

## **Interaction matters: how the EU approach to Russia shapes the outcomes of cooperation in the ‘common neighborhood’**

The chapter represents a part of a PhD research that focuses on the interaction between regional organizations and external great powers. In my dissertation I aim to explain the different trajectories and outcomes of the EU-Russia and ASEAN-China relations by advancing the role-centered understanding of the power of regional organizations as political actors (Wendt 1992; Thies 2009; Thies 2012). My research of the history of interaction of the EU-Russia and ASEAN China cases has shown that the way regional organizations responded to the role conceptions advanced by great powers resulted in the different evolution of Russia’s and China’s roles and their level of cooperation with the EU and ASEAN respectively. This role-centered explanation allowed to explain the general pattern of region-great power communication within the distinct social environments in Europe and Asia. However, it does not account for a number of variations in the interaction trajectories. Namely, the shifts in the degrees of great powers’ cooperation/confrontation towards the policies of regional organizations were not always dependent on the enacted roles. These shifts also represented intra-region and intra-issue area variations, which means that the difference in regional social contexts or issue-related contexts cannot provide adequate explanations. Therefore, in order to understand these variations I need to further unpack the interaction process and examine how the format of interaction or the quality of interaction that regional organizations favor influence the level of great power cooperation.

In order to establish this causal connection, I will focus on the instances in the EU-Russia relations where the EU changed its approach to interaction, to see whether it produced a difference in the outcome (the level of Russia’s cooperation). The two ‘ideal types’ of the format of interaction are considered to frame the case analysis: ‘shared’ approach to interaction and ‘protectionist’ approach. These ideal types were created on the basis of my previous empirical research and thus represent a conceptual innovation. ‘Shared’ approach to interaction represents the situation where great powers are allowed to participate in regional-order building by influencing its underlying concepts and objectives, when they are able to impact the policy content, scope and organization, and when the commitments for policy implementation are shared between the organization and great power. ‘Protectionist’ format of interaction represents the opposite logic of interaction.

Two case studies are considered to test my assumptions: Northern Dimension Cooperation and crisis of the case of the Eastern Partnership. This case selection follows the covariational research design to case studies (Gerring 2006, 27) as both cases offer spatial and temporal variation.

I will argue that ‘shared’ format of cooperation creates ‘legitimate’ channels for great powers to be involved in region-building and contributes to the socializing effect. In contrast, ‘protectionist’ format of interaction reduces the opportunities for great powers to be meaningfully engaged in the region, which creates incentives for resistant or even confrontational behavior.