlying the various activities of Muslim education IOs. For this purpose, the most relevant among Muslim education IOs are the Islamic World Education, Science and Culture Organization (ICESCO, formerly known as Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO)), a branch of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the Arab League Cultural, Educational and Scientific Organization (ALECSO) and the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States (ABEGS).

These three organizations are largely comprised of states with predominantly Muslim citizens and make frequent references to Islam in both their official statements and their publications. They also occasionally cooperate with each other, and there is a significant overlap in their membership. More precisely, all member states of the ABEGS are also members of the ALECSO, all of which are in turn members of ICESCO. In this chapter,

I therefore refer to them as Muslim or Islamic education IOs, borrowing from Wayne Nelles' term "Islamic multilateral institutions" (Nelles 2006). Special attention will be given to the ICESCO since it is the largest Muslim education IO. As such, it enjoys a unique status, not least because it explicitly promotes the religious dimension of education. The frequent references to religion, which informs both ICESCO's goals and the means it chooses to achieve them, separate the organization from its more universally oriented counterparts. Whereas organizations like the UN agencies are secular by nature, ICESCO is distinctly non-secular.

Following a few remarks about the existing literature on Muslim international organizations in the next section, this chapter will first briefly introduce leitmotifs and ideas in education policy. It will then examine data generated from publications produced by the ICESCO, the ALECSO, and the ABEGS, presenting recurring themes found in these documents. The analysis will assess the proclaimed goals of the organizations for education policy, as well as their means of choice to achieve them, both of which are assumed to be informed by underlying ideas on how education should be conceptualized. After giving some space to the discussion of the results, the chapter concludes with a brief outlook on the challenges for further research in this field.

The analysis finds that Muslim education IOs participate in a distinct discourse which revolves around the synthesis of traditional values drawn from Islamic philosophy and the demands of a modern global labor market. Furthermore, it calls into question the effectiveness of said organizations in resolving the assumed conflict between traditional Muslim education and a "Westernized" world, as Muslim education IOs face shortages in budget and staff.

9.2 Contextualizing Education Leitmotifs in Muslim IOs

A large part of the motivation for this chapter stems from the fact that we know almost nothing about Muslim education IOs, despite them being around for more than four decades. Literature on these organizations is exceptionally limited, adding some weight to Wayne Nelles' claim that "the international community as a whole has not well analyzed, engaged with, or understood Islamic multilateral institutions" (Nelles 2006: 123).

Nevertheless, three basic points have been made by scholars in regard to the organizations examined here. Firstly, being one of the few scholars to have published on Islamic IOs, Nelles notes that most of them share a "profound concern" in regard to their cultural

identity, namely that Western culture, as well as globalization, puts serious pressure on many Islamic countries wanting to preserve their cultural and spiritual roots (Nelles 2006), something that many Westerners have "never come to terms with" (Nelles 2006: 122). Currie-Alder (2018) argues that strengthening the common cultural identity among Muslim countries has been one of the key motivations behind the foundation of various multilateral organizations in the Muslim world. Baghdady discusses the fundamental conflicts between the values proliferated by Western models of education and what he calls "Arab and Islamic cultures" (Baghdady 2019), arguing that some Muslim-majority states have been resistant to accept foreign cultural norms and objectives in education. Secondly, connected to this conflict, spiritual development or self-refinement seems to be a much more important educational objective for many Muslim countries, especially in the Arab world, than for many Western countries, when compared for example with individual prosperity or economic growth (Findlow 2008). This is not to say that economic growth, skilled human capital, and other economic objectives of education policy are irrelevant for the organizations covered here. Rather, previous comparative work on national education policy in the Gulf region suggests strategical and situational "re-drawing of structures, priorities, collectivities and paradigms" as the main feature of education policy (Findlow & Hayes 2015: 125). Some nations, at least in the Gulf region, tend to use international input in education strategically to reach their economic goals (Hayes & Al'Abri 2018). Finally, Muslim education IOs do not enjoy the same level of trust as, say, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) or the OECD. For example, Kayaoglu finds that the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and, by proxy, ICESCO, is often viewed as "inefficient, weak, and useless, and thus a disservice to Muslims" (Kayaoglu 2015: 3).

These points, while scarce, set a few expectations for the analysis. It is especially interesting that the findings provided in this chapter fit well with the arguments made by Nelles and Findlow. Moreover, my findings are in line with the idea that discourses on education policy comprise aspects related to the reproduction of culture within the respective 'cultural sphere': It seems that, indeed, cultural identity and spiritual refinement rank a lot higher on the Muslim education IOs' agenda than in other regional organizations.

A large part of the following analysis is concerned with leitmotifs in education policy. Therefore, it is necessary to elaborate on what a leitmotif is, which type of leitmotifs we find in education policy, and why they matter. A leitmotif is, defined in the simplest way,

a dominant recurring theme in a given medium. Leitmotifs are constituted by a set of different ideas about education policy. I rely on Goldstein's and Keohane's definition, according to which an idea is simply a "belief held by individuals" (Goldstein & Keohane 1993: 3). For my purpose, this definition will be expanded to include not only beliefs held by individuals but also those held by IOs. Leitmotifs and ideas inform and guide education policy. They provide the framework for more specific goals which the Muslim education IOs might propose. How IOs frame education when they participate in discourse on specific education policy tells us how they think about education in general, which in turn informs their aims. This is important because for most education IOs, education is not a goal in itself but a means to an end (Martens & Niemann 2013). For example, an IO might pursue better learning outcomes to increase people's ability to participate in society, or to enhance their competitiveness in the labor market. This chapter differentiates between economic utilitarianism as well as social cohesion on an individual and collective level as the four main categories or leitmotifs under which education ideas can be subsumed. For the analysis of ICESCO, and to a lesser extent, ABEGS and ALECSO, a certain distinction or uniqueness can be expected in their education ideas. This is because the primary connection among ICESCOs member states is religious orientation, implying that both the social and the economic purposes of education policy may be adapted or expanded to include cultural-religious ideas.

Much of what is presented below depends on qualitative content analysis of documents published by the examined organizations. Qualitative content analysis is the process of deducing meaning from the analysis of documented conversation of any kind (Schreier 2014). Three main criteria have been applied when selecting the documents, namely relevance, availability, and time of publication. For my purpose, the most relevant documents are those that have a strategic component, i.e. that set a more general vision on what the organization's education policy aims to achieve. This is because generally these documents clearly state their perceived purpose of education, rendering the analysis straightforward. Examples for relevant documents include strategic plans for the future, handbooks on education policy, or the charters of the IOs. Unfortunately, availability of documents is a huge concern when dealing with smaller IOs like the three cases presented here. Especially in the cases of ABEGS and ALECSO, the number of documents publicly available in English is limited. Therefore, any document excluded from the analysis has an immediate trade-off resulting in a smaller (and possibly insufficient) data base. This means that one cannot apply criteria for relevant documents too rigorously when dealing

with these organizations. In total, 26 publications have been examined for this chapter. The documents have been coded along the dimensions laid out in the theoretical framework using the qualitative analysis software MAXQDA. 550 data points provide the basis for the following analysis.

9.3 Similar, Yet Unique – Three Muslim Education IOs

The organizations covered in this chapter have a limited presence in the global public and academic discourse on education IOs. Thus, it seems adequate to preface the analysis with a general outline of the ICESCO, the ALECSO, and the ABEGS. I briefly introduce these three organizations and provide an overview on how the organizations are set up, what their goals are, and what they do to reach them. Note that the ICESCO and the ALECSO are not exclusively tasked with education policy. Therefore, their charters and statutes encompass several goals in other policy fields, which are irrelevant for my purpose and only included if they provide insights into the organizational leitmotifs.

9.3.1 ICESCO: Education Policy for the Ummah

The Islamic World Education, Science and Culture Organization, formerly known as Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, is perhaps the most relevant Muslim education IO. Established by the member states of the OIC in May 1981 and officially founded in 1982, its membership has expanded from 28 founding members at the constituent conference to 54 member states today. As an official branch of the OIC, only OIC members can join the organization. ICESCO is comprised of states from all over the world with varying sizes and capabilities as well as resources. The Union of International Associations (UIA) classifies the ICESCO as an "intercontinental membership organization" (Union of International Associations 2019), which means that its "membership exceeds that of a particular continental region, covers at least 10 countries, and is equitably distributed over at least two continents" (Union of International Associations 2020). As such, ICESCO is a very diverse organization in terms of the regional origin of its members. Most of its member states are situated in Africa and the Middle East, but there are exceptions like the Republic of Indonesia (joined in 1986) or the Republic of Guyana (joined in 2014). Interestingly, a number of states in the ICESCO only have a minor share of Muslim citizens, such as the Republic of Togo (est. 14% Muslim population (CIA World Factbook 2010)).

9.3.1.1 Goals in Education Policy

ICESCO's 2017 strategy paper "Development of Education in the Islamic World" outlines its current objectives for education policy. These objectives are based on perceived challenges which the ICESCO members face in today's world. According to the organization, the "major shortcomings in the education system of the Islamic World" (ISESCO 2017b: 29) include high illiteracy rates of up to 70% in some member states, poverty and huge income inequality, as well as great imparity in education between genders. In addition to these general problems, the ICESCO also identifies a number of more specific problems with education policy in many of its member states, such as deficient educational curricula, poor teacher training, insufficient spending on education, and low enrolment rates in all stages of the educational system (ISESCO 2017b: 30). Based on its perception of these problems, the ICESCO proposes some major objectives for education policy, which correspond to earlier publications (ISESCO 2014, 2016a) and to the charter of the organization (ISESCO 2015a). The societal objectives of the ICESCO for education are to

> contribute to the development of educational systems […] to build peaceful, knowledge-based and prosperous societies" (ISESCO 2017b: 7), and to
>
> ensure the transition of Muslims from being dependent and passive consumers to being active international role players, developers and producers of knowledge in such a way as to allow the Islamic world to regain its leading role in building human civilization (ibid.).

These statements also illustrate the difference between an objective and a leitmotif, in that the first part of the sentence represents the objective (e.g. "contribute to the development of educational systems") and the second part describes the purpose behind the objective (e.g. "to build peaceful and prosperous societies").

Furthermore, there is also an economic component in the educational objectives of the ICESCO. Education is supposed to not only create a knowledge-based society, but also help alleviate poverty and enable economic development of the member states. The summary of the ICESCO's proclaimed educational objectives is worth quoting in almost its full length here, since it is quite encompassing:

> The objective is to reshape the roles of education in achieving sustainable development and facing present and future developments and requirements, […] enabling Islamic countries to engage in knowledge societies and contribute to knowledge production, thereby marking its presence in the writing of humanity's cultural history in its new form (ISESCO 2017b: 13).

Thus, the ICESCO's educational objectives have both a social and an economic dimension. On the one hand, the economic development of the member states is only possible if the labor forces of the respective countries are equipped with adequate skillsets to enable them to participate in a global labor market. On the other hand, education should also ensure that Muslims all over ICESCO's members are aware of their cultural roots and their responsibility for a cohesive and peaceful knowledge-based society. However, the distinction between goal and education ideas becomes blurry in statements that highlight the cultural roots and religious tradition and at the same time proclaim the Islamic world's ambition to regain a leading role in human civilization and to participate in the writing of humans' cultural history. Proclaiming a particular kind of individual whose religiously influenced culture thrives towards a leading role in human civilization is an example of the importance of cultural spheres in global educational discourses. The objectives reflect the general ideas of the organization within the founding charter, which has been amended a number of times since its inception in 1982. The next chapter deals with them in detail.

9.3.1.2 Leitmotifs and Education Ideas of ICESCO

The ICESCO, like most education IOs, treats education as a multi-purpose endeavor. In this view, education is crucial for skill formation, self-fulfillment, collective wealth, and the proliferation of collective social rights and duties. At the same time, the ICESCO has a clear focus, meaning that some education ideas are more important than others. In general, the ICESCO recognizes that education is an important tool for economic development on both the individual and the collective level. On the other hand, education has a significant social, especially cultural and religious element. While the economic element is, at times, clearly visible in the analyzed documents, the cultural and religious focus is what makes the organization unique among education IOs with a global reach.

