

**Doctoral candidate:**

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**Title:**

When Knowledge Travels. Expert Networks in African Security Policy: Case Studies of AU and ECOWAS.

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**Summary:**

Why do the security mechanisms of the African Union (AU) and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) resemble the United Nations Security Council, and each other? This thesis argues that the existing literature does not adequately capture policymaking in international and regional organizations. By looking mostly at functionality-driven explanations, it has neglected so far the key role of interdependent decision-making processes. How states and organizations define their interests is to a large extent influenced by decisions already made in other international and regional organizations. Existing diffusion studies have

already shown that these learning processes are observable in most of today's such organizations. However current research remains conducted on a quantitative basis, and is therefore not able to answer questions regarding where those learning processes are actually taking place and, most importantly, exactly who is involved in them.

This thesis closes this gap by tracing the establishment processes of the AU's and ECOWAS' security mechanisms. After having conducted interviews with involved decision-makers and consultants, the thesis shows how the design of the security mechanisms of the AU and ECOWAS has been heavily influenced by other, already-existing security mechanisms. Furthermore, it reveals just how crucial the role of expert networks has been in this. Not only having acted as knowledge-holders but most importantly as knowledge-sharers, expert networks have actively brought their knowledge of and from other organizations into the decision-making processes of the AU and ECOWAS. By illuminating how expert networks have constituted a decisive factor in such learning processes, this thesis contributes to our greater understanding of diffusion processes in general and of (social) learning ones in particular.