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# The migration governance in South America: the bottom-up diffusion of the Residence Agreement of Mercosur

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## **Abstract:**

This article offers an alternative explanation for the diffusion theory that focusses on the process of governance emergence from a top-down perspective. This alternative bottom up explanation is tested studying how the model of migration governance in the Mercosur Resident Agreement was formed. In that sense, the article evaluate the actors that were involved in the Agreement, their main interests and institutional conditions, as well as the modes of interaction that prevailed among them. Based on interviews with key actors, documents and academic literature on the subject this article concludes that the Agreement was mainly the result of the Brazilian and Argentinian negotiations. Brazil needed to boost regional cooperation after Mercosur crisis and considered that a joint migration amnesty could have a positive impact in the regional block's image. However, the Argentinian experience in migration issues was the one that allowed for a more coherent policy in the matter, which in the end was accepted by the member states as the best policy option for the region. Therefore, I sustain that the mode of interaction in the Residence Agreement negotiations was a bottom up process of diffusion of the Argentinian experience through the region

**Keywords:** Mercosur, bottom up diffusion, diffusion mechanisms, regionalism, governance, migration.