The ICESCO believes that an education policy which is suitable for the international Muslim community (the "Ummah") in general and its member states specifically has to be mindful of and informed by Islam and Islamic values. The significance of Islam for the organization's policy is made clear from the very first sentence of its charter, which states that Islam is "a religion of peace and tolerance, represents a way of life and a spiritual, human, moral, cultural and civilizational force" (Charter of the ICESCO, Preamble). Thus, if ICESCO is to successfully achieve its educational objectives, they have to be rooted "within the framework of the civilizational reference of the Islamic

world and in the light of the human Islamic values and ideals" (Charter of the ICESCO, Art 4 (a)). Looking up to Western education systems as the singular source of inspiration for reforms in the Islamic world is counterproductive, according to ICESCO, because they are "alien to its cultural and civilizational references and incompatible with its socioeconomic context" (ISESCO 2017b: 16).

This sentiment can be found in every document published by ICESCO. Frequent references to religion are made in all reviewed documents, for example:

> ISESCO hopes that this book will be yet another tool needed in enhancing the level of education in the Muslim world, […] within the framework of Islamic values that spur the Ummah to achieve greater civilizational progress and advancement (ISESCO 2002: 6).
>
> This [document] has been developed in accordance with the specific needs of Muslim communities and in line with Islamic teachings which regard education and learning (pursuit of knowledge) as an obligation for each Muslim (ISESCO 2016b: 7).
>
> [ISESCO aims to] preserve and enhance our common Islamic heritage to increase the awareness of the Muslim Youth of the values of Islam (ISESCO 2005: 2).

The relationship between Islam and ICESCOs education policy is twofold. First, as noted before, its education objectives have to be mindful of Islamic culture and heritage, otherwise they cannot be achieved within the Ummah, because Islam is not only a religion, but "represents a way of life" (see above). Second, Islam also informs the education leitmotifs of ICESCO, since it provides a sense of what the ideal society to be achieved via quality education looks like, as well as an own legal system with the Sharia. Of course, not all member states of ICESCO refer to Sharia law in their legal systems. ICESCO, however, frequently does (e.g. ISESCO 2009: 2). The prominent role of Islam results in a vision of education focusing on spiritual self-refinement, collective norms, and duties drawn from a common cultural and religious background shared by all ICESCO member states.

This vision is further illustrated by a certain sense of a larger-than-life "Islamic civilization". While the notion of Islamic civilization is already present in the Charter, it is more explicit in later publications. The 2009 Khartoum declaration states the "renewed commitment and strengthened resolve" of ICESCO to "preserve and enhance the common Islamic heritage to increase the awareness of the Muslim children and adolescents of the values of Islam, and instill into them a sense of pride in the achievements of the glorious Islamic civilization" (ISESCO 2009: 2). Other documents stress the need to "allow the Islamic world to regain its leading role in building human

civilization and spreading good and peace among humankind." (ISESCO 2017b: 7) and to "consolidate the civilizational identity of the Muslim world" (ISESCO 2017b: 25).

Second to spiritual refinement and collective religious participation, there is the leitmotif of economic development through quality education. In particular, ICESCO identifies the "need to harness the potential of human resources in Islamic countries and equip young people with basic skills for working life and professional integration […] in order to improve living conditions and economic development" (ISESCO 2017b: 69). However, compared to other global education IOs such as the OECD and the World Bank, human capital and economic growth seems to play a relatively small role in the discourse proliferated by ICESCO. The statement quoted above is in that way not representative of the general trend. The documents reviewed for this chapter rarely mention "human resources" or "human capital". In fact, the charter of the ICESCO does not refer to economic growth or the labor market at all, while the cultural purpose of the organization is very prominent. Economic growth is mostly presented as part of a larger bundle of educational objectives in ICESCO publications. Interestingly, ICESCO documents refer mostly to "socio-economic development" rather than just economic development (ISESCO 2002, 2009, 2017b).

This is not to say that ICESCO does not view economic development as an important benefit of quality education – it very much does. Rather, ICESCO attempts a delicate balancing act in "combining deep-rooted authenticity and enlightened modernity" (ISESCO 2017b: 12). ICESCO is aware that its member states desperately need improvements in education to reap the benefits of globalization and not be marginalized by it. However, its member states fear that they may lose their identities and cultural roots over the desperation for better education if they mindlessly assume Western education models, as many countries around the world have done (ISESCO 2017b: 16–18). Connected to said fears, the challenge of globalization is another prominent motif in ICESCO's publications. While most IOs recognize that globalization is not only a chance but also a challenge for many countries, ICESCO seems especially worried about its impact. ICESCO summarizes the challenge as follows:

> Any new educational strategy in the Islamic world has to deal with globalization in such a manner as to take advantage of its positive aspects, […] while protecting the Muslim identity against the danger of melting into another culture in conflict with the religious, intellectual, social, moral and cultural components of the national Islamic identity (ISESCO 2017b: 16).

Among the "positives of globalization" anticipated by ICESCO are intercultural dialogue and increased understanding between different countries and regions of the world, both

of which are collective social undertakings. Mutual respect and understanding through intercultural dialogue enabled by globalization and modern communication technology will contribute to world peace and the advancement of human civilization. In fact, in a globalized world, "positive cross cultural fertilization and interaction is the only framework under which cultures can prosper." (ISESCO 2017b: 16). This notion is also reflected in a speech that Dr. Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijri, then Director General of ICESCO, held in 2015, in which he noted that "infusing the contents of education curricula, science, culture and the media with then inherent tolerance of religious values is the right approach to building peace and promoting dialogue between the followers of religions, cultures and civilizations." (ISESCO 2015b).

In sum, ICESCO discourse focuses a lot on the social dimensions, at both the individual and collective level, while recognizing that there is a need for economic development. However, economic development is second to spiritual self-refinement and only needed insofar as it enables people to lead a good life and alleviate them from poverty.

9.3.1.3 Activities in Education

Having established the education ideas present in the analyzed publications, one should expect that these ideas are also reflected in the activities of ICESCO. ICESCO engages in a number of activities that are somewhat "typical" for large education IOs, such as organizing workshops, meetings, and conferences with stakeholders in the field, for example the member states' ministers of education. Furthermore, ICESCO activities include publishing material on education policy, funding local projects, setting up educational centers, or participating in discourse via social media. Content-wise, these endeavors cover a wide range of both social and economic topics. This is especially evident from the workshops that ICESCO organizes, often in cooperation with other IOs or NGOs. For example, in 2018, ICESCO organized workshops on "professional methods to counter Islamophobia", on "recommendations for the development of a curriculum promoting the values of peace, harmony and tolerance", on "The Role of Crafts in Developing Community-based Economics in the Member States [sic]" and on "Integrating University and Private Sector Development [sic]", among others (Organization of Islamic Cooperation 2018). Further workshops include topics as diverse as environmental impact assessment, the protection of landmarks in Jerusalem, or financial support for women entrepreneurs in Chad. Most of these topics clearly reflect the leitmotifs covered above. Additionally, several workshops and training sessions

demonstrate ICESCOs strong cultural focus. For example, ICESCO organizes training sessions in “traditional embroidery with gold and silk for women (Tahrira and Qasab)” (Organization of Islamic Cooperation 2016) or “New Cultural Roles of Civil Society in Promoting and Disseminating Good Governance Culture”.

At last, it is worth noting that ICESCO’s budget also tends to provide greater financial means to social than to economic measures (ISESCO 2019: 83), although a lot of measures in education policy, such as combating illiteracy, can be read as both an economic as well as a social project. While the budgetary items are sometimes ambiguous, there is a striking difference between the financial means attributed to skills and vocational education ($450.000) and those attributed to for example “traditional education” ($1.000.000). One interesting finding on ICESCO’s most recent budget report is the $450.000 reserved for “the school of values and coexistence” (ISESCO 2019: 83). What ICESCO means with this illusive term is an education system “that aims to build a system of values in the minds of children and instill it in their daily behavior […] with respect for human rights, racial and cultural diversity and coexistence; drawing on the Islamic view that calls for taking care of the environment, healthy nutrition and human health and rationalize the use of natural resources endowed to people by Allah” (ISESCO 2019: 73). While this is not a very specific objective, it reinforces the importance which ICESCO assigns to what it views as the cultural roots of its member states in traditional Islamic values. In conclusion, this short analysis of ICESCO’s activities shows that the elements presented above as ICESCO’s leitmotifs are present in both the organizations day-to-day business as well as its budget.

9.3.2 ALECSO: Education for the Arab World

The Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization is a Tunis-based sub-institution of the League of Arab States. Founded in 1970, ALECSO is comprised of 22 member states today, most of which are situated in the Maghreb region and the Middle East. Similar to ICESCO, ALECSO’s main task is the coordination of member state efforts in the fields of education, science, and culture. Many ALECSO member states are also member of ICESCO. We can, therefore, reasonably expect some similarity between the objectives and ideas of both institutions, given that they operate in the same fields.

9.3.2.1 Education Goals

ALECSO's perception of the challenges its member states are facing is largely similar to ICESCO. Key internal issues to be tackled are poverty, illiteracy, and inequality between genders. External challenges are posed by the danger of the deterioration of traditional values through "Western" cultural influence, the fierce competition in labor markets through globalization as well as military threats. This last point seems weirdly out of place in an education document, as ALECSO refers to the challenge of "the foreign occupation of Palestine and Iraq, and the Golan Heights occupied by the Zionist entity, and conspiracies against some of the other Arab countries" (ALECSO 2008: 39).

According to ALECSO, its main overall objective in reaction to these various challenges is to promote "intellectual unity in the Arab World, through education, culture and sciences, and enhancing the level of culture in order to keep up with, and positively contribute to, universal civilization" (ALECSO 2017: 4). For higher education, this idea has recently been challenged significantly in national policies of the member states (Hayes & Al'Abri 2018). It remains to be seen if and how these challenges will find their way into the discourse produced by ALECSO.

For education policy specifically, ALECSO names an extensive list of objectives, among which a few stand out (ALECSO 2017: 4). These "key priorities" are to "guarantee quality education for all as a human right", to "provide learners with the tools for the acquisition, analysis, production and use of knowledge", to "strengthen capacities in education-related policy formulation, planning and management" and finally to "strengthen the Arab States' capacities in terms of data collection and use, and monitor best practices and experiences" (ALECSO 2017: 7).

9.3.2.2 Leitmotifs and Education Ideas of ALECSO

ALECSO's education ideas are similar to those found in the published documents of ICESCO, where we find a "mixed bag" of supposed purposes of education, with an emphasis on societal advancement and both collective and individual spiritual refinement. On the one hand, ALECSO is aware of the economic problems of the Arab states. One of ALECSO's declared "essential leverage points" (ALECSO 2008: 39; ABEGS 2015) is "enabling the learner to master the tools of knowledge […] and to acquire the skills and experiences necessary to increase his productivity and enhance his role as contributor to change and development" (ALECSO 2008: 40), because "human capital is the critical

factor in moving forward to achieve prosperity" (ALECSO 2008: 6). This idea is also present almost word for word in other publications (ALECSO 2017: 7). "Education is the corner stone in the preparation, training and mobilization of the abilities of human capital" (ALECSO 2008: 6), and both individual and collective prosperity heavily depend on education as a driving force and an enabling system.

On the other hand, we find once again that ALECSO gives special attention to social purposes of education. ALECSO demands that "the philosophy of education be changed, so that building the student's personality becomes an essential axis in the educational process […]; he can develop his/her spirit of citizenship and belonging, and be educated in human rights, tolerance, coexistence and dialogue" (ALECSO 2008: 9). For the individual, the key social purpose of education must be "developing the learner's abilities and meeting his various needs, particularly his physical and leisure needs, to increase his options for self-achievement" (ALECSO 2008: 40). This change in philosophy should be based on "the teachings of True Islam, as well as respect of other cultures and religions, in accordance with faith and conviction of the right to disagree" (ibid.). In terms of collective social purposes of education, ALECSO holds traditional values and norms as essential elements of the curricula when building a cohesive society. It argues that solidarity and individual responsibility constitute the basis for the social contract upon which the member states' societies are built. Arab societies can only prosper when their citizens are educated, know their rights and duties as well as the religious and cultural foundations upon which these are based.

Lastly, there is a sense of regional identity which is supposed to be proliferated and strengthened by education policy, the concept of Pan-Arabism. Pan-Arabism implies a certain cultural uniformity shared by Arab people in the Middle East and the Maghreb region, which should also be reflected in the state system of these regions. Borne over a century ago out of sentiments against British and French rule in the region, Pan-Arabism is anti-colonial at its core and therefore emphasizes Arab autonomy (Reiser 1983). The specific expression of Pan-Arabism ranges from intergovernmental cooperation to calls for a united Arab nation. Indeed, Pan-Arabism lies at the roots of the foundation of the Arab League itself. For ALECSO education policy, this idea means that education has an additional purpose – "the purpose being to strengthen the pan-Arab [sic!] sense of belonging and feeling" (ALECSO 2008: 40). Quality education must provide a sense of regional identity so that Arab citizens have a point of reference. This goes hand in hand with "increasing awareness of the major Arab issues" (ibid.). It is interesting to see this

idea spelled out explicitly because of the heavy implications that the term carries. One could interpret this as an added emphasis on the importance of Arab identity for ALECSO's education ideas.

