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Diffusionism and Beyond in IR Norm Research

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ABSTRACT

This article suggests the relevance of diffusionism in discussing the past, the present, and the future of the International Relations (IR) norm diffusion literature. The paper argues, thus, that IR norm research has reproduced the diffusionist and beyond-diffusionist mechanisms and epistemologies that the anthropological research on culture diffusion has developed, and this has been consequential for the discipline. Accordingly, the diffusionism dominant in the mainstream IR norm research has led to the normalisation of normative hierarchies and power asymmetries between geographies in the diffusion context. The critical norm research, complementarily, while extensively criticising such biased scholarly practices, failed to diagnose the problem as diffusionism and thus failed to benefit from the informed conclusions the anthropological schools offered regarding *beyond-diffusionism* in diffusion research. The paper takes this as a basis for highlighting the necessity to further extend the dialogue between IR and social sciences and humanities on issues including diffusion.

KEYWORDS

Diffusionism; diffusion research; norm diffusion; critical norm research

Introduction

In the historical context, the IR scholarship has profoundly engaged in the questions anthropologists (and equally historical sociologists or social historians) raised in elaborating the history of state-formation, warfare, and civilisations.¹ Recently, this interest has been also extended towards subjects such as migration, border-making, ethnicity, culture, identity, violence, conflict, gender, transnationality or globalisation.² This was in line with IR scholarship's establishment of the relevance of local particularities in the global processes. The latter tendency has enabled scholars to acquire a more grounded knowledge on the local as a research site for IR and to gain further familiarity with the epistemologies and methodologies developed outside the IR mainstream. This present research is a product of this tendency, and it is built on a belief that most of the mechanisms, epistemologies or methodologies IR scholarship developed on agency or structure or relations or meaning have also been extensively studied in other disciplines. Yet, many of their findings have not been adequately addressed or reflected on within IR, affecting the conclusions IR scholarship would offer to them. Diffusionism

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¹For instance, see Snyder (2002).

²For some of these studies see Richmond (2018); Millar (2018, 2014); Montsion (2018); Lie (2013); Kuus (2013); Vrasti (2008); Beier (2005).

is a topic of this kind. This research aims to elaborate on, in the case of norm diffusion research, the extent to which diffusionism is methodologically and epistemologically consequential in IR and to which IR debates on diffusion(ism) would contribute to the broader diffusion research.

To begin with, in Anthropology, diffusionism is a century-long approach focused on offering scholarly explanations for the dissemination of cultural traits and innovations. It, therefore, represents a particular perspective on studying the process and the practice of diffusion. And, it becomes considered as a methodological problem due to its assuming a hierarchical relationship between geographies and localities in the occurrence of cultural change and resemblances, two processes explained by diffusion.

In IR there is as yet no discussion made under the title of diffusionism, however, diffusion has historically been a critical mechanism often studied within the scope of policy diffusion and norm diffusion. It has also been effectively utilised in explaining, for instance, the internationalisation of the nation-state system, the expansive democratisation, Westernisation and Europeanisation, the spill-over of instabilities and threats, cosmopolitanisation, the global arms race, distribution of wealth and prosperity, world-wide sustainable development and human rights agendas, or the globalisation of environmental concerns. Similar to the diffusionism in Anthropology, in mainstream IR, the diffusion has been considered as a form of hegemonic relationship of the emitting centre *with* the recipient periphery. And, this comprehension has depicted the periphery as a passive and silent recipient of the externally invented/imposed standards for political, societal or even economic conduct (an opportunity to be in tune with the centre), which assumes an inherent normative superiority and legitimate dominancy of the centre. This, nonetheless, has mostly been a tacit act.³ The mainstream norm diffusion research does not make references to diffusionists' findings. The critical norm research as well, while criticising the mainstream norm research for assuming hierarchy and asymmetry in diffusion, does not diagnose the problem as diffusionism. Strikingly, both the mainstream understanding of diffusion and the diffusion models developed by critical norm research bear a remarkable resemblance with the (beyond) diffusionism models in Anthropology and other fields.

This research underlines the necessity of accurately identifying the problem (diffusionism, in this case). This will enable the scholarship to benefit from the earlier findings and discussions on diffusionism in other fields, to develop informed ways to go beyond such problems in norm research, and to contribute to the broader debate on the subject within the social sciences and humanities. As of yet, IR scholars have not participated in the transdisciplinary efforts for studying diffusion without dwelling on diffusionism, despite its commonality within the discipline. This is something long experienced regarding diffusionism—as Katz et al. suggested as early as 1963 that

diffusion researchers in the several traditions ... scarcely know of each other's existence. The recent "discovery" of rural sociology by students of mass communications and vice versa is a good case in point. As a result, each tradition has emphasised rather different variables and a

³In broader social sciences, the critiques have long drawn attention to "the fact that most social scientists who today put forward diffusionist ideas ... are unaware of the diffusionism in their ... thinking" Blaut (1987, 33–34).

characteristically different approach ... diffusion research in the various research traditions can be said to have been “independently invented!”. (Katz, Levin, and Hamilton 1963, 40)

Additionally, Hans Peter Hahn (2008, 192) suggests that diffusionism functions as a “missing link” between culture history and globalisation, because it lays bare the parallels between the two approaches regarding the way the global flows of traits are understood. Similarly, Joao Leal (2011, 314) argues that diffusionism could be the “missing link” between acculturation and globalisation theorists. This is because while they both grasp diffusionist premises, dialogue between them is absent despite their both dealing with cultural transmission processes, cultural change, and the local reactions to foreign cultural influences; in the example, for instance, of the Westernisation of the Third World/Global South.

So, would *diffusionism* function as a ground for dialogue (*a missing link*) between IR and Anthropology? Considering the norm research’s reliance on diffusionism (and beyond), one can say it would. Indeed, it already functioned as such between Social Psychology’s interpersonal norms research and Anthropology. In Social Psychology, initiated by the research agenda on the “transmission of cultural information and meanings through a cultural medium (i.e. norms)”, the necessity of anthropological approaches to diffusion (the missing link) was long ago discovered. And even an in-house neo-diffusionist approach to interpersonal and sociocultural communication has been developed (Kashima, Peters, and Whelan 2008; Gao et al. 2015). This paper, thus, relatedly reflects on the potential for and limits of a dialogue between IR and Anthropology based on the IR research’s agenda on norm diffusion.

The paper is structured as follows: The first section introduces the mainstream and critical comprehensions of norm diffusion and the diffusion models developed by critical scholarship to overcome the mainstream (non-diagnosed) *diffusionist* biases. Following this, the second section in-detail elaborates *diffusionism* and *beyond-diffusionism* in historical and contemporary Anthropology. Finally, the third section draws the parallels between IR norm research and the anthropological schools on diffusionism and beyond-diffusionism and reflects on the future research avenues for IR research on non-diffusionist modes of norm diffusion.

Norm diffusion—mainstream and critical approaches

Mainstream norm diffusion accounts

The mainstream understanding of norm diffusion in IR came to be represented mostly by mainstream constructivism, which paid attention to the channels of transmission. These channels include teaching, socialisation, persuasion, or coercion by which the norm receiving actors, learn, adopt, institutionalise, comply with, and eventually internalise (and also bandwagon, decouple, habitualise, emulate or mimic) the outsider ideational settings.⁴ The core idea behind norm diffusion has been the belief that “norms (like ideas) do not float freely”; they thus have been given international mobility by norm

⁴The relevant literature includes studies such as: Finnemore (1993); Risse-Kappen (1994); Klotz (1995a; 1995b); Katzenstein (1996a, 1996b); Kowert and Legro (1996); Cortell and Davis (1996); Checkel (1997; 2001); Sikkink (1998); Finnemore and Sikkink (1998); Price (1998); Risse-Kappen, Ropp, and Sikkink (1999); Johnston (2001); Ingebritsen (2002); Björkdahl (2002); Park (2005); Simmons, Dobbin, and Garrett (2008); Börzel and Risse (2009); Katsumata (2011); True (2016).

advocates (a.k.a. norm entrepreneurs) who actively promote the norms (Sikkink 1998; Risse-Kappen, Ropp, and Sikkink 1999). However, this has often been accompanied by two other beliefs; that not all norms are equal; thus, only a few can diffuse, and the diffusing ones are often the “good” ones. This is a conviction confining the diffusion to an inherently hierarchical relationship between a “norm maker/builder” (active emitting centre) and a “norm taker” (passive recipient) and imagining it as a process facilitated and overseen by the *morally superior* norm entrepreneurs.⁵

Norm entrepreneurs here are portrayed as the agents of norm diffusion with “strong notions about appropriate or desirable behaviour in their community” that utilise (i) framing (and other forms of linguistic and symbolic activities) as a political strategy “to redefine an activity as wrong” (Sikkink 1998, 519)—and to alter the prevalent normative structures (Wunderlich 2013)—and (ii) organisational platforms to promote their norms internationally (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, 896–900). Despite the overall references to and reasoning through “morality/normativity” in norm promotion and justification, norm entrepreneurs have often been considered as using “material levers” and acting “strategically to achieve [their] desired ends”—an approach that depicts the diffusion innately as a coercive process, from which a situation of persuasion/compliance arises and that assumes the target of the diffusion as a passive recipient automatically adopting a diffusing norm (Klotz 1995b, 13; also see Checkel 1997; Payne 2001; Björkdahl 2002; Olsen 2002).

Critical norm research targets mainstream accounts

This mainstream comprehension of norm diffusion has been highly criticised, and the critical norm scholarship has proposed alternative models of diffusion.⁶

Among these critiques, Amitav Acharya has suggested that the mainstream norm research adheres to secured linearity and moral superiority in theorising diffusion. This is because, to Acharya, it assumes an “implicit dichotomy between good global or universal norms and bad regional or local norms”, attributing to Western-originated international norms a prescriptive quality and moral superiority over the local non-Western ones (Acharya 2004, 242, 2013, 468). It is upon this ground that the role of local agency is overlooked in norm diffusion, and the locals are imagined as “passive recipients”. When the “locality” is theorised in diffusion, the adaptive processes—including the strategies such as framing or grafting that aim to “make a global norm local” or associate “a new norm ... with a pre-existing norm”—are thought to be overseen by the outsiders (Acharya 2004, 24, 2012).⁷ In this belief, the norm entrepreneurs are thought of as “moral entrepreneurs” who assume a self-imposed mission of “teaching”

⁵The following studies exemplify this well: Finnemore and Sikkink (1998); Checkel (1999); Ingebritsen (2002); Björkdahl (2005).

⁶For critiques on the epistemological consequences of mainstream diffusion approaches see Acharya (2004, 2011, 2012, 2013); Wiener (2007a, 2007b); Archibugi and Marchetti (2009); Mueller (2011); Gilardi (2012); Zwingel (2012, 2016); Krook and True (2012); Schneiker and Joachim (2012); MacKenzie and Sesay (2012); Wunderlich (2013); Steinhilper (2015); Engelkamp, Glaab, and Renner (2014); Engelkamp and Glaab (2015); Großklaus (2015); Zimmermann (2016); Dunford (2017); Bloomfield (2016); Bloomfield and Scott (2016); Draude (2018); Lorentzen (2018).

⁷For this, Acharya particularly targeted the works of Risse-Kappen (1994); Klotz (1995b); Price (1998); Cortell and Davis (1996); Kowert and Legro (1996); Checkel (1997, 2001).

the rest of the world the *international* prescriptions of what is good (appropriate) and what is not (Acharya 2004, 242).⁸

Antje Wiener as well fiercely criticised the norm research's empirical tendency of studying diffusion as a process of the powerful Western states' pushing the weaker states to *achieve* compliance (termed as socialisation). To her, this depicted the targets of socialisation as passive "norm followers" and diffusion as a recurring process of "transferring norms from the inside of liberal communities out" thus from the static liberal centre towards the static illiberal periphery in the form of "transplanting" (Wiener 2015, 214). Moreover, Anke Draude (2018, 577) reflected on this tendency by arguing that

[r]esearch on global norm diffusion and institutional transfer has often neglected the agency of the governed. Both approaches imply that the world-wide spread of more or less formalised standard(s) of appropriate behaviour follows a roadmap from North to South. While active 'senders' are thus thought to create social and political standards in a consolidated centre of the world and to direct dissemination, passive 'recipients' in the peripheral regions are supposed to simply take and copy, or reject, the social innovations from elsewhere.

Bloomfield and Scott confirmed this view and critically argued that diffusion research treats the "targets of socialisation ... as passive 'norm followers'", tends to study "*successful* cases of norm diffusion" (thus takes the diffusion as a linear-progress), and assumes that the diffusion is "teleologically progressive" (Bloomfield and Scott 2016, 4-5).⁹ This comes to mean that "Western norm entrepreneurs were implicitly assumed to be 'enlightened' while their targets—non-Western norm followers—were 'unenlightened' and required 'guidance'" (4-5). These two positions were confirmed by Engelkamp and Glaab. They suggested that diffusion research tends to conceptualise normative change through assuming either adoption or rejection, thus through underestimating the importance of local context and power relations. Moreover, to them, the diffusion research conceptualised the international, more precisely the Western, norms as "intrinsically good" and attributed to them "universal normality" and validity—a hierarchical representation utilised to show why the Western norms are more appealing internationally (Engelkamp and Glaab 2015, 210, 207, 203).