9.3.2.3 Activities in Education

ALECSO, as an education IO, seems to follow a rather hands-off approach to pursuing its objectives. Compared to ICESCO, which actively intervenes in education policy with its own projects, such as workshops and training sessions it hosts, ALECSO is focused on spreading awareness. ALECSO focuses on problems regarding education policy in member states, where it collects data, provides information to policymakers, and offers a platform of coordination. Indeed, ALECSO's declared code of conduct is to serve "as a house of expertise in the Arab World in all that relates to education, culture, science and communication" (ALECSO 2017: 10). The most important branch of ALECSO in this regard is the ALECSO Observatory, which was created as part of the Plan to Develop Education in the Arab World (2008). This institution is largely in charge of ALECSO's education policy research. It monitors the state of education in the Arab world, provides advice to policy makers, collects best practices, gathers and organizes data, and publishes a vast body of literature. The organization has, for example, published eight bulletins and reports on the general state of education, nine books and manuals relating to Arabic language education, a 24-part encyclopedia on great Arabic writers as well as roughly 30 books with synchronized learning material for Arab schools. Furthermore, the organization publishes various bi-annual journals on education.

9.3.3 ABEGS: Education Policy for the Gulf Region

The Arab Bureau for Education in the Gulf States was set up in 1975 by seven member states from the gulf region, namely Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Oman, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Qatar. All of these states are also members of the ALECSO and the ICESCO. ABEGS's raison d'être is similar in nature to ALECSO and, to a lesser extent, ICESCO. As per ABEGS's website, its task is to "promote cooperation and coordination in the fields of culture, education, science, information and documentation" (ABEGS 2019a), which is almost congruent with ALECSO's mission, albeit with a narrower regional focus.

9.3.3.1 Education Goals

ABEGS has published a number of comprehensive strategic goals along which it operates. The four key aims are, without any particular order, "developing the younger generations to promote citizenship values, developing educational policies and spreading the best practices, developing the Arabic language and the learning of it, as well as consolidating the roles of family and society in education." (ABEGS 2019a) . These aims go hand in hand with ABEGS' mission, which the organization summarizes as "coordination of education development operations to reflect the Islamic nature of the region, to promote unity among its citizens and set educational plans based on modern scientific foundations" (ABEGS 2019b: 9).

9.3.3.2 Leitmotifs and Education Ideas of ABEGS

The above quote points to further similarities between ABEGS and the two other Muslim education IOs. On the one hand, the religious and cultural heritage of the region provides an important foundation without which a proper education system for the Gulf states cannot be realized. On the other hand, educational plans for the future should be based on "modern scientific foundations". This statement implies that ABEGS is well aware of the balancing act that it is tasked with – the synthesis of traditional values drawn from Islamic philosophy and the demands of economic development in a global labor market.

For the individual, quality education should entail that "young people can acquire behaviors which help them uphold their rights and duties as citizens, be in touch with their countries internal issues, while remaining positively open to up-to-date information in various fields, utilizing this information to help themselves and develop their countries" (ABEGS 2015: 52). Once more, there is a focus on social rights and duties for individuals. Interestingly, a shared declaration of UNICEF, UNHCR and ABEGS, the Sharm El Sheik Statement from 2015, puts the focus on sustainable development and prosperity, where social cohesion comes as second priority:

> We reaffirm that it [education] is a basis for the realization of other rights and essential for inclusive, equitable and sustainable development, as well as prosperity in the Arab states. […] We notably commit to the principle of education as a public good and a building block for prosperity, well-being, social cohesion and sustainable development (UNESCO 2015: 1).

ABEGS's education ideas are thus a bit more balanced between social and economic concerns.

9.3.3.3 Activities in Education

The ABEGS Strategy 2015-2020 lists 23 initiatives with 92 individual projects to be implemented until the year 2020. Among these are seminars, training sessions for stakeholders, the organization of regular coordination meetings, and a large number of publications. In fact, ABEGS claims to have published "hundreds of books and translations in various educational, scientific and cultural areas", which lead to its publications receiving "considerable interest and growing appreciation among people as valuable resource of educational Arab thought" (ABEGS 2019b: 29).

9.4 Cooperation Between the Three Organizations

Given the similarity of ABEGS, ICESCO, and ALECSO, both in terms of education ideas and member states, cooperation between the organizations is expected to a certain degree. Indeed, the organizations claim to cooperate on a lot of issues. In an attempt to institutionalize said cooperation, ICESCO has hosted a series of meetings between the three IOs. Most recently, they met in Rabat in 2017 at the 4th Forum of International Organizations. ICESCO Director General Dr. Altwaijri noted in his respective opening speech that "we must increase synergy and enhance cooperation between ICESCO, ALECSO and ABEGS" and that "the steadily growing scope of cooperation […], and the rising trend of our accumulated expertise and accomplishments are proof that we are on the right track" (ISESCO 2017a: 2).

While these statements point to the existence of cooperation, it remains obscure which specific forms coordinated efforts by the three organizations assume. In other words, it is clear that ICESCO, ALECSO, and ABEGS do cooperate with each other, but less clear *how* they do so. Both of the most recent progress reports published by the OIC (2016; 2018), which thoroughly track ICESCO activities, do not mention joint action with ABEGS or ALECSO, and neither do ICESCO's tri-annual newsletters. Without further evidence, it seems that cooperation between the three organizations is more rudimentary than the statement above implies. To add to that observation, cooperation between but also within these organizations might be hindered by conflicts between the member states. Given the religious differences between some of the larger member states as well as their economic competition induced by geographical proximity, conflicts occur quite often. As Kayaoglu notes, "[…] one can conclude that even fairly minor coordination issues can become extremely complicated when they involve differences in religious interpretation.

ICESCO, like the OIC, is not strong enough to override the objection of a powerful member state in the name of the collective good" (Kayaoglu 2015: 125).

9.5 Conclusions

The key findings from the analysis presented above can be summarized as follows. Firstly, ICESCO, ALECSO, and, to a lesser degree, ABEGS are quite clear in their emphasis on social purposes of education over economic ones, confirming expectations set by the literature (Findlow 2008). At the same time, all three organizations are aware of their member states' need for quality development policies, which education is a large part of. Secondly, there is a distinct cultural and/or religious element in the education ideas of the Islamic education IOs, which manifests itself in the refences made to Islam and to a larger-than-life Islamic civilization. This means, thirdly, that Islamic education IOs engage in a balancing act quite similar to the Southeast Asian case presented below. On the one hand, global labor markets require standardized education in order to be tapped into. On the other, "Westernized" education may be detrimental to the proliferation of traditional cultural-religious roots which the Islamic education IOs are committed to protect. This is challenging because global education policy is often secularized, while ICESCO is clearly not a secular organization. That is also what makes ICESCO a special case among global education IOs, in that most other global IOs are distinctly secular.

Indeed, the Islamic education IOs face a number of challenges which may seriously hinder their effectiveness in carrying out their designated missions. Differences in religious interpretations between Shia and Sunni countries respectively are an obvious example. As ICESCO, for example, commits itself to "publicizing the correct image of Islam", it remains unclear what "true Islam" constitutes. For ICESCO, this is further complicated by geopolitical tensions between large member states, such as Saudi-Arabia and Iran. Its relatively small budget only adds to these problems.

In sum, this chapter has undertaken a first mapping of Muslim international organizations in education policy. I have argued that Muslim education IOs engage in the production and reproduction of their own distinct ideas on how education should be conceived of, thereby, attempting a synthesis of traditional cultural and religious values drawn from Islamic philosophy and quality education for development purposes. Going forward, there remains a lot of potential for further research to expand upon these findings, especially since the analysis relied on a rather limited number of available documents for the

ABEGS and the ALECSO. While it may be too early for a final verdict, the evidence hints at a connection between the globalization of education policy and the emergence of competing regional-cultural ideals of education. In a globalized world, some regional organizations may feel the need to protect their cultural roots against "Westernization" of education systems, possibly forming counter-movements against global education IOs. While Samuel Huntingtons "Clash of Civilizations" has been received very poorly in Western International Relations, and understandably so, a subtle mechanism of a similar kind could be at play here. Some form of contradiction in their approaches towards education policy seems to exist between the different "civilizations" in the perception of the organizations reviewed here, as elusive and broad as this term may be. To acknowledge the fuzzy boundaries between different global cultures, Windzio and Martens (2022a) introduce the concept of "cultural spheres" and an appropriate methodology which accounts for this fuzziness in diffusion analyzes. Is this a conflict between the regional and the global, or do these cultural spheres just indicate cultural difference, but coexistence, even though disagreement on the "writing of humanity's cultural history" will sometimes lead to tense relations between cultural spheres? ICESCO, for instance, regards "Westernized" education as a threat, rather than as a role model, but it is yet by no means clear what the implications are for the future global cultural development and the relations between the cultural spheres. At last, it remains to be seen whether there is any evidence for this development in other regions of the world before larger-scale conclusions can be drawn. Further research is needed to provide a more complete picture of the interactions between the global, regional and local levels of education policy.

10. Regional Ideas in International Education Organizations: The Case of SEAMEO

10.1 Introduction

Over the last decades, various regional IOs have emerged as relevant, yet largely uncharted actors in international education policy. One of them is the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO). The underrepresentation of regional organizations in contemporary research on international education policy is striking, considering that SEAMEO has been a major player in education policy in Southeast Asia for decades. Founded in 1965, it still has not garnered any attention by scholars of international education or international relations. The following chapter represents a first

step towards filling this gap, by exploring the underlying leitmotifs and ideas which inform discourse produced and reproduced by SEAMEO. How does SEAMEO conceive education? I argue that SEAMEO follows a distinctly holistic ideal of education policy, stressing both the social as well as the economic purposes of education. While some of its inspiration may stem from the United Nations post-2015 global sustainable development agenda in education policy, SEAMEO has championed a balanced approach towards education from its very inception. However, it has done and continues to do so with a distinct emphasis on the educational purpose of reinforcing collectively shared cultural values and traditions of its member states, which it deems unique to Southeast Asia. The influence of regional organizations on education policy in their respective region should not be underestimated. Indeed, the majority of international organizations active in education policy are regional organizations (Niemann & Martens 2021). Acting at the intersection of the *global* and the *local*, SEAMEO is uniquely connected with both globally oriented partner organizations, such as the UNESCO, and the national governments of its member states. Therefore, studying the organization's perception of education and its ideas on education policy provides valuable insights into conceptions of education in the region.

The case study presented here relies on qualitative content analysis to infer SEAMEO's ideas and leitmotifs in education policy from the organization's policy publications as well as from personal statements made by SEAMEO officials. Qualitative content analysis is a method to systematically analyze qualitative data and deduce meaning from documents (Schreier 2012; Krippendorff 2018). Valuable objects for analysis can, in principle, include recorded communication of any form. Two main sources have been used for the purpose of this chapter. First, 15 strategic education policy documents published by SEAMEO between 1970 and 2019 have been deductively analyzed using a coding scheme based on the different leitmotifs in education policy presented by Windzio and Martens (2022a). Eligible documents for analysis have been limited to publications available in English to circumvent the considerable language barriers, since SEAMEO uses multiple official languages. To organize the data, the software MAXQDA has been employed. 185 data points acquired through this process form the basis of the analysis. Complementing this first step, a semi-structured interview with a high-ranking SEAMEO official has been conducted in February 2020. Before engaging with the data, however, the chapter provides a brief introduction to SEAMEO, covering its organizational setup as well as its member states and its cooperation with other organizations. Based on four

leitmotifs in education policy, I then explore the qualitative data drawn from the documents, before discussing the results. The chapter closes with a short outlook on possible implications of the evidence from this analysis.