The ground for this hierarchical representation is the assumption of "one-way diffusionism" that assumes a "uni-directional travel of ideas, practices, institutions and forms of historical and economic development from West to rest" (Archibugi and Marchetti 2009, 58).¹⁰ This exact position is also shared by Krook and True (2012), Zwingel (2012, 2016), Wunderlich (2013), Van der Vleuten, van Eedewijk, and Roggeband (2014), and Engelkamp and Glaab (2015). They all criticised the assumption of a linear, uni-directional, top-down, and one-way flow—*global to local* or *international to domestic*—of norms inherent in most global norm diffusion research for their affirming and enhancing the universalism and global-salience of Western ideas and institutions.

In line with the critique of Western-centrism, MacKenzie and Sesay (2012, 147) postulate that mainstream diffusion scholarship tells "primarily a white, Western

⁸Acharya here targets the works of Finnemore (1996); Kowert and Legro (1996); Finnemore and Sikkink (1998); Checkel (1997); Barnett and Finnemore (1999).

⁹Also see Kowert and Legro (1996) for a critique of the tendency of studying successful cases of norm diffusion.

¹⁰Here, Archibugi and Marchetti particularly target David Held and his cosmopolitan democracy arguments.

version” of the “story” of international norms” that misguidedly treats international norms as *international* in character, that implicitly normalise inequality and imperial hierarchies innate to norm constitution, and that thus reinforce the local norms’ intrinsic subordinate position against the so-called “international” or “global” norms. This is because to MacKenzie and Sesay the arguments on the intersubjective constitution of *international* norms prevailing in constructivist norm research are naïve; the local is never equal as an agent contributing to norm construction, and diffusion or socialisation never involves a reciprocal relationship. The same mistaken perspective is dominant, to them, in diffusion research, as they keep suggesting that “norm diffusion involves a socialisation process that is voluntary, progressive, and reciprocal”, and “that largely disregards or glosses over the intense contestations and controls associated with norms” (147). To them, such discourses on norm diffusion embody “neo-colonial tendencies”, even represent “practical sirens warning of imperialism”—as diffusion mostly involves “coercion, financial pressure, and exclusion”, the supposed *appropriateness* the norms evoke is defined and overseen by the powerful Western states, and the participants of the “norm business”—norm diffusers and norm takers—are involved in an “unequal” power relationship (147).

Robin Dunford (2017) defined the unequal power relationship Mackenzie and Sesay address as the persistence of “coloniality” in the Western authorship of norms.¹¹ This is because, to Dunford, the normative and epistemic hierarchy set “between already universal and otherwise unchanging global norms and a vernacular culture or language into which grassroots and Southern actors translate them” indicates that “[n]on-Western actors become norm-makers only by complying with an already-written global design” (3-4).

Functioning as a summary of the above reviewed critical position against mainstream norm diffusion, Elias Steinhilper (2015, 538) explains that

Norm diffusion is conceived as a one-way avenue as the norm is spread by a sender and adopted by a passive norm recipient. The norm is not reshaped and renegotiated in an interaction. Furthermore, these approaches are biased toward ‘Western’ countries and perspectives. Various authors explicitly note that normative change occurs when Western states and international organisations pressure states in the ‘Global South’. Their perception of diffusion is a linear process from the ‘West’ to the ‘Rest’ in terms of both the drivers of change and the content of international normative innovations. External norms are largely conceived as unequivocal and deeply rooted in dominant Western ideas ... in light of these approaches, it is unlikely to expect the proliferation of ‘non-Western’ norms and even more so the socialisation of Western states into compliance with such norms.

Upon such critiques and as part of a search for a remedy, the above scholarship also proposed several alternative models and modes of norm diffusion.

Alternative models of norm diffusion

According to the model Amitav Acharya developed, coined as norm circulation, the diffusion is essentially a two-way but multi-step process. As part of diffusion, the “global norms offered by transnational moral actors” go through local contestation and in order to achieve a fit with the “cognitive priors of the locals” the norm gets

¹¹Also see Björkdahl (2005, 529).

localised (Acharya 2013, 469). Following this, “this local feedback is repatriated back to the wider global context along with other locally constructed norms and help to modify and possibly defend and strengthen the global norm in question (subsidiarity)” (469). This model offers a valuable explanation about the Western-bias-free sources of the globality of global norms—their creation has diverse sources and develops with the involvement of multiple agents in plural contexts. With this model, Acharya shows the importance of the weak against the powerful in the norm process. Nevertheless, in formulating the circulation model, Acharya combines his concepts of localisation and subsidiarity, two key frames of reference in his thinking. Localisation challenges the idea of thinking of local context as a passive recipient of norms, and reconceptualises local agents as active norm localisers and constructors. In localisation, local actors use “foreign ideas as a frame to express local beliefs and practices” and deliberately change “the formal shape and content of foreign ideas on the basis of the recipient’s own prior beliefs and practices” (Acharya 2012, 2–3). Subsidiarity, on the other hand, shows how local actors delegitimise the universality of the outside norms and “preserve their autonomy from dominance, neglect, violation, or abuse by more powerful central actors” (Acharya 2011, 97). Nevertheless, both localisation and subsidiarity prioritise the agency of local actors, reveal the legitimation dynamics at work in the local, highlight the necessity of the cognitive priors of the locality, and recognise the evolutionary characteristics, other than one-way and progressive, of normative change (2012, 4).

Antje Wiener’s beyond mainstream framework is termed *strategic blueprinting*, and she proposes it as a model defining the interactive and equally contested nature of norm transfer. In strategic blueprinting, the periphery strategically chooses to translate only certain pieces of the normative order into domestic institutions: in Wiener’s words “[r]ather than transferring norms from the inside of liberal communities out, outsiders choose to copy parts of the *acquis communautaire*” (2015, 211). Blueprinting here appears to be a conscious choice, and it reflects the culturally defined alternative meanings the adopter attaches to the external normative order. The blueprinting framework is based on a particular understanding of norm transfer, suggesting that the meanings of norms are contested; therefore, the assumed universal validity and facticity of norms are unrealistic. The normative meanings norms connate vary depending on the cultural prior or strategic reasoning of the recipient and norm defenders. In diffusion, therefore, the granted normative meaning of norms changes due to local rival validation processes and to the contestation manifesting itself in interpreting the meaning and representation of norms (Wiener 2007a, 48, 54, 2007b, 1–2, 2018).

Krook and True (2012) also challenge the portrayal of diffusion as a one-way process, thus sharing a point of departure with Wiener. They instead offer a discursive model that sees ambiguity and vagueness as the core characteristics enabling norms to be globally diffused.¹² This is because, to the discursive model, “[n]orms diffuse precisely because—rather than despite the fact that—they may encompass different meanings, fit in with a variety of contexts, and be subject to framing by diverse actors” (105). Their vagueness, therefore, enables norms’ “content to be filled in many ways and thereby to be appropriated for a variety of different purposes” (104). Here, the discursive model assumes the contestation as the prime trajectory for norm diffusion; as state and non-

¹²On the discursive character of diffusion also see Engelkamp and Glaab (2015, 212); Schneiker and Joachim (2012).

state actors, as active participants of norm constitution and reconstitution globally, are in constant competition for both giving meaning to norms and defining their policy outcomes. This is an account of diffusion that sheds an excellent light on the occurrence of diverse local reinventions of the content and meaning of norms.

Through drawing on the redundancy in the “norm diffusion literature ... [regarding] local reinterpretation of norms” and to contribute to the better understanding of the dynamics of “the localisation of globally promoted norms”, Mathias Großklaus (2015, 1255–1256) offers an appropriation model to the study of norm diffusion.¹³ Appropriation, to Großklaus, is a non-Western local practice of reinterpreting, mostly Western, foreign or “alien” ideas, and it is utilised by local actors “in order to participate in a broader normative order, while at the same time rejecting Western semantic control over this order”. Via appropriation, the non-Western world resists the enforced normative order and undermines the *colonial* influences for adoption. And, they incorporate “Western ideas of (claimed) universal validity ... in non-Western identity constellations without replacing local identities”. They also utilise the appropriated norm to deal with the local non-compliant practices “in ‘universal’ terms without having to fall back on the traditions of Western societies at the same time”—this is the ground upon which Großklaus suggests appropriation as a form of localisation (1255).

Suzanne Zwingel utilised norm translation to account for norm travel globally—she did so through highlighting the evolutionary character of international norms. Zwingel’s translation model is a challenge to diffusion’s implying of a one-way flow, from global to non-global; it thus denotes that “differently contextualised norms may be translated *into another realm*, for example, from global to national or local to national” (2012, 124). This translation, however, involves culturally reinventing a norm or the transmission of certain meanings that manifest as vernacularisation or domestication—the basis upon which international norms evolve and by which they become turned into culturally understandable and socially acceptable local/national frames (125).

Lisbeth Zimmermann similarly proposes a norm translation framework; yet, unlike Zwingel, she offers a “multiple translation” model highlighting the development of *subtypes* of translation in the course of localisation. To Zimmermann (2016), theories of diffusion ignore the practices of translation and contestation, and misguidedly expect resistance (due to local filters), full adoption (due to social and material vulnerability), or decoupling (due to lack in state capacity) as clear-cut outcomes of the norm processes. Those considering translation as an outcome, as for instance part of localisation, however, tend to turn the research focus only to local actors leaving the actual domestic global interaction unexplored (99). Zimmermann’s model rather treats norm translation as a fluid and continuous process focusing on “the interaction of different actor groups and the agency of both international and domestic actors that contest, interpret, and translate norms” (111). This allows her to cover contestations from both global-local and local-local dimensions.

Zimmermann and her colleagues in a later study offer yet another model, a.k.a. the contestation model, unlocking the *limitations* of both the above-mentioned norm appropriation and norm translation frameworks. Both models, to Zimmermann, Deitelhoff, and Lesch (2018, 696–697), reveal the vagueness of global norms and the *agency of the*

¹³Also see Lorentzen (2018).

governed, however their “perspective remains top-down in orientation, resulting in a model that studies only the reactions of actors from Global South to ‘international’ norms”, leaving the “core of the global norms usually remain untouched” (norms are translated by local actors in new local contexts yet the original norm continues to remain intact despite local translation and appropriation). By saying this, they suggest that these frames ascribe minimal agency to the local actors (actors from the Global South) and ignore the capacity of local agency to influence the norm-in-global-circulation. To Zimmerman et al., following Acharya and Wiener, despite the power asymmetry in the global-local context, the local norm reception processes, more precisely the contestation, may lead to or “feedback into international norm change”; therefore local agency embodies transformative effects on global norms, confirming the *agency of the governed* argument (696).

Robin Dunford, in his de-colonial diffusion model, defies elitism and Western-centrism innate to both the actual norm transfer process overseen by entrepreneurs and the diffusion scholarship; in so doing, he aims to decolonise (and democratise) norm diffusion. In order to decolonise the diffusion thought, he confronts what he calls the “epistemological coloniality” dominant in norm research on local, vernacular and non-Western experiences. To him, diffusion studies often theorise the local agency’s role through confining it to adapting and reconstructing an *already-existing* global scheme thus to a capability to produce only particular and local knowledge, other than global. In Dunford’s words, in such an account “[n]on-Western actors become norm-makers only by complying with an already-written global design” (2017, 4). By this, epistemic hierarchies between universal norms and vernacular, local culture become sustained. To go beyond this, Dunford, similar to Großklaus, suggests focusing on the re-articulation and appropriation of the so-called global designs by the local, along with their localisation and vernacularisation, with reference to the multiplicity of knowledge, culture, and history. This, however, requires a methodological shift in tracing norm travel through “looking beyond the trail of communication developed in high-level institutional discussions [in formal governance and government institutions] and analysing in addition the emergence of norms in and the spread of norms across grassroots mobilisations” (2). To facilitate this shift, Dunford proposes several other strategies in the context of diffusion, including, challenging the representations of localities in the South as conservative and incapable of authoring transformative norms; deconstructing myths identifying the West as the exclusive and independent origin of modern global norms; restoring marginalised voices, practices and perspectives; and altering major inequalities in the power, resources and platforms that people have in shaping and spreading global norms. Collectively, these strategies challenge multiple hierarchies shaping who can produce and spread global norms (5).

Our final beyond-mainstream diffusion model is an agency-based explanation of local norm resistance and counter-entrepreneurial involvements, coined as *antipreneurship*. The model offers an account of resistance to norm diffusion and introduces *norm anti-preneur* as an agent opposing norm entrepreneurs and defending the normative status quo (Bloomfield 2016, 2). The model challenges the practice of theorising the targets of diffusion as passive norm followers, the liberal-bias through unfolding the normative agency in a non-liberal context, and the linear norm flow and progress assumptions through championing the role of contestation, resistance and counter-entrepreneurship

(4-5). Norm antipreneurs, as counter normative agents, resist entrepreneurial involvements by refuting the morality claims embedded in or undermining the normative credibility of the norm-in-flow. They may also make use of certain tactical advantages such as securing the backing of the defenders of the formal institutional status quo and blocking the entrepreneurial institutions producing policies based on a new norm (Bloomfield and Scott 2016). The norm antipreneur model is particularly necessary to show that the counter-agency involvements of the locals are necessary. That contestation is a state of affairs taking place between competing normative orders and run by agents capable of championing and refuting moral and institutional claims—a perspective confirming and expounding upon Dunford’s *de-colonising the diffusion*, Draude’s *agency of the governed*, and Acharya’s subsidiarity arguments.