10.2 International Organizations in Education – Leitmotifs and Ideas

This chapter rests on a few core assumptions about the role of ideas and leitmotifs in discourse proliferated by international organizations working on education. The first is that international organizations *matter*. They have a distinct influence on international education policy, which manifests itself in various ways (Barnett & Finnemore 1999; Bauer 2006; Hawkins et al. 2006), one of them being the diffusion of norms and ideas (Barnett & Finnemore 2004). It is through this process, among others, that international organizations have become relevant actors in global education policy. Through the activities of IOs, ideas concerning what education is supposed to look like or what purpose it should serve are distributed beyond national borders. Conversely, IOs also incorporate ideas proliferated by their member states. Diffusion is not a one-way road in this view, and it is rarely possible to trace the origin of a certain idea to its very origin. However, as ideas are such a crucial part of what makes IOs influential in global politics, research on what these ideas and leitmotifs may be is imperative.

I use the terms leitmotif and idea in the following sections. A leitmotif is a recurring theme in a given medium and, in this context, guides education policy. As established in the previous chapter, I stay with Goldstein's and Keohane's conceptualization, following which an idea is a belief held by individuals (Goldstein & Keohane 1993). Leitmotifs, in turn, are comprised of sets of multiple ideas. The following chapter attempts to uncover ideas and leitmotifs proposed and reinforced by SEAMEO in its official documents. For this purpose, it relies on four basic guiding principles or leitmotifs in education (Nagel et al. 2010).

Generally, education can be seen as a means to either increase economic utility or the cohesiveness of a given society. These basic aims work on both the individual as well as the collective level. For individuals, education is supposed to enhance their skills for the labor market, thereby boosting their productivity and income. On the social dimension, education is supposed to enable individuals to find self-fulfilment and develop their character to the fullest. On the collective level, education can be seen as a means to increase economic growth and provide skilled human capital. At the same time, it can also be an important tool for states and IOs to create an informed citizenship, which

allows its members to participate in the political process, to be aware of their rights and duties and to achieve a cohesive, just society. Of course, these leitmotifs are ideal types. Also, they are not mutually exclusive, meaning that most of the time all of them will be informing the actions of a given education IO to some degree. Furthermore, the principles may be interlinked. On the individual level, skill formation and a successful career may contribute to self-fulfilment for citizens. On the collective level, a wealthy nation may have an easier time with citizen participation in the political process and in society in general, due to since people do not have to spend most of their time on their livelihood if there is a certain degree of wealth.

As ideas depend on the social context within which they are created and procreated, region- or culture-specific ideas can be expected to be at play within regional education IOs. While these ideas can be grouped into the same basic categories as global or transnational ideas, it is important to adequately contextualize them. For example, the idea that education is supposed to contribute to people's cultural awareness for a more cohesive society is part of a social-collective conceptualization of education policy. What culture it is that people should be aware of, however, is region-specific. Indeed, education ideas concerned with culture only make sense in a regional context, as there is no "world culture". There is no universal consensus on cultural awareness as a desirable education outcome, so we may expect to find an emphasis on cultural education only in regional organizations.

For regional organizations, in general, it is important to set foci in their work. Due to limited budgets and personnel, regional organizations require certain education policy objectives to be prioritized over others to be effective. The three Islamic education IOs covered above provide an example of this process, as they prioritize social and cultural purposes of education over economic ones. Subsequently, it should be expected that SEAMEO is similarly forced to set priorities. Due to the poor economic status of many SEAMEO member states, one may further expect education to be conceptualized mainly as a policy field of economic development by the organization. I argue, however, that this is not the case based on the available data.

10.3 Exploring SEAMEO – A Decentralized Approach to International Cooperation

SEAMEO is a regional international organization tasked with facilitating cooperation in education, science and culture between its member states. Since its inception more than

five decades ago, it has grown into one of the most relevant actors in international education policy in Southeast Asia. Its purposes resemble similar organizations around the world, which have been modelled after the UNESCO, albeit with distinct regional contexts, such as the Islamic World Education, Science and Culture Organization (ICESCO) and the Arab League Cultural, Educational and Scientific Organization (ALECSO). The Yearbook of International Organizations classifies SEAMEO as a *regionally defined membership organization*, meaning that its "Membership and preoccupations [are] restricted to a particular continental or sub-continental region or contiguous group of countries, and [it] covers at least 3 countries or includes at least 3 autonomous international bodies" (Union of International Associations 2020). SEAMEO membership reflects this typology, as all of its 11 member states today are located in the SEA region.

SEAMEO is closely affiliated with the more widely known Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), another regional international organization which covers a larger range of policy areas, often with an economic focus. ASEAN's range of member states is identical to SEAMEO, with the exception of Timor-Leste, which is a member of SEAMEO, but not of ASEAN. As per its "core values", SEAMEO intends to be "ASEAN's strategic partner for the advancement of education, science and culture" (SEAMEO 2020a). This cooperation is realized via regular coordination meetings, joint projects in education and culture, as well as memorandums of understanding.

Although the education ministers of its member states make up the SEAMEO council, which is the organization's highest decision making body, and the SEAMEO secretariat as the main administration body is set up in Bangkok, SEAMEO's work is distinctly decentralized in nature. The practical work "on the ground" is carried out by 26 regional centres, which are spread over all member states. These centres operate as independent organizational units with their own secretariats, budget and staff and report to both the SEAMEO secretariat as well as the respective ministries of the countries they operate in (see figure 9). They cover fields as diverse as *Open and Distance Learning* (covered by the SEAMEO Regional Open Learning Centre (SEAMOLEC)), *Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture* (SEARCA), or *Tropical Biology* (BIOTROP). In total, SEAMEO employs over 1000 people across all of its centres (Interview SEAMEO, 04.03.2020).

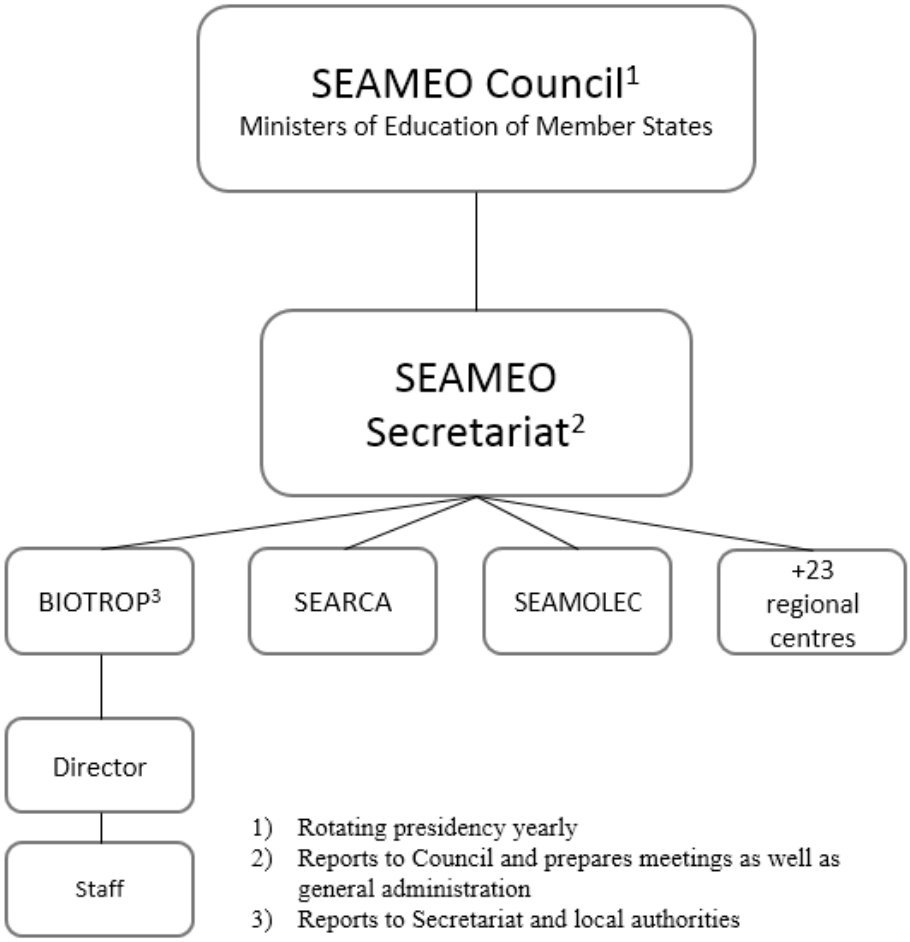


Figure 9 – SEAMEO structure[14]

The decentralized nature of SEAMEO's organizational structure implies the possible existence of many different views and ideas, since in principle, every regional centre may have its own distinct motifs. However, most of these centres do not specifically deal with education policy, but rather focus on content-based implementation of policy in their respective fields. They do not engage in justifying or reflecting on education policy.

SEAMEO's member states are very heterogeneous in terms of economic development. While some of them, such as Singapore and Malaysia, have been on the forefront of economic growth in the region, others are among the poorest countries in Asia. Thus, SEAMEO faces the delicate challenge of balancing the educational needs of its developing member states, with those of its richer members when designing policy. This diversity implies questions of distributional justice and the balance of power within the organization, which are somewhat alleviated through means of unanimous decision-

[14] Source: own account, www.seameo.org

making in the SEAMEO council (Interview SEAMEO). Although formally, policy decisions can be taken by qualified majority, decisions against objections by even single member states practically do not happen.

As the main international organization in education in the region, SEAMEO is notably well connected with both governments in the region as well as partner organizations. It is also the main partner for global education IOs operating in the region. SEAMEO's joint projects include cooperation with UNICEF, UNESCO and the Asian Development Bank (ADB). SEAMEO and UNESCO have been regular partners since the early 1980s, cooperating on a wide range of education projects in Southeast Asia. A recent example is the UNESCO Global Action Programme (GAP) on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) launched in 2014, which is implemented by SEAMEO in the region (SEAMEO 2020b). For UNICEF, cooperation with SEAMEO has notably increased since 2010 (Interview SEAMEO); one instance being the Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM) programme for grade assessment, which is funded by UNICEF. On the other hand, SEAMEO works with non-governmental actors like the German Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and various universities from around the world. As noted by a SEAMEO official in February 2020 in reference to the UN agencies, "If the project is in Southeast Asia, they [UN entities] will contact SEAMEO. Normally, that's the way. […] We are the project implementer." (Interview SEAMEO).

10.3.1 SEAMEO's Ideas in Education Policy

IOs often stress that all purposes of education are important and refer to a rather encompassing view on education. However, different foci can be found in their documents and statements as well as policy in most cases. The World Bank and the OECD, for example, pursue an economic focus in education policy, whereas ICESCO stresses the social purposes of education policy. SEAMEO, on the other hand, proliferates a balanced, holistic view on education. I refer to this view as "holistic" because, according to SEAMEO, education is supposed to benefit individuals as well as society in regard to both economic as well as social needs. This is in line with recent definitions of holistic education (Mahmoudi et al. 2012). Concurrently SEAMEO's education ideas do have their own "flavour", in that education policy is seen as an important tool in preserving the cultural roots of the region in both individual and society. SEAMEO views itself as uniquely suited to tackle the challenges for education policy in the region by recognizing

the cultural dimension of education. IOs with a global focus, such as UNESCO, need a partner in the region, if their policies are to be successful, because Southeast Asia is a unique setting for education policy and has to be treated accordingly.

Education ideas can be grouped into four basic categories or leitmotifs, depending on what they deem the primary purpose of education and education policy. Education policy enables individual skill formation and self-fulfilment, but is also crucial for economic growth on the national as well as social participation on the individual level. In this section, I argue that although SEAMEO's education ideas partly overlap with the United Nations' sustainable development agenda, in that it recognizes both the social, cultural as well as the economic purposes of education, it does so with its own distinct references to Southeast Asian culture and regional values. This emphasis on regional culture represents the main difference between SEAMEO's conceptualization of education policy and the one produced by the UN.

The Post-2015 global sustainable development agenda encompasses 17 sustainable development goals, of which Goal 4- quality education - is the most relevant for education policy. Goal 4 represents a commitment by the UN member states to "ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning," because "Education enables upward socioeconomic mobility and is a key to escaping poverty. Education helps reduce inequalities and reach gender equality and is crucial to fostering tolerance and more peaceful societies" (United Nations 2020: 1). This recent statement displays a holistic view on education, which is comprised of a balanced set of different ideas on what education should primarily achieve, such as social cohesion or economic growth.

SEAMEO, on the other hand, has championed this view on education since its inception back in 1965, referring to a better "quality of life" for the people of Southeast Asia as the main purpose of its very existence. The documents reviewed for this chapter contain frequent references to this purpose, stating for example that "[SEAMEO] is mandated to enhance regional understanding and cooperation and unity of purpose among SEAMEO Member Countries *in order to achieve a better quality of life*" (SEAMEO 2017c: xiii). In fact, out of the 15 reviewed documents, only 6 did not include statements on quality of life. It remains vague, however, what the term quality of life entails, beyond the general notion that education and science are supposed to holistically improve every aspect of people's lives in the region. Therefore, it seems more fruitful to focus on specific statements made by SEAMEO on the social and/or economic purposes of education.