The above discussion reviewed the diffusionist and beyond-diffusionist mechanisms that the IR mainstream and critical norm researches have produced. The following section elaborates the historical and contemporary discussions in Anthropology on diffusionism. The section will unveil the parallels between IR norm diffusion and anthropological culture diffusion prescriptions. It will particularly make it possible to observe the overlap between the critical norm diffusion models and the beyond-diffusionism models developed in Anthropology and to facilitate this, every single model developed in both literatures have been individually reviewed.

Diffusionism—past, present, and beyond

Diffusionism represents both a school of thought of cultural-historical ethnography (in Anthropology) and relatedly a methodological approach to cultural change and trait diffusion. The latter is what the former adheres to when conducting research. Yet, it has also become a predisposition mostly tacitly adopted in studying the diffusion processes in broader social sciences and humanities. This section reviews the basic tenets of the diffusionist school of thought and elaborates on the methodological bias and issues such a perspective has generated. The section also brings together the methodologies and analytical models introduced for studying diffusion without dwelling on diffusionism.

The past

The literature discusses three scholarly branches of diffusionism, beginning from the late 19th century until the 1940s: namely, the German-Austrian School, the British School, and the American School.¹⁴ The initial pioneering arguments of the diffusionist kind were introduced by the German and Austrian geographer-anthropologists, as part of their endeavour for understanding the formation of cultural similarities and civilisations across the globe. The idea they championed was that the similarities were generated by cultural contact, and then they attempted to uncover the routes and regions of diffusion. As part of this quest, they identified culture areas and culture circles formed through successive diffusion of cultural traits or complexes—the diffusion suggested as taking place

¹⁴For reviews of scholarly discussions on diffusionism see Katz, Levin, and Hamilton (1963); Bargotta (2000); Kuklick (2010); Veit (2013); Rohatynkyj (2018).

from cultural centres towards the peripheral regions. The leading figures of this school included Friedrich Ratzel, Leo Frobenius, Fritz Graebner and Wilhelm Schmidt. The British school instead utilised the diffusionist ideas in advocating for ancient Egypt to be the sole centre for human development, from which the civilisation, as a cultural complex, diffused to the rest of the world. Grafton Elliot Smith and William James Perry, often referred to as the heliocentric diffusionists, are considered to be the main representatives of this school. W.H.R. Rivers is also included on the list due to his studies on “the effect of routes of travel upon wandering culture traits” (Goldenweiser 1925, 24) and to his suggesting that diffusionist influences—cultural contact—play a definitive role in cultural development (Langham 1981, 120). The American School of diffusionism, similar to the German-Austrian school, was interested in culture areas and complexes. They worked on defining culture areas (within the Americas) and on elaborating the contexts and the conditions under which they were formed and expanded (Freed and Freed 1983; Kroeber 1997). The diffusion of cultural influences within a culture area or between distinct areas was an essential reference for them in explaining the formation and expansion of cultural and civilisational complexes. Leading figures in this school included Franz Boas, Robert Lowie, Edward Sapir, Alfred Kroeber, and Clark Wissler.

All three branches of diffusionism feature diffusion as a challenge to the classical evolutionary doctrine, for its postulating that the similarities between cultures were due to the similar evolutionary stages that humankind experienced throughout history (the psychic unity) and to the invention of similar cultural traits independent of each other in the absence of historic contact (independent invention) (Goldenweiser 1925, 19). Diffusionists’ response was that despite the presence of a peculiar inner development of cultural groups, foreign influences and contact were the primary determinants in the making of culture and civilisation. To them, the evolutionary scheme could not account for “processes of gradual differentiation as well as processes of leveling down differences between neighboring cultural centers” (Boas 1920, 317–318). This was because it was the diffusion “encountered at every stage and in every phase of society ... [that] lays the axe to the root of any theory of historical law” and that “makes all other agencies taper almost into nothingness beside it in its effect on the total growth of human civilisation” (Lowie 1920, 434).

Nevertheless, the scientific advances in archaeology, the scientific method’s gaining dominance in social science research, the strengthening neo-evolutionist reasoning, and the shift in attention to the problem of acculturation led to the diffusionist schools’ losing their influence by the 1940s (Katz, Levin, and Hamilton 1963, 238; Leal 2011, 317; Storey and Jones 2011). This, however, does not mean that studying “diffusion” was given up, on the contrary, in the post-war context, concomitant to the developments in mass media, questions regarding the diffusion, particularly of innovations, gained new momentum. And researchers conducted extensive research in various disciplines, including communication and rural sociology, education, marketing, health, and technology (Katz, Levin, and Hamilton 1963, 239). The anthropological diffusionist schools, no doubt, provided a necessary scholarly ground for all these studies.¹⁵

¹⁵See the following studies for considerations on the contribution of the diffusionist school: Leal (2011); Djelic (2008, 545); Appadurai (1988, 39).

Diffusionism, however, also left methodological and epistemological legacies built on certain “erroneous” assumptions of mankind’s innovative capacities, of the implicit inferiority of those remaining in the periphery, and of the normalisation of inter-societal, cultural and spatial hierarchies. These legacies have been widely criticised, yet they have equally been embraced by many, although mostly tacitly, since then (Blaut 1987, 33–34).

In the historical context, the evolutionist school targeted diffusionism for assuming a hierarchy regarding the inventive capacities of humankind. The subsequent neo-evolutionist school formed a more nuanced critique. They argued that evolution and diffusion were not antithetical conceptions, but instead processes working together in the development and spread of cultural traits. To them, even the classical evolutionists acknowledged the significance and ubiquity of diffusion and diffusionist processes (White 1945). The misconception regarding the “evolution vs diffusion dichotomy” was generated, to the neo-evolutionists, by the diffusionist school’s confusing “the evolution of culture with the culture history of peoples”—the former is what the evolutionists consider as the basis for the development of culture. In contrast, the diffusionists wrongfully consider the latter as an evolutionary argument that assumes that every people on earth pass through specific and standard stages in acquiring culture (343). The evolutionists, according to the neo-evolutionists, developed formulas describing the formation of culture, other than establishing historical laws on the “evolution” of the “culture history of tribes” and peoples (346). This approach of describing evolution and diffusion as complementary, rather than exclusionary and rival arguments, was shared by many.

Among them, James Blaut (1987, 1993), an influential anthropologist and geographer, fiercely criticised diffusionism for its naturalising of the inequalities between geographies and brought together the evolutionist arguments of psychic unity and independent invention and the historical practice of diffusion under a uniformitarian framework. Blaut considered diffusion as the principal cause in culture change, yet rejected considering “some places/people as more inventive than others”. He instead held that “all communities have equal potential for invention and innovation, regardless of whether for the landscape as a whole the overall propensity to invent is low or high” (1987, 34–35). For him the historically set spatial inequalities have been normalised, naturalised, and even moralised (30) by the diffusionists by their postulating that “some places are permanent, natural centers of creativity and invention” and that the centre (historically Europe and the West) is progressive, advanced and more civilised than its periphery (the rest of the world) (1993, 13). Blaut calls this *the diffusionist world model*, an epistemological scheme where the centre leads and innovates, while the periphery lags behind and imitates. Blaut also thought that diffusionism was a product of and functioned as a scientific “justification” for colonialism (16, 18).¹⁶ To him, diffusionism imposed a theoretical model regarding the internal characteristics of the colonised societies in ways that would conform to the interests of the colonising societies, and that evokes colonialism as a bestowal of civilisation, therefore, as normal, natural, inevitable, and moral (1987, 33, 1993, 1).

¹⁶This has been acknowledged by many others; see Storey and Jones (2011, 22); Rohatynkyj (2018, 5); Friedman (2007, 120).

The present

Along with the criticism of the historical practice of diffusionism, there are denunciations targeting also the post-war context in scholarly writing on diffusion. Two prominent agendas have been focused on as inflicted by diffusionism—one is the writings on modernisation (development), and the other is on globalisation.

James Blaut describes *modernisation* as the *modern*-day diffusionism and suggests that it gained prominence in the post-war period following the collapse of empires and the emergence of new sovereign and underdeveloped states, or the Third World. The importance of these new countries for ever-expanding capitalism and the anti-socialist political camp during the Cold War required the creation and *scientific validation* of a modern form of the diffusionist model. This model involved a body of ideas suggesting that economic and social advancement for the now-sovereign Third World states requires acquiring the so-called modernising traits from the developed capitalist countries. This was a move in line with classical diffusionism's normalising and moralising the flow of progressive ideas from the developed core to the backward or slowly progressing periphery. As Blaut (1987, 36) argues,

modern diffusionism, strives to show that it is just this spreading of modern knowledge and ways that characterises the present-day relationship between capitalist metropolis and Third World and strives to argue convincingly that receptivity to flows of all sorts from the metropolis is the only way for peripheral societies to achieve development and “modernity.” Emerging from this is a concrete model in which there is asserted to be a steady flow of information, “modern” social attitudes, and wealth-generating material things like productive farm inputs glissading down from metropolis to periphery. This model has been deployed in one form or another in a number of studies, empirical and theoretical, and claims are made that it has been empirically validated.

The virtue of development—evoking inevitably good practices to be adopted—, accordingly, was set as the scientific and moral basis for normalising and naturalising the hierarchical relationship between the developed core and the underdeveloped periphery. It is on this basis that Blaut draws a parallel between the classical colonialism and the modern-day modernisation. Blaut's aim here was to decolonise the way the Third World is imagined, and his endeavour was joined by others studying spatial, economic and sociological dimensions of rural development. These studies particularly targeted the developmental assumptions revolving around the idea that diffusion is the natural way for underdeveloped geographies, rural areas, to achieve a positive social change and that only through diffusion can “traditional” societies/geographies be brought into “modernity” (See Blaikie 1978; Browett 1980).

The globalisation research has maintained the spatial hierarchies that the development and modernisation theories assumed. Imagining globalisation as a uni-directional flow of culture/knowledge from the First to the Third world was the common practice in this regard. As Hans Peter Hahn (2008, 191) puts forth: “[t]he current research on globalisation often shows astonishing similarities between the 19th century understanding of diffusion and the most recent interpretations regarding globally circulating cultural phenomena”. He suggests this because, to him, globalisation research tends to adopt the perspectives of cultural history in its endeavour to comprehend the contemporary cultural connections and world-wide distribution of cultural traits. However, the critical

shortcoming was their being inclined to maintain spatial hierarchies, to assume adoption as an automatic/mechanical outcome, and to neglect the “local horizons of meaning and action” and the “possibility of rejection” (thus to rule out local agency) (199, 197). This tendency, as Hahn shows, was also coined as neo-diffusionism.¹⁷ Arnd Schneider (2003) as well draws attention to that, as a diffusionist practice, globalisation research maintained approaching cultural change as a mechanical process, rather than a social and interactive one.

Ulf Hannerz (1997), in the same manner, drawing on contemporary anthropologists’ broad studies of the diffusion patters of material culture and technology, holds that the way globalisation comes to be studied and the questions the globalisation research raise give an impression that the late 19th-century diffusionist approaches and scholarly foci have returned. In addition, Hannerz highlighted in an earlier study that since the 1960s globalisation research had embraced a view of spatial asymmetry that manifested itself in the vast use of conceptual pairs of “center (or core) and periphery, [or] metropolis and satellite” (1992, 219). The duality in this approach has shaped the structures of meaning and cultural expression within the discipline and created an understanding of researching the world through elaborating the centres and peripheries of cultural flow, as the diffusionist cultural anthropologists did in the historical context.

Signe Howell, similarly, argues that, as diffusionist practices, the scholarship takes globalisation as a *lopsided* (asymmetrical) relationship between the West and the rest, and as a process that conclusively results in the world-wide diffusion of western knowledge and culture. They, accordingly, “underestimate the degree to which societies are affected by it only superficially” and equally rule out that for some considerable time “[t]he flow of knowledge between societies goes in more than one or even two directions—both from non-western parts of the globe to the West, and between non-western societies” (Howell 1995, 174–176).

Jonathan Friedman (2013, 335) as well talks about “the renaissance of diffusionism” in discussing contemporary globalisation theory, due to the tendency among anthropologists to see globalisation as the “essential and new reality of flows and connections”. Their reducing globalisation to connections between societies, to Friedman, confined their focus of analysis “to simple diffusionism”. Moreover, to Friedman, as a diffusionist practice, the globalisation scholarship ignored the perspective of the local, therefore local agency—as he described (2007, 120–121):

If anthropologists and others, in a new-found diffusionist discourse ... busy themselves with discovering where things come from and showing how they become combined in particular urban places, this need not have anything to do with real social lives other than their own observers. This conflation of the emic and the etic is a hierarchical and ethnocentric vision that was the hallmark of colonial project of classification that gave rise to terms such as hybridity and creolisation ... [which] are part of the world of the observer ... [and] are ways of identifying the experience of multiplicity at a distance.

This is the ground upon which globalisation research, in Friedman’s accounts, not only denies the local peoples’ ability to produce cultural material/trait, but also reproduces the diffusionist spatial and social hierarchies with reference to culture.