In the SEAMEO founding charter, the signatory members explicitly note that the organization will "assist in articulating education to the economic *and* social goals in the individual Member States." (SEAMEO 1965: Art I § 2b). Since then, this sentiment has found its way into most publications available for analysis. Below are some examples from different decades:

> The benefits of […] education may be derived at various levels. At the personal level, individuals can improve their knowledge and skills for their own betterment, be this in terms of material or moral well-being. The contributions of the individuals could lead to greater productivity and better livelihood of a community […] (SEAMES 1973: 3)

> […] a large segment of the population […] require some form of educational service to improve their economic status and the quality of their social participation (SEAMES 1981: 2)

> Education is very important in bringing a better quality of life of people in the region [sic!]. At the individual level, education offers the opportunity for a person to acquire new knowledge, learn relevant skills and pathways to realise personal aspirations. At the macro level, education is strongly linked to economic productivity, technological advancement, higher income, and lowered poverty levels (SEAMEO 2008: 5)

> [education] can maximise the development of knowledge and skills that enable individuals to attain holistic well-being, sense of responsibility and self-reliance. Ultimately, successful individuals are able to live harmoniously and further contribute to society (SEAMEO 2017c: iv)

As opposed to other education IOs, there are few instances in which SEAMEO documents would prioritize one aspect of education policy over the others. This finding is consistent with statements drawn from an interview with a high ranking SEAMEO official conducted in February 2020, in which the interviewee stressed that education has to be treated as part of both social policy and development or economic policy. The interviewee also subscribed to the idea that education is to be seen as a "holistic project", in which different purposes of education need to be fairly balanced. Therefore, neither the social nor the economic dimension is prioritized over the other in education policy (Interview SEAMEO: 10).

Indeed, it seems in recent years SEAMEO has started to support this "holistic" nature of education quite explicitly (SEAMEO 2017c: iv), especially in the context of lifelong learning. For example, in its action agenda of 2017, SEAMEO proposed an association of lifelong learning with the objective of developing and implementing "holistic and comprehensive lifelong learning approaches" (SEAMEO 2017b: 36)

As a holistic view on education encompasses all of the four basic categories of education ideas (Nagel et al. 2010), evidence for every single one of these idea groups or leitmotifs should be found in SEAMEO publications. The following section will assess the findings for each category found in SEAMEO's policy publications. When possible, instances where these ideas are highlighted separately instead of being intertwined with its counterparts are presented. A standard practice in the publication of education IOs includes listing all imaginable benefits of education when addressing readers; however, it is more noteworthy if an idea is presented standing on its own.

Individual skill formation, referring to the development of personal abilities which help boost the productivity and economic livelihood of an individual, is especially present in earlier documents. Here, education primarily ensures equal opportunities in the transnational labor markets for individuals from all kinds of economic backgrounds and increases the general standard of living of people in the region. These ideas are present in publications as early as 1973 (SEAMES 1973: 1). In the context of non-formal education, education policy is "called upon to assist in raising standards of living and in improving the quality of life of the underprivileged" (SEAMES 1981: 4). Identifying the need to educate children and youth that do not finish school or have never enjoyed regular schooling, SEAMEO notes that "a large proportion of out-of-school youth and adults do not possess marketable skills" and that occupational training needs to be expanded to empower "the urban and rural underprivileged in raising their standard of living" (SEAMES 1980: 10).

Overall, however, SEAMEO mostly refers to the collective economic benefits of education, if it deviates from its emphasis on holistic well-being at all. These collective purposes of education include economic development as well as human capital formation. Therefore, education policy needs to be a part of an economy's reaction to ever-increasing globalization of national markets and the challenges posed by transnationalization of human capital. As Prof. Dr. Bambang Sudibyo, then Minister for National Education of the Republic of Indonesia and SEAMEO Council President, noted in 2008, "In today's globalised world […], the people have to be able to respond to the global outlook and be ready to seize global opportunities." (SEAMEO 2008: 5). This idea is displayed in many recent publications available for this chapter (SEAMES 1980; SEAMEO 2011, 2017b). As a poignant example, note this statement from the 2011-2020 SEAMEO Strategic Plan:

> SEAMEO recognizes that the ever-changing labor market needs and fast-paced global development pose enormous challenges for Southeast Asia to sustain and upgrade the competitiveness of its human resources. (SEAMEO 2013: 66)

To effectively tackle globalization's challenges, education is the premier tool available to SEAMEO member states in the region. In this context, SEAMEO views itself as both an enabler as well as a provider for its members, stating that it is "Southeast Asia's largest and most dependable service provider in human resource development" (SEAMEO 2008: 8), its economic mission being to "to nurture human capacities and explore the fullest potentials of people in the region" (ibd.). In sum, "SEAMEO firmly believes that regional strategies should be aimed at benefitting individual member countries while at the same time achieve integration for regional growth" (SEAMEO 2013: 66).

On the social dimension of education, SEAMEO displays a distinct cultural element to its policy reasoning and its specific recommendations. This idea is based on the notion of the unique nature of the Southeast Asia region, which requires an approach towards education policy specifically tailored to and mindful of this nature. For individuals, education is viewed as a means to personal development, a healthy life as well as a fulfilling participation in society. For societies, education has a huge range of purposes; it can be a catalyst for a healthy, equal, fair and moral society and a prerequisite for cultural awareness of one's own culture as well as foreign cultures, thereby enabling intercultural dialogue.

Among the benefits presented most prominently are cultural-regional issues such as local traditions, history, and language. As early as 1973, SEAMEO noted that "[…] education can strengthen […] nation building, preservation and development of cultural heritage and environmental improvements" (SEAMES 1973: 6). To this day, SEAMEO upholds the reproduction and appreciation of cultural roots as one of education's main social purposes (SEAMEO 2013, 2017b, 2017c). A society that is aware and appreciative of its own culture is, according to SEAMEO, also a necessary condition for valuable intercultural dialogue between different regions and even within Southeast Asia. This is especially true for Southeast Asian societies, because many of them are either multi-ethnic, multi-religious or, commonly, both. As per the aforementioned Prof. Dr. Sudibyo, "in […] socio-cultural development, education takes greater significance in multi-ethnic and multi-religious societies. Education can help to raise awareness of commonalities and shared values among different communities." (SEAMEO 2008: 5). This way, SEAMEO hopes to create and encourage a shared "unity of purpose" among its member states through education (SEAMEO 1999, 2011, 2013).

Furthermore, SEAMEO views education as a tool to produce and reproduce regional norms and values and to improve social cohesion within its member states. Special attention is regularly given to vulnerable communities and the ways in which they can be empowered by quality education, possibly resulting in a more cohesive and resilient society and providing equal opportunities to people from all kinds of backgrounds. Vulnerable communities in this context refers to those that suffer from any form of systematic exclusion from the education system. This includes linguistic and/or ethnic minorities, people with special education needs, economically disadvantaged people or those who live in remote areas without access to regular schooling (SEAMEO 2016: 5). In order to support these communities, SEAMEO has dedicated one of their 7 "priority areas" from 2015-2035 to addressing barriers to inclusion (SEAMEO 2017a, 2017b). As an interviewed official stated, "the target of the ministers […] is how to identify the marginalized learners – those who are out of school – and bring them back to school" (Interview SEAMEO: 2).

Overall, there is evidence for all of the four categories presented above: *skill formation, self-fulfilment, wealth of nations, social right and duty*. However, none of them is presented in the policy publications as more important to the education ideal of SEAMEO than the other categories. This finding is once again consistent with personal accounts. When presented with different purposes of education, similar to the aforementioned ones, the interviewed official refrained from ranking or weighing them against each other, instead stating that "they are all important […] within our vision and mission" (Interview SEAMEO: 10).

What, then, distinguishes SEAMEO from other education IOs, if not for a policy focus? From this analysis, it is precisely the holistic nature of SEAMEO's ideal of education that separates it from the bulk of global education IOs. More specifically, the fact that we can observe this "quality of life" approach so early in SEAMEO's publications is unique to this organization. As Niemann points out, most education IOs started their activities focusing either on the social dimension of education, like the UNESCO, or on the economic dimension, like the OECD and the World Bank (Niemann 2022). SEAMEO, on the other hand, included both social and economic goals of education policy on an equal basis in its charter (see above) and its mission from its very foundation in 1965 onwards. It has since been a consistent proponent of this holistic approach.

Being the largest and most relevant regional education IO in Southeast Asia, SEAMEO furthermore views itself as an advocate for the region's cultural uniqueness, which requires an education system mindful of and specifically tailored to the nature of the region. This notion can be found in other regional international organizations, like the Arabic ALECSO and ABEGS. It is rooted in the belief that Western ideas of education dominate in global education IOs, like the UNESCO, and that these ideas as well as the policies informed by them cannot be applied as readily to Southeast Asia as they can to, say, Western Europe, since they do not take into account cultural-regional contexts. At best, this might render them less effective for Southeast Asia. At worst, they may downright fail in the region. What is needed in the region, then, is a well-rounded education approach made for SEAMEO countries. Two statements by the SEAMEO council in 2014 and 2016 with the Vientiane Statement and the Bandung Statement respectively call for this "revolutionary" approach to be implemented:

> We therefore call for a new paradigm for the development of education in Southeast Asia that will require changes to educational systems that are not only gradual and evolutionary, but also revolutionary while still being rooted in our shared values and traditions. (SEAMEO 2016: 3)
>
> We therefore call for action among the delegations and institutions represented here to work cooperatively in building the region's educational system that is dynamic and resilient amidst current challenges, even as they remain rooted in our shared values and traditions. (SEAMEO 2016: 7)

From these press statements alone, it remains unclear what these cultural roots, values and traditions entail and what they mean for education policy in the region, apart from their perceived uniqueness. For an answer, note the following paragraph which I believe is worth quoting in almost its full length:

> Culture refers to a people's traditions, history, values, and language that make up the culture of a group and which contribute to their identity. Integrated with education, it brings about awareness, appreciation, and understanding of one's national patrimony, which reflects, validates, and promotes the values, world views, and languages of the community's culture. Culture-based education […] intends to respect all forms of knowledge and ways of knowing and support indigenous people and various ethnicities as individuals and community members in educational practices. (SEAMEO 2017b: 247).

As a result, it seems from these definitions that global standards of education can never fully account for regional contexts. Consequently, culture-based education has to be designed regionally with the help of organizations like SEAMEO. It is this role as a facilitator of quality education in Southeast Asia, which SEAMEO supposedly intends to

fill. The challenge for SEAMEO in doing so is framed as the following: It must balance its education policy between a global labor and goods market dominated by Western standards and requirements, as well as its unique cultural background, while maintaining a well-rounded and balanced approach towards education. Quality education in the SEAMEO region has to be "proactive and future-oriented, yet rooted in the values and traditions of the region" (SEAMEO 2017a: 1).

10.3.2 The Content of SEAMEO Education Policy - 7 Priority Areas

Having established the ideas and leitmotifs found in SEAMEO's documents, how does SEAMEO go about achieving these formulated policy goals? Are these ideas reflected in the content of the organization's policy? As the organization is very active on many fronts, the following section focuses on SEAMEO's "7 Priority Areas" for 2015-2035. These areas were established in 2015 to inform and set the agenda for the next two decades of education policy in the region (SEAMEO 2017a). Table 4 provides a summary of the priority areas.

	Title
Priority 1	Achieving universal early childhood care and education
Priority 2	Addressing barriers to inclusion
Priority 3	Resiliency in the face of emergencies
Priority 4	Promoting technical and vocational education and training
Priority 5	Revitalising teacher education
Priority 6	Harmonising higher education and research
Priority 7	Adopting a 21st Century curriculum

Table 4 – SEAMEO's priority areas in education[15]

The first two of these priorities are targeted primarily at the aforementioned vulnerable groups and local communities, which may be excluded from learning opportunities through systemic factors. They explicitly target these segments of the population to achieve a more cohesive and just society with equal opportunities for all learners

[15] From SEAMEO 2017c

(SEAMEO 2017a: ii). It could be argued that the same is true for priority 3, because national emergencies, like natural disasters or wars, tend to hit vulnerable communities harder than others. Priority 4 is the only area with a strictly economic focus, aiming to provide the people of the region with suitable skills for the labor market and enabling workers' global mobility. Priorities 5 and 6 are formulated rather generally and it remains vague whether SEAMEO has a specific focus in mind here. They are essentially "meta"- or process-related goals, in that they stress the need to reform the education system in the SEAMEO region using an integrated approach that sets region-wide standards, best practices and frameworks across all member states. Finally, the justification for Priority 7 almost reads like a synopsis of the analysis presented in chapter 7. By means of an adequate curriculum to be taught in the education institutions of the region, SEAMEO aims to achieve both its social and economic goals, while accounting for its cultural roots and values. Thus, adopting a 21st century curriculum means

> pursuing a radical reform through systematic analysis of knowledge, skills and values needed to effectively respond to changing global contexts, particularly to the ever-increasing complexity of the Southeast Asian social-cultural and political environment (SEAMEO 2017a: ii).

In order to effectively monitor implementation of the 7 priority areas in the member states, SEAMEO uses a percentage-based target system. Education projects connected to the 7 areas are reported during the yearly meeting of member state vice ministers of education. They are then recorded and given a contribution percentage value, enabling the secretariat to track the progress towards all areas in the various member countries (Interview SEAMEO). Best practices and outstanding projects are highlighted and published in documents like the 2017 report "7 Priority Areas – Implementation by SEAMEO Member Countries".

Generally, the priority areas fit quite well with the evidence presented in chapter 7. This is especially true for Priority 7. Ideally, the analysis should be complemented by an assessment of SEAMEO's budget. After all, action (i.e. financing) may sometimes speak louder than words. Does SEAMEO allocate its budgetary items in a way which pairs well with its stated goals and ideals in education policy? Unfortunately, obtaining the budget for the SEAMEO secretariat proved to be difficult. Furthermore, due to the decentralized structure of the organization, in which every regional centre has its own budget co-funded by the state it is located in, the secretariat's budget would not tell the whole story – unless one were to obtain all 26 regional centre's budgets as well.

10.4 Conclusion

This chapter has argued that SEAMEO proliferates a holistic, encompassing and balanced ideal of education, in which both social and economic purposes of education are relevant on the individual and societal level. Furthermore, there is evidence for a special, region-specific twist to SEAMEO's leitmotifs in education policy, which manifests itself in the emphasis of cultural values and traditional norms rooted in the regional context of Southeast Asia. The importance of culture in education for people in the region requires a mindful approach towards education policy, which takes such elements into account in order to be successful.

Combined with the findings from the chapter on the Islamic education organizations, the evidence hints at a more general development in regard to regional education IOs. Regional organizations, like SEAMEO, are keen on reaping the developmental benefits of globalization but, at the same time, unwilling to sacrifice their cultural roots, values or traditions for it. The result is a delicate act of balancing between these two worlds. Further research is required to solidify the theoretical implications of the data presented here. How is the distinct cultural element in both SEAMEO's as well as other regional or cultural organization's education ideas related to globalization? Are these developments expressions of a "new regionalism" or "in-group orientation" in international politics? Is there a countermovement to globally proliferated Western education ideals, or are these exceptional rather than representative cases for the interaction between the global and the regional? Future work needs to find answers to these questions, if a coherent picture of how regional organizations react to globalization as well as to the dominance of Western ideals in education policy is to be established.

11. Here to Stay? Challenges to Liberal Environmentalism in Regional Climate Governance

11.1 Introduction

International organizations (IOs) have become some of the most influential actors in climate governance over the last decades (Bauer 2006; Biermann et al. 2009; Biermann 2014). However, despite their prominence, research has failed to acknowledge their diversity. Apart from a limited number of case studies, most of which concern the EU (e.g. Zwolski & Kaunert 2011), regional organizations (ROs) have been neglected by scholars of international climate governance in favor of the 'usual suspects', such as the

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (Busch 2009). Exceptions include studies on the role of ROs in the Pacific (Williams & McDuie-Ra 2017) and the regionalization of climate security (Krampe & Mobjörk 2018). Multilateral climate governance has been characterized as fragmented (Keohane & Victor 2011; Zelli & van Asselt 2013) or polycentric (Jordan et al. 2015; van Asselt & Zelli 2018), as it is comprised of a multitude of different actors, which hold diverging views on how to best conceptualize and combat climate change. An account of ROs as distinct actors is an important part of the puzzle, if we are to understand how this complex arena interacts with norms and ideas regarding climate change.

As Steven Bernstein and others (Zelli et al. 2013; Zelli & van Asselt 2013) have convincingly shown, multilateral climate governance, represented not least by IOs, has institutionalized a normative 'compromise of liberal environmentalism' (Bernstein 2001: 1) starting from the Rio Summit in 1992 onward (Bernstein 2001; Bäckstrand & Lövbrand 2007, 2019). Liberal environmentalism is comprised of a set of norms which 'predicate international environmental protection on the promotion and maintenance of a liberal economic order' (Bernstein 2002: 1). In other words, under the liberal environmentalist paradigm, economic growth is not only non-contradictory with climate protection, but rather a necessary precondition for it. With the institutionalization of this idea through the UN climate framework in the 1990s, 'liberal environmentalism constituted the setting within which climate change was framed and solutions found' (Jernnäs & Linnér 2019: 74). The notion of sustainable development, enshrined by the United Nations in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015, is intimately connected to liberal environmentalism. In regard to climate policy, sustainable development presumes that climate protection and economic development do not fundamentally contradict each other but are in fact complementary. The sustainable development paradigm is thus an embodiment of liberal environmentalism in contemporary climate governance (Bernstein 2001). Since the 1990s, discourse around climate change has often either reinforced or challenged this compromise, with the former being much more common (Bäckstrand & Lövbrand 2019).

This article expands the literature on liberal environmentalism through an account of attitudes towards the paradigm among ROs. It does so by comparing the discursive patterns produced by the Council of Baltic Sea States (CBSS) as well as the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). The analysis presented here is concerned with two main research questions. How do ROs construct climate change, and how can variation in

discursive patterns produced by ROs be explained?

As this article compares the idiosyncrasies of ROs, it represents an exercise in comparative regionalism, which refers to both the study as well as the empirical process of regional integration around the world (Börzel & Risse 2016b). Comparative regionalism attempts to move beyond earlier conceptions of regionalism to enable what Söderbaum has called 'conceptual pluralism' (2016: 33). However, rather than focusing on the causal determinants of variance in regionalism, which has traditionally been the major concern of scholars of regionalism, this article is concerned with the content of regionalism. By comparing ideas and discourse across regional organizations, the analysis aims to uncover variance in how regional organizations conceptualize climate governance. It then seeks to explain this variance, thus extending research on liberal environmentalism to include not only global governance, but also regional governance arrangements other than the EU, beyond the euro-centrism often attested to studies in comparative regionalism (Börzel & Risse 2016a).

In what follows below, I will make both empirical and theoretical contributions to the literature. Empirically, I argue that the ideas found in CARICOM's statements on climate governance have recently changed towards more urgent climate action, connecting climate change with notions of survival and justice. This shift can be interpreted as an implicit challenge towards liberal environmentalism. No similar shift in discourse can be found for CBSS, which has consistently championed the sustainable development paradigm as the ideational basis for its activities in climate governance. Then, I show how this variance can be explained through the availability of new knowledge from different sources, which influences how ROs conceptualize problem definitions and policy solutions. The analysis points towards the *combination* of different sources of knowledge as a main explanatory variable. Anecdotal knowledge, drawn from experiences in the day-to-day work of RO officials with projects and people in their respective region, can be just as important as scientific knowledge drawn from climate research for explaining ideational change.

In the following sections, I first develop my theoretical framework, in which I briefly discuss the relationship between norms, ideas, and knowledge. Then, I provide a summary of my methodology, before comparing my cases, relying on a constructivist institutionalism framework, which employs qualitative content analysis of data from different sources. Afterwards, I explain and discuss these findings, reflecting on the validity of the argument put forward. Finally, I conclude the article with a summary of

my argument as well as an outlook on further avenues for research on ROs in climate governance.

11.2 The Evolution of Ideas – Knowledge and Change

The analysis presented here relies on what may be called constructivist institutionalism (Hay 2011; Haas 2016). This framework is institutionalist in that it emphasizes the importance of IOs (here: ROs) as institutions for global governance as well as the agency of said institutions vis-à-vis their member states. IOs matter, and their existence makes a significant difference in world politics. Hence, it is valuable to conduct research on the ideas that guide their policy (Barnett & Finnemore 2004; Hawkins et al. 2006). It is constructivist because it focuses on norms and ideas which ROs proliferate through discourse, and the ways in which these change over time. Ideas are, in the simplest terms, 'beliefs held by individuals' (Goldstein & Keohane 1993: 1). Norms, using a comprehensive definition, are 'standards of appropriate behavior for actors with a given identity' (Finnemore & Sikkink 1998: 891). Both concepts are thus closely related, as norms can also be seen as (formally or informally) institutionalized ideas (Sunstein 1996). Norms and ideas have been an object of study in climate governance research for some time, and there is robust evidence for their relevance in informing climate policy (Gough 2015; Jordan et al. 2018). Liberal environmentalism is one of the premier examples of influential ideational complexes in this field.

Constructivists' treatment of ideas has not been entirely unproblematic, as they have traditionally been conceptualized as largely stable, functioning as catalysts for change and determinants of policy outcomes themselves (Goldstein & Keohane 1993). Ideas institutionalized as norms and paradigms in politics change mostly in times of crisis, when old paradigms fail sufficiently often to provoke transformation (Hall 1993). In many works on ideational change, ideas are simply replaced with other, more appropriate ideas in the face of crisis (Carstensen 2011).

These theories about ideas therefore often fail to explain incremental change over time. We can use a constructivist framework to describe and assess the ideas produced by ROs in discourse, but we may fail to be properly theorize and explain variation over time. What is needed is thus a supplement which enables such an explanation, while simultaneously not contradicting the basic tenets of constructivism and institutionalism. Following Mark Blyth (2011), this paper therefore assumes that ideas are constantly evolving. ROs, as the social institutions they are, 'are populated by learning subjects who

can ‘act back’ upon their environment in purposive ways’ (Blyth 2011: 97). RO officials can contribute to the evolution of ideas through discourse proliferated by their organizations. In this view, regional challenges to globally dominant norm complexes, such as liberal environmentalism, become part of the evolution of ideas.

However, not all types of ideas are relevant for this article, and it is therefore helpful to be more specific about their typology. Mehta (2011) separates three levels of ideas, namely policy solutions, problem definitions, and public philosophies. The first two are helpful categories for the following analysis. Policy solutions are ideas that propose specific goals, as well as specific means to achieve these goals in relation to a given problem. Problem definitions are broader ideas that provide ‘a particular way of understanding a complex reality’ (Mehta 2011: 27). Policy solutions therefore at least partly depend on problem definitions and may change when problem definitions evolve (see figure 10).

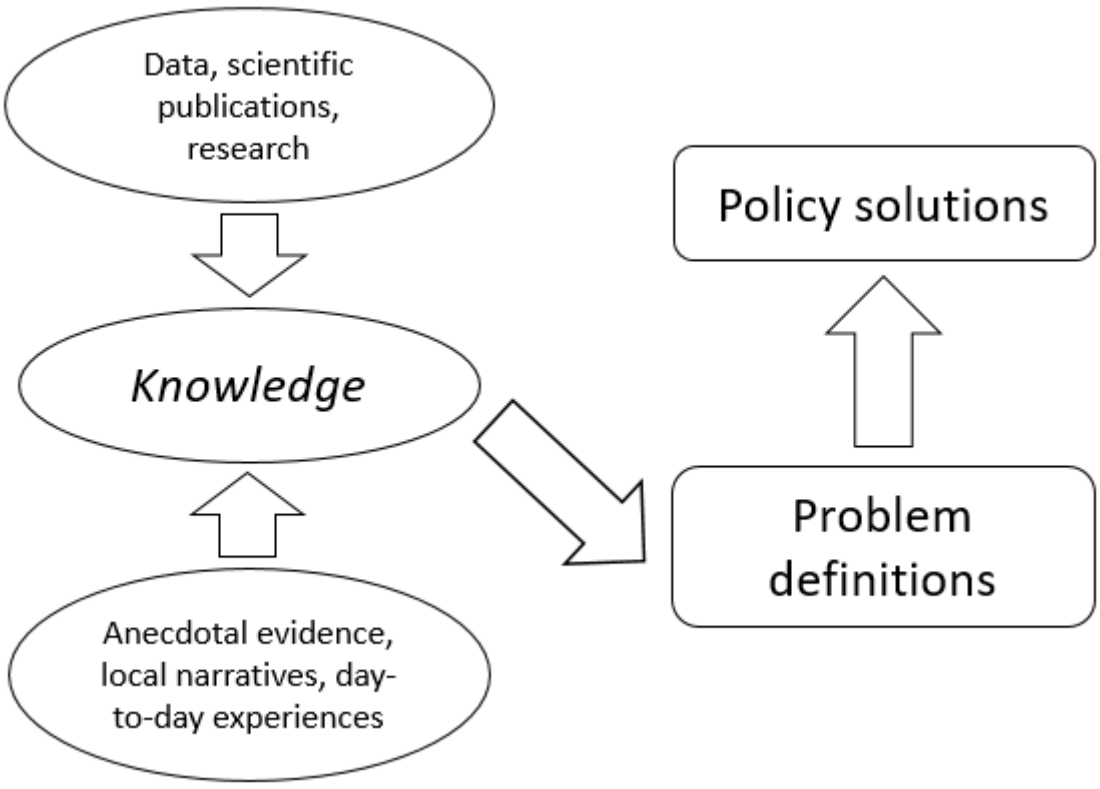


Figure 10 – Knowledge and ideas

It is then evident that *knowledge* becomes a central variable in the equation in this model. As actors’ ideas constitute, but are also constituted by, what they know (or assume to know) about the world (Sunstein 2019), ideas may change incrementally when new

knowledge comes into play. The Encyclopædia Britannica defines knowledge as 'information, understanding, or skill that you get from experience or education' (2022). It is precisely this distinction between knowledge by experience and knowledge by education that is crucial for my argument. In climate governance, new or more refined knowledge and data about climate change may prompt changes in conceptions of the severity of the problem, the main purpose of climate governance, the appropriate strategies to mitigate climate change or adapt to it, which policies should be prioritized, and others (Heymann 2010).

Knowledge can be generated from different sources, scientific data, day to day experience, local stories, and many more. I argue that a combination of bodies of knowledge from different sources can help explain change in both problem definitions as well as policy solutions. Figure 10 shows this relationship in a simplified manner. A somewhat crude distinction between scientific knowledge and anecdotal knowledge suffices for the purpose of this paper. The term anecdotal knowledge should not be taken as knowledge that is 'less true'. Rather, it is merely used as a common distinction between the realm of science and other arenas. In this conceptualization, regional challenges to liberal environmentalism in climate governance are necessarily part of the evolution of ideas. Differing regional experiences combine with internationally acclaimed scientific data to provoke incremental ideational change.

One may expect ROs in the Global South, such as CARICOM, which are both more at risk from and less able to adapt to climate change, to voice ideas that are less compatible with liberal environmentalism, given the connection between the current global economic order and climate change (Wright & Nyberg 2015; Nyberg et al. 2023). At the same time, CBSS may be expected to be more supportive of sustainable development than CARICOM, because of its favorable position in said order. In the following sections, however, I illustrate that until recently, these expectations would have been misled and that only the introduction of new knowledge has changed CARICOM's perspectives on climate governance.

11.3 Research Design and Methods

The analysis presented here relies on a structured focused comparison design of two similar cases. Both CARICOM and CBSS are regional organizations, meaning they are 'formal and institutionalized cooperative relations among states […] and constitute regionalism' (Börzel & Risse 2016a: 7). They are of similar size in terms of member

states and largely comprised of coastal states, which are subjected to risk multiplication through climate change. Moreover, both share a similar risk perception, albeit for opposite reasons. While CBSS claims that the Baltic region is vulnerable because of its highly industrialized economies and its population density (CBSS 2022b), CARICOM states that the Caribbean is vulnerable because of its *lack* of economic power (CARICOM 2009a). Both are generalist ROs that cover a wider range of policy topics, of which climate governance is only one aspect. The key difference between these two organizations is their position in the global political economy. While CBSS mostly consists of developed countries from the Global North, CARICOM is almost exclusively made up of small island developing states (SIDS). This dimension is relevant for a comparison, because one might expect differing ideas on climate change and governance based on how much RO member states benefit from the contemporary order of the global political economy.

To assess these ideas, the analysis relies on qualitative content analysis. Qualitative content analysis as a method of inferring meaning from text data has been a staple in international relations research on ideas and social sciences in general for many years and will provide the data basis for my analysis (Hsieh & Shannon 2005; Peräkylä 2005; Silverman 2006; Bowen 2009).

The material used for this comparison is compiled from a number of sources. Using the software tool MAXQDA to organize the coding, I examined strategic policy documents and reports published by the organizations, ministerial declarations, public statements made by RO officials, as well as their websites. This document analysis is complemented by two semi-structured expert interviews conducted with one high-ranking official of each of the organizations. While combining interviews and document analysis is common in research on international organizations, it is especially important for studying regional organizations. This is because ROs often lack funds and infrastructure, i.e. general resources, to produce many documents for each of their areas of work. Where organizations like the World Bank or the OECD have produced hundreds or even thousands of documents over their lifespan, regional organizations like the CBSS have produced just a few dozen over all of their issue areas. This means that document analysis will often not produce sufficient data, simply because there are so few documents available. This problem can be somewhat circumvented by including expert interviews. On the other hand, ROs often have very few staff members compared to larger bureaucracies. Thus, data generated by interviews with RO officials often relies on only

a handful of interview partners. To solve these problems, it is imperative that qualitative research on ROs includes all available sources of qualitative material to gain more robust and valid data.

The coding system employed here (see table 5) is informed by climate change discourses found in the literature (Bäckstrand & Lövbrand 2019; Jernnäs & Linnér 2019) as well as earlier work on liberal environmentalism. In total, 27 documents have been coded. 171 data points form the basis of the analysis.

	Problem definitions		**Policy solutions**	
	Primary purpose	**Actors**	**Strategic focus**	**Policy content**
Codes	*Survival* *(Sustainable)Development and Economic growth* *Climate justice* *Security* *Environmental protection*	*IOs* *Private sector* *Civil society* *States* *Partnerships*	*Mitigation* *Adaptation* *Integrated approach*	*Disaster risk management* *Mainstreaming* *Economic transformations* *Technological innovation* *Carbon markets and taxes* …

Table 5 – Problem definitions and policy solutions

The codes can be divided into four distinct categories. *Primary purpose* refers to the main policy goals of climate governance, which in turn inform the policies that ROs deem adequate to tackle climate change. These purposes reflect the multifaceted nature of the policy field, as there are issue linkages to other fields such as economic policy or security policy. The *Strategic focus* category questions whether the ROs stress mitigation of climate change, adaptation to climate change, or an integrated approach which grants equal weight to both strategies. The *Actors* category contains codes for the actors which the ROs mention in their documents as relevant or influential in climate policy, examining who acts in climate change and also expressing who should act. Finally, the *Policy content* category describes the specific policies which ROs produce or reproduce to achieve their

goals. These can be as broad as 'technological innovation', but also very specific, as are for example calls for global carbon taxes. For the sake of brevity, not all codes for this category are listed here. While *primary purpose* and *actors* are parts of problem definition, *strategic focus* and *policy content* inform policy solutions proposed by ROs. Both of these levels of ideas help us assess how ROs challenge liberal environmentalism, or whether they do so at all, as liberal environmentalism entails implicit assumptions about all of these categories.

11.4 Regional Ideas on Climate Governance and Challenges to Liberal Environmentalism

While both CARICOM and CBSS have historically subscribed to the UN sustainable development agenda in regard to climate governance, recent contributions and statements published by CARICOM put greater emphasis on notions of survival, possible extinction and climate justice. On the other hand, discourse produced by CBSS does not show a similar development, remaining firmly within its previously established ideational framework. The production of new scientific knowledge through the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and other sources only provides a partial explanation for this development. While the availability of new, more concerning data can help explain why CARICOM's attitude towards the efficacy of the current climate governance system has notably shifted, it fails to explain why CBSS's has not. After all, they both rely on the same globally available scientific knowledge about climate change. At the same time, in terms of strategy, a discursive shift from a focus on climate change mitigation to a more integrated approach which also covers climate change adaptation can be observed in both ROs. What, then, determines change in ROs' attitudes towards climate change and climate governance? The following sections will first provide a rather descriptive account of how both organizations conceptualize climate governance and how these concepts have changed over time. Second, it will examine how a combination of new knowledge from different sources can help explain the evolution of these ideas, and how such an explanation is both supported by empirical data as well as theoretically consistent.

11.4.1 CBSS – A Sustainable Development Story

CBSS is a regional organization comprised of ten member states in the Baltic region, after former member Russia has been suspended following its role in the war in Ukraine since

February 2022. Founded in 1992, the CBSS is mandated to coordinate member state policy in three priority areas called *Regional Identity*, *Safe & Secure Region* and *Sustainable & Prosperous Region*. The activities of CBSS in climate governance can be located within the latter priority area. Much of what CBSS does in the realm of climate policy is connected to EU policies, so much so that officials have described CBSS' climate activities as 'driven' by EU policy (Interview 1, 29.08.2022). This is in line with CBSS' depiction of its role in various policy documents, in which the organization seems to view itself as an implementer and coordinator rather than an independent actor. Thus, CBSS works in conjunction with both the EU and its globally active partners, stating that 'the CBSS supports a global perspective on regional problems. These include politically and practically translating the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Climate Agreement, the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction, […] into regional actions on the ground.' (CBSS 2022a). This work further includes providing expertise and gathering data on climate change in the region, promoting and implementing regional strategies such as BALTADAPT or the EU Strategy for the Baltic Region and coordinating member state activities in the three priority areas (Interview 1).

Because CBSS, as a regional organization, has limited resources in both staff and budget, it generally needs to pick its priorities well and cannot cover all possible avenues of climate governance. It is important to note that the focus of CBSS in climate governance can be quite dependent on the priorities of the respective presidency, which is rotating yearly between member states. This legal setup has led to significant variation between policy goals over the years, as policy foci remain 'in flow' (Interview 1). It also means that the ministerial level of CBSS member states, which is involved in policymaking through yearly meetings of the foreign ministers, holds quite a lot of weight, as said 'flow' depends a lot on policy input by the ministers. It is therefore even more noteworthy that the ideas displayed in its published policy documents have remained largely consistent over the observed period of time.

As indicated by the name, CBSS's priority area *Sustainable & Prosperous Region* draws heavily from the sustainable development paradigm. Sustainable development is featured prominently in most of the publications available (CBSS 2017a, 2017b, 2020). As such, in CBSS's view, climate action is but one aspect of sustainable development. CBSS thus notes that 'A large part of the work within this priority follows the framework of the United Nations 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with a

special focus on supporting the transition towards competitive green economy […]' (CBSS 2022b).

This 'special focus' is also found in the Baltic Action Plan 2030, which formulates six focus areas for regional cooperation, one of which is *Climate Action*. Serving as a framework for action, the plan notes that 'sustainable development is the engine of economic prosperity, environmental quality, and social well-being' (CBSS 2017b: 6). As for climate action, 'Achieving a low-emission and resource-wise Baltic Sea Region is the recommended objective as a part of climate change mitigation.' (CBSS 2017b: 9).

This notion is consistent with the UNFCCC and other globally relevant parties in the climate governance infrastructure, which similarly subscribe to the global sustainable development agenda (Beisheim et al. 2022). Under the UN SDG framework, climate policy is embedded into a more holistic ambition, as one of 17 goals covering a wide range of policy fields relevant to sustainable development (Bogers et al. 2022). However, the centrality of sustainable development for CBSS predates the SDGs, as earlier documents show (CBSS 2009, 2014). When asked about the impact of the SDGs on the organization, one official stated that the SDGs had thus not been particularly impactful for CBSS, but had rather provided a sort of common ground or terminology for communicating and coordinating with other political actors in the field (Interview 1).

CBSS identifies particular vulnerability in the Baltics, proposing that the region is especially vulnerable to climate change due to its high level of industrialization as well as its population density. The region must therefore 'respond to the climate change and its possible impacts on human security, the environment and competiveness in the region' (CBSS 2017a: 7). These three issue areas – economic development and competitiveness, environmental concerns, and security – are by far the most prominent concerns for climate governance promoted by CBSS. At the same time, CBSS recognizes climate change as a truly multifaceted problem with issue linkages to other fields as diverse as energy, transport, migration, culture and agriculture (interview 1). However, the 'special focus' on supporting the regional transformation towards a competitive green economy puts additional emphasis on combining economic development with environmental protection. Strategically, CBSS has recently started to shift its focus from climate change mitigation to adaptation. As the effects of climate change become more apparent, CBSS has argued that both policy and funding must increasingly be targeted at adaptation to limit those effects (CBSS 2017a, 2019).

From its inception, CBSS has championed sustainable development as the premier

guideline of climate policy. As shown above, sustainable development is a manifestation of the compromise of liberal environmentalism in international climate governance. CBSS does therefore support and reproduce, rather than challenge, liberal environmentalism. While at least implicit challenges, such as discussions about 'de-growth' rather than green growth, may be on the horizon in 'five to ten years', they are not currently part of official intra-organizational discourse (interview 1). This prediction is consistent with the notion that RO officials can contribute to the evolution of ideas over time through learning, but also shows that the knowledge that CBSS' problem definitions are based upon has not changed enough to warrant ideational change as of today.

11.4.2 CARICOM – Towards a Radical Notion of Climate Change?

CARICOM is the primary regional organization in the Caribbean, representing the majority of Caribbean states. As such, it is mostly comprised of Small Island Development States (SIDS). Founded in 1973 in Chaguamaras, Trinidad and Tobago, the organization represents 15 member states as well as five associated members. CARICOM's climate policy is carried out by the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre (CCCCC). While CARICOM and its member states retain political oversight over the centre through COTED, the Council for Trade and Economic Development, the CCCC carries out most of the technical work and activities on the ground (Interview 2, 28.09.2022). Although the centre is functionally independent in its daily work, it still represents an official branch of CARICOM and is obligated to report back to CARICOM on a regular basis. The following section accounts for this relationship by taking into account documents published by both CARICOM and the CCCCC. CARICOM also works closely with AOSIS, the Alliance of Small Island States, which has an extensive track record in advocating for the interests and needs of SIDS around the globe, especially in regard to climate change (Interview 2).

Similar to CBSS, CARICOM has focused on advancing sustainable development in the region in the past. In earlier documents, social and environmental concerns stemming from climate change are raised prominently, but mostly in conjunction with and second to economic concerns in sections where all three are mentioned. Economic concerns are almost always named first and in priority (CARICOM 2009a; CCCCC 2014). As formulated by a 2015 publication, CARICOM 'recognizes that climate change is a serious global challenge and that climate-related impacts may impede economic and social well-being and development aspirations and efforts' (CCCCC 2015: 3). However, the

relationship between economic growth and climate change is twofold according to CARICOM. Not only does climate change pose a threat to economic development, but economic growth is at the same time a prerequisite for dealing with a changing climate. Thus, CARICOM 'believes that sound economic growth, grounded in sustainable development practices is crucial for building climate resilience' (CCCCC 2015: 3).

At the same time, CARICOM has raised concerns about the very survival of its member states, which it considers seriously threatened by climate change (CARICOM 2009a, 2009b). In fact, the famous phrase '1.5 to stay alive' and the inclusion of the 1.5 degree temperature goal into the Paris Agreement in 2015 can be traced back to input provided by Dr. Jimmy Fletcher from AOSIS, which heavily relies on data and feedback provided by CARICOM members since 2009 (Interview 2). Recently, this dimension of climate policy has been most prominent in the organization's publications and statements. A clear discursive shift can be observed between pre-2015 and today, in that CARICOM now vehemently stresses narratives of survival and possible extinction of some of its member states. For example, in its declaration leading up to COP26 in Glasgow, CARICOM members demanded '[…] the assurance that our survival will not be compromised', while 'underscoring thus the limits to the region's adaptive capacity […] with cataclysmic and existential implications' (CARICOM 2021). As one official succinctly put it, '[some] islands will just disappear, it's as simple as that' (Interview 2).

A third crucial dimension of CARICOMs notion of climate policy is what has been called climate justice in both literature and public discourse in the past. For CARICOM, this means first and foremost that its members are disproportionally affected by climate change, while responsible for only about 0,2% of global greenhouse gases, and also lacking the funds to sufficiently adapt to climate change (CARICOM 2021).

The latter two ideational dimensions can be interpreted as implicit challenges to the current global political economy, its effects on climate change, and its inability to deal with a changing environment. This becomes evident in a number of statements made by high ranking officials of CARICOM in the last two years (e.g.Young 2021). Dr. Mark Bynoe, assistant executive director of the CCCCC, wrote in 2021 that 'our security and our children's future have been placed at the mercy of private profit' (Felson & Bynoe 2021: 10) and urged the international community to 'for once put people over profits, and planet over politics' (Felson & Bynoe 2021: 7). Thus, recently, a distinct sense of urgency can be observed in CARICOM's contributions to global climate policy discourse. The organization has openly criticized the international community for its lack of significant

climate action, which is exemplified by the insufficient implementation of the Paris Agreement (Raiser et al. 2020; CARICOM 2021). Officials have stated that commitment to solving the climate crisis in the Caribbean and other regions at risk pales especially in relation to other global crises, such as the Covid-19 pandemic or the war in Ukraine. In CARICOM's perception, these crises have been tackled with much greater vigor than the ongoing climate crisis, while potentially being less impactful on a global scale (interview 2). Thus, CARICOM calls for global commitment to the agreements made in Paris in 2015, stressing that the climate crisis would be much less urgent for the region if cuts to global greenhouse gas emissions were actually being made in accordance with those promised in the nationally determined contributions. Strategically, CARICOM equally stresses adaptation efforts over mitigation more recently, as it acknowledges a gap in funding for adaptation versus mitigation of climate change (CCCCC 2015).

Whether these shifts represent an implicit challenge to liberal environmentalism is obscured by the nature of CARICOMs relation with other international actors. In 2020, CARICOM received a full third of its annual budget from contributions made by 'development partners', meaning either large developed countries or other IOs, such as the EU (CARICOM 2020). For climate governance, the dependence on external funding is even greater, as the CCCCC is mandated to acquire its funding independently of CARICOM's member states. Thus, it is questionable whether CARICOM would mount more explicit challenges to the liberal economic order that the current global climate regime is tied to, even if it wanted to. In any case, CARICOM has never explicitly challenged the sustainable development paradigm or called for a more fundamental transformation of global production and consumption patterns. However, it has disputed the more business-friendly climate policies of developed countries, as shown above. As the idea that successful climate policy depends on sound economic growth is one of the cornerstones of liberal environmentalism, these criticisms can be interpreted as an implicit challenge. Thus, while CARICOM does not put forward any systemic challenges to the global climate regime, it does criticize the effects and inadequate output of this regime as well as the developed countries responsible for it. It is this contrast between CARICOM's ideas and the more sustainable development focused and less critical discourse produced by CBSS which requires explaining.

CARICOM's discursive shift towards a more existential notion of the implications of climate change and a more urgent call for drastic measures in climate governance can be explained by two main factors. First, the ever more refined findings on climate change,

such as the most recent IPCC reports (e.g. IPCC 2022) have provided CARICOM officials with a new and more extensive scientific basis for their claims (interview 2). As ever more data on climate change further solidify suspicions of CARICOM that the survival of their members may be at serious risk in the near future, instead of some far-away dystopian vision, these reports have given impetus to emphasize those narratives of extinction and climate justice. It is well known that IOs draw a significant share of their power from the production, reproduction and diffusion of knowledge (Barnett & Finnemore 1999, 2004; Oestreich 2012). However, scientific knowledge itself may also function as a catalyst for the evolution of ideas connected to climate change. As climate governance especially relies on data about which aspects of the environment will change, in which capacity they will change, and to what effect they will change, the ability of CARICOM to refer to an internationally recognized body of knowledge is of crucial importance for the organization. As CARICOM notes in one of its most recent publications,

> With the recent release of findings in the IPCC's Sixth Assessment Report (AR6), echoing the alarm of the grim consequences of a world warming much quicker than originally thought, and the confirmation that humans are unequivocally causing changes in the climate, we find it fitting to […] amplify our voices on the issues that irk us as it relates to climate change (Fontenard 2021: 3)

Second, over the last decade, the perceived effects of climate change have become painfully obvious in the day to day experience of people in the Caribbean. It is precisely this combination of sources of knowledge that induces ideational change. Scientific knowledge as well as anecdotal knowledge act as mutually reinforcing catalysts for a shift in ideas on climate change. As Dr. Young, executive director of the CCCCC, publicly stated in response to the IPCC's AR6:

> The findings confirm what we have been experiencing and telling the world. […] Year after year, we see the number and severity of climate hazards increasing. (CCCCC 2021).

The observation of changes in the environmental, social and economic realities of everyday life and their impact on the citizens of CARICOM member states have altered the perception of policy makers, or shifted their priorities. As natural disasters grow in frequency and severity, there are a lot of cases for this impact. Other instances of experienced climate change include more intense rainfall, higher temperatures and heavier hurricane seasons (CCCCC 2021). One CCCCC official pointed to the nutmeg industry on Grenada, once the second largest provider of nutmeg in the world, as an example. This industry was razed by hurricanes Ivan and Emily in 2002 and 2004 and

lost about 90% of its production, severely impacting the local economy and livelihoods of people on the small island state (interview 2). This form of anecdotal knowledge is all too often dismissed in the social sciences, but may matter a great deal in regional settings.

The combination of both scientific as well as anecdotal knowledge offers an explanation which is empirically sound and makes theoretical sense. While CBSS officials have access to the same scientific knowledge as CARICOM executives, they lack the experiences with the immediate impact of climate change in their day-to-day work. This is not to say that climate change is not impacting the Baltic region visibly as of today. Rather, the impacts are not yet catastrophic enough for CBSS to change their problem definition of climate change. For CARICOM, the problem definition of climate change has evolved over the last years, through both new data provided by scientists as well as anecdotal knowledge from their activities in the region. Thus, the organization now questions the output of the current global climate governance infrastructure, as well as inadequate climate action put forward by large emitters, such as the US or China. Anecdotal knowledge acquired from experience rather than scientific research can contribute to the evolution of ideas (Blyth 2011) over time in this way.

11.5 Conclusion

This article has tracked the discourse around climate change put forward by ROs, arguing for the explanatory power of knowledge, manifested through evolving ideas. Both ROs compared here have been firm proponents of sustainable development in the past, thus contributing to and reproducing liberal environmentalism. However, CARICOM has changed its problem definitions of climate change over the last years, leaning towards a more survival-focused conceptualization. CBSS, on the contrary, has continued to champion the sustainable development paradigm. Of course, sustainable development does not inherently contradict notions of survival or climate justice, especially under the SDG framework, as it is precisely the contradiction between ecological protection and economic growth that the SDGs try to solve. Nevertheless, as the proof of concept for sufficient decoupling of economic growth and climate change under real world socioeconomic conditions is still out, setting such a discursive focus can be interpreted as a deviation from the paradigm. I have argued that this deviation can be explained by evolving knowledge from a combination of sources, stressing the importance of anecdotal knowledge in conjunction with scientific knowledge. It is through this combination that ideas have translated into discursive shifts in the examined cases.

These shifts represent a case of ideational evolution (Blyth 2011). However, this approach is not without its weaknesses. While it offers a satisfying argument for variation in discourse, a knowledge-based approach fails to provide a proper explanation for a lack thereof. For example, it cannot account for why both ROs continue to integrate more climate adaptation policies into their governance approach, when CARICOM needs urgent adaptation funding more than CBSS. As an alternative explanation for why CARICOM has voiced such criticism of the current climate change regime, one could consider a rationalist hypothesis based on actors' interests or ranked preferences of action. Such a proposition would hold that a changed order of preferences or of geopolitical interests accounts for the variation described above. I argue that the approach I have taken here does not necessarily contradict a more rationalist framework, since a constructivist perspective must see interests as social constructions as well (Hay 2011). Assuming that interests do not exist exogenously, they must be treated as co-constituted by actors' knowledge and therefore equally not independent of ideas. As knowledge changes, so does what actors, such as ROs, perceive as their interests. One may therefore argue that it is necessarily in CARICOM's interest to make more urgent calls and challenges to liberal environmentalism, when new climate data tell them that they have to perceive climate change as an existential threat to their very survival, but they can also see that in their day-to-day work with people from the region. Interest, in this view, is also a matter of problem definition, but does not hold a lot of explanatory power independent of or exogenous to ideas. The cases presented here are not necessarily generalizable for all ROs active in climate policy, which is typical for even larger comparative case studies. As ROs have their idiosyncrasies, they must be examined case-by-case. Further case studies are thus needed to achieve a more complete picture of the role that ROs play in international climate governance.

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