¹⁷James Blaut devoted a chapter to a discussion on “neo-diffusionism or globalization” in the uncompleted third volume of his magnum opus, *The Colonizer’s Model of the World*. See Wissoker (2005).

Gustavo Lins Ribeiro (2019), by the same token, suggests that the *global* has been reproduced as a diffusionist category within the contemporary globalisation research. This is because, confirming Friedman, to Ribeiro thinking on a global scale was a definitive practice within diffusionism, and the contemporary globalisation research failed to take the perspectives on “flows” and “dissemination” beyond diffusionist accounts of the global scale movement of people, capital or information.

Beyond?

Most of the studies that criticised the historical and contemporary research for *doing* diffusionism offered their own versions of a *beyond* approach to study diffusion. Against diffusionism’s disqualifying the receiver from inventing, attributing inferiority to those remaining in the periphery, and normalising hierarchies between the West and the rest, the beyond approaches highlighted, among others, the vitality of the agency (active participation) of the local (to diffusion), the locals’ capacity to undermine foreign influences, the local reconstruction of diffused traits, the non-hierarchical character of the sender-receiver interaction, and non-linear diffusion.

In his non-diffusionist model for studying diffusion, Blaut (1987, 34) returns to the (neo)evolutionist arguments and urges that “in all human communities we should expect to find the same capacity for creation and invention ... regardless of whether for the landscape as a whole the overall propensity to invent is high or low”. Therefore, diffusionism’s expectation of a basic inequality between the inner and the outer sectors of the world—and of humanity—should be refuted by bringing any spatial inequalities in matters relating to cultural evolution, and more specifically economic development, into the discussion of diffusion (Blaut 1993, 42). Blaut also identifies several non-diffusionist diffusion processes taking place across the world beyond the one-way diffusion conception of diffusionism (that is from the centre to the periphery); including, cellular, ultra-rapid, crisscross, dependent, disguised, phantom, and (non)displacing diffusion (35-39). These plural manifestations direct attention, for instance, to the fact that autonomous diffusion is not secured (“entry conditions” in diffusion may be present), a trait may diffuse back in the form of reinvention, centre and periphery may be in plural and are transitive conditions, the outcome of diffusion may not be progress (against the modernisation/development thesis), transitions in the periphery may not be related to the diffused traits (attributing to diffusion a causal quality in change is erroneous), and it is mistaken to imagine the periphery in a cultural vacuum to be filled by modern traits.

Blaut’s plural manifestations propositions have also been acknowledged by Signe Howell. She argues that diffusion of knowledge and know-how has for quite a while now been taking place multi-directionally and in multi-sited manners (Howell 1995, 175). Therefore, the diffusionist argument of asymmetry and linearity in diffusion, to Howell, is not always relevant. Diffusion, as a multi-directional and multi-sited practice, reveals the agency of the non-western societies and the power to take or reject traits in circulation or to counter-influence western societies.

Chabot and Duyvendak (2002, 706) as well think that diffusion may take place from the non-West to the West, from the periphery to the core, or from the “non-democratic outskirts” to the “democratic heartland”—it does not necessarily function through a

hierarchy and through orderly social systems. Therefore, diffusion is not a linear process, but rather runs through non-linear and equally fluid mechanisms. Along with this, the diffusing items do not necessarily need to be “finished products”; they may even be “works-in-progress” thus be “dynamic, ambiguous, and malleable, both in the transmitting and receiving context”. Within this context, the receiving community interprets the diffused item and reconstructs it (or the meaning of it) for the need of the receiving context.

Arnd Schneider suggests studying cultural diffusion through taking “cultures as open systems where individual actors negotiate access to, and traffic in, symbolic elements which have no fixed meaning” and through a focus on appropriation and related “individual practices that mediate between different cultural levels in the process of globalisation” (2003, 215, 221). Appropriation, to Schneider, is a transformative act and an act of individual agency, something “neglected both by earlier paradigms of culture change and by more recent theories of globalisation” (225). It denotes making an *alien* diffusing-artefact one’s own through interpreting both the artefact (the other) and the self, within the scope of which “(i) the ‘original’ context of an artefact and its producers [intentions of the ‘originating’ producer]; (ii) the artefact itself; and (iii) the appropriating person or agent” are taken into account, yet with an overarching understanding that the parties involved in the transaction of the cultural diffusion are not equal (221).

To Jonathan Friedman, in diffusion, having a mere focus on the object-in-circulation obscures us from seeing the way “objects enter into lifeworlds” and become “integrated within particular cultural project” (2007, 123). This is the ground upon which Friedman suggests taking diffusion as “embedded in larger systems of exchange” (121). He exemplifies this embeddedness as follow:

For example, the ‘diffusion’ of European cloth into Africa is not a mere issue of flow but of the way in which cloth was a significant prestige good that was valued locally precisely as foreign and thus of high status, entering into a regional system of exchange that produced chiefs as well as slaves in terms of locally specific categories and social relations. Diffusion is not a process in itself, but a product of already existing strategies and relations in novel circumstances. (123)

As a remedy to the diffusionist globalisation studies’ neglect of the local horizons of meanings and actions in diffusion, Hans Peter Hahn proposes focusing on local agency, local actions and local perspectives by examining the cultural appropriation processes. Appropriation, as utilised by Hahn, “describes the local perceptions of new [circulating] cultural phenomena”, thus the local agency’s turning them into local authentic *properties* by creating local meanings and transforming the local traditions and environment accordingly. Through appropriation, how “a certain cultural element is picked up, transformed, and ... become a feature of the local society” could become examined without a need to reference the “flow metaphors” (2008, 197). To Hahn, appropriation is also about resistance; this is because, it, against the automatic adoption argument, introduces a possibility of rejection to diffusion. Hence, it represents a strategy the powerless adopt against the powerful in the colonial interaction. Thus, through appropriation, the local both innovates and avoids becoming a *victim* of colonial diffusion and global influences, and undermines the power of the trait imposers (194-196).

Djelic argues that diffusion is about construction, “[c]onstruction’ of the diffused ‘objects’” in the receiving locality (2008, 549). This is a form of practice Djelic defines

as *translation*. Having included the receiving community in the diffusion processes as active participants, Djelic argues that, through translation (i) the diffusing trait is constructed “from and upon a local ‘object’ or experience”, (ii) a mediating communication takes place between the carriers and the receivers, (iii) and the local adapts to a novel setting and transforms accordingly (550). Diffusion as construction/translation draws on the “pre-existing legacies” and the “peculiarities of the context of reception” thus arguing that they “have an impact both on diffusion path and on patterns of appropriation” (548). Thus, through the role of contextual contingencies the involvement of a “multiplicity of actors, interests, cognitive frames and (hi)stories” in diffusion is laid bare (552).

From more of a social psychological perspective and through confirming the construction and translation arguments made above, Kashima et al. consider diffusion as the process of the transmission of cultural meanings through social interaction. To them, as part of diffusion, cultural meanings are “communicated from a sender to a receiver”, and the receiver learns or relearns these communicated cultural meanings (Kashima, Peters, and Whelan 2008, 397). Cultural transmission/diffusion, therefore, should be “thought of as a joint activity between the sender and the receiver, in which they collaborate to come to a mutual understanding of cultural information”—diffusion thus is “inherently dynamic, collaborative, and distributed” (399).

In a more recent example, Clayer et al. offer a socio-semantic approach to the circulation of traits and symbolic products, as a remedy to diffusionism. To them, the traits and symbolic products may transform “in the very process of circulation” and come “to assume different significations and forms in various time–space configurations” (Clayer, Giomi, and Szurek 2019, 24). They, accordingly, may have different circulating patterns (including entangled, triangular, two-way or circular, rather than a one-way transmission from one spatiality to another), and their meanings may be unstable and locally reengineered (despite the efforts put forth by the entrepreneurs for stabilising them) (25).¹⁸

Diffusionism and its beyond in IR—its extent, consequences, and future

The critiques within Anthropology of the contemporary practices of diffusionism are imperative for IR scholarship—given that both development/modernisation and globalisation are subjects extensively studied within IR. The developmental agendas and practices within the UN system (the liberal order) have been deeply scrutinised by the norm research. Globalisation has often been taken as a variable facilitating the transnational norm diffusion processes led by epistemic communities and other governmental and nongovernmental advocacy networks. In the case of the mainstream norm research, the research on development and globalisation has maintained the diffusionist assumptions in elaborating the norm building and dissemination processes. The maintained premises included, for instance, assuming a one-way (linear) diffusion (from sender to receiver, West to Rest), centre-periphery duality (the *West* is a permanent centre of invention), Western norms to be progressive and modernising, almost an automatic adoption, normalisation and moralisation of geographical inequalities, spatial and normative hierarchy in diffusion (as a form of epistemological colonialism), Western-

¹⁸Also see Tabak (2016), particularly the chapter entitled ‘Local Responses to Post-Kemalist Socialisation’, pages 173–217.

defined globality and internationality in norm emergence and diffusion (not all norms are equal in quality for being global), neglecting local meanings and agency in diffusion, and ignoring non-Western contributions to the global normative order (at least not in a good sense). And, these assumptions have been consequential for IR—they methodologically crippled the endeavours to offer bias-free conclusions.

On the other hand, critical research's way of problematising mainstream norm diffusion overlaps with that of the beyond-diffusionist discourses within Anthropology. The overlapping proposals include, for instance, the neo-evolutionist arguments of multiplicity of centre and periphery and their being transitive positions, active agency of the locality and the periphery's participation in global processes, the possibility of the occurrence of colonialism-like outcomes from diffusion, the periphery's enjoying an equal capability for norm creation and promotion (local-to-global diffusion), the local agents' turning diffusing norms into local authentic *properties* through localisation/translation/appropriation, the change in the meaning of circulating norms, the communicative and contested *natures* of diffusion, and resistance being a strategy the powerless adopt against the powerful in norm diffusion. Upon these shared propositions we see the postulation of the overlapping and even rival beyond-diffusionism models, such as, translation, appropriation, (multi-directional, multi-sited, pluriversal) circulation, decolonial diffusion, contestation or symbolic/discursive construction.

The parallels between the mainstream norm research and diffusionism, and between the critical norm research and beyond-diffusionist positions are therefore evident. Both may be said to be led by common research agendas and both literature, confirming Katz et al.'s critique, *independently invented* the diffusionism and beyond-diffusionist models for IR. The problem, however, is that it is done in the form not of borrowing them, but rather of *independently inventing* them. This, nevertheless, also shows that diffusionism may stand as a *missing link* of a more fruitful and complex dialogue between Anthropology and IR. It may lay bare their already complementary perspectives and agendas related to the local, the global, and the things in-between—some of these were listed in the introduction such as migration, border-making, ethnicity, culture, identity, violence, conflict, gender, transnationality or globalisation. The studies cited above in *footnote 2* clearly show the extent of the already achieved dialogue and exchange.

Moreover, once the critical norm research accurately diagnoses the problem as diffusionism, IR scholarship will benefit from the informed conclusions the anthropological schools offered on diffusionism and *beyond-diffusionism* and will participate in the trans-disciplinary efforts for studying diffusion without dwelling on diffusionism. Similarly, the conclusions, contributions, and the models developed in the IR norm scholarship will get into circulation in broader social sciences and humanities, and relatedly novel avenues for research will be opened up. Accordingly, the appropriation, translation, ambiguity, decolonial diffusion, pluriversality, localisation, subsidiarity, antipreneurship models and the related empirical enquiries already constitute concrete examples for possible contributions. Indeed, they complement, further and strengthen the anthropological beyond-diffusionism research's efforts at unfolding the plural, multi-directional and multi-sited manifestations of diffusion, the extended systems of exchanges diffusion is embedded in, and the appropriation-led negotiations on and translations of the meanings of symbolic elements. The dialogue between IR and Anthropology, therefore, is two-sided, and studies on diffusionism, as a missing link, would further this dialogue and exchange.

Conclusion

This research has clearly shown that IR as a scholarly discipline reproduces mechanisms, epistemologies or methodologies developed in other disciplines. This shows the unity in social science (and humanities) enquiry (may also confirm the evolutionist psychic unity arguments). Moreover, it indicates that IR contributes to the broader debates in social sciences, and equally has to take into account further the necessity of incorporating epistemologies and methodologies developed in other disciplines. Indeed, this has been comprehensively and successfully done for quite a while, yet there is still much to do in this regard. Diffusionism stands here as a venue for extending the scholarly exchange between Anthropology and IR beyond conflict studies and the history of civilisations.

Diffusionism has been consequential for anthropological enquiry, and with this research, I made it explicit that it is so also for IR. For this very reason, in both Anthropology and IR similar cries for the necessity of going beyond diffusionist biases have been widely articulated. However, this has been done without building on each other's findings, so both disciplines independently developed their own individual yet overlapping versions of beyond-diffusionism. Future research may bring those proposals together and amplify the validity of the models; yet, initially, a thorough enquiry is needed within IR for elaborating on the impact of diffusionism (and beyond) in scholarly discussions other than norm research. Considering that the diffusionist assumptions such as spatial and cultural hierarchies and dualities are quite a common practice in IR discussions of the international system, global governance, global IR, global south, development, normativity, cosmopolitanism, democratisation, or inequalities, it is highly likely that diffusionist conclusions have been maintained and beyond-diffusionist critiques have been independently reproduced also in these scholarly literatures.